



**Recommendations of the 17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN GO-NGOs Forum  
“Accelerating the Implementation of ASEAN’s Commitments for Gender  
Equality through Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion”**

**22 May 2023, 9:00-16.30 hrs. (GMT+7)  
Video conference**

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**GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The 17th ASEAN GO-NGO Forum on Social Welfare and Development was held on 22 May 2023, via video conference. The Forum was co-chaired by H.E Datuk Dr. Maziah binti Che Yusoff, SOMSWD Chair, and Datin Paduka Khatijah binti Suleiman @ Sulaiman, President of National Council of Welfare and Social Development Malaysia (NCSWM), as NGO Co-Chair. The Forum was attended by approximately 108 participants, which included SOMSWD Focal Points, Government representatives, representatives from national NGOs and CSOs, academe, representatives from Plus Three countries, representatives from the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), representatives from the organisations awarded with ASEAN Outstanding Social Welfare and Development Awards (AOSWADA), representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat, representatives from international organisations and UN agencies, and other delegates from Malaysia. The List of Participants is attached as ANNEX 1.
2. Guided by the theme “Accelerating the Implementation of ASEAN’s Commitments for Gender Equality through Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion”, the Forum served as a multi-stakeholder platform and venue for the ASEAN Member States, NGOs, CSOs, private sector, academia, and relevant stakeholders to share knowledge and experiences on measures and resources needed to advance social welfare and development in ASEAN, with particular focus on country progress, programmes and mechanisms and to recommend further best practice to move forward in accelerating the implementation of ASEAN’s goal for gender equality through gender mainstreaming and social inclusion. The Forum also provided an opportunity to highlight and explore roles and contributions of NGOs/CSOs and the private sector to society, particularly to the social welfare and development sector, at regional and international levels; to showcase outstanding achievements and share information on the roles and contributions of the AOSWADA Awardees 2021 and 2022 to social welfare and development in their respective Member State; and to identify actionable recommendations and ways forward to improve capacity and further enhance engagements

of CSOs/NGOs and the private sector in social welfare and development at the national and regional levels. The Concept Note and Programme are attached as ANNEX 2.

3. The Forum congratulates Malaysia, the host country for defining the topic of the meeting on the theme “Accelerating the Implementation of ASEAN’s Commitments for Gender Equality through Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion”. It is a motivating topic which challenges the responsibility of all parties to accelerate the achievement of results.
4. The Forum congratulates ASEAN for the past work that has helped to create a good tool to drive the meeting. In regard to this forum, whether it is the ASEAN Declaration on the Gender Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals, ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021-2025 and other relevant declarations, these policies act as key infrastructures to create a good environment for the development of action plans and measures in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal Five of realizing gender equality.
5. Key recommendations arising from the Forum:
  - Agreeing on the importance of ASEAN Member States to focus on the commitments for gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalised communities,
  - Recognizing that gender equality starts within the family, strengthened in the community, and reinforced in the nation through formal and informal education, and through gender transformative approaches,
  - Recognising that gender inequality is a problem for all groups especially those from vulnerable and underprivileged groups, that any forms of gender discrimination must be eliminated, and that social welfare services need to protect them and to be accessible to them,
  - Realising the significance of mobilising the cooperation of government with, NGOs/CSOs, private sectors, academic and relevant stakeholders on measures, strategies and resources needed to advance gender equality and social justice in ASEAN,
  - Realising world crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can significantly hinder progress in gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and in certain circumstances, can exacerbate inequalities and gender based violence,
  - Believing in collective efforts as a vital force in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, that all parties must understand and be involved and that groups of people affected by gender inequality and discrimination must be empowered and supported to self-advocate through a rights-based approach for greater inclusion.

- Believing that gender mainstreaming is an effective and strategic measure that will benefit all groups of people, in particular women, children, people with disability, and the rapidly aging populations, where issues of gender equality could have been overlooked when social welfare services mainly focus on other pressing needs, and

**Arising from discussions and general consensus in the Forum, we recommend the following:**

- 5.1 Each ASEAN Member States must urgently realise the strategic measures of the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community Blueprint 2025 (Blueprint 2025), which includes:
  - *Promote non-discriminatory laws, policies and practices by developing effective, responsive, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels;*
  - *Strengthen civil service through effective capacity building, human resource development and collaboration programmes among ASEAN Member States;*
  - *Work towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls;*
  - *Develop regional strategies and enhance institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming in ASEAN policies, programmes and budgets across pillars and sectors;*
  - *Ensure inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels with special attention to the needs of those in disadvantaged situations, including ethnic minority groups, children, youths, women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly/older persons;*
- 5.2 Governments must pledge high-level commitment and ownership to the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting at national and ASEAN sectoral levels.
- 5.3 Develop gender data at the national and ASEAN level to develop concrete evidence for policy programmatic development and implementation to address inequalities and advance gender equality. Data should also be developed into gender indices of ASEAN countries that can be easily accessible.
- 5.4 Increase resources to support capacity building and specialisation in undertaking gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting.
- 5.5 Develop robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and achievement and to promote cross-fertilisation of good practices

- 5.6 More targeted action plans that prominently feature gender mainstreaming as a strategic measure in addressing inequality and social justice issues in all areas of development.
- 5.7 In light of social and economic realities post pandemic, gender mainstreaming and social inclusion are even more urgent to ensure gender equality. It is the responsibility of all – governments, NGOs/CSOs, international NGOs, ICSW, business sector and the community, to work synergistically to ensure that no one is being left behind due to gender inequality.
- 5.8 Increase awareness at different levels about gender equality and equity with emphasis on the community and the vulnerable groups,
- 5.9 The enactment of policy, laws and regulations on gender equality which include effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and tangible mechanism for inclusive participation to ensure their enforcement and implementation.
- 5.10 We call upon all stakeholders in social welfare sector to embed gender mainstreaming measures in their programs and services.
- 5.11 As signatories that are legally obligated to CEDAW, all ASEAN countries must transpose its provisions into effective national laws, policy and strategies.
- 5.12 As UN State parties committed to the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, all ASEAN countries must increase efforts, strategies, and monitoring for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5, and across all SDGs containing targets and indicators promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.
- 5.13 Increase allocation of regional and national resources that will achieve strategic measures recommended by the Blueprint 2025 and ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021-2025, particularly by utilising the gender responsive budgeting approach.
- 5.14 Taking into account that many ASEAN countries still demonstrate wide gender gaps in women's leadership and political empowerment, ASEAN member states must take immediate measures to legislate, formulate affirmative policies and increase efforts towards increasing women's representation and participation in decision-making positions in both public and private sectors.

#### **Specific recommendations on children's rights**

- 5.15 A specific focus is given to children's rights in national and regional development planning, particularly in relation to children in vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalised positions.

- 5.16 Multiple efforts and measures to combat gender based violence against girls, particularly in the form of child marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 5.17 Urgent measures are taken to eliminate child exploitation and abuse in the digital environment, which overwhelmingly affect girls and young women, such as online sexual grooming, pornography, and cyberbullying.
- 5.18 Through ASEAN cooperation, comprehensively and utilising the rights-based approach, address children’s vulnerabilities in the context of forced migration, displacement, and statelessness. This is especially in the light of the impact of such contexts on children’s health and wellbeing, education and their vulnerabilities to human trafficking, sexual and economic exploitation,

**Specific recommendations on People with Disability (PWD) and the aged population**

- 5.19 ASEAN Member States to strengthen their healthcare systems by investing in healthcare infrastructure and services that cater to the unique healthcare needs of people with disability (PWD) and the aged population. This includes the provision of affordable and accessible healthcare, promoting preventive care and ensuring the availability of specialised care and rehabilitation services.
  - 5.20 Enhance inclusive national policies by including a focus on PWD and the aged population, particularly in relation to their rights and access to education, employment, communication and mobility and decision-making processes.
  - 5.21 ASEAN should collaboratively develop comprehensive caregiver support programmes that provide training, respite care and financial support to individuals providing care and assistance to PWD and aged family members.
6. The recommendations are endorsed by the 17th ASEAN GO-NGO Forum on Social Welfare and Development on the Twenty Second of May in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Three (2023) for submission to 18th ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD).
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