



VOICES

Bulletin of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

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one vision
one identity
one community

▶ Advancing the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Agenda

I am pleased to present the second issue of "VOICES": Bulletin of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). This issue of "VOICES" focuses on advancing the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community agenda. Much was achieved in 2017 in terms of improving the lives of ASEAN's people and 2018 is anticipated to be as promising for the People's Pillar.

In this issue, we are honored to welcome H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, who assumed office as Secretary-General of ASEAN in January 2018. Secretary-General emphasizes the important role of the socio-cultural pillar in the process of building the ASEAN Community and its identity. He underscores the need to improve the lives of the people of ASEAN through education, healthy lifestyle and the environment, among others, which in turn will contribute to increased productivity in ASEAN. Under the leadership of Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi, ASCC will be provided with further impetus to continue its mission toward realizing an engaging, inclusive, sustainable, resilient and dynamic community.

The signing of the ASEAN Declaration on the Role of the Civil Service as a Catalyst for Achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 at the 30th ASEAN Summit in April last year, demonstrated the commitment of ASEAN Member States in developing a strong civil service sector

to discuss key issues on social protection in ASEAN. Through this conference, we can look forward to a compendium of good practices on social protection in ASEAN, and also a set of indicators to assist us in understanding the impact of project implementation.

Also held as part of ASEAN at 50 commemorative events was the 7th Cross-Regional Roundtable

on the Elimination of Violence against Children. Jointly organized with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Ms. Marta Santos Pais, and the Government of the Philippines, the meeting provided a platform for the exchange of best practices and legislations on such issues as child abuse, sexual exploitation online, harmful traditional practices and



H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi
Secretary-General of ASEAN



H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi (4th from left, seated) with H.E. Vongthep Arthakaivalvattee (5th from left, seated) and staff of the ASCC Department.

that plays a critical role in ASEAN community building. It is through the civil service that many human development and social service initiatives are implemented. Thus it is important that ASEAN continues to promote its civil service that is professional, responsive, effective, efficient and upholding the principles of good governance. In turn, their welfare must be protected.

As part of ASEAN at 50 celebration, the ASEAN High-Level Conference on Social Protection was held in Manila last year. This conference provided a valuable interactive platform in bringing together various sectoral bodies ranging from poverty eradication to rights of women and children,

bullying. Children delegates also interfaced with meeting participants and voiced their opinions. The strengthening of social services is a key component in ensuring that children are protected and given the services they need.

In the workplace, a high priority for ASCC is strengthening social protection for all workers. Recognizing the predominance of the informal sector in many ASEAN Member States, ASEAN leaders adopted the Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN in 2016. The Declaration calls for ASEAN Member States to strengthen their capacity in promoting social

protection as part of the transition. A Regional Plan of Action has been developed to put the Declaration into action.

Another milestone to be highlighted is the signing of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers at the 31st ASEAN Summit which reiterates ASEAN's long commitment on migrant workers since the first Declaration was signed a decade ago. An action plan will be developed to translate the ASEAN Consensus into concrete actions.

On the future generation of ASEAN, it is quite alarming that more than 3.6 million children do not have access to a school in their community, have not been enrolled in a school, have dropped out of schools or are at risk of dropping out. The ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth seeks to address this issue, ensuring that children from all sections of society are included in the educational process.

ASEAN continues to work on improving the quality of lives of its people. Much progress has been made in the area of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which is a regional health priority. With a growing aging population, it is becoming important for ASEAN Member States to also look into providing long-term care.

As one of the world's most disaster-prone regions, it is crucial that ASEAN has safety nets and disaster risk financing insurance (DRFI) in place to mitigate the impact

of disasters. ASEAN is developing disaster-responsive social protection measures and exploring DRFI to assist in recovery and rehabilitation during times of disasters, and also in the prevention, mitigation and preparedness of disasters.

ASCC also places emphasis on raising awareness on environmental conservation. To recognize the valuable contribution made by individuals, the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes program was launched in 2017. This program recognizes outstanding individuals from the ASEAN region who have contributed significantly to biodiversity conservation and advocacy efforts in their respective countries. Ten individuals from ASEAN Member States were honored during ASEAN's 50th year commemorative celebration.

Advancing the Socio-Cultural Agenda has been and continues to be a priority for ASEAN. It is my hope that this issue of "VOICES" can provide some information on the initiatives of ASEAN aimed at further improving the lives of the peoples of ASEAN.

H.E. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee
*Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN
for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community*

► Overview of Social Protection in ASEAN

Social protection addresses poverty, reduces inequality and contributes to higher living standards. This in turn, contributes towards building a socially cohesive and peaceful society.

ASEAN's commitment towards social protection is well noted with the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection at the 23rd ASEAN Summit in October 2013. The declaration notes that social protection is a basic human right and includes the provision of social services, social assistance and social safety-nets to everyone, especially those most in need.

The adoption of this declaration has led to the creation of an action plan, which was adopted in November 2015. The ASEAN Regional Framework and Action Plan to Implement the ASEAN Declaration on Social Protection defines social protection as ***"interventions that consist of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty, inequalities, and vulnerability by assisting the poor, at risk, vulnerable groups such as but not limited to persons with disabilities, older people, youth, women, children, undernourished, victims of disasters, migrant workers, as well as families and communities to enhance their capacities to better manage risks and enhance equal access to essential services and opportunities on a rights based/needs based approach."***

Social protection programmes can be broadly divided into those that serve the working population, children and youth, the elderly and the general public. The level of social protection in ASEAN is very diverse.

In the area of providing social protection for children, ASEAN Member States have done remarkably well in providing access to basic education, with basic school enrollment rates as high as ninety percent. The existence of school feeding programmes for children attending school assist in reducing malnutrition among children in lower income households. Attention needs to be given to the provision of childcare services and also to the needs of young children not yet of school age.

For the working population, social protection at this stage is largely limited to the formal sector. Some compensation is provided for work-related injuries and workers are also provided with sickness and maternity leave. Nevertheless, the rate of coverage for work-related injuries does differ widely between ASEAN Member States. Effort needs to be taken to extend coverage to workers in the informal sector and the self-employed.

ASEAN Member States have also made good progress in providing universal health coverage, with four Member States having close to 100 percent social health insurance coverage. However wide variations exist in the accessibility and quality of health services. There is also a need for long-term care for ASEAN's aging population.

Social Protection for Children

 <h3>Education</h3> <p>ASEAN Member States provide mainly free basic school education. Enrolment rates are over 90%. Enrolling and retaining students in schools beyond basic-level remains a challenge for some Member States.</p>	 <h3>Nutrition</h3> <p>All ASEAN Member States have some form of school feeding programmes. Focus is needed for nutrition programmes targeting children below school age.</p>	 <h3>Child allowance</h3> <p>Most ASEAN Member States have in place cash benefit schemes in the form of means-tested social assistance for families with children.</p>	 <h3>Childcare</h3> <p>Schemes supporting childcare are quite limited in most ASEAN Member States. Preschool education is being promoted and all Member States have established Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) specific national legislation and/or policies.</p>
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Source: Cheng Boon Ong and Céline Peyron Bista, *The state of social protection in ASEAN at the dawn of integration*, Bangkok: ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2015

Social Protection for the Elderly

 <h3>Pension Schemes</h3> <p>Statutory pension schemes in the ASEAN region are either provident saving funds, social insurance schemes or a combination of both. Coverage in Member States range from 0%-87%. Self-employed and informal economy workers are usually excluded from the statutory pension system.</p>	 <h3>Long-Term Care</h3> <p>Government provision of long term care for the elderly is lacking in ASEAN Member States. Family-based provision of income and care for the elderly is still prevalent with the majority of elderly co-residing with their children. Singapore and Thailand have tax incentives in place to encourage the familial arrangements for elderly care.</p>	 <h3>Access to Medical Care</h3> <p>ASEAN Member States have made good progress in the area of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore have achieved 100% social health insurance, Thailand is at a close 98% and 80% of Philippines population have access to UHC. Over half of Indonesia's and Vietnam's population have social health protection.</p>
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Source: Cheng Boon Ong and Céline Peyron Bista, *The state of social protection in ASEAN at the dawn of integration*, Bangkok: ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2015

Social Protection for Workers

 <h3>Work Injury Benefit</h3> <p>Legal coverage for mandatory or voluntary schemes to compensate workers for work-related injuries range from a low 6.7% percent to a high 88% among ASEAN Member States. Coverage needs to be extended to cover self-employed and informal economy workers.</p>	 <h3>Sickness Benefit</h3> <p>Paid sickness leave is provided in varying extents in ASEAN Member States. Eight ASEAN Member States consider sickness leave as an employer's liability under its respective labour laws. Philippines and Thailand have schemes that provide sickness coverage to the self-employed.</p>	 <h3>Maternity Benefit</h3> <p>All ASEAN Member States provide some form of maternity benefit covering from 8 to 26 weeks. Philippines, Thailand and Singapore provide maternity benefit coverage to the self-employed.</p>	 <h3>Unemployment Benefit</h3> <p>Unemployment rates in ASEAN Member States range from 0.3% -6.9% for the overall working age population. Thailand and Viet Nam have established unemployment insurance schemes.</p>
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Source: Cheng Boon Ong and Céline Peyron Bista, *The state of social protection in ASEAN at the dawn of integration*, Bangkok: ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2015

▶ ASEAN's Commitment to Social Protection

Major ASEAN Commitments Relevant to Social Protection

2017	ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
2016	ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth
2016	Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN
2015	Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN
2013	The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN
2013	ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection
2012	ASEAN Human Rights Declaration
2011	Proclamation of the ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2011-2020): Towards an Inclusive Society
2011	Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of the Persons with Disabilities in ASEAN Community
2011	Bali Declaration on ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations "Bali Concord III"
2010	Brunei Darussalam Declaration on Strengthening Family Institution: Caring for the Elderly
2010	Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children
2010	ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Human Resources
2007	ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
2007	Cebu Declaration Towards One Caring and Sharing Community
2001	Declaration on the Commitments for Children in ASEAN
1993	Resolution on the ASEAN Plan of Action for Children

ASEAN is committed in building an inclusive community that promotes a high quality of life. At the heart of this commitment is ensuring equitable access to opportunities for the people of ASEAN. This includes promoting and protecting the rights of women, children, youth, the elderly/older persons, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The *ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection* strongly affirms ASEAN's dedication in improving the lives of the people of ASEAN. The declaration recognises social protection as a basic human right and an investment in people. A regional framework and action plan based on this declaration has been developed, containing programmes on social welfare / social assistance, social insurance, social safety nets, labour market interventions and human resources development. These programmes are designed

to address and mitigate risks an individual undergoes in his / her lifetime, and also larger social, economic and environmental risks.

Another major declaration is the *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration*. In the area of social protection, this declaration focuses on an individual's right to decent work, medical care, social services, social security and social insurance. The declaration also addresses maternity leave and social protection for mother and child, regardless of the marital status of the mother.

Improving maternity protection in the workplace is also addressed in the *Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children*. Other elements of social protection addressed in this declaration include strengthening the capacity of government officials in delivering quality and accessible basic social services to children and women.

The recently adopted *ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth* focuses on increasing access to education for children and youth who are unable to attend school or at risk of dropping out. The declaration strives to provide for inclusive and equitable quality education. It also promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Other commitments focusing on social protection services to children include the *Resolution on the ASEAN Plan on Action for Children* and the *Declaration on the Commitments for Children in ASEAN*. These declarations prioritise the provision of childcare services, strengthening primary health care services for children and improving employment opportunities to enhance parental care towards children.

Violence against women and children is addressed in the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children*. This declaration addresses social services needed by survivors of violence such as social welfare services, education and health services. It also seeks to instill awareness to prevent re-victimisation of women and children.

ASEAN leaders have highlighted the need for skills training for better access to decent work. The *ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Human Resources and Skills Development for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth* aims to promote skills development, vocational training and workforce learning for vulnerable groups, including women, youth and persons with disabilities. The *Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN* adopted recently in 2016, also promotes skills development and vocational training for better access to decent jobs.

The needs of ASEAN's growing cohort of older persons who require social protection services is well recognized

by the ASEAN Community. The *Brunei Darussalam Declaration on Strengthening Family Institution: Caring for the Elderly* encourages for the development of educational programmes to enhance the ability of families to take care of their elderly. It also calls for the promotion of quality health care, including preventive and rehabilitative services, for older persons. The *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN* focuses on strengthening communities in delivering care for older persons. Focus is also given to the development of human capital and expertise in gerontology, geriatrics and related manpower to meet the demand for health and social services for older persons.

The *Proclamation of the ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2011-2020): Towards an Inclusive Society* and *Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of the Persons with Disabilities in ASEAN Community*, focus on the well-being of persons with disabilities. Priorities include ensuring persons with disabilities are able to access social services and also for the development of social security schemes to protect those with severe disabilities. The proclamation also prioritizes skills training and lifelong learning for persons with disabilities.

As a region with a high level of cross-border migration for work, there is a need to ensure that the rights of migrant workers are being protected. The ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers signed at the recent 31st ASEAN Summit demonstrates ASEAN's commitment in providing protection and upholding the rights of migrant workers.

Strengthening social protection in ASEAN is among the top priorities for the ASCC pillar. ASCC remains committed to its goal of building an inclusive society that promotes a high quality of life.



▶ The ASCC Blueprint and UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Mapping out Complementarities

Social protection plays an important role in improving the lives of the people of ASEAN and is well addressed in the ASCC Blueprint under the objectives of “Inclusive,” “Resilient” and “Dynamic.” The UN 2030 Agenda addresses social protection through specific targets in SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8 and 10. The following chart illustrates the complementarities between both development agendas.

ASCC Blueprint 2025	Sustainable Development Goals
<p>B.1. Reducing Barriers B.2. Equitable Access for All B.3. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights D.1. A Disaster Resilient ASEAN D.4. Strengthened Social Protection in Times of Disasters and Environmental Changes</p>	 <p>Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p>
<p>Encourages making social services and social protection more accessible and affordable, and for coverage to be extended. Also recognises the need for social protection in times of disasters or environmental changes.</p>	<p>SDG 1.3 - Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.</p>
<p>B.1. Reducing Barriers B.2. Equitable Access for All B.3. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights</p>	 <p>Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p>
<p>Recognizes that universal access to healthcare (UHC) is a key feature for a healthy, caring, sustainable and productive community. Encourages effectiveness of UHC implementation and provides mechanisms and enhances institutional capacity to promote basic social services for all including access to health services. Also focuses on developing a sustainable financing mechanism for social protection particularly UHC.</p>	<p>SDG 3.8 - Achieve universal health coverage (UHC), including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.</p>
<p>A.2. Empowered People and Strengthened Institutions B.1. Reducing Barriers B.3. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights</p>	 <p>Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p>
<p>Focuses on reducing inequality, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Recognizes the need for early childhood care services and appropriate care and support to the elderly.</p>	<p>SDG 5.4 - Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.</p>

- B.1. Reducing Barriers
- B.2. Equitable Access for All
- B.3. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights



Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

Encourages for human capital development and sustainable livelihood, through education, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and microfinance. Also calls for initiatives to eliminate all forms of discrimination, which includes exploitation of women, persons with disabilities and migrant workers.

SDG 8.5 by 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

- B.1. Reducing Barriers
- B.2. Equitable Access for All
- B.3. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights



Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Recognizes that social protection requires a sustainable financing mechanism and promotes for partnerships with the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

SDG 10.4 - Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

For inquiries, contact:
The ASEAN Secretariat
Community Relations Division (CRD)
70A Jalan Sisingamangaraja · Jakarta 12110, Indonesia | Phone: (62 21) 724-3372, 726-2991 · Fax: (62 21) 739-8234, 724-3504
E-mail: public@asean.org

ASCC Analysis Division
ASCC Analysis and Monitoring Directorate
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department
Email: ASCCAMD@asean.org

ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities

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