GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN ASEAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION
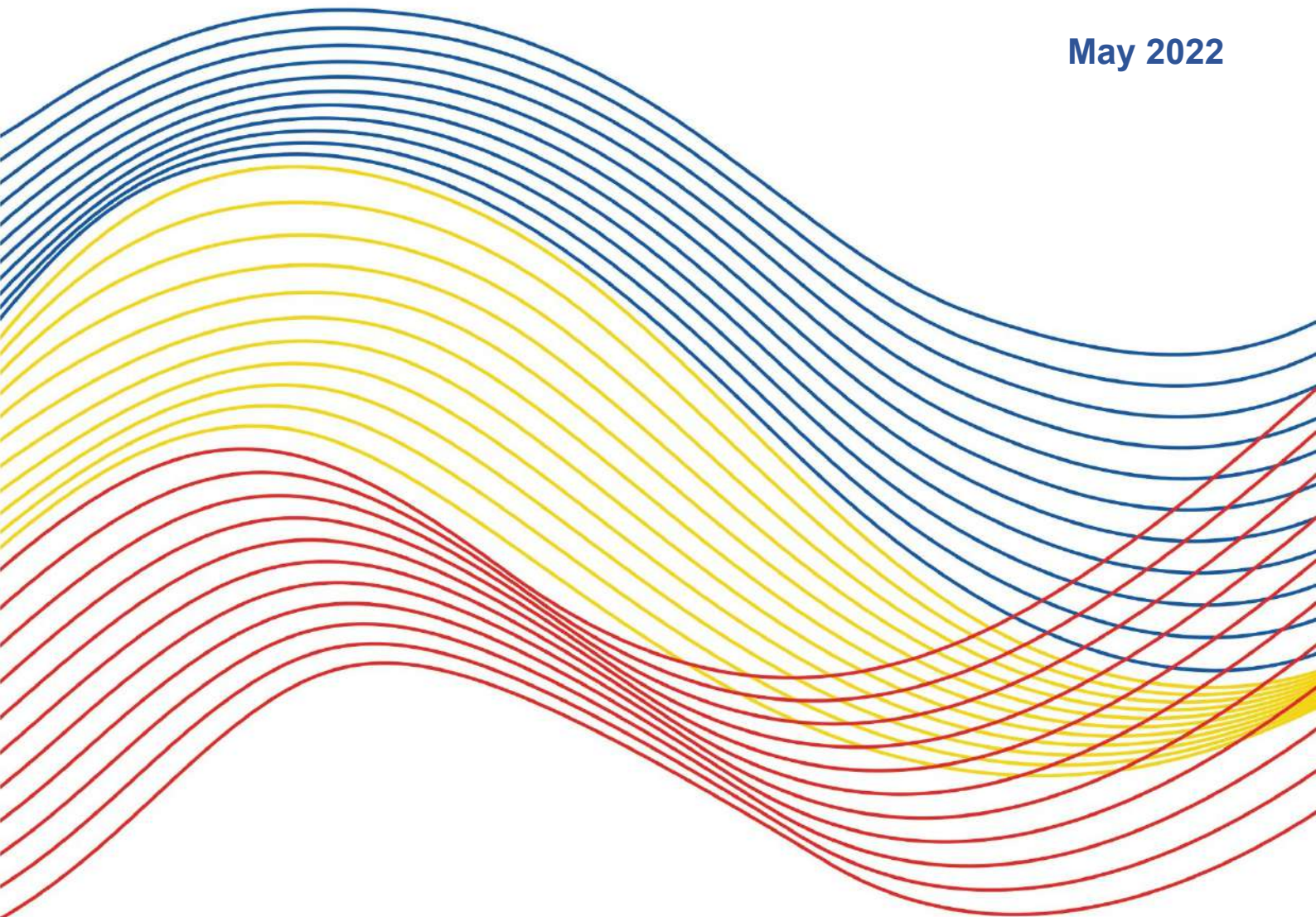
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SHARE – Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region – is a European Union (EU) Grant funded project with an overarching objective to strengthen regional cooperation, enhance the quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and students, contributing to an ASEAN Community. The main aim of SHARE is to enhance cooperation between the EU and ASEAN to create an ASEAN Higher Education Space.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This document reports the SHARE EDI research project carried out by the Asia Research Centre, Universitas Indonesia (ARC UI). The research examines several key issues and the enabling environment for gender equality, diversity and inclusion (GEDI) in ASEAN's higher education (HE). More specifically, this study aims to explore, describe, and analyse initiatives that have widened the social space for GEDI in HE with an overarching question: How do ASEAN university managers and scholars practice and negotiate the values of GEDI in their organisational and academic work?

By examining the development actors and institutions in each ASEAN member country's HE, this research hopes to provide a better understanding of the complex and multi-layered GEDI in ASEAN's HE sector for a more inclusive HE system. The approach and analysis are informed by theories of social justice and equity that acknowledge underlying historical structures of patriarchy, state ideology, that is combined with religious conservatism in Southeast Asia. This report uses qualitative approaches and focuses on GEDI initiatives in ASEAN's HE by drawing on two categories of data: primary (i.e. semi-structured interviews of key actors and stakeholders) and secondary data (i.e. desk review).

Key Findings

Six key findings in the research highlight initiatives that are either institutionally driven or actors' led that have opened up the social space for GEDI in HE, they are:

1. **Constructing leadership through mentoring**
   Mentoring inclusive leadership nurtures the values of equality and inclusion in ASEAN universities. Women leaders or leaders from marginalised groups at HE institutions are the result of effective policies and advocacy that widen the space for the GEDI agenda.

2. **Research and advocacy on gender and disability**
   GEDI research and advocacy are central to facilitating transformative policies and programmes that work better for women, people with disability, and minority groups. The connection between research and advocacy work highlights the point that research groups have contributed not only to the GEDI mainstreaming attempts, but also to the integration of GEDI sensitive actions and advocacy undertaken by individual universities.

3. **Student mobility (social and international mobility)**
   There are two forms of mobility that contribute to equity: social and international mobility. Firstly, HE is an important means for social mobility, yet gender and regional inequalities as well as social exclusion remain a major problem in accessing universities. Secondly, despite efforts to strengthen HE internationalisation through increasing international mobility; it has been more accessible to students who come from high-income families and/or those coming from major religious, ethnic, racial groups. Meanwhile, female students as well as those from economically disadvantaged families, remote areas, as well as religious, racial and ethnic minorities are likely to have less access to internationalisation programmes. We found that virtual exchange programmes, where learning participants could experience diverse cultures without leaving their home country, can also be an option.

4. **Affirmative policies (such as scholarship programmes and women in STEM)**
   Affirmative action policies stimulate the representation or participation of GEDI in HE in general and in STEM disciplines. programmes such as scholarship and quota schemes are exemplary instruments to improve access to marginalised groups. However, often they are understood superficially through numbers. The outcomes of scholarships and mobility programmes need to be tracked and investigated carefully to further the outcomes and improvements in HE access.

   In addition to access, the policy needs to embrace intersectionality and incorporate supporting mechanisms to create an enabling environment for participation to transpire. Such programmes, though, need to take into consideration inequalities between engineering, medicine and social sciences and think of ways to also equalise the proportion of male students in social sciences and humanities.

5. **Local and regional inequalities and agency in second-tier universities**
   First tier universities have higher research capacity and resources and are generally more globally oriented and highly engaged in transnational education. Meanwhile, second and third tier universities are more community oriented and are not as globally oriented as the first tier. While local and regional inequalities persist, especially between first and second or third tier universities, in some cases the latter are able to exercise agency in tailoring programmes in responding to GEDI. Tailor-made programmes exist in second and third tier universities, especially those developed by international PhD graduates who return to their local universities and exercise leadership.

6. **Integrating inclusion into pedagogy**
   Putting GEDI theories into practice requires integrating principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion into the curriculum across disciplines. As informed by our informants, translating GEDI-sensitive and inclusive pedagogy into the classroom

assists students in questioning traditional gender roles and stereotypes as well as understanding privileges and constraints which is the prerequisite to emancipation. Developing an inclusive curricula could leverage existing or form new collaborations between agents in ASEAN HE institutions, specifically international PhD graduates with global exposure and outlook who are in leadership positions. Such a strategy would require leadership mentoring and coaching that facilitates the nurturing of stronger local agencies.

Recommendations

We propose six research-based recommendations that, based on our key findings, could scale up the already widening social space for GEDI in ASEAN HE.

1) Develop a regulatory framework that addresses issues of gender inequality, gender-based violence, and social exclusion. An effective way to ensure equal access and protection of women and minority groups is by creating and improving laws and policies that allow for institutional responses to gender-based violence and social exclusion.

2) To ensure inclusiveness and diversity in the development of such regulation requires mainstreaming GEDI approaches in research and advocacy works across ASEAN HE institutions. Establishing a Research and Advocacy Centre on GEDI and developing GEDI-sensitive indicators could provide a space to discuss and normalise inclusion and diversity through research, advocacy works and internationalisation programmes. Strengthened networks amongst these research and advocacy centres improve the quality of research and effectiveness of advocacy works on GEDI.

3) Invest in mentoring and coaching for ASEAN HE GEDI leaders coming from diverse backgrounds. Leadership mentoring in the forms of both formal (such as capacity building, inclusive recruitment, leadership training, etc.) and informal models (providing support and domestic as well as career advice) of mentoring need to be prioritised for marginalised groups, or those who share similar concerns. GEDI-sensitive indicators can be used here as core values for prospective leaders.

4) Promote inclusive internationalisation with mobility being a component thereof by engaging local GEDI leaders. Inclusive internationalisation requires both academic and social mobility for staff and students with GEDI priorities. Inclusive mobility must be made explicit to ensure that HE is accessible for all groups of people, with priority to marginalised groups.

5) Implement bottom-up funding and programmatic support. Funding and programmatic support is aimed to strengthen researcher-led initiatives identified in this study, that work on micro levels of GEDI strategies, and mainstream them as much as possible to meso and macro levels. These initiatives too could benefit from leadership programmes that connect actors regionally.

6) Integrate GEDI into curriculum and pedagogy. Integrating inclusion, diversity, and inclusion into the curriculum structure, pedagogy (teaching and learning process), assessment and mobility programmes manages the process of internalising values of justice and equality for both students and lecturers. Such practices could also involve fieldwork and collaborative work across classrooms within the ASEAN HE institutions, supported by funding and programmatic assistance.

These recommendations focus on relevant reforms for GEDI in the higher education sector. We focus on existing enabling factors that have effectively widened the social space and built broader awareness for GEDI in universities. We do this in hopes that it would be given more resources and lead to meaningful change across ASEAN HE institutions.

Action Plan

Based on these recommendations, we developed more detailed steps of action according to its levels of action for each category of stakeholders. They are organised into macro, meso and micro policies and practices.

No	Level of action	Programmes
1	Macro (global, regional, national level)	Mainstreaming GEDI in policy dialogues
		Creating and improving GEDI regulatory framework
		Allocating resources for ensuring GEDI at place
2	Meso (institutional level)	Design policies and programmes that foster GEDI in the institutions, such as through recruitment, promotion, and leave

		scheme
		Establish GEDI Research Centre
		Establish Crisis Centre of Gender-based Violence and protocols to address gender-based violence
		Integrate GEDI into curriculum and research schemes
3	Micro (individual researcher or academic)	Translating GEDI principles into teaching and learning process
		Researching with GEDI principles
		Be an advocate of GEDI (community practice)

Table 1: Action Plan

Some initiatives (see recommendations) overlap across levels, and bottom-up strategies are recommended. Such means that those who have already led initiatives (local leaders) should be supported to mainstream their initiatives and approaches at an institutional level and/or broader level (national, regional, or global). It takes collaborative work between key individual actors, institutions, national governments, and global players.

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore, describe, and analyse initiatives by actors and institutions that have widened the social space to address lack of higher education (HE) access for women, people with low incomes, and all excluded people in ASEAN countries. Policies and practices that aim to address this fall within the scope of gender equality, diversity and inclusion (GEDI). GEDI in ASEAN's HE is a policy and practical response towards larger systematic and structural exclusion of social groups along the lines of gender, ethnicity, race, religion, class, and others. Our approach and analysis are informed by theories of social justice and equity that acknowledge underlying historical structures of patriarchal and colonial relations (Blackmore, 2017).

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) declarations have professed the commitment to protect and advance women's economic and human rights. This declaration expanded and surged in the area of peace and security (Davies et al., 2014), identity and expression (Langlois et al., 2017), and the environment (Hill et al., 2017). Consequently, they overlap with various local and national forms of exclusion of social groups from fulfilling their economic and human rights to receive quality education.

Improving HE access in ASEAN has been done in several general ways, specifically by using regional policies as a hook to make progress in terms of increasing student and lecturer mobility and capacity building. Firstly, academics and researchers have noted that scholarships provided by and for ASEAN countries, importantly through cooperation and regionalism (Feuer & Hornidge, 2015; Jarvis & Mok, 2019; Mok, 2008; Sakhiyya & Rata, 2019; Welch, 2012; Yepes, 2006). Secondly, the ASEAN University Network (AUN) has been clear and systematic in implementing regionalisation and/or internationalisation by means of increased student and lecturer mobility. Studies that emphasise on the importance of student and lecturer scholarship as well as increased academic and social mobilities in the ASEAN region (Luke, 1997, 2000, 2002; Morley, 2013; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Sakhiyya & Locke, 2019; Wijaya Mulya & Sakhiyya, 2020) have focused largely on developing women leadership.

Strengthening the GEDI agenda in ASEAN's HE could leverage on pre-existing women leadership programmes and diversify types of leaderships and marginalised groups to create a more inclusive and diverse enabling environment for GEDI. Such applies the principles of feminist approaches to acknowledge everyday strategies and tactics to overcome systematic exclusion. This approach is sensitive to difference and context. Our previous study on Indonesian women academics and managers during the pandemic, found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, they experienced the blurring boundaries between home and work (Rakhmani, Sakhiyya, Eliyanah, 2021). This study also found that women and caregivers carry added burdens and responsibilities of working from home due to while at the same time extending their caregiving roles to protect the most vulnerable on campus under their

responsibilities.[1] This logic allows us to look at the initiatives taken by actors in ASEAN's HE and understand how they leverage institutional resources for GEDI strategies. This way, we can investigate the variety of capacity building programmes in ASEAN's HE tailored within the universities to create a more enabling environment for GEDI.

This study has answered some questions to understand how actors and institutions in ASEAN's HE have widened the social space for GEDI: How do structural hindrances relate with the discursive nature of GEDI; and how do we connect the macro political economic condition of ASEAN universities with the resources of local scholars as well as equality programmes created by individual universities and actors? In doing so, we hope that this research can provide better understanding of the complex and multi-layered GEDI dynamics in ASEAN universities, as well as strengthen the space for alternative understandings and discourses for a more inclusive HE.

For ASEAN policy-makers, this study could contribute to advancing and providing empirical analysis for the discussions on GEDI. We are concerned with improving inclusiveness, as we argue it strengthens social resilience and responsiveness of ASEAN's HE. This is aligned with the aspirations of ASEAN's universities to become world class universities. That is why this study aimed to answer the overarching question: How do ASEAN university managers and scholars practise and negotiate the values of GEDI in their organisational and academic work?

Academics and managers who are supportive of GEDI are potential agents of change to ensure that organisational resources are allocated well and continue to widen the space for more voices to be heard. We achieved this objective by carrying out this study, with hopes that it provides a better understanding of the current state of GEDI dynamics ASEAN's HE. This report begins with the methodology we undertook to pursue the research questions stated in the introduction section. The following section identifies and maps the barriers, enabling environments, and discourses for GEDI according to three levels of analysis (macro, meso and micro levels). Then, we demonstrate our key findings and recommendations for widening the social space for GEDI.

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[1] This research has engaged the then Minister of Research and Technology and the Director of Learning and Student Affairs, Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture to discuss gender equality in research and higher education and think of affirmative action through a discussion facilitated by the Knowledge Sector Initiative.

METHODOLOGY

2. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the purpose of this research, we drew on two categories of data, i.e. primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through semi- and structured interviews with 24 informants. We selected our respondents through purposive sampling by maintaining, as much as we could, an equal distribution of countries across ASEAN region, gender, and sector (university and/or inter-governmental organisation). With those categories in mind, we interviewed key persons from all ASEAN member countries. Some of whom are researchers or experts in GEDI fields, research managers of research centres established in universities, and director or programme manager of regional/bilateral organisations (SEAMEO, ASEAN, ASEF, etc). We also consider whether the informants come from a majority or minority social group within each country, their class position and level of privilege in their respective organisations or the clout their organisation possesses compared to other institutions in their countries. For example, in selecting research informants, we consider the perspectives they hold on GEDI matters and are built throughout years of experience in managing student mobility and other internationalisation programmes in the university. If they are scholars, their perspectives are visible through their publications. In addition, institutional categories (first or second tier universities) are taken into consideration as it entails certain privileges and resources to its academics. We acknowledge that the social position of our informants influences which kind of GEDI interest they represent and advocate for and take this into consideration in our analysis.

We carried out semi-structured interviews, or a conversational flow of deep interviews following the logical structure of our informants, of policy makers, university managers, and/or academics representative of Southeast Asia. We did this through applying rapid gender and inclusion coding in our purposive sampling method. Our informants were stakeholders who have rich experience in GEDI; as they work on the issue whether for policy-purposes, institutional development, or specific academic and professional expertise.

Secondary data was gained from desk-review. We scanned the horizon of secondary data in the form of policy reports, academic articles, media publications publicly available discussing GEDI in the region. We verified these documents against those selected by our selected informants, specifically those following university issues during the pandemic. We scoped literature and requested document recommendations from our counterparts in the ten ASEAN member states, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. These counterparts are our research informants, composed of ASEAN stakeholders that also further validated the final report. In specific points of our data collection, we requested feedback from ASEAN stakeholders in HE to identify key gaps that need to be addressed both country-specific and regionally. Such was done through a Consultative Workshop with key stakeholders (one month prior to the finalisation of the final report) in which they were given the report draft and asked to provide feedback either in spoken or written formats. Notably, several stakeholders reached out for

further collaboration and involvement in other GEDI projects outside this research scope (i.e. engagement).

As the research team are scholars, members of scientific communities and university managers-cum-activists in the area of GEDI in HE, we have theoretical-grounding and social responsiveness towards everyday politics of GEDI. We practice grounded research, where any word and everyday practice is empirical data, based on an awareness of a structural analysis of gendered and social inequalities. These combinations of approaches, we posit, enabled us to provide short-term practical solutions without losing a long-term policy vision that wishes to address broader structural problems that hinder women, minority groups, and the marginalised or disadvantaged (who may not be in the minority groups on the basis of income, ethnicity and other social groups) from accessing HE.

BARRIERS AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR GEDI

3. BARRIERS AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR GEDI

This section provides an overview regarding the three levels of our analysis (macro, meso and micro) in order to understand the barriers and enabling environments for GEDI. Our interviews and scoping review identify several factors that enable and inhibit GEDI and equity principles, i.e. regulatory framework (macro), institutional (meso), actors (micro), and discourses that operate in these three levels of analysis.

In short, the macro level analysis, on the existing regulatory framework, helped us identify the frameworks that reinforce and hinder the advancement of the GEDI agenda. The meso level analysis centres on institutional policies and programmes that operationalise GEDI principles. Meanwhile, the micro level analysis focuses on community and/or individual academic-led initiatives. The meso and micro level analyses helped identify ways to encourage participation in the HE context, as well as access to and participation in mobility. Lastly, discursive analysis on the macro, meso and micro levels helped us identify the alternative discourses of ASEAN's HE. Together, the analysis provides insights regarding the GEDI experience of staff and students engaged in ASEAN's HE.

The table below summarises the barriers.

Kind of Barriers	Dimensions	Forms
Structural Barriers	Macro	- Absence of regulatory framework in ASEAN - Low resource allocation
	Meso	Absence of affirmative policies and action
	Micro	Constrained by structures
Symbolic Barriers	Patriarchy	Disenfranchising women and other marginalised group
	State Ideology	Militarism, authoritarianism, state-Ibuism[2]

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[2] The term stat*e-ibuism* was originally coined by Suryakusuma (2011) to encapsulate the utilisation of the ideologies of gender and sexuality as a form of control, under the authoritarian New Order regime (1966-1997) in Indonesia. Within stat*e-ibuism, women* are valued as instruments of the developmentalist state that are obliged to fulfil their domestic roles. Stat*e-ibuism* has contributed to sustaining the docility and willingness of women to subscribe to a conservative gender role. Even after the end of authoritarianism in Indonesia the construction of ideal womanhood through State *Ibuism* prevails.

	Religion	Religious conservatism

Table 2: Barriers for GEDI

Both the structural and symbolic barriers have hindered the mainstreaming of GEDI in universities which can be found in macro, meso and micro levels. Each of the barriers are explained in detail below.

3.1   Barriers: Structural and symbolic

We found that structural and institutional barriers exist on the meso (local/regional/national) and macro (international structures) levels. Macrostructural barriers come in the absence of regulatory frameworks that enforce GEDI, which relate to low resource allocation of funding to ensure GEDI policies and programmes are in place. Meso structural barriers lie in the absence of affirmative policies and action (i.e. resource allocation by managers) that ensures GEDI principles are practised.

Our findings revealed that academics and university managers have considerable agency to ensure that organisational resources are allocated to realise GEDI programmes. But this is effective when GEDI is part of the national agenda. The problem is that GEDI is yet to be set as the national agenda in all ASEAN countries.

No	Country	GEDI Regulation	Name of Law/Policy
1	Philippines	Exists, and is directly applicable to higher education	CHED MEMORANDUM ORDER No. 01 Series of 2015: Establishing the Policies and Guidelines on Gender and Development in the Commission on Higher Education and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
		Exists, but not directly applicable to higher education	Republic Act 9710: Magna Carta of Women
2	Indonesia	Exists, but not directly applicable to higher education	Law on Disabilities (No. 8/2016)
			Presidential Instructions (No. 9/2000) concerning the Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) in development
			Ministerial Regulations (No. 84/2008) concerning the Guidelines of Implementing Gender Mainstreaming in Education

3	Lao PDR	Exists, but not directly applicable to higher education (some are available in local language)	Decree of the President of the Lao PDR on the Promulgation of the Law on Development and Protection of Women (2004)
			Revised Constitution, in 2015, providing for equality before the law, including on the ground of gender
			Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children, in 2015 criminalizing marital rape and prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination against women
			Amended Law on Education, in 2015, providing for equal access to education for women and girls
			Law on civil Servants, in 2015, and the Amended Law on Labour, in 2013, providing for equality of women in employment, as well as provisions for women in the areas of occupational safety, health and maternity benefits and protection
			Law on Gender Equality and Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
			Law on Women's Union, in 2013, defining the mandate, rights and duties of the Lao Women's Union;
			National Plan of Action on Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Children 2021-2025
			National Strategy and Plan of Action on Inclusive Education 2011-2015
			Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (2016-2020)
			Education Sector Development Framework 2009-2015
			The Education Strategic Vision Up to the Year 2020
4	Malaysia	It is still a blueprint, and is directly applicable to higher education	Malaysia Education Blueprint 2021-2025 (Higher Education)
5	Thailand	Exists, but not directly applicable	Education Provision for Persons with

		to higher education	Disabilities Act, B.E. 2551 (2008)
			Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 (2015)
6	Cambodia	Exists, but not directly applicable to higher education	National Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023
			Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency: Building the Foundation Toward Realizing the Cambodia Vision 2050
			Neary Rattanak V: Five Year Strategic Plan for Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment 2019-2023
			Action Plan on Inclusive Education (2019-2023)
		Exists, and is directly applicable to higher education (Technical Education and Training)	Gender Policy and Action (2017-2026) by Directorate General of Technical Vocational Education and Training
			Gender mainstreaming action plan in Technical Education and Training
7	Myanmar	Exists, but not directly applicable to higher education	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022)
8	Vietnam	Exists, and is directly applicable to higher education (available in local language)	Circular No. 05/2017/TT-BGDĐT dated 25 Jan 2017 by Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training
			Decree No. 57/2017/NĐ-CP dated 9 May 2017 by the Vietnam Government
			Decision No. 66/2013/QĐ-TTg dated 11 November 2013 by Vietnam Prime Minister
			Decision No. 82/2006/QĐ-TTg dated 14 April 2006 by Vietnam Prime Minister
			Decision No. 152/2007/QĐ-TTg dated 14 September 2007 by Vietnam Prime Minister
9	Singapore	Exists and is applicable at the higher education institutional level	Gender inclusivity in Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)
			Diversity, equity and inclusion in Yale-NUS College

			Inclusion in National University of Singapore (NUS)
			Inclusivity in Singapore Management University (SMU)
			Accessibility in Nanyang Technological University (NTU)
10	Brunei Darussalam	Exists, but not directly applicable to higher education	Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022
			Employment Order, 2009

Table 3: GEDI Regulation in ASEAN's Higher Education

Source: Compiled by authors through interviews and secondary literature.

Even within countries that have GEDI regulations, enforcement and implementation is uneven. There is a gap between regulatory planning and implementation of GEDI strategies. We found that this is due to a lack of resources to support and enforce them.

> "The main challenge is with gender responsive budgeting. And when we talk about it, it is very complicated. In a way that, because it is just like… everyone in Cambodia, they raised to me that, "Okay, it is not hard to do. But, we don't have the budget to do it. There is no supported budget to implement these activities. So, how can we do it?" (SPk, interview, 10 November 2021).

In-country actors that mobilise resources for the GEDI agenda are needed to address the persisting structural barriers. The capacity of actors to do this is bound by the kinds of symbolic barriers that exist in their context. Symbolic barriers are culturally constructed boundaries that prevent actors and institutions from pushing for the GEDI agenda. They are nurtured in everyday informal settings (e.g. meetings, who can participate and not, biased recruitment and support, etc.) as well as formal settings (e.g. scholarships, formal leadership positions, delegations, etc.). Such appeared in elements of patriarchy, state ideology, and religion.

Patriarchy is born from a long history of social traditionalism and kinship arrangements that privileges men over women. It defines the place of women and other marginalised groups in society and confines their roles in the domestic sphere over public roles. There are aspects of patriarchy that nurture misogyny and toxic masculinity, both of which exclude non-heteronormative social groups, whether modern (i.e. LGBTQ) or traditional (i.e. indigenous). These elements of patriarchy are very much related to the notion of family.

"We have seen in the Philippines, for example, there is this very prevalent situation of marrying down in the family where the woman is more highly qualified than the man. And in a patriarchal society like ours in Asia, that would have huge implications on family formation and things like that" (CW, interview, 15 December 2021).

Likewise, other informants have mentioned that the kinds of GEDI programmes they can apply are those that do not disturb the state's status quo. This means the GEDI cannot yet protect LGBTQ and indigenous students and lecturers, as they are prevented symbolically from accessing HE resources to strengthen their social mobility (i.e. scholarships and leadership capacity building). In some contexts, these kinds of symbolic exclusions interlink with state ideology.

"Certain state ideologies may reinforce or debilitate the patriarchal culture. Our research finds that certain ideologies, such as state-Ibuism in Indonesia [which was born during a highly authoritarian military regime] and military ideology in Myanmar [as a result of dominant military rule], have their impacts on the governance of higher education in managing issues of gender and social inclusion" (TZ, interview, 27 January 2022).

Some ASEAN countries, such as Myanmar, Indonesia and to some extent the Philippines, have a history of militarism under strong state regimes. Such has provided fertile ground for patriarchy to work through state ideology that determines which universities can receive funding from the government and which cannot. This also means that critical social research, including GEDI, is at the very best frowned upon and, at the very worst, could mean persecution for the researcher. Such marrying between patriarchy and the state has been intensified with conservative religious ideals in Muslim-majority ASEAN countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore. These are reinforced through specific religious laws (*fatwas)*, which are interpretations of male clerics regarding the confinement of women's roles within the domestic sphere.

"Malaysia, Indonesia, is predominantly Muslim and in Singapore also like, even though it is a minority, I think religion plays a huge role in perception. So, these ideas that come from religion really shape how you view gender, for example. And then, at the end, it can translate into policies as well" (NS, interview, 15 November 2021).

Furthermore, women who divorce and women breadwinners receive symbolic punishment through *fatwas.* Similarly, working women in non-public sectors in Brunei also find barriers to getting paid on parental leave. Likewise, minority groups such as LGBTQ and those subscribing to pagan and/or indigenous religions are seen as backwards and must be indoctrinated. Such hinders the GEDI agenda, specifically by preventing women and minority groups from

participating and talking about their issues in public settings. This also prevents them from gaining leadership positions in organisations where religious leaders have strongholds.

> "... In terms of marriage, mobility and assets, legality is based on Islamic Family Law. There needs to be consideration in making paid leave of at least 14 weeks to all working mothers (only available to mothers under public sectors), parental leave available and prohibition of dismissal of pregnant workers" (RM, interview, 29 March 2022).

Problematically, our research found that leaders and managers are agnostic about structural and symbolic barriers to GEDI in HE. Our informants have revealed that GEDI achievements are understood by higher education leaders--who are predominantly part of the mainstream social groups--superficially through numbers and not investigated more deeply. Thus, the unique experience of a poor woman whose education had to be terminated to help her family's income (anonymous) is seen as part of a quantitative dropout rather than being part of more significant patriarchal influences over the role of women. In short, the outcomes of scholarships and mobility programmes are not tracked qualitatively. Hence the further development of HE access improvements must be more carefully studied to ensure the sustainability and multiplier effect of GEDI scholarships.

> "I think the country has been overly obsessed with this ethnicity issue that has actually been the main driving force in much of our development, at least for the first 50 years. We have sort of neglected to pay more close attention to gender. We thought… this will come, but we… and when we begin to look into the institutional kind of gender distribution, then we'll realise that in public universities, you have about 75% females and at the lower level higher education institutions like in community colleges and polytechnics, these are where all the guys are. In the long term, this will have implications to not only gender distribution but also the formation of families and things like that" (CW, interview, 15 December 2021).

Hence, it is essential to understand what disciplines women and minority group students take. Equally important is to recognise whether they can hold on to jobs, gain upward social mobility with their degrees and skills and if women and minority group graduates can become university graduates leaders. Notably, some managers and leaders insist that GEDI has been achieved, despite some women leaders and managers indirectly excluding other social groups from leadership positions. Thus, for us, it is not enough to speak of whether or not policies and fundings are available for GEDI. It is equally important to make sure that GEDI actors can exercise their agency and make sure that the space for diverse sets of interests within the GEDI agenda can have more and more space in public settings.

3.2 Enabling environments for GEDI

We found that enabling environments for GEDI are present on the meso (local/regional/national), macro (international structures), and micro (researcher-led initiative) levels. Firstly, enabling factors on a macro level come in the form of regional regulatory frameworks. Secondly, enabling factors on a meso level lie in institutional policies and programmes used to ensure GEDI principles are practised. Thirdly, enabling factors on a micro level are practised by individual researchers and academics.

First, the regulatory framework is central to ensure that GEDI principles can be enforced. International frameworks for GEDI have been adopted and translated in the ASEAN contexts, such as the ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals (ASEAN Committee on Women, 2021). The declaration demonstrates a strong commitment towards GEDI. The principles and ideas presented in the Outlook (ASEAN Committee on Women, 2021) are overarching as they connect with Sustainable Development Goals, however, a more operational framework of how to integrate it within the HE field still needs to be developed.

Another regulatory framework that resonates with commitment to GEDI is UN Women that supports GEDI by stating their support to end violence against women, reinforcing women, peace and security, and empowering women's economy. This declaration was translated into a series of policies in the form of ASEAN Gender Outlook formulated by ASEAN Committee for Women (ACW) and UN Women. Inequality indicators for each country as concerned by SDGs, i.e. poverty, health, quality education, political participation, and clean energy are translated into some statistics specifying the impact of COVID-19 to aspects across SDGs and gender. Nevertheless, this document does not discuss more concrete programmes readily implemented for GEDI in HE. Rather, it focuses on primary education and its relationship with socio-economic development.

Regulatory frameworks for GEDI regarding disabilities are also available, however, they are generic regulations and have not specifically addressed HE. For instance, in the context of Indonesia, regulations for inclusions are legally written in the law of the Republic of Indonesia number 4 of 1997 concerning persons with disabilities or people with different abilities. With such regulations and laws as foundations, the government has developed their concern for inclusion year by year for people with disabilities regarding the friendly-construction-building for people with disabilities, public health, and special services for people with disabilities. These laws focus only on disabilities, but they have not addressed other GEDI issues, such as the issues of marginalised groups or races, the poor, and other vulnerable groups.

Second, institutional policies and programmes are a way to operationalise GEDI principles. Institutions here refer to HE institutions and any relevant associations that address GEDI in HE levels. Our scoping review lists several programmes that can be adopted at an institutional

level, such as collaboration in teaching, transnational education, research and reciprocal mobility and paid consultancy.

ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting) with its programme named the ASEM Education Process aims to ensure equitable access to all students by inviting 53 European and Asian countries to sit together and discuss a solution to ensure equity in access to distance learning modalities during pandemic. The ASEM Education Process is organised at two levels, i.e. the political level includes ministerial commitment with representation at ministerial meetings and at the stakeholders' level, including stakeholders, policy makers and experts within different cooperation platforms, events and projects to discuss any concerns related to the education process. With the presence of policy makers and stakeholders, the ASEM Education Process sees education from different perspectives and provides recommendations for better education programmes including making sure that equity takes place.

In addition, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), as the intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation, initiates the ASEM lifelong learning hub's future directions in lifelong learning (ASEM, 2021) and focuses on equity and inclusion and identity, respect, and dignity. ASEM also presents the ASEM DUO Fellowship programme (ASEM-DUO, 2017) and the ASEM Work Placement programme (ASEM Education Secretariat, 2017) to contribute to equal access to mobility under international cooperation in HE and internationalisation in ASEAN and European member countries. However, while the programme aims to make all students equal in accessing mobility, an alignment with the GEDI agenda is not clearly stated.

We found a GEDI initiative focused on peer-to-peer learning for girls well-aligned with the GEDI agenda. EDGE is a British Council programme that facilitates a peer learning delivery model where they work with community centres and provide girls with training to become peer leaders. It facilitates study groups and so on. EDGE has benefited girls around Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal as well as providing a unique insight into the lives and opinions of adolescent girls across 11 diverse countries: Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam and Syria since 2012 to 2021 (British Council, 2022). Also, this programme aims to provide safe spaces to carry on learning outside formal education to keep girls in school or help them return to school. Aligned with gender sensitivity and a mobility programme, the British Council also offers women and science scholarships that have just been introduced in Southeast Asia (LE, interview, 16 December 2021).

Third, we narrow down on community and/or individual academic-led initiatives. Associations under and/or collaborators of the ASEAN governments have shown a wide variety of policies which include researchers or academics' balanced opportunities in HE and bigger context (ASEF, ASEM, SHARE, SEAMEO RIHED, etc.). They take a programmatic approach that benefits academics in ASEAN to mobilise and include more participants in the GEDI agenda. ASEM

National Equity Policies 2021, for example, has captured the broader benefits to learning, teaching and research of prioritising equitable access and success by taking a holistic institution-wide approach to planning and practice. Such include equality of all researchers to have similar rights to conduct research. Back in 2016, European Institution for Gender and Equality had captured this need by introducing us to their guideline known as GEAR Tool (Gender Equality in Academia and Research). The approach focussed on fostering equality in scientific careers, ensuring GEDI balance in decision-making processes and bodies, and integrating the GEDI dimension in research and innovation content. Asia and ASEAN also share similar steps by consistently working on inclusion in HE. ASEM, SHARE, SEAMEO RIHED are examples of how structural barriers to GEDI are addressed by holding initiatives on GEDI in their associations and programmes. A recent study by Olson-Strom & Rao (2020) shows that female academics' enrolment in HE throughout Asia has been accelerated even though the equality between men and women for leadership is still under question.

In the context of ASEAN, equity programmes have been prioritised as written in the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025. ASEAN has developed regionalism flagship research programmes by conducting multi-disciplinary research on social and sustainability sciences for understanding social, environmental and economic issues under the impacts of ASEAN integration. The establishment of an ASEAN Scholars Network on Social and Sustainability Sciences also facilitates knowledge exchange, cross-disciplinary learning and collaborative policy-relevant research. The ASEAN Work Plan on Education for 2021 gives even more opportunities for researchers and academics by inviting scholars to conduct research in priority areas, i.e. equitable mobility programmes, policy and accreditation, and access and quality of HEs. In addition, ASEF, through its ARC8 outlook report 2030, has underscored Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe. It has given considerable attention to HE research, especially the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HE. Despite the mobility constraints, the pandemic has provided the momentum for researchers and academics to utilise online spaces to overcome spatial and temporal barriers. These come in online classes, meetings, and research in collaboration with colleagues from outside their respective countries. However, no analysis of the widening of collaborative space in post-COVID academia has been carried out systematically.

While these three levels of enabling environments, i.e. regulatory framework, institutional policies and programmes, as well as community and/or individual academic-led initiatives, are useful to scan which areas are constructive for the GEDI agenda, they are practised in pockets and are heavily donor-driven. In many cases, our informants have expressed having to work outside of institutional corridors to make capacity building programmes for the economically disadvantaged more effective (MD, interview, 24 December 2021; MB, interview, 5 January 2022). Others have also stated that the GEDI agenda must not be contentious towards state ideology that works through patriarchy and religious conservatism (NS, interview, 15 November 2021; NE, interview, 7 December 2021).

3.3   Discursive analysis of GEDI in ASEAN's higher education

In this section, we provide insights regarding the discursive effects of macro policy framework, meso institutional programmes, and micro academic-led initiatives. This can come in the form of curriculum development, research programmes and themes, and community engagement--which we see as deeply interlinked (specifically when talking about GEDI).

We look at the policies and programmes that are in place to address inequalities in access and success in HE in Asia and Europe, although only very few countries have specific policy documents (ASEM National Equity Policies in Higher Education 2021). The most common equity target groups are students with lower income/socio-economic background and students who are differently-abled. The less common target groups are gendered groups, indigenous populations, older or mature learners, people from rural backgrounds, refugees, and students with care experience. Groups that receive the least attention include people affected by historical violence, members of the LGBT community, victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Our research also finds that women's career path in the HE sector is often impeded by culture-specific values and practises (Olson Strom and Rao 2020). In Malaysia, for instance, Luke (2001) identifies the culture-specific values and practises that place impediments on women's career advancement. They include women's difficulties in balancing professional demands and family responsibilities, the persistence of cultural values that maintain double standards for men and women in public life, among others. In Brunei Darussalam, we found that the double role of women in the family also hindered some women to reach higher positions in HE, specifically to become professors. Women also are burdened with administrative tasks as they are seen to be more well-organised than men.

> "Very few women make it to the top of the academic ladder, that is, at professor level. It is not so much structural hindrances as societal hindrances. Women academics who are married with children will find it very difficult to juggle both career and family. Women academics are also given more administrative tasks than men as they are perceived to be more well-organised" (SA, interview, 30 March 2022).

The manifestations of the cultural values and practises in distinct contexts have shaped women' experiences in specific ways. This is evident from the quantitative figure of women's under-representation in senior leadership in ASEAN (see figure 1 below). There is no specific data on women leadership in ASEAN's HE sector. However, data on female leadership on corporate boards illustrates the distribution of women's representation on senior leadership which shows less than 20% of the overall landscape in Southeast Asia. While not specifically talking about women in HE, The Asia-Pacific Women in Leadership (APWiL)'s Gender Gap report in 2019 is a useful indicator to gain a general overview about women leadership. There was a significantly higher proportion of male executives compared to female executives

across participating universities. Males make up 80% of university executive staff, with women making up the remaining 20% of university leaders.[3] Yet, it remains to be seen whether initiatives to support GEDI in the context of HE have been attentive to such cultural values and practices that mediate GEDI politics.
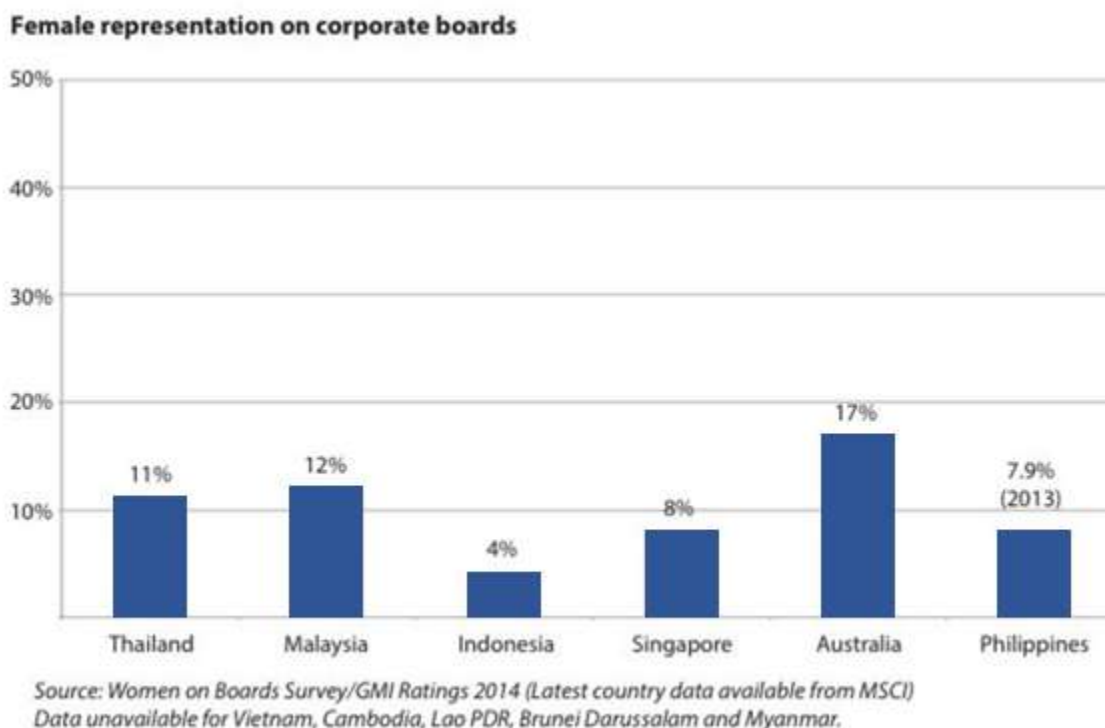
Female representation on corporate boards

Source: Women on Boards Survey/GMI Ratings 2014 (Latest country data available from MSCI)
Data unavailable for Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Brunei Darussalam and Myanmar.

Figure 1: Female Representation on Corporate Boards

Source: APWil, 2019.

The review also finds that some themes and specific groups of people continue to be excluded from initiatives to support GEDI. End and Yang (2020), for instance, demonstrates that most universities in Asia tend to either be described as hostile or ambivalent toward LGBTQ students and staff. Ambivalent universities are characterised by administrators and policies that do not acknowledge the existence of such diversity and ignore or condone any discrimination that LGBTQ students may face on campus. Hostile universities not only condone discrimination against LGBTQ students but also actively perpetuates violence and discrimination through its faculty, administrators, and policies. One informant from the Philippines underlined how LGBTQ has become one of the main concerns of their GEDI

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[3] The APRU Gender Gap survey was administered to 65 participating universities (APRU and Universitas 21 members) across 23 economies in May 2018. The survey was officially closed in December 2018 and a total of 39 institutions completed the survey.

research and the use of uniform in the campus even brings the issues of LGBTQ prominent as the students feel that their gender identity is not yet respected (MD, interview, 24 December 2021).

The attainment of GEDI in HE should not be an incidental or an offshoot of a good education. Instead, it should be an explicit and overarching goal to be accomplished through systematic and integrated efforts from policies to contents. HE classes, research, curriculum and community engagement should offer safe spaces where subjects and ideas considered socially taboo, such as non-heteronormative sexualities, or sensitive, such as minority religious groups and their intersection with gender and sexualities are discussed scientifically without any fear of persecution, including gender-based violence.

Gender-Based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender, highlighting a broader issue of gender inequality. The scope of gender-based violence is more general as it does not only concern women (on Women-Based violence) but all gender based on gender identity (such as LGBTQ). Wicaksono and Kartikasari (2021) conducted a study on gender-based violence in ASEAN and found a relation between gender-based violence and the dominant culture. They reveal that the illegal status of LGBTQ in some ASEAN countries, female genital mutilation (FGM), and the broader patriarchal system in the society reflect what happens on the campus. In addition to this, Wicaksono and Kartikasari also argued that regulations and laws taken by the government for LGBTQ and women's role in the society are also influenced highly by the dominant religion held by some religious groups and society; for example, the existence of PKK (family welfare and empowerment) organisation that controls women's roles and capacities.

In the midst of growing attention to and concern about gender-based violence (GBV) in universities, a key piece in the jigsaw of responses to GBV are student activists who resist GBV and supporting cultures. In the case of LGBTQ students, for instance, Eng and Yang (2020, p. 255) assert that HE should be a space where these students can get affirmation of their identities and for other students to recognise their existence and nurture the sense of respect to these otherwise marginalised groups through the curriculum. Expanding Eng and Yang's assertion, we believe that research conducted by faculty members in HE about GEDI is also crucial in making the minority and/or marginalised groups and the social inequalities they experience more visible. Thus, solutions can be sought to ensure their inclusion and equal treatment. We address this issue to our informants and see what their insights are regarding the initiatives they have designed such as their theoretical and methodological approaches, research themes, and community engagement programmes within their countries' regulatory framework, universities, individual road map.

KEY FINDINGS: WIDENING THE SPACE FOR GEDI ACTORS

4. KEY FINDINGS: WIDENING THE SPACE FOR GEDI ACTORS

In this section, we provide the key findings that address our supporting research questions. We explain here how ASEAN university managers and academics practice and negotiate GEDI values in their work. We emphasise on the micro initiatives that have potential to be mainstream through institutional policy (meso) and regulatory frameworks and funding (macro).

4.1   Constructing leadership through mentoring

We find the significant value of mentoring leadership that nurtures equality and inclusion in ASEAN's HE. Women leaders or leaders from marginalised groups at HE do not develop by accident. They are results of effective policies and advocacy that challenge the taken-for-granted leadership built on gender, disability, and minority biases. Our informants from Indonesia clearly asserted that mentoring programmes have been yielding positive outcomes in the form of higher participation of women and minority groups in the decision-making posts as well as stronger institutional and moral support to achieve equality and inclusion.

Research on feminist leadership generally suggest that leadership is central to support progress towards equity (Blackmore, 2017). Our study extends this notion by highlighting the importance of mentoring to construct leadership that supports GEDI. As suggested by Olson-Strom and Rao (2020, p. 278) mentors will provide support and guidance to students, and in our research cases also their female colleagues and colleagues of marginalised background, in understanding the challenges they face as well as in prioritising their distinctive needs.

Informants confirmed that alliances play an important role in mentoring. In Indonesia, the Association of Gender and Children Studies of Indonesia (*Asosiasi Pusat Studi Gender dan Anak Indonesia* or known as ASWGI) provides mentoring for local scholars interested in establishing a Research Centre on Gender Studies. Such centres are expected to be strong forces in institutional change to achieve GEDI, nurturing female academic leadership, and also promoting research in the field of GEDI at their respective universities.

> "We provide them [referring to young members and members who are interested in establishing a research centre on gender studies] with mentoring on how to communicate the intention to their superiors and we also advocate the significance of the research centre to their university leaders" (IH, interview, 20 October 2021).

This mentorship yields in academics, primarily women, who possess leadership skills to negotiate with university leaders to advance equality and inclusion. The mentorship programmes for researchers and managers in academics, for illustration, are SHARE Peer Multiplier Training on higher education management, Capacity Building Workshop by SHARE

Programme and ASEF on Inclusion in Internationalisation of ASEAN Universities, and Capacity Building Workshop by ASEF on Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education. UN-Women has also focused on women empowerment and female leadership in Asia. This is in line with Euraxess that advocates gender equality and women leadership in Southeast Asia. There are also programmes that strengthen leadership in students (girls and other marginalised groups). For example, the British Council's English and Digital for Girls Education (EDGE) in South Asia, Brighter Path Girls Clubs in Vietnam and GIZ's Girls' Innovation Camps in Indonesia focus on opportunities for skills development among girls and promotes social inclusion of those most marginalised. These programmes are essential in providing girls and students from marginalised groups to work with the community and receive training to lead their peers on specific projects. In terms of advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities, similar mentoring strategies are applied (RF, interview, 9 November 2021). Mentoring is fostered through consortiums and alliances for disability research and services to ensure that researchers with similar interests in disability studies and advocates for disability research centres have adequate academic and moral support. The personal and professional connection built through mentoring allows members to support each other in understanding and dealing with the social and structural challenges they face in their collective struggle to achieve inclusive HE. Eventually, the mentees and mentors create collective leadership that operates inter-institutionally to promote the GEDI agenda.

4.2   Research and advocacy on gender and disability

GEDI research and advocacy are central to serve as pathways to facilitate transformative policies and programmes that work better for women, people with disability, and minority groups. The establishment of the Centre of Gender Studies (the Philippines) and Disability Support Centre (Indonesia) highlights this connection between research and advocacy works. For example, the case of the Philippines demonstrates the government's efforts to mainstream gender in the national agenda by launching a national mandate that each HE institution in the country establish gender research groups. Our interviews with MD and MB of the Philippines provide this insight on the national enforcement of gender mainstreaming in HE sector:

> "Every state university and college is mandated by the Commission in Higher Education to mainstream gender and development in the focal function of the university. It is in CHED Memorandum Order Number 1 Series of 2015. It's a national mandate" (MB, interview, 5 January 2022).

The establishment of GEDI research groups have contributed not only to the GEDI mainstreaming attempts, but also to the integration of GEDI sensitive actions and advocacy undertaken by individual universities. MB further explains the roles of her research group in spearheading gendered research below:

"Our centre is actually spearheading research on gender. So, at the present we have completed two major research projects under the gender and development centre, and we are also doing some more gender research and other gender related researches, and we are trying to help out and assist some of the faculty members in the university to really come up with a gender research or not-really-so-much on doing or making it entirely as a gender, but more of an integrating gender. We reckon to address gender issues in the field of research" (MB, interview, 5 January 2022).

Similarly, on the disability research group, our interview with RF of UIN Indonesia highlights this point where the establishment of the disability service centre could support the university to be more inclusive.

"UIN Jogja has a disability service centre. The centre was established in 2006 which supports the university to be an inclusive campus, especially for students with disability. Currently, we have 120 students with disabilities. Our job is to ensure that all learning aspects, both physical and cultural, facilitate students' need for learning" (RF, interview, 9 November 2021).

These programmes are examples of how research centres have enabled the development of knowledge and action to strategically support and promote GEDI in wider society. Addressing key issues in GEDI need to be done by experts in the field. Existing research and advocacy on GEDI can be strengthened and nurtured into larger social changes. Equally important, effective advocacy works with a strong conceptual basis and would benefit from being historically informed and methodologically relevant; to achieve a more long-lasting impact. Key stakeholders we approached, such as NUFFIC, ASEF, and DAAD, have a number of experts in GEDI in HE. The presence of these experts supports not only their internal works (planning and developing more inclusive programmes) but also provides access to global networks with a GEDI agenda in mind. On the contrary, the absence of a research centre demonstrates an absence or lack thereof community of experts in the field.

4.3   Student mobility (international and upward)

Two forms of mobility featured prominently in the interviews: social and international mobility. HE remains an essential means for social mobility in most countries, yet GEDI is still a significant problem in admission to HE. Secondly, amidst the increasing significance of internationalisation of HE, international mobility has been strongly promoted yet, inequalities and inclusion remain significant problems in this respect too. Based on the interview we conducted, internationalisation is still more accessible to students from high-income families. In contrast, female students and students from economically disadvantaged families, those from remote areas, and those from ethnic minorities are likely to have less access to

internationalisation unless affirmative policies and international funding are involved (see Table 2).

In other words, addressing inequalities inevitably leads to reproducing new kinds of inequalities. Such a paradox is not a phenomenon unique to ASEAN HE. Using the HEI in the USA, Kommers and Bista (2021, pp. 3-4) illustrate that less state involvement in regulating and supporting HEI students in undertaking international mobility leads to the exclusion of non-elite students. Unequal access to mobility can be caused by unequal access to resources, primarily financial and social construction of gender. Thus, ensuring that, as much as possible, non-elite actors are mainstreamed into the GEDI agenda--so that we maximise addressing inequalities by minimising its reproduction.

Consequently, in the context of ASEAN, intervention in the form of affirmative policies, either by the state or the HEIs, have been implemented. For example, in Indonesia, the international student mobility for ASEAN student inbound and outbound fundings were allocated as much as 200,000 USD in 2017 and 2018 as well as 350,000 USD in 2019. It experienced a decrease in 2020 to 260,000 USD due to pandemic restrictions on international flights. In 2021 the budget allocation significantly increased up to 1.2 million USD for mobility. It was given in the form of scholarships for inbound and outbound activities for students and partnership funding for HE institutions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). The significant amount in 2021 was due to the emancipated learning policy (*Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*– MBKM) which the government initiates to ensure all students have an opportunity to gain experiences outside their own campus, i.e. in the industry, schools, or other campuses, domestically and internationally. This attention to mobility funding demonstrates the government's commitment to internationalise its universities, a case that resonates in other countries in ASEAN.

In addition to academic and geographical mobility, attaining a HE degree is still an important path to upward social mobility. Yet, admission and retention in HE is rife with inequalities. In Laos, for example, one of our informants who works for the Ministry of Education in Laos, stated in the interview that compared to men, women were less likely to go to college because of their domestic responsibilities. Moreover, the intersection of gender and other minority identities, such as economic disadvantage, being from remote locations, and from minority ethnic groups, were likely to further prevent women from getting an HE experience.

> "There are a lot of barriers for women to take tertiary education. Going to college needs time commitment and a lot of financial resources. Women are expected to get married, take care of the family and their parents, especially if we talk about women in remote areas" (VS, interview, 3 December 2021).

International mobility has been a significant strategy for ASEAN states' HE internationalisation. Sanger (2020, p.5) suggests that mobility across education systems and cultural contexts offers students and faculty members opportunities to learn from each others' differences, thus minimising the potential for conflicts and alienation. An informant from ASEF, RT, mentioned how important it is to give students a hook to see the world's diversity through short-term exchange activities.

Notably, ASEAN universities are geared towards the regional student markets due to lessening state support for its financing. Thus, the international student market has provided significant sources of income. As such, international mobility is factored into international university rankings, such as QS and Times Higher Education--that guide and inform ASEAN students about their university choices. Thus, despite their commercial nature, many HE institutions believe to be markers of quality and marketability.

Yet, our informants also realised that international mobility is a privilege. A Vice President for Internationalisation from a major university in Thailand and a former executive at ASEAN University Network stated that international mobility is "a privilege for some people - staff or students. It's not for everyone" (ND interview, 20 December 2021). This statement also implied that inequality is rampant in the access to international mobility programmes. Among these groups are women, students from remote regions, students with disabilities, and also students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The lack of access to internationalisation can manifest in the low proficiency in English or other international languages and basic ICT skills required for international mobility, and the lack of access to funding. The intersection of gender identity and other minority identities often makes it even harder to access international mobility. For instance, in the cultural contexts where gender discrimination meets poverty and or regional marginalisation, certain groups of individuals are even less likely to be able to access international mobility. In the context of Laos, as we gathered from our informants, where regionalism and gender discrimination are rife, women from remote areas and disadvantaged families can hardly take part in international mobility. Such is because women are considered more suitable for taking care of the domestic work, and financial resources for education are often prioritised for male family members. This is not to mention that regional campuses in the country tend to receive less support in terms of international mobility. As implied by an informant from Laos, VS, Laos Ministry of Education supports female students, especially those from remote areas, to improve their English proficiency:

> "For student mobility, we are supporting female students to improve their English language skills because many of them are coming from remote areas and unable to speak English. In addition, they also lack ICT skills. So, we train them at universities" (VS, interview, 3 December 2021).

In dealing with a lack of funding, our informants generally mentioned two strategies: university support and international donors. ND (interview, 20 December 2021) noted that Mahidol University offers a co-funding scheme for international mobility with the university to support 60% of the funding. The remaining is shouldered by students selected for mobility. In such a way, the university expects to defy the myth of international mobility being 'expensive' and exclusively for students from high-income families. In addition, working with international donors for international mobility programmes will likely compel universities to ensure equality and inclusion. As in the case of Laos, donor agencies often require that selection must be transparent and that recipients of the funding must be equal in terms of GEDI and/or including students with disabilities and from minority groups (VS, interview, 3 December 2021). For example, the donors often explicitly provide specific numbers or percentages of students with disabilities and minority groups in the funding requirements. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the inequalities and exclusion around international mobility as students benefited from virtual mobility programmes. The restrictions on physical mobility imposed by many countries due to the pandemic have triggered innovations in internationalisation, including inspiring the creation of many innovative international virtual exchange programmes. However, more considerations need to be given to address the lack of natural intercultural interactions among participants (Seneviratne 2021) and exclusions brought by digital inequalities if international digital mobility is aimed at marginalised groups.

Our informant from Malaysia sees social exclusion in university internationalisation from an equity perspective. Our informant mentions that international students experience marginalisation during their international studies (CW interview, 15 December 2021). This perspective is seen from how the universities separate the students in an international dormitory, and even they need to pay more than other students. Facilities for tourism and other public services are sometimes more expensive for international students. This leads to exclusion where international students are friends with only the international students and are not so close to the local students, as cases shown in the UK (Fazackerley, 2021) and Australia (Cantwell, 2019). This equity case adds to the urgency of inclusive treatment for local and international students.

4.4 Affirmative policies (scholarship, women in STEM)

Women's participation in higher education might have improved statistically in several countries. Based on the interviews we conducted, by looking at specific subjects or majors, the increased participation still reflects traditional constructs of gender roles. Looking more closely at national data within STEM disciplines among the seven countries in Asia, a higher proportion of females are found in certain disciplines such as pharmacy, medicine and biology yet remain underrepresented in others such as computer science, physics and engineering (UIS, 2014). As explained by our respondent in Cambodia (SP, interview, 10 November 2021), despite higher enrolment of female students, they tend to be concentrated in subjects related to nursing or teaching rather than STEM subjects. This is mainly determined by their vision of women employability in their countries. This pattern of gender tracking, which channels women into careers that are basically extensions of their domestic responsibilities and allows

men to acquire more marketable skills and enjoy greater earning power, only exacerbates the problem of unequal opportunities for women. Besides women's participation, people with disabilities also experience structural barriers in educational attainment and participation in the labour market. In some specific contexts, such as Laos, ethnic minority groups encountered language barriers to access public education besides economic and infrastructural factors (Licuanan, 2004). Beyond different types of marginalisation including minority groups, people with disabilities and women, marginalised populations from low-income families are more likely to experience multiple barriers of access to HE.

As identified from several interviews, affirmative action through quota schemes is one of the most essential instruments to improve access to marginalised groups. While we have not found a regulatory framework at the institutional level of affirmative action for women, we identified a best practice of institutional affirmative action policy for people with disability at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Indonesia. With the assistance of its Centre for Disability Service, the university opens special enrolment and assigns a quota for students with disabilities via their autonomous university test. Several scholarships are also available for students supported by philanthropy endeavours (e.g. Astra, Nusantararun, etc). The Centre for Disability Service gives follow-up assistance for students as they progress through their studies. The affirmative action policy is more viable to formulate and implement at the university level rather than the national level as admitted by RF (interview, 9 November 2021), the head of Centre for Disability Service. The policy should apply for both external and internal policy. Not only focus on students' enrolment quota, but it should also pertain to internal recruitment processes such as faculty teaching teams and administrators. As Licuanan puts it, in the case of women's participation, also important are the identification and projection of role models among faculty, administrators, and alumnae; systematic inclusion of women among speakers and resource persons for campus events such as graduation; setting up of policies and mechanisms to handle sexual harassment cases; support services to alleviate the double burden of women on campus and to make campuses more family-friendly workplaces. This approach might also be adopted for other marginalised groups.

While affirmative action policy stimulates the representation or participation in HE, focusing on the quota system alone will be ineffective to boost the participation. The policy needs to embrace intersectionality and incorporate supporting mechanisms to create an enabling environment for participation to transpire.

> "So, I think, for me, it's quite obvious that in tertiary education, that intersectionality of disadvantage plays a massive role. And it plays a massive role in what part of the education system you land up in, and then why you make the choices you do depending on whether you're in tertiary education or higher education, then sometimes profoundly economic factors come in, quite often the labour market factors come in, and obviously so does the social choice factors come in" (LE, interview, 16 December 2021).

The intersectional approach acknowledges systemic discrimination due to sexual orientation and identity, gender and gender identity, ability, race, economic status, national origin, among other aspects of one's identity, supplementing affirmative action policy with scholarships, follow-up assistance to overcome learning challenges, physical or non-physical infrastructures, and other specific needs identified along the way. Taking example from the Malaysian Government's comprehensive effort to achieve inclusive STEM education by expanding girls' schools and residential science schools (Khalid, 2018). Such effort has made the country stand out for being one of the few countries in Asia with a higher proportion of female graduates (58.8%) in science programmes in tertiary education (UNESCO, 2015). Local NGOs play significant roles in closing the gap of access particularly at the grassroots level. As found in Laos and Myanmar (SB, 25 November 2021; TZ, 27 January 2022), NGOs working in remote areas with marginalised groups at grassroots level provide different types of assistance ensuring women, ethnic minority groups, and other underrepresented populations improve their capacity and resources to gain the opportunities in HE. They manage educational programmes such as scholarship, language courses or mentorship.

If there are national-level policies to foster affirmative action policy in education, Olson-Strom and Rao (2020, p.278) added the caveat that the policy does not always have the intended effects. Therefore, the formulation and implementation of such policy has to ensure that it will not further disadvantage one underrepresented group in favour of another, but rather offer more opportunities to all underrepresented and vulnerable groups.

4.5   Local and regional inequalities and agency in second-tier universities

While local and regional inequalities persist, especially between first and second or third-tier universities, the latter category do have agency in tailoring programmes in responding to GEDI. The pattern remains that the first-tier universities with their high research capacity and resources are more globally oriented and mobile, the second and third tier universities are more community oriented. Asian Development Bank's (2011, 43) research on higher education across Asia identifies how unequal are resources available to universities. In general, governments have devoted considerable efforts and resources to foster top-tier, world-class universities. The disproportionate allocation of resources to these top universities may inhibit the development of other important aspects of the higher education system.

The research identifies at least two ways in which the development in the second and third tier universities may be hindered (Asia Development Bank 2011, 10-13). Firstly, the tendency for governments across Asia is to allocate major resources to top-tier universities that are heavily research oriented at the expense of second and third-tier universities that are more oriented to teaching. Governments across South East Asia, in particular, have channelled special funding to top-tier universities to promote research. Secondly, whereas academic salaries are typically lower compared to private sector universities, there are exceptions for those employed in a few top-tier universities. This means that there is a greater chance that

those employed in second and third-tier universities receive inadequate compensation for academic work, pushing some to take on outside employment.

Our study points to a case where those in second or third-tier universities exercise their agency in the attempts to attain the GEDI agenda under the difficult circumstances. In the Province of Biliran, one of the smallest and newest provinces in the Philippines for instance, a significant number of academic staff in Naval State University continue to be employed precariously as part-time instructors. One of the barriers for the staff to be hired permanently is their inadequate education level. While one needs to obtain a master's degree to be hired as a permanent staff member, many do not have the financial resources to complete postgraduate education (MD, interview, 24 December 2021).

Though scholarships - funded by the government as well as other parties - are available, only few staff apply for it. One of the reasons is because most scholarships are offered to those who study sciences and mathematics. This demonstrates a type of barrier associated with the way social studies and humanities are made less of a priority in the provision of scholarships. Another reason is because some staff are unable to meet the basic requirements - for instance the one related to language proficiency - to apply for the scholarships. Problems that can be found elsewhere, like the low proficiency of English or other international languages and basic ICT skills required for international mobility, pose greater challenges for academics employed in second and third tier universities. These all indicate the greater challenges which may be experienced by academics based in second and third tier universities to engage in transnational education, where learners are located in a country different from where they are based.

In addition, while lack of funding schemes - to support research, publication and international mobility - put impediments to academics elsewhere to advance their career, it puts a greater challenge for those in second tier universities. In the case of Naval university, teaching staff employed precariously often have to seek for an additional source of income to supplement the income they earn from teaching at the university. However, considering that Biliran has been recently developed as a province, only few teaching-related jobs are available for the staff.

Under the difficult circumstances, resources provided through the mandate of the Commission in HE to support GEDI mainstreaming programmes help to generate support for the female staff. In her position as coordinator of GAD (Gender and Development) in Naval State University, MD explains how the office used funds allocated yearly for the programmes to carry out research on the situation of female staff at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic (interview, 24 December 2021). The research identified two main issues faced by female staff, associated with the multiple burden of single parents and the mental health issues. The office uses the research result to plan for follow up actions, including proposing for the provision of

a university-based childcare centre, organising campaigns to raise female staff's awareness of their rights in the workplace as well as arranging events to help female staff cope with stress of work.

4.6   Integrating inclusion into pedagogy

One of the best ways to put theories of GEDI into practice and take it into the next level is by integrating it into the curriculum. As part of the GEDI mainstreaming efforts, one campus in the Philippines has designed a course entitled "Gender and Society" in order to discuss issues of GEDI in the classroom and raise awareness.

> "As time went by, we were able to craft some programmes in the centre. So, of course we focused on the instruction, integrating gender in our curriculum. Particularly in the making of our core syllabus or syllabi. We have subjects like Gender and Society. We also integrate gender in our subjects such as understanding the self. So, of course we are trying to create a syllabus that really touches on gender and social inclusion more particularly. The diverse type of students that we have in the university" (MB, interview, 5 January 2022).

> "...in terms of how our mainstream programmes could be gender transformative, that might help us deal with the boys and men challenge. It's something, perhaps we're still trying to get our heads around. So, how might we include gender sensitive pedagogy into how we teach English. So, we've just done a global module on English language teaching and gender sensitive pedagogy, at least in principle, you should be having female and male teachers taking those courses, right, even though most teachers are female in primary, certainly" (LE, interview, 16 December 2021).

Both informants highlight the importance of translating GEDI-sensitive and inclusive pedagogy into the classroom to assist children in questioning traditional social roles and stereotypes as well as understanding privileges and constraints which could lead to empowerment.

4.7   Seeking alternative forms of internationalisation

Internationalisation is driven by economic and pedagogical concerns, with mobility as a key mechanism. Simultaneously, opportunity structures for mobility are unevenly distributed amongst different social groups. On the one hand, international mobility activities can potentially promote social inclusion, for instance, by diversifying academic and education spaces. On the other, they can also create new inequalities if the issues of access for marginalised groups are not addressed. Within this contradiction, the GEDI agenda is strategic.

Uneven distribution of opportunities can come in several forms. Firstly, language and fundings are two of the most frequent constraints that emerge. Secondly, a theoretical analysis of the partnership structures between the "the Global North'' and "the Global South" could be enlightening feedback for programme managers. Sharpe (2015), a postcolonial critic, mentioned that studying abroad reproduces 19th-century colonial practices in that the students coming from the South are visitors and not equals. What is then nurtured is a kind of cosmopolitan aspiration to become "of the North" rather than retain the cosmopolitan values that strengthen social mobility in ways that would benefit the "South". Programmes like E-Twinning can be considered part of alternative forms of internationalisation, whereby students and teachers do not have to leave their home country to be exposed to ideas and cultures foreign to them. E-Twinning is a programme co-funded by the Erasmus+, the European programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. The programme offers a platform for teachers, headteachers, and staff who work in a school in one of the European countries involved to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share and be part of the learning community in Europe. The programme currently involves 43 countries in Europe and beyond (eTwinning, 2022).

Such a programme of 'virtual exchange' can positively affect GEDI. It could encourage students to raise awareness of other people's cultures and the diversity of other countries from the comfort of their homes. If applied in the South East Asian context, this virtual exchange programme could benefit female academics in the HE system, who often face barriers to studying abroad while juggling domestic work, in advancing their careers.

Alternative forms of internationalisation integrated into the curriculum may provide opportunities for better learning and more equitable partnerships. Alternative forms of internationalisation need to be designed to intentionally disrupt the taken-for-granted notions about the transformative potential and good work of education abroad. They need to encourage students' reflection on their complicity in maintaining asymmetrical power relations in their education abroad experience and its micro-moments.

CONCLUSION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to explore, describe, and analyse initiatives–whether generated through institutions or actors–that have widened the social space for GEDI in HE. We achieved this purpose by explaining how ASEAN university managers and academics practice and negotiate GEDI values in their work. We presented findings on macro (regulatory frameworks), meso (institutional policies) and micro (researcher-led initiatives) levels in ASEAN countries. We furthermore presented key findings regarding the micro initiatives that have potential to be mainstream through institutional policy (meso) and regulatory frameworks and funding (macro).

We found that effective GEDI initiatives happen on micro-levels. Despite structural (regulatory and funding) and symbolic (cultural and ideological) barriers, actors can manage projects and programmes that benefit the socially marginalised. They are largely outliers within more significant structural and systematic gender and social inequalities. Working outside of the mainstream has strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, these initiatives have fragmented, programmatic, and sporadic nature that makes it difficult to consolidate a shared GEDI agenda on an ASEAN level. But on the other hand, it means that actors and institutions can exercise their agency with more autonomy than if they implemented State programmes (especially those that negatively discriminate against LGBT students).

That is why we recommend such initiatives to be supported in ways that would make them less dependent on incidental conditions. We are tendering the following recommendations to promote GEDI agenda as part of the attempts to internationalising ASEAN universities:

1) Developing regulatory framework that addresses issues of gender inequality, gender-based violence, and social exclusion

A way to ensure equal access and protection of women and minority groups is by creating and improving laws and policies that render institutional responses to gender-based violence and social exclusion. The case of Indonesia in the development of ministerial regulation on sexual violence on campus has provided an umbrella law to address and redress gender-based violence in the HE sector.

2) Mainstreaming GEDI approaches in research and advocacy works

The absence of GEDI approaches in HE highlights the importance of GEDI mainstreaming in ASEAN HE. Establishing a Research and Advocacy Centre on GEDI, as

well as developing GEDI-sensitive indicators within the Research Centre that consider specific localities and historical context will ensure the inclusiveness of the internationalisation agenda. Thus, GEDI-sensitive indicators will ensure that issues of gender, inclusion and diversity are acknowledged throughout the research, advocacy works and internationalisation programmes, thus mitigating the reproduction of GEDI disadvantage status-quo.

Apart from mainstreaming GEDI in the research, advocacy, and HR, HE can also provide more media platforms for women scholars/activists to voice their ideas. This will lead to more research on gender to evaluate participation, performances, and productivity against patriarchy. For mainstreaming GEDI in the curriculum, more advocacy needs to be done to integrate gender in the study and not to be given only to specific gender (women). Stereotype against women to study certain areas in HE can be eliminated by mainstreaming GEDI through advocacy. This policy needs to be looked at and researched by managers and top leaders of HE in order to produce rules suitable with the local context where the HE is located. Lastly in mainstreaming GEDI is the need to design an evaluation rubric to evaluate the impacts on certain GEDI programmes on female students and academics.

3) Investing in leadership mentoring with diverse background

There are many barriers in aiming for structural and cultural reforms, therefore we pay attention to actors with potential, or future leaders in order to improve diversity in decision making roles and to provide leadership for GEDI initiatives. Leadership mentoring in the forms of both formal (such as capacity building, inclusive recruitment, leadership training, etc) and informal models (providing support and advice) of mentoring need to be prioritised for women and other marginalised groups, or those who share similar concerns. programmes designed to help prepare such groups to take on leadership positions should focus on the internalisation of GEDI core values which can support the advancement of the GEDI agenda.

4) Promoting inclusive mobility

Investing in an internationalisation agenda requires inclusive mobility both socially and academically for staff and students with GEDI priorities. Inclusive mobility means ensuring that higher education is accessible for all groups of people, including women and other marginalised groups. Inclusive mobility must be made explicit and not

assumed to really address issues of gender inequality and social exclusion. When investing in satellite campuses or catering for inbound mobility consideration must be given to ensuring the safety and accessibility of women and students with disability to avoid hindering the progress of internationalisation. An internationalisation experience such as micro credit activities on GEDI can be also done for students who want to explore other subjectivity or cultural perspectives on gender. Partnership between HE whose priority is in the area of gender can also be conducted by holding an exchange programme intercultural understanding on gender, for example.

5) Funding and programmatic support

More funding and programmatic support would strengthen researcher-led initiatives that work on micro levels of GEDI strategies and mainstream them as much as possible to meso and macro levels. These initiatives too could benefit from leadership programmes that connect actors regionally. The sharing of tactics and strategies can be done across and among actors and institutions, in the hope that a pooling of regional resources can be done in ways that are bottom-up rather than top-down. The bottom-up approach could promote greater resilience and sustainability of local-scale efforts, providing the needed support for actors and institutions that have worked independently to promote GEDI (with or without the existence of external funding) and leverage their impacts.

More fundings and programme development can open opportunities for reaching students to join more programmes in GEDI, for example scholarships for students who are economically disadvantaged. In the findings section it was explained that one barrier for an uneven distribution of internationalisation programme/ mobility is the funding. Thus, providing more opportunities for scholarship will be beneficial to promote inclusion in internationalisation. Another model of scholarship if fundings to support more training for women with vulnerable/marginalised backgrounds to help them to become more independent.

Support of fundings and programmes can be also in the form of courses in the HE curriculum, by providing courses which are not gender-based. This will need help from ministries of education and scholars in the field to integrate non-gender-based courses for students. Another programme which can be promoted is short courses for students instead of longer-term mobility. By having short courses and funding it, we can reach more people to learn about diversity, and to include more people, more opportunities. What makes it prominent here is also the source of fundings which

needs to be intensified to ensure the continuation of programmes/ courses and having more donors to support, not only government but also other sources, i.e. global organisations or private sectors.

6) Integrating inclusion into curriculum and pedagogy

GEDI agendas need to be integrated in curriculum structure, pedagogy (teaching and learning process), assessment and mobility programmes. GEDI agenda can also be added into relevant topics or materials in existing courses. In addition, collaborations between countries can also be tailored to design curriculum structure and pedagogy that incorporate GEDI agenda, exchanging insights from the different ways in which academics in different countries develop strategies to empower learners to question traditional gender roles and stereotypes as well as understanding of structured-based privileges and constraints experienced by the populace.

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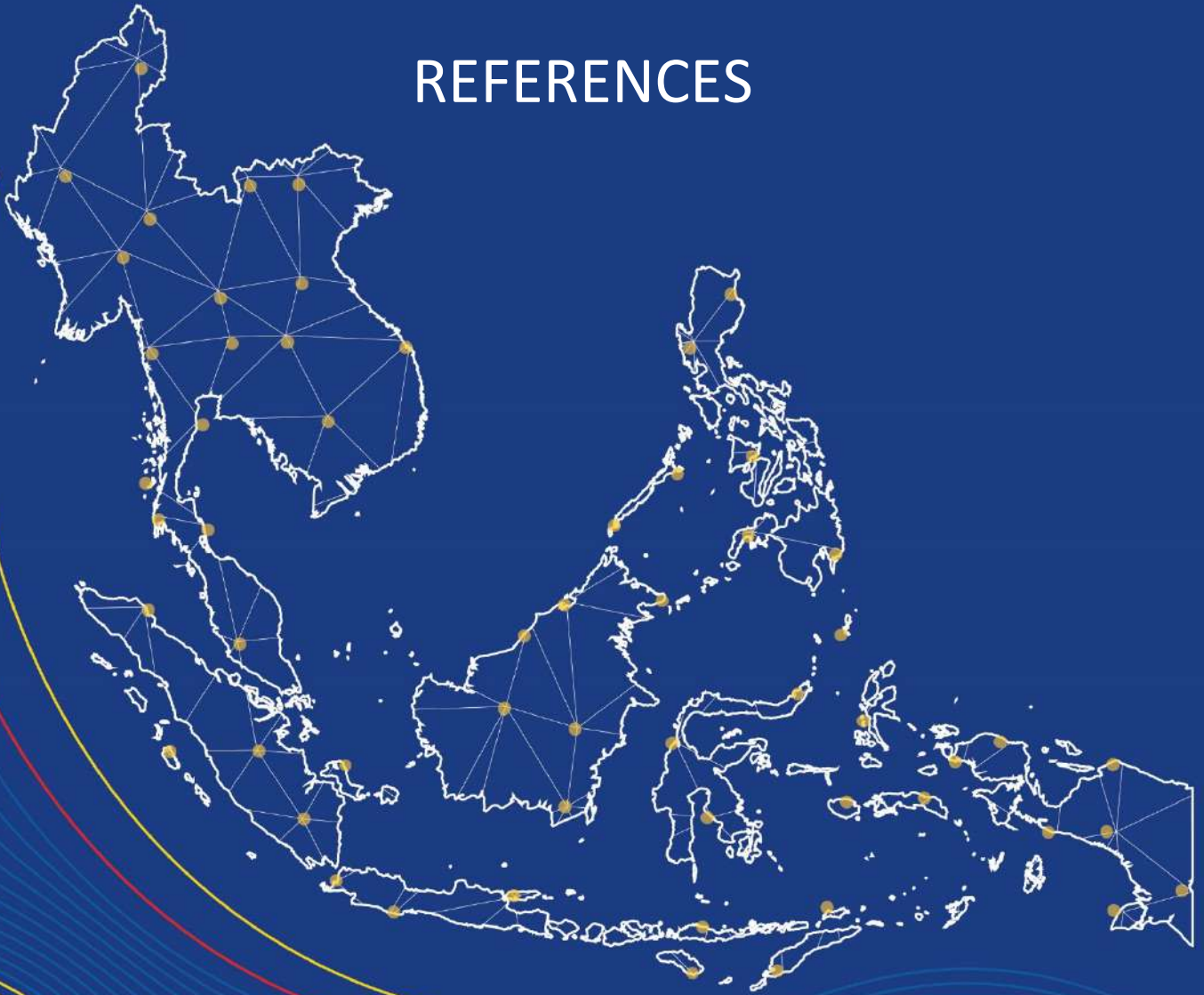
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