



Women Political Participation and Leadership in ASEAN



one vision
one identity
one community

Women Political Participation and Leadership in ASEAN

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

Authors: Henny Andersen and Pamela Asprer Grafilo

For inquiries, contact:

ASEAN Secretariat

70A Jalan Sisingamangaraja
Jakarta 12110
Indonesia
Phone: +62 21 724-3372, 726-2991
Fax: +62 21 739-8234, 724-3504
E-mail: public@asean.org

Mission of the European Union to ASEAN

Menara Astra, 38th Floor
Jl. Jend Sudirman Kav 5-6
Jakarta 10220
Indonesia
Phone: +62 21 2554-6200
Fax: +62 21 2554-6201
Email: mission-asean@eeas.europa.eu
Website: <http://eeas.europa.eu/asean>

Women Political Participation and Leadership in ASEAN

Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, October 2025



This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All

Photo/Image Credits: Güngör Genç

General information on ASEAN appears online at the ASEAN Website: www.asean.org



Women Political Participation and Leadership in ASEAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study on “Women Political Participation and Leadership in ASEAN” was undertaken as a strategic follow-up to the recommendations made at the first EU-ASEAN Dialogue on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in the context of the ASEAN-EU Cooperation on Gender Equality, held on 22 October 2018 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam. Building upon the foundations of the 2015 study “Advancing and Monitoring Women’s Political Participation in the ASEAN Region”, this second study provides updated insights and analysis to further inform ASEAN’s collective efforts in promoting women’s political participation and leadership as integral to inclusive governance and sustainable development.

Spearheaded by the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) Cambodia, which also led the 2015 study, the initiative was carried out with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Union.

The authors, Ms Henny Andersen and Ms Pamela Asprer Grafilo, gratefully acknowledge the valuable contributions and feedback from:

- The focal points and representatives of the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW), for their collective contributions, which are too numerous to be acknowledged individually here;
- The ASEAN Secretariat’s Socio-Cultural Community, its Human Development Directorate, and especially the Poverty Eradication and Gender Division (PEGD), for their professional coordination, facilitation of consultations, engagement with all stakeholders, and for providing substantive feedback on the draft study;
- The staff of the Mission of the European Union to ASEAN, and officials of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships, for their unwavering support throughout the study;
- The national experts across the ASEAN Member States, without whose contributions the compilation of the regional study would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	3
List of Tables.....	6
List of Figures.....	6
List of Abbreviations.....	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
1. THE 'WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP (WPPL) STUDY	16
1.1. Background.....	16
1.2. Context.....	17
2. WPPL STUDY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY	19
2.1. Study objectives and overall approach	19
2.2. Study scope and process	20
2.2.1. Key Performance Indicators (KPI) defining study scope.....	20
2.2.2. KPI selection process and selection considerations.....	21
2.3. Data collection methodology and sources.....	21
2.4. Data analysis and study structure.....	21
3. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI) FINDINGS	23
3.1. Governing structures and arrangements stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies	23
3.1.1. Legal frameworks foster gender balance in governance structures and bodies (KPI 1-5).....	23
3.1.2. Greater gender balance in political parties exist (KPI 6-8)	29
3.1.3. Establish and recognise gender-sensitive statistical systems and monitoring to track progress on women leadership and participation in public and private spheres (KPI 9)	32
3.1.4. Institutional mechanisms are in place that mitigate and reduce violence and discrimination against women in politics (KPI 10).....	33
3.2. Number of women motivated/attracted to engaging in and leading in political processes has increased (KPI 11)	34
3.2.1. Various support networks for women are created and sustained.....	34
3.3. Public recognition of women as equally suited and constructive political leaders.....	36
3.3.1. Increased positive representation of women leaders and women's political empowerment in the media (KPI 12)	36
3.4. Number of women leaders in political institutions increased	37
3.4.1. Proportion of women in minister and deputy minister positions (KPI 13).....	37
3.4.2. Proportion of women in senior or managerial positions in government (KPI 14)	37
3.4.3. Proportion of women judges in supreme judicial body and women judges in courts (KPI 15)	39
3.4.4. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local legislative councils (KPI 16).....	39
3.4.5. Proportion of seats held by women as chief executive or head at local government (KPI 17).....	40
3.4.6. Political institutions are welcoming to women political leaders (KPI 18)	41

4. CONCLUSIONS.....	42
4.1. Strengths and weaknesses.....	42
4.2. AMS monitoring capacity.....	45
4.2.1. Limited gender and statistical expertise.....	46
4.2.2. Managing the data gaps.....	46
4.2.3. Strengthening institutional coordination.....	46
4.2.4. Meeting resource constraints	47
4.2.5. Dissemination and use of data.....	48
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	49
5.1. On governing structures, institutional mechanisms, networks, and media.....	49
5.2. On increasing women participation in political parties and public institutions.....	50
5.3. Sustaining and institutionalising the tracking of WPPL progress in ASEAN.....	51
5.3.1. Forging AMS consensus on WPPL indicators.....	51
5.3.2. Establishing a WPPL baseline.....	52
5.3.3. Sustaining and institutionalising WPPL progress monitoring post 2025	52
ANNEXES.....	54
Annex 1: Key Performance Results Framework	55
Annex 2: Definition of Key Performance Indicators, Data Collection Tools, Methodology and Key Informant Guide Questions	56
Annex 3: Summary of National-level Findings under each Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	75
Annex 4: Recent Data and Information (Beyond Cut-off Date of 31 December 2023).....	126

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Proportion of Women in Political Institutions in ASEAN	37
---	----

LIST OF FIGURES

Graph 1: Proportion of Women in Political Institutions in ASEAN	11
Graph 2: Percentage of Women Candidates and Membership in Political Parties	30
Graph 3: Percentage of Women in Government and Public Service in ASEAN	38
Graph 4: Women in the Judicial System in ASEAN	39
Graph 5: Women in the Legislative System in ASEAN	39

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	ASEAN Committee on Women
ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
ACWO	ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisation
AIPO	ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation
AKEPT	Higher Education Leadership Academy (Malaysia)
AMMW	ASEAN Ministerial Meetings on Women
AMS	ASEAN Member States
APKADESI	Asosiasi Perempuan Kepala Desa Perempuan (Association of Women Village Head) (Indonesia)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASH	Anti-Sexual Harassment (Philippines)
BAC	Bar Association of Cambodia
CCE	Character and Citizenship Education (Singapore)
CCWC	Commune Committee for Women and Children (Cambodia)
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women/ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGEO	Chief Gender Equality Officer (Thailand)
CNCW	Cambodian National Committee on Women
CODI	Committee on Decorum and Investigation (Philippines)
COMWEL	Council of Malaysian Women Political Leaders
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSPS	Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (Brunei Darussalam)
CWBD	Council of Women Brunei Darussalam
CWPC	Cambodian Women Parliament Caucus
DILG	Department of Interior and Local Government (Philippines)
DPR	National Representative Council (Indonesia)
DPRD	Provincial Representative Council (DPRD Provinsi) (Indonesia) Municipal Representative Council (DPRD Kabupaten/Kota) (Indonesia)
DPR-RI	People's Representative Council (Indonesia)
DSW	Department of Social Welfare (Myanmar)
DSWD	Department of Social Work and Development (Philippines)
DWF	Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (Thailand)
E-READI	Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FWA	Flexible Work Arrangements (Singapore)
GAD	Gender and Development (Philippines)
GAP	Gender Action Plan (EU)
GAP	Gender Analysis Pathway (Indonesia)
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (Philippines)
GFP	Gender Focal Points (Malaysia, Thailand)
GFT	Gender Focal Team (Malaysia)
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GGGR	Global Gender Gap Report
GMAG	Gender Mainstreaming Action Group (Cambodia)
GMAP	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan (Cambodia)

GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting (Thailand)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology (Lao PDR)
IDP	Internally Displaced People (Myanmar)
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPC	Institutions of Public Character (Singapore)
IRI	International Republican Institute (Thailand)
KemenPPPA	Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Indonesia)
KII	Key Informant Interview
KOWANI	Kongres Wanita Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Congress)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KPI	Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Coalition)
KPPI	Kaukus Perempuan Politik Indonesia (Political Women's Caucus)
KPPRI	Kaukus Perempuan Parlemen Republik Indonesia (Women's Caucus of the Republic of Indonesia)
LAC	Legal Aid Center (Malaysia)
LAD	Legal Aid Department (Malaysia)
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LGU	Local Government Unit (Philippines)
LPRP	Lao People's Revolutionary Party
LWU	Lao Women Union
MCS	Ministry of Civil Service (Cambodia)
MCW	Magna Carta of Women (Philippines)
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (Brunei Darussalam)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGEC	Media and Gender Equality Committee (Philippines)
MGGI	Malaysia Gender Gap Index
MMCWA	Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association
MNCW	Myanmar National Committee on Women
MoI	Ministry of Interior (Cambodia)
MoLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Viet Nam)
MoM	Ministry of Manpower (Singapore)
MoRA	Ministry of Religious Affairs (Brunei Darussalam)
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs (Cambodia)
MP	Members of Parliament (Indonesia, Malaysia)
MP	Malaysia Plan
MPI	Maju Perempuan Indonesia (Advanced Indonesian Women)
MSF	Ministry of Social and Family Development (Singapore)
MSNV	Malaysian Shared Prosperity Vision 2030
MTRCB	Media and Television Review Classification Board (Philippines)
MWAF	Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation
MWCDF	Myanmar Women and Children Development Foundation
MWFCD	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (Malaysia)
MWSF	Myanmar Women's Sports Federation
NAPC	National Anti-Poverty Commission (Philippines)
NAPVAW	National Action Plans to Prevent Violence Against Women (Cambodia)
NCAWMC	National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children (Lao PDR)
NCWO	National Council of Women's Organisations Malaysia

NDP	National Development Party (Brunei Darussalam)
NEC	National Election Committee (Cambodia)
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NKE	Non-Key Experts
NP-SNDD	National Program on Sub-National Democratic Development Phase (Cambodia)
NR	Neary Rattanak (Cambodia)
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan (Cambodia)
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan (Lao PDR)
NSPAW	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (Myanmar)
NWP	National Women Policy (Malaysia)
PA	People's Association (Singapore)
PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
PEGD	Poverty Eradication and Gender Division (PEGD) of the ASEAN Secretariat
PFAA	Perdana Fellows Alumni Association (Malaysia)
PGA	Parliamentarians for Global Action (Malaysia)
POHA	Protection from Harassment Act (Singapore)
PPLIPI	Perhimpunan Perempuan Lintas Profesi Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Cross-Professional Women)
PPPI	Perkumpulan Perempuan Pemimpin Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Women Leaders)
PPRG	Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (Indonesia)
PS	Pentagonal Strategy (Cambodia)
PUG	Gender Mainstreaming (Indonesia)
RA	Republic Act (Philippines)
RPJMN	National Mid-term Development Plan (Indonesia)
RS	Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency (Cambodia)
RSA	Royal School of Administration (Cambodia)
SBF	Singapore Business Federation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG-WEN	Singapore Women Entrepreneurs Network
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise (Viet Nam)
SWD	Strategy and Women Development (Singapore)
TG - FAR	Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (Singapore)
TGFEP	Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices (Singapore)
TWG	Technical Working Group (Myanmar)
TWGG	Technical Working Group on Gender (Cambodia)
ULAP	Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines
UUTPKS	Undang-Undang Tinda Pidana Kekerasan Seksual (Indonesia)
VNR	Voluntary National Reports (Brunei Darussalam)
WC	Women Committees (Myanmar)
WCCC	Women and Children's Consultative Committees (Cambodia)
WEC	Women's Executive Committee (Singapore)
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy (Thailand)
WIN	Women's Integration Network (Singapore)
WLF	Women Leadership Foundation (Malaysia)
WoNA	Whole of Nation Approach (Brunei Darussalam)
WPPL	Women Political Participation and Leadership
YWLC	Young Women's Leadership Connection (Singapore)

Executive summary

This study on Women Political Participation and Leadership (WPPL) implements previously approved monitoring frameworks. It was designed with the intent to establish a comprehensive baseline on various dimensions of WPPL across the ASEAN region. Thus, it sets out concrete evidence of progress in women's political participation whilst identifying the persistent challenges that women still face in the region.

During the second half of 2022, national information and data was generated around 18 agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in each of the 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS). The chosen approach for the national-level WPPL studies was to have AMS country-teams composed of both nominated national experts and ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) focal points. The national experts were technically responsible for producing national WPPL reports closely guided by the ACW focal points. A team of one senior M&E expert and one senior gender expert consolidated the data and data analysis in the 10 national WPPL studies into this regional WPPL study. Throughout the study process further technical support was provided by key experts from the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI). The WPPL study process has been closely guided by the Poverty Eradication and Gender Division (PEGD) of the ASEAN Secretariat.

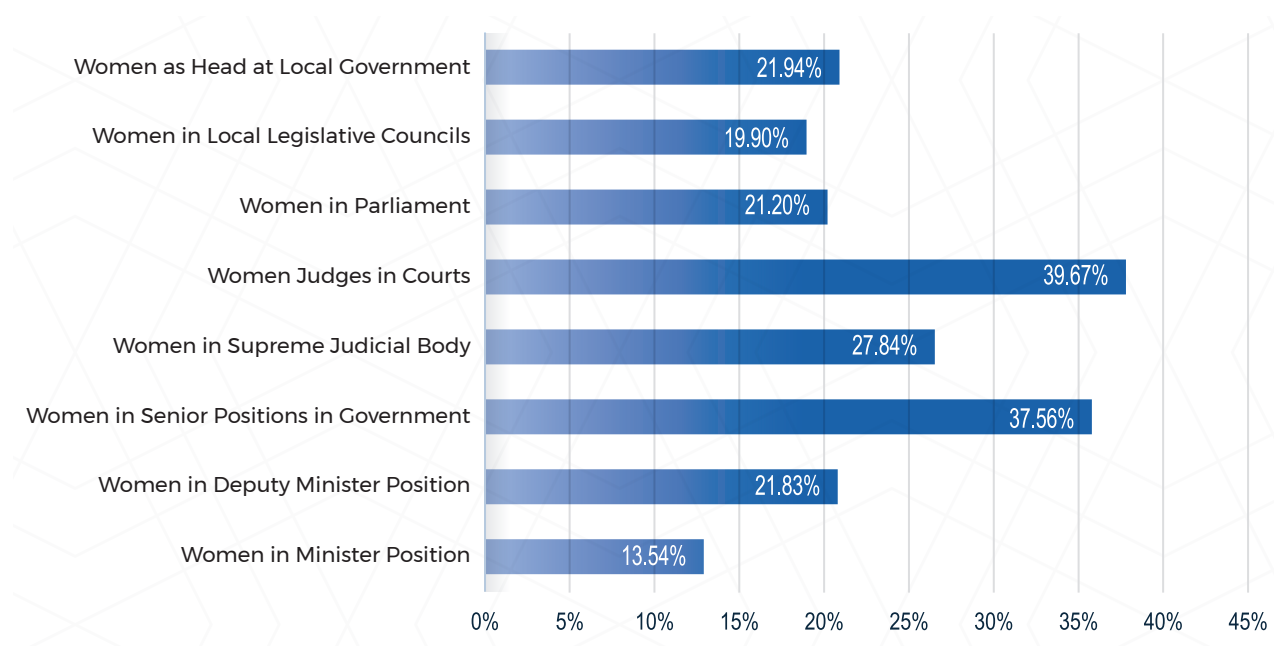
The comprehensive baseline data generated through the WPPL study process provides the ACW with a set of measurable targets and benchmarks to monitor progress on WPPL at the regional level. These benchmarks can now be used to track improvements over time, identify best practices and foster healthy collaboration among the AMS.

The insights gained from the data and data analysis can be utilised to inform the design and implementation of targeted policies, programmes and interventions by the AMS and the ACW to address the identified gaps and challenges in women's political empowerment. The WPPL study thus provides the foundation for an undertaking that will constantly evolve to help reshape the political landscape in ASEAN by promoting women's participation and leadership.

■ WPPL trends in ASEAN

- The average percentage of women candidates at the national level is 36.6%, whilst at the sub-national level it drops to 18.32%. Overall, women make up only 14.49% of political party membership across the region, indicating a significant under-representation.
- Women's representation as political party candidates in ASEAN remains low, typically between 10% and 38%. A notable issue is that women are often placed in lower positions on candidate lists, significantly reducing their chances of being elected, as candidates higher on the list are more likely to win seats. This reflects entrenched gender biases and power imbalances within the political parties.
- Men continue to dominate leadership and decision-making roles within most political parties in the region. This male dominance poses significant barriers to achieving gender parity in political representation. Factors such as traditional gender roles, entrenched social norms, and limited access to resources hinder women's advancement and their ability to attain leadership positions. The lack of women in authoritative roles undermines the effective representation of women's interests within political agendas.

Figure 1. Proportion of Women Leaders in Political Institutions in ASEAN (As of 2023)



- The regional average for women in ministerial positions is 13.54%, with representation increasing to 21.83% at the deputy minister level and 37.56% in senior or managerial government positions. The data suggests that whilst women may advance in managerial capacities, their presence in high-level decision-making roles still needs to be improved.
- The ASEAN region shows a relatively strong representation of women in the judiciary, with the regional average for women in the highest judicial body at 27.84%, whilst women judges are at 39.67%.
- The regional averages for women's representation in parliament (21.20%) and local legislative councils (19.90%) are still below the global average of 25.4%, indicating a long way to go to achieve gender parity.
- The regional average of 21.94% for women as heads of local government indicates significant room for improvement to achieve gender parity.

■ Insights from the analysis of the study findings

Policies and implementation challenges: specific policies to enhance gender equality and/or policies for gender mainstreaming are in place, or in the process of being formulated, in all AMS. The policies delineate lines of responsibility and implementation mechanisms and include measurable targets for women's representation in leadership and decision making. Implementation challenges include insufficient financing as well as limited political commitment to enforce overall or partially agreed gender mainstreaming. In future policies, it would be beneficial to aim beyond setting stronger targets, concentrating on ensuring the effective implementation of approved actions and measures, to actually achieve the set targets. In particular, given the cross-cutting nature of gender equality, the bodies dedicated to coordinate and oversee implementation may need stronger enforcement tools. An explicit risk-management strategy would be helpful in this respect, outlining how to address the potential risk of the lack of political commitment in implementation. This may include sanction mechanisms approved at the highest level of government.

Some of the challenges are deeply rooted, such as transforming social values and norms, and seem to be largely addressed through awareness-raising campaigns, sensitisation programmes and training that primarily targets women. However, as mentioned in some national studies, awareness-raising on its own will most likely not achieve the desired transformation of mindsets. A more comprehensive approach is

required, with a stronger emphasis on a mix of policies and measures. Women alone, despite being well-trained, do not hold the institutional power to bring about change. Since women are in the minority in all decision-making bodies, they inevitably depend on the need to achieve a consensus with male colleagues, and this signals the necessity for stronger measures in policies to enhance men's understanding of the benefits of improved gender equality.

A proper gender impact assessment along with actual representation of women in key decision-making roles within political institutions will likely foster more inclusive and gender-responsive governance. Integrating a gender perspective into the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and legislation can also help address the specific impacts on women.

In this respect, proposed laws and measures should not only be analysed from the perspective of the expected directly positive effect on women, but also from the perspective of whether the signal sent contributes to transforming social expectations. Parental leave (instead of maternal leave), for instance, can be arranged in many different ways, all of which can contribute to immediately restoring the work-life balance of women, whilst signalling that caring for their children is a shared responsibility and that both parents' involvement should be the norm. It is also recommended to analyse more comprehensively how the introduction of longer term home-care leave for women, but not for men, reinforces the prevailing unsupportive norms that women are to be the designated unpaid home-care worker.

An attitude survey to estimate the share of people with no bias in gender social norms would help provide a baseline against which to measure the potential for positive change in biased social norms. This in turn would permit an assessment of the combined effects of all measures and actions taken to uproot unsupportive attitudes and traditions.

Whilst there are significant strides for women in key positions at the executive, legislative and judiciary levels, both nationally and sub-nationally, much remains to be done. The barriers and key gaps include the persistent under-representation of women at the highest levels of political leadership; disparities in progress across ASEAN countries; and under-representation in specific areas like the judiciary. The uneven achievements across the AMS, both at the national and local levels, suggest the need for more coordinated and targeted efforts to address the barriers faced by women in different national contexts. The WPPL study also notes that data availability is an issue, with several countries lacking information on women's participation in various political institutions, particularly political party gender-data. The lack of comprehensive and reliable data makes it challenging to track progress, identify gaps, and develop evidence-based policies to address the barriers to women's political empowerment.

Gender balance in political parties: over recent years, the AMS have adopted a variety of strategies to boost WPPL and to tackle those persistent barriers that have historically restricted women's political representation. Several factors and barriers, however, hinder the effectiveness of women's leadership initiatives themselves and impede gender balance in political parties.

The commitment of political parties to promote women's political representation can often be assessed through their internal regulations, bylaws, and manifestos. However, it is noteworthy that except for Cambodia, no other political party across the region has a manifesto that explicitly supports women's leadership. This lack of formal commitment underscores the need for political parties to adopt affirmative policies that prioritise women's representation and actively work to create an inclusive political environment. Quotas for women's representation in elected bodies and political party candidate-lists can immediately boost the number of women in decision-making roles. However, these measures need to be designed and implemented thoughtfully, with clear monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure meaningful and sustainable change.

The role of money in politics is a significant barrier for women, who often face greater resource constraints as compared to their male counterparts. Providing public funding and subsidies to support women candidates can help level the playing field. Additionally, introducing campaign finance regulations to limit the influence of money and ensure more equitable access to resources can create a more inclusive political environment.

Building strong networks and support systems for women in politics is crucial to enhancing their visibility, confidence and access to resources. Structured mentorship initiatives, where successful women politicians or civic leaders guide and support younger women, can be particularly impactful in nurturing the next generation of female political talent. Such peer-to-peer learning and mutual support can help women navigate more effectively the male-dominated political landscape.

Traditional gender roles and social norms continue to uphold male dominance in political leadership. Family responsibilities, limited access to resources, and prevailing societal expectations restrict women's capacity to participate in and advance within political structures. This requires a concerted effort to reshape the public discourse and social norms around women's political leadership. Comprehensive civic education programmes in schools and communities can play a vital role in this regard. These programmes should:

- expose students to positive role models of women in politics;
- discuss the importance of gender parity in decision making; and
- equip young people, both girls and boys, with the knowledge and skills to participate actively in the political process.

Implementing family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave, accessible and affordable childcare support, and flexible work arrangements, can create more inclusive working environments for women in elected bodies. Ensuring the provision of safe and respectful workplaces, free from harassment and discrimination, is also crucial to enabling women to thrive in the political sphere.

Media exposure: women often encounter significant barriers to media exposure. The rapid proliferation of digital and social media platforms presents opportunities as well as challenges for women in politics. On the one hand, these tools can empower women to connect directly with voters, raise their profiles, and mobilise support more effectively. On the other hand, the online space is also rife with misogynistic harassment and abuse targeted at women politicians. Leveraging the positive potential of digital tools, whilst simultaneously implementing robust measures to combat online violence and ensure digital safety, can create a more enabling environment for women to thrive in the political arena.

Monitoring mechanisms and capacity: many national statistics offices across the ASEAN region lack specialised expertise in gender statistics and gender analysis. There is a critical need to build the capacity of statistics staff to better understand gender concepts and issues, and design data-collection methods that are gender sensitive to provide data for more gender-responsive policies.

The dedicated gender equality agencies in ASEAN countries often also face constraints in their statistical and analytical capacities. Many lack the in-house expertise to rigorously monitor and evaluate gender-related data and translate it into evidence-based policymaking. Strengthening the technical capabilities of these national gender agencies is crucial to driving more responsive and impactful gender data systems.

In addition to the broader gaps in sex-disaggregated data across various domains, there are also significant shortcomings in the availability of data on women's participation in political parties and electoral processes in Southeast Asia. Information on the gender composition of party leadership structures, candidate nomination processes and other intra-party dynamics that affect women's political empowerment is often scarce or fragmented.

Filling critical data gaps and achieving the effective integration of gender considerations into national data collection requires strong collaboration and coordination between the national statistics agencies and the gender equality ministries/agencies. In many ASEAN countries, the siloed nature of various government entities has hindered a comprehensive, coordinated approach to generating and using gender-responsive data. The national statistics office, gender machinery, and electoral bodies may operate independently, lacking mechanisms to systematically share information, align methodologies, and jointly analyse data related to WPPL. Further, many ASEAN countries face budget limitations and competing development priorities that make it difficult to allocate sufficient resources to this effort. Securing sustainable funding and technical capacity remains a persistent challenge.

Dissemination and use of data: even when gender data is collected, there are often challenges in ensuring that it is effectively disseminated and utilised by policymakers and other stakeholders. Bridging the gap between data production and data use remains a critical priority.

Many ASEAN countries face limitations in the dissemination and accessibility of sex-disaggregated data. National statistics offices and gender agencies may publish gender data in stand-alone reports or specialised publications, yet these are not always widely circulated or easily accessible to diverse user groups. Further, the formats and presentation of gender data are not always user-friendly or tailored to the needs of different stakeholders. Technical reports with dense statistical tables may not resonate with policymakers who require more concise, visual and actionable insights. Failure to translate data into local languages can also hinder its broader dissemination and uptake.

Beyond accessibility, there are often challenges in the actual utilisation of gender data for evidence-based policymaking. Policymakers, legislators and programme managers may not fully understand the relevance and implications of gender statistics or lack the capacity to interpret and apply the data effectively. The lack of clear data-to-policy feedback loops implies that valuable gender insights often do not translate into tangible policy reforms or programme interventions.

I Conclusions and recommendations focused on three core areas

I. On governing structures, institutional mechanisms, networks, and media:

- *Future gender equality policies* should put a stronger emphasis on a mix of measures to overcome deeply rooted obstacles to gender equality, focusing on the effective implementation of policies to achieve tangible results.
- *Shared responsibility for change* should be emphasised. Here, men's support is crucial, highlighting the need for policies that enhance men's understanding of the benefits of gender equality.
- *A risk analysis and management strategy* to address the potential lack of political commitment to implementing gender-equality measures, possibly including sanction mechanisms at the government level, should be an integral element of future policies.
- *An attitude survey* should be considered to establish a baseline for measuring shifts in biased gender norms and assessing the impact of measures aimed at changing unsupportive attitudes.
- *Women's unpaid care and domestic work:* stronger efforts are needed to ease societal expectations that women alone should take on the burden of unpaid care work. These include an analysis of parental leave options to promote shared responsibilities in childcare and the provision of childcare facilities to ease women's work-life balance.
- *Sexual harassment:* stronger efforts are needed to address this, including reducing the stigma around reporting incidents and advocating for a parliamentary code of conduct that enforces existing legal rules and mechanisms.
- *Young female leaders:* initiatives supporting young women in leadership roles exist in several AMS, providing successful models that could be scaled up to promote leadership at both national and sub-national levels.

II. On increasing women participation in political parties and public institutions:

- *Promote gender-sensitive civic and political education* in schools and communities to reshape public discourse and social norms regarding women's leadership.
- *Implement gender quotas and affirmative action policies* to overcome structural barriers and create a more equitable political landscape for women.

- *Strengthen women's political networks and mentorship programmes* to enhance women's visibility, confidence and political resource access. Cross-party women's caucuses and mentorship programmes are particularly beneficial.
- *Addressing gendered barriers in political financing* by providing public funding and subsidies for women candidates can help level the playing field.
- *Enhance support for women politicians*: family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave and affordable childcare, can create a more inclusive environment.
- *Promote gender-responsive governance*: integrating a gender perspective into policy design, implementation and evaluation helps address the different impacts on women.
- *Leverage digital and social media tools*: the possibility for women to harness the positive aspects of digital tools, alongside measures to combat online abuse, can foster a safer political environment for women.

III. On institutionalising the tracking of WPPL progress in ASEAN:

Building on the findings and recommendations of the WPPL study, the ACW is in an advantageous position to institutionalise these mechanisms and processes for regularly tracking WPPL progress. This includes:

- *Integrating the WPPL indicators and data collection protocols* into the ACW's post-2025 work plan and monitoring processes.
- *Strengthening the capacities of national statistics offices and the gender machinery* to generate and report WPPL data harmoniously.
- *Establishing a regional platform* for regularly exchanging WPPL data, analysis, and good practices among the AMS.
- *Aligning the WPPL monitoring framework* with the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines and other relevant regional and global frameworks.

1. The Women Political Participation and Leadership (WPPL) Study

1.1. Background

This study on WPPL in ASEAN is a follow-up activity to the recommendations made at the first EU-ASEAN Dialogue on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in the context of the ASEAN-EU Cooperation on Gender Equality, held on 22 October 2018 in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

The WPPL study elaborates on insights from the only previous study on women's political participation and leadership in the ASEAN region. In 2014-2015, the ACW, through the leadership of Cambodia, implemented the 'Advancing and Monitoring Women's Political Participation in the ASEAN Region Project'.¹ Through this project, women's political participation was analysed by examining four categories:

- (i) elected positions (direct and indirect election – at national and sub-national levels);
- (ii) candidates of political parties (not elected);
- (iii) appointed decision-making bodies/positions (at national and sub-national levels); and
- (iv) civil society organisations advocating women's participation in politics and public decision making (at national and sub-national levels as feasible).

The study delivered these conclusions:

- (i) there is progress in women's representation in both national-level and sub-national-level elected bodies, but this remains below the critical mass of 30%;
- (ii) across all AMS, there is no indication of a critical mass of women as candidates in party lists;
- (iii) women's appointments in strategic public decision-making levels tends to be more prevalent at less senior levels of decision making;
- (iv) women possess influence and voice within civil society, but there is little evidence to indicate that this is carried outside the realms of advocacy and service delivery; and
- (v) currently, there is no systematic information available to analyse and demonstrate the impact of women's political participation.

A monitoring tool formed a central part of the 2015 study, aiming to establish a foundation for systematic and evidenced-based information on women's representation in the elected bodies and leadership positions in the AMS, and the systematic impacts of their participation on the region's sustainable development. The most recent ACW Work Plan, 2021-2025, explicitly covers the thematic area of gender-responsive governance and leadership. Under Vision 7 of this Work Plan, ACW envisions that by 2025, AMS governments, institutions and stakeholders will promote gender-responsive governance and increase women's leadership and meaningful participation in policy and decision making at all levels.² The monitoring framework for Vision 7 is elaborate, with outcome and output indicators to be monitored.

This WPPL study aims to align and operationalise the 2015 monitoring tool and the Vision 7 monitoring framework. The updating of the monitoring tool with the collection of data is linked to the implementation

1- The report constitutes a synthesis of key findings from nine (9) AMS country studies. Seven country studies were initiated and conducted in parallel in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, and Viet Nam. ACW Myanmar provided the information paper on 'Women's Participation in Political and Public life in Myanmar'. ACW Singapore provided the information paper on 'Women's Participation in Politics and Appointed Decision-Making Positions in Singapore'. A proposed Monitoring Tool was annexed to the synthesis report. Refer to Annex 1.

2- ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) Work Plan 2021-2025.

of the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) and the women's participation and leadership key thematic areas.³ Further, the priority theme of the sixty-fifth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, 15-26 March 2021, was women's full and effective participation and decision making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.⁴

1.2. Context

WPPL are critical in advancing gender equality. This is acknowledged in several international legal instruments, including:

- the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979);
- the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing, 1995); and
- the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its stand-alone Goal 5 on 'Achieving Gender Equality and empower all women and girls' and target 5.5 'Ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life'.

Within ASEAN, the promotion of gender equality and the political empowerment of women are high priorities, underscored in various ASEAN instruments. The Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and the adoption of the SDGs in 2017, aim at the gender-responsive implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 through the promotion of women's equal access to, and full participation in, decision-making bodies and mechanisms. The Joint Statement on Women, Peace, and Security in ASEAN adopted in 2017 further emphasises the importance of women's equal, complete and adequate participation and leadership as agents of change at all stages of peace processes. Women have a critical role in preventing and resolving conflict as well in peacebuilding and in peacekeeping.

The gender gap in political empowerment, as measured by the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI),⁵ nevertheless remains the largest of the four gaps tracked and the most challenging gender gap to close, both globally and in ASEAN. Globally, the gender gap in political empowerment is widening, and the number of years it would take to close the gender gap in political representation is increasing. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) 2020, it would take 95 years to close the gender gap in political representation,⁶ which in 2021 was reported to have increased to 146 years,⁷ and continued to increase to 155 years according to the 2022 report.⁸ Whilst the most significant shift in timeline to parity over the 18 editions of the GGGR has occurred in Political Empowerment, the wait for parity has nevertheless extended to 169 years in 2024 (plus seven years in 2023 and an additional seven in 2024).⁹

The socio-political context varies across the AMS. Brunei Darussalam has only one registered political party which does not run elections or gain electoral representation, and Lao PDR and Vietnam have one-party systems. The remaining seven AMS all have multi-party systems, with Malaysia being a federal state. The electoral system also differs in terms of casting votes for parties versus for individuals, in terms of closed versus open party lists, and in terms of voting in national elections only versus sub-national and national elections. Nevertheless, whilst the diversity across the AMS in 2024 remains the highest when it comes to closing the political empowerment gender gap, there seems to be no unambiguous correlation between developments in political gender empowerment gaps and prevailing socio-political systems.

3- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/gender-action-plan-iii-towards-gender-equal-world_en

4- <https://www.unwomen.org/csw/csw65-20210>

5- The Gender Gap Index is designed to measure gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in countries, rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities in those countries. It thus evaluates countries based on outcomes rather than inputs or means, and it ranks countries according to their proximity to gender equality to women's empowerment. The Global Gender Gap Index monitors gender gaps in four dimensions of development; i) Economic participation and opportunity; ii) Educational attainment; iii) Health and survival; and iv) Political empowerment.

6- WEFORUM, The Global Gender Gap Report 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

7- WEFORUM, The Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Insights Report, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>

8- WEFORUM, The Global Gender Gap Report 2022. Insights Report, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022>

9- WEFORUM, The Global Gender Gap Report 2024. Insights Report, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2024>

From 2022 to 2024, a slightly closing trend can be seen in the political empowerment GGGI in the two AMS with one-party systems (Lao PDR and Viet Nam), whilst the closing trend is somewhat more pronounced in the AMS with no political parties standing for election (Brunei Darussalam). In the remaining seven AMS with multiparty systems, the gender gap for women's political empowerment is closing in three (Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand), whilst widening in four (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar).¹⁰

As for educational attainment in 2024, the gender gap is almost closed: ranging from 97% or higher and reaching 100% in Malaysia and the Philippines. A similar situation is found for the gender gap in health and survival: with the closure of the gap ranging from around 95% (Brunei Darussalam and Viet Nam) to close to 98% (Cambodia and Thailand). However, the gender gap for the economic participation and opportunity index persists: with a variation in gender gap closure between 60% and 78% (in Myanmar and Singapore, respectively).

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the value of having women adequately represented in leadership. In the AMS and globally, the special task forces created to help tackle the rapidly evolving crisis mainly relied on pre-existing male-dominated networks. Whilst women were thus largely excluded from these bodies, evidence shows that a combination of a higher representation of women in parliament, strong feminist movements and strong democratic institutions was associated with a greater number of gender-sensitive measures during the pandemic.¹¹ The role of women and girls as front-line health-care workers and as caregivers for home-schooling children as well as the sick or elderly family members was also brought into the spotlight during the COVID pandemic.

The disproportionate distribution of unpaid care and domestic work¹² is one of the root causes of the persistent inequalities. This was reconfirmed in a study on the care economy in ASEAN.¹³ A mix of policies is needed to enable women and men to better reconcile the time requirements of the workplace with those of unpaid care work at home, including parental leave, care leave, care insurance schemes, and flexible work arrangements. During the launch of the ASEAN care study, ASEAN reaffirmed their commitment to address women's unpaid care and domestic work.¹⁴

According to ACW Vision 7, the obstacles to overcome in ASEAN include:

- a lack of collaboration and partnership among different AMS organisations and ASEAN bodies to promote gender equality;
- unsupportive social attitudes towards women in the role of leadership and decision making;
- occupational segregation and gender wage gaps;
- the traditional practice of male dominance and some laws posing barriers for women to take on leadership roles in decision making; and
- gender stereotypes and biases in educational materials, media, and suchlike, which perpetuate women as unworthy or incapable of holding leadership positions.

Women in politics tend to be assigned only to particular sectors due to persistent gender stereotypes and biases.¹⁵ They also experience harassment and violence. The obstacles identified in the ACW Vision 7 thus, in large, reiterate barriers and gaps similar to those identified in the 2015 synthesis report from the project 'Advancing and Monitoring Women's Political Participation in the ASEAN Region'. This also pointed to the challenge of 'glass ceilings' or invisible/informal obstacles.

10- Myanmar is not covered in 2024. WEFORUM, The Global Gender Gap report 2024. Insights Report, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>.

11- UNDP&UN Women, Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil, <https://www.undp.org/publications/government-responses-covid-19-lessons-gender-equality-world-turmoil>

12- The 2024 GGG Report includes data on the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work for two AMS, indicating that in Thailand women spent 11.85 percent of their time on this while men spent 3.75 percent, and in Lao PDR women spent 13.6 percent while men spent 10.06 percent.

13- ESCAP, Addressing Unpaid Care Work in ASEAN 2021. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/addressing-unpaid-care-work-asean>.

14- <https://asean.org/asean-reaffirms-commitment-to-address-womens-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-during-launch-of-new-un-asean-report/>

15- ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) Work Plan 2021-2025.

2. WPPL study approach and methodology

2.1. Study objectives and overall approach

The overall objective of the study is to provide an inclusive landscape of WPPL in ASEAN and their impact on the region's sustainable development, whilst also taking into account the different systems of government of each AMS. Rather than seeking to compare the achievements of each Member State, the study assesses the current status and provides lessons learned as well as recommendations for enhancing WPPL in ASEAN. The seven specific objectives are set out below.

- i. Provide a clear understanding of the current situation and the trends of WPPL at both national and sub-national levels across ASEAN.
- ii. Provide an updated list of indicators (and baseline data) that should constitute the basis for monitoring the women in political leadership situation in the ASEAN region and provide the basis of regular monitoring over the coming years.
- iii. Provide success stories and good practices as well as lessons learned on WPPL, across ASEAN.
- iv. Identify core enablers contributing to increased WPPL in political spheres in the region.
- v. Provide a comprehensive mapping of institutional facilitators of WPPL in the region, in the political and public sphere (including the media).
- vi. Provide platforms to update monitoring tools and data to assess the impacts of WPPL on the region's development.
- vii. Identify and recommend actions to be undertaken by relevant stakeholders at the national and regional levels to further promote WPPL in the region.

The national level in each AMS is the starting point: appropriately capturing diversities in terms of varying government systems, socio-economic context and differing status regarding gender equality in political participation. Indeed, future progress monitoring requires baseline information from each AMS.

The chosen approach for the national-level WPPL studies was to have AMS country teams, composed of ACW focal points and nominated national experts. The national experts were technically responsible for producing national reports, closely guided by the ACW focal points. Thereby, political appraisal of the study was secured from the outset, whilst the ACW focal points had access to support from the national technical capacity. Technical support was further provided by E-READI through a team of one senior monitoring and evaluation (M&E) expert and one senior gender expert, who also developed the subsequent regional study based on the national AMS reports.

2.2. Study scope and process

2.2.1. Key Performance Indicators (KPI) defining study scope

This WPPL study explicitly aims to put two previously approved monitoring frameworks into practice, namely the monitoring framework of Vision 7 of the ACW 2021-2025 Work Plan and the 2015 monitoring tool. The Vision 7 framework is comprehensive, with a total of 4 outcomes, 14 outputs and 21 indicators. The 2015 monitoring tool includes an additional 29 indicators grouped around four categories.¹⁶

Considering the extensive nature of these two monitoring frameworks, all parties recognised the need to refine the scope to align with the available WPPL study resources. In a first comparison between the two frameworks, it was found that some of the 2015 indicators were already matched by indicators in the Vision 7 framework, whereas others would fit well under one of the 14 outputs. Some were, however, outside the scope of the Vision 7 monitoring framework.

The final selection of which KPIs to include, in effect, defined the scope of data collection for this WPPL study. The selection also provided the scope of baseline data needed to operationalise actual progress monitoring. It was agreed that the evolving monitoring framework to be applied in this study would follow the structure of the more recent Vision 7 framework. A visual overview of the selected 18 KPIs to be included, aligned to the corresponding outcomes and outputs of the Vision 7 monitoring framework, can be found in Annex 1.

2.2.2. KPI selection process and selection considerations

A comparatively lengthy, but highly transparent, participatory and inclusive process was applied in order to arrive at a consensus among the ACW focal points from all AMS about which KPIs to include, as well as to agree on definitions of the selected indicators.

The two senior experts prepared a first selection of potential indicators, which remained broad and primarily intended as the basis to be further narrowed down in an iterative process in which the ACW focal points were the key decision makers. During the introductory and preparatory phases of the study, two online workshops were held on 8 April 2022 and 12 July 2022, respectively. Here, participants included the ACW focal points from each respective AMS, officials from the ASEAN Secretariat, E-READI senior and junior experts, and the two senior Non-Key Experts (NKE).

The final consensus on the selection of KPIs, and the definition to be applied to each of the selected KPIs, was eventually reached during an in-person closed-door workshop on 23 August 2022 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. Here, the nominated national experts were also introduced. In total, there were 36 participants, including ACW focal points and national experts from the AMS, officials from the ASEAN Secretariat, the EU Delegation to ASEAN, and senior experts from E-READI. In preparation and follow-up for these three workshops, several technical meetings were held between the ASEAN Secretariat, E-READI senior and junior experts, and the two senior NKEs.

One important aspect in the final selection of KPIs was the ACW focal points' assessment of actual data availability. The WPPL study is expected to set the standards for regular future data collection. The actual capacity to regularly collect and process data in the AMS had therefore to be acknowledged, and a realistic schedule for the frequency of data collection be set. The inclusion of qualitative indicators to capture the monitoring of key root causes contributing to gender inequality, including the unequal rate of women in politics and public decision making, is a challenge, when seen from a capacity requirement perspective.

16- i) Elected positions (direct and indirect election, at national and sub-national levels); ii) Candidates of political parties (not elected); iii) Appointed decision-making bodies/positions (at national and sub-national levels); and civil society organisations) advocating women's participation in politics and public decision-making (at national and sub-national levels as feasible).

There is a call for increased investment in gender equality data and evidence, because it informs policy decision-making and ensures that responses are effective and inclusive.¹⁷ By giving access to structured empirical evidence and data, the WPPL study contributes to a more substantial basis for future policymaking. Further, it will facilitate efforts to strive for the necessary transformative steps to continuously strengthen women's opportunities to engage in political decision making and leadership.¹⁸

2.3. Data collection methodology and sources

During the in-person workshop in Jakarta, indicative data sources and methods for data gathering were agreed upon in principle. Two main methodologies were to be applied:

- i. desk review of secondary documents; and
- ii. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and/or Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

The agreed definitions, indicative data sources and proposed data-collection methods for each selected KPI were consolidated into one data-collection tool. The two senior NKEs prepared guidance notes for each KPI and these were added to the data-collection tool document to support the review of documents and to guide issues to be discussed in FGDs/KIIs. The operational definitions of the selected KPIs as well as the data-collection methods and templates are provided in Annex 2.

The subsequent identification of specific national-level data sources and methods for data gathering, including identification of appropriate participants to be invited to FGDs and/or KIIs, was initiated during the in-person workshop but remained to be finalised by each AMS. The remaining gaps in clarifying data sources and methods for data collection were subsequently closed in bilateral online discussions between the two senior NKEs and each AMS team as relevant.

2.4. Data analysis and study structure

A report outline for national-level WPPL studies was shared with the ACW focal points and the respective selected national expert. National-level data was collected and analysed by the national teams in each AMS, then approved by the respective ACW focal point. This now provides a foundation for the establishment of national-level baselines for the selected KPIs, against which the future progress of women's political empowerment and participation in governance and leadership can be assessed.

The national-level WPPL studies constitute the foundation for this regional-level WPPL study. The data, information and analyses in the national reports provide the basis for understanding the current situation and trends of WPPL in ASEAN. As such, this also set the limits for the regional study, which is primarily determined by the information provided by each AMS in their respective national-level WPPL study.

The agreed cut-off date for information and data to be included in the WPPL regional study's core analysis was set to 31 December 2023. This decision ensured that all AMS were assessed using a consistent and comparable timeframe. The cut-off also allowed the study to maintain analytical coherence and avoid complications arising from partial updates from only certain countries.

A consolidated regional-level analysis of the collected national-level information and data is presented for each of the 18 KPIs, which provides for a regional landscape that includes a discussion of perceived gaps and limitations in the data gathered (Chapter 3). A summary of national-level findings for each KPI can be found in Annex 3, thus allowing a comparatively easy means by which to gather a situational picture of each AMS across all KPIs. Assessed strengths and weaknesses at the outcome level are presented in the conclusions in Chapter 4, followed by recommendations in the final chapter (5).

17- The ASEAN Gender Outlook is the first regional flagship publication jointly produced by ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), the ASEAN Secretariat, and UN Women. It is dedicated to tracking progress towards gender equality and SDGs in the ASEAN region. <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/asean-gender-outlook>

18- Opening speech of H.E. Kheng Samvada, Permanent Secretary of State, Ministry of Women's Affairs of Cambodia, and ACW Cambodia Focal Point, at the Jakarta in-person workshop on the WPPL study on 23 August 2022.

The WPPL study has a forward-looking vision. It provides the foundation for a constantly updated undertaking that aims to build a consensus that reshapes the political landscape in ASEAN by promoting women's participation and leadership. Several pieces of qualitative information and new quantitative data from 2024 and the beginning of 2025 were made available in the process but are not included in the analysis of findings in the present WPPL study. This information and data will, however, serve as important inputs for the next round of monitoring to evaluate progress against this WPPL baseline study. A summary of selected recent information and data is shared in Annex 4 to illustrate this continuous and rapid progress.

3. Key Performance Indicator (KPI) findings

Information and data for the selected 18 KPIs were gathered at the national level in each of the 10 AMS. The set of national-level studies from the AMS constitutes the basic source for the analysis below, unless otherwise indicated.¹⁹ It is worth noting that progress monitoring of indicators implies looking at the 'status quo' at the time of gathering the findings. The effects of previous efforts, measures, activities, and suchlike are implicitly reflected in the findings of today, and historical details about previous policies, campaigns and suchlike are therefore not further elaborated upon here.

The assessment and analysis of the findings are structured around the agreed KPIs (please see Annex 1). In essence, the assessment and analysis of the findings aim to establish a baseline against which to monitor future progress in each of the AMS, thereby in turn providing the basis for future ASEAN regional-level progress monitoring.

3.1. Governing structures and arrangements stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies

More women in political leadership tends to create a powerful role-model effect and certainly generates decisions that represent broader parts of the population. Societal expectations, legal environment and other barriers that affect women more than men, including the elimination of gender-based violence and the availability of care, continue to play an essential role in the choice of career trajectories. The effective functioning of established governing structures and arrangements plays a key role in overcoming potential obstacles to enhancing the opportunities and willingness of women to engage in decision making and political leadership.

3.1.1. Legal frameworks foster gender balance in governance structures and bodies (KPI 1-5)

3.1.1.1. Policies that stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies (KPI 1)

Each of the ASEAN countries has by now acceded to or ratified the CEDAW.²⁰ Specific national gender-equality and women-empowerment policies and/or strategies are developed in the majority²¹ of the ASEAN countries. These delineate lines of oversight responsibility, identify responsible government bodies to ensure implementation, and include quantitative targets and indicators for women's participation at various levels and in various positions. Brunei Darussalam is in the preparatory phase of developing a comprehensive National Plan of Action on Women, which will be used as a reference for policymaking on gender balance.

Gender mainstreaming is mandated in Indonesia, and the government has integrated gender equality into every stage of its national mid-term development plan since 2005. A gender-analysis pathway is to be used to assess whether policies, programmes and activities are gender responsive or not. In the Philippines, the relevant overall policy promotes gender mainstreaming as a strategy to integrate actions towards gender equality across the whole society. Minimum requirements to achieve gender equality are set through both

19- The national-level reports are extensive, and a heavy-handed selection of findings and analysis was inevitable. A summary of national-level findings for each KPI is seen in Annex 3.

20- Each of the 10 AMS has by now accessed or ratified the CEDAW with deposition of its Treaty between August 1981 and May 2006, and will thus be discussed herein only when directly referred to for findings presented. Treaties deposited by Brunei Darussalam (May 2006), Cambodia (October 1992), Indonesia (September 1984), Lao PDR (August 1981), Malaysia (July 1993), Myanmar (July 1997), Philippines (August 1981) Singapore (October 1995), Thailand (August 1985), and Vietnam (February 1982).

21- Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

gender and development planning and the budgeting system with oversight and monitoring under the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW).

Concerted measures to address and eventually overcome persisting challenges are generally not specifically addressed in policies and/or strategies beyond awareness-raising campaigns and training primarily targeting women. These challenges include social prejudices and gender stereotypes, addressing unpaid care work and other barriers that affect women more than men, including the elimination of gender-based violence.

Specified measures towards addressing unsupportive social attitudes towards women in the role of leadership and decision making, and gender stereotyping, are mentioned in three AMS. Transforming social norms and values is one specific result area of the gender and development budgeting system in the Philippines. Measures to be taken include sensitisation training of partners, advocacy campaigns, but also include promoting basic education and knowledge of gender equality. Gender stereotypes are addressed in Singapore through enhancing the Character and Citizenship Education curriculum to address mental models and stereotypes more directly, especially those that impact women in their career choices and familial roles. The curriculum emphasises the value each person brings to careers and the family irrespective of gender, and students learn to appreciate that families can be different, and shared parental roles and familial responsibilities are discussed and mutually agreed upon. Brunei Darussalam notes that gender stereotypes tend to be *sticky elements*²² and that attitudinal and ideational change is crucial for a more future-oriented and forward-looking approach to achieving gender equality. Awareness programmes may be successful to a certain extent, but they need to include both women and men (or be designed to be more targeted to men and boys) as participants.

Overall, descriptive information of intended achievements in terms of objectives and that of an appointed government agency body for overseeing implementation is prevalent, whereas risk assessments and risk management to enhance the possibility of smooth implementation are weaker. There is, for instance, little discussion of whether the appointed oversight machinery is equipped with adequate tools or support structures to leverage enforcement.

Insufficient budget allocations are assessed to prevent the effective execution of gender mainstreaming action plans in line ministries in Cambodia. In Indonesia, there is growing recognition of the need to further enhance budget allocations to programmes that support gender equality, promote a healthy work-life balance for women, and address challenges rooted in patriarchal traditions, as well as policies and initiatives aimed at combating gender-based violence. In Malaysia, the 2022 budget did not include significant allocations for advancing women's leadership. The issues of financial and human resources have been proposed as the primary obstacles to the effective execution of gender-equality work in general, and the realisation of the objectives and targets in the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020 in particular.

In Indonesia, strengthening the political commitment to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy in all aspects of planning and budgeting would significantly enhance the effectiveness of its implementation. There is, further, a lack of understanding of the gender-mainstreaming analytical tools. In Malaysia, one obstacle is the lack of acknowledgment as to the importance of the guiding principle of the set minimum of 30% representation for women. Men and women leaders deem that the policy will only be effective if it is embraced by both genders in both the public and the private domains. Leadership positions are limited and come with such authority that it means men will not easily make way for women to be leaders. There is an urgent need for those men holding leadership positions to acknowledge that the lack of women in leadership is a problem. A challenge assessed in Cambodia is that gender mainstreaming action plans in line ministries tend to focus only on training, whilst there should be more innovative ideas as to how to effectively mainstream gender equality and empower women in their respective sectors.

22- Also confirmed by a recent study (covering 38 nations, out of which 4 AMS) revealing that between the periods 2010-2014 and 2017-2022 the share of people with no bias in gender social norms improved in Singapore whereas a backlash was seen in Thailand, Malaysia, and Philippines. UNDP, Breaking down gender biases. Shifting social norms towards gender equality 2022. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-07/gsni202303pdf.pdf>.

3.1.1.2. Legal frameworks which foster gender balance are available (KPI 2)

The range of laws included in the national-level WPPL studies differs across the AMS. So, for example, social sector laws are more detailed in some AMS, which is, to a certain extent, a reflection of varying socio-cultural and socio-political contexts (please see Annex 3 for details on specific laws and legal documents in each AMS).

Equal rights between men and women and/or guaranteed equality and non-discrimination of citizens, including on the grounds of gender, are stipulated in laws in most AMS.²³ Most frequently, the constitution in the respective AMS is referred to; whereas in Lao PDR, reference is made to the Law on Women's Development and Protection, and in the Philippines the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) seeks to eliminate gender-based discrimination. In Brunei Darussalam, the Islamic Family Law Act aims at protecting women's rights, especially in the context of family life, whilst laws in general are drafted to include both genders.

Equal rights for women and men to vote and to be elected are guaranteed in the constitutions and/or election laws in all nine AMS where regular national and/or sub-national elections take place (expressed either in direct terms or indirectly as an implication of providing for equal rights for men and women before the law).²⁴ Here, though, political parties act as gatekeepers to candidacy. Whilst women have equal rights to stand as party candidates, the authority to decide who will be included as a candidate for election rests with the respective party. Election list quotas for women are mandatory only in the Election Law and Law on Political Parties in Indonesia: with a 'modified zipper model candidate list' requiring that for every three candidates there is at least one woman. Percentage targets for the share of female candidates are set in several AMS; however, these targets exist only as policies and carry no mandatory legal enforcement (gender equality within political parties is discussed further under KPIs 6-8 below).

Gender equality at work is generally provided for in laws governing the labour market, with a certain degree of limitation in Brunei Darussalam, where there are some elements for protection against discrimination in the labour market, but the extent of these protections may be tenuous.

Women's equal rights in the economic sector in access to assets, including land and through inheritance, is highlighted in some AMS. In Brunei Darussalam, the Islamic Family Law Act aims to protect women's rights in the context of separation, divorce, reconciliation, and inheritance. In Cambodia, the Land Law and the Marriage and Family law guarantee men and women equal rights to own and inherit land and protect the rights of female-headed households and people with disabilities. The Inheritance Law in Lao PDR endorses the same inheritance rights for men and women (in contradiction to the customary land inheritance system). In Viet Nam, the Land Law as well as the Civil Code support equal inheritance-rights to land and other property attached to land for men and women and prohibits the disenfranchisement of surviving wives.

Maternity and paternity leave regulations are established in all AMS,²⁵ either in the constitution, the employment or labour laws, the maternity leave regulations, or similar. These laws also aim to ensure that women are not discriminated against in their work life by their reproductive and childbearing roles. Whilst the number of paid days for maternity and paternity leave varies across the AMS, mothers have considerably more paid leave days than fathers. In Malaysia, in addition to maternity and paternity leave, the Public Service Department allows women workers to take non-paid leave for childcare for up to five years. Women workers can take leave to care for their own child, adopted, fostered, or the de facto child for whom the woman worker has been taking care for over two years. There is, as of now, no legally provided rights for parental leave. However, in Indonesia, a revision to the Labour Law is being discussed to include a clause on parenting leave for six months. Singapore encourages shared responsibility for care-giving and paternity leave was doubled to four weeks in 2024. Fathers can also apply to share up to four weeks of Shared Paternal Leave from their spouse's maternity leave, sending a clear message that paternal involvement should be the norm (see KPI 1). The current Shared Parental Leave scheme will be replaced

23- Indonesia did not explicitly mention any such law in its national report. Information may be added during the review of this first draft of the regional report.

24- In Brunei Darussalam no political parties stand for elections.

25- There is though no mention of laws or regulations on maternity and paternity leave in the national-level reports from Malaysia and Thailand.

with a new Shared Parental Leave, which will provide ten weeks of paid parental leave shared between both parents on top of the Government-Paid Maternity Leave and Government-Paid Paternity Leave. The Government will roll this out in two phases to manage the impact on employers. At first, six weeks of shared leave will be provided for babies born from 1 April 2025; this will be increased to the full ten weeks a year later. The ten weeks of shared leave will also be paid for by the Government.

Measures to support the specific needs of working women, such as menstrual leave and breastfeeding rooms, are in place in Indonesia. However, further strengthening to the implementation of these supportive policies through clear sanction mechanisms would help ensure better compliance and the protection of women's rights in the workplace. Female workers in Lao PDR are entitled to rest one hour per day to feed, vaccinate or otherwise take care of their child. The Philippines enacted an Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act requiring health and non-health facilities, establishments and institutions to establish lactation rooms. Nursing employees are entitled to break intervals in addition to their regular time off for meals to breastfeed or express milk.

Day-care facilities in the workplace are provided for in Indonesia in derivative regulations to the labour law. In the Philippines, the Day Care Law mandates for the establishment of a day-care centre in every small territorial and administrative district (barangay). National government agencies and government-owned and controlled corporations are requested to provide day-care services to their employees' children who are under five years old. The services should be within the office premises or nearby accessible areas, thus emphasising that childcare is a social responsibility of public institutions and the state. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) operates a day-care centre and has been advocating for the establishment of a day-care centre in all government institutions. The MoWA's guidelines on the operation of day-care centres were officially launched in May 2024. The establishment of day-care centres in other ministries is yet to be implemented, possibly more due to budget constraints. The Cambodian Labour Law requires managers of enterprises employing a minimum of 100 women (over the legal age for employment) to set up a nursing room and a child-care centre, either within their premises or nearby. No required standards are set.

Flexible working arrangements and women-friendly practices are in place, to a certain extent, in three AMS. In Malaysia, flexible working arrangements include working part-time, working remotely or a combination of both. This workplace flexibility enables employees to organise their working hours in a way that meets the needs of both the employee and the agency. To support flexible working arrangements, departments and agencies will provide the necessary digital infrastructure. Flexible working hours are to ensure that women remain in the workplace, perform better and can ultimately acquire leadership positions. In Singapore, in line with the tripartite Standards for Flexible Work Arrangements and Work-Life Harmony, public officers can request for flexi-place, flexitime or flexi-load arrangements to enable officers to balance their work and personal responsibilities. In Thailand, the Action Plan on Women's Development includes strategies to push for policies/measures/practices that are friendly to women and create models and commend workplaces that are exemplary in having women-friendly practices, both in government and in the private sector.

Whilst *domestic and sexual violence* is criminalised through the legal framework in several AMS, and a complaint thus may be filed with the police to be investigated for possible prosecution, many victims do not file a report due to stigma or fear of repercussions. The provision of support services to victims of domestic violence is, consequently, the most common measure referred to in the national-level WPPL, including mediation. In Cambodia, the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women is in place. In Viet Nam, the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control was adopted by the National Assembly in 2007 and amended in 2022.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is explicitly prohibited in the Labour Laws/Codes in Cambodia and Viet Nam, whereas in Malaysia this is covered in the Employment Act, the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act, and the Anti-Stalking Bill. In the Philippines, it is covered in the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law and Safe Spaces Act. In Lao PDR, the labour law does not define, or explicitly prohibit, sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment in the workplace is discussed further in KPI 10, below.

3.1.1.3. *Enforcement of laws and regulations, where relevant, in support of gender equality (KPI 3)*

Laws and regulations are enforced through various modes of enforcement. In the national reports, the enforcement of policies is discussed alongside the enforcement of laws and regulations. Drawing a clear line of distinction between policy and laws and regulations is a challenge, with an inevitable degree of overlapping or cross-referencing, as evidenced previously in KPI 1 and KPI 2.

The enforcement discussion below is split into two sub-sections. First, we summarise findings from the national WPPL studies on overall enforcement. Then, we present a summary of the different modes of enforcement for laws related to gender-based violence (as a reference point for the performance indicator on sexual harassment and code of conduct in KPI 10, below).

Overall enforcement of policies:

Diverse modes of enforcement are described, such as assigning coordinated oversight responsibilities to a government institution for a national gender-equality policy or a gender-mainstreaming policy. Other modes are the provision of support services and programmes, and the implementation of training and public awareness campaigns.

Overall, whilst procedures and institutional arrangements are described, there is less information on their effectiveness, i.e., how well they are applied and practised (which would be required to become a functional baseline for future monitoring). Similarly, there is a lack of assessment as to whether training and awareness campaigns are effective modes of enforcement. There is no mention of access to strict enforcement tools to be applied when rules and regulations are not followed by one or several parties. The absence of, for example, strict sanction mechanisms is mentioned as a weakness by Indonesia. Malaysia, in turn, refers to the importance of paying stronger attention to enforcement in addition to enacting policies and laws.

Good examples of a discussion around effectiveness are found in the WPPL report from Viet Nam. The report points to a remaining lack of awareness, especially in rural areas, with limited understanding of the gender-equality law as obstacles to the effective implementation of gender-equality policies and laws. In addition, a deeply engrained patriarchal culture presents an obstacle to changing attitudes towards gender equality, combined with a lack of resources, infrastructure and the limited ability of women to influence decision-making processes. Indonesia attributes challenges in meeting set quotas to factors like limited political commitment and less assertive language, such as merely advising to 'pay attention to' these goals. Additionally, the absence of strict sanction mechanisms to enforce policies supporting women's specific needs in employment is also highlighted as a contributing factor. Cambodia assessed social norms as hindrances to achieving gender-equality goals. In the WPPL study from Lao PDR, it is concluded that particularly regressive attitudes and negative stereotypes prevent effective enforcement, despite the legislation and institutional mechanisms being in place.

Enforcement of gender-related violence laws:

The primary modes of enforcement for these laws include providing training programmes, offering advice and social services, providing free legal services, supporting police investigations and legal actions, as well as raising awareness about women's rights.

Indonesia's 2022 Sexual Violence Law represents a vital step toward stronger protections for victims and improved accountability of perpetrators. However, implementation challenges remain, particularly at the regional level, where enforcement practices can vary. Efforts are ongoing to ensure that the law's principles are consistently upheld nationwide, protecting victims and reinforcing justice for all. Malaysia emphasises the importance of assessing the enforcement of new legal acts after five years, such as acts related to sexual harassment and anti-stalking. There are claims of improved effectiveness in terms of enhanced awareness of gender-based violence in Viet Nam, though not accompanied by empirical evidence from evaluations or other assessment methods.

3.1.1.4. *Review of laws and discriminatory clauses in laws and policies, where relevant (KPI 4)*

Reviews undertaken in the national WPPL studies show that there are remaining discriminatory clauses or laws in some AMS, whereas Thailand finds that all discriminatory laws have been revoked or amended. In Brunei Darussalam, laws are non-discriminatory, and they are reviewed in an on-going process. Singapore regularly reviews its laws to ensure that they are up to date and relevant to its evolving society, as well as fit for purpose for protecting women and girls against discrimination and harm.

In Cambodia, as the fundamental legal framework, the Constitution guarantees that no other law will include discriminatory provisions. In Malaysia, there are gaps in the Federal Constitution in which gender discrimination persists, as the prohibition against discrimination only binds the government and public authorities but not private parties. In addition, the Federal Constitution gives different rights to men and women regarding the nationality of their children. The Constitution of Myanmar includes a section that implies gender stereotypes in appointing or assigning duties to certain civil service personnel.

Indonesia has identified areas in family, administrative and citizenship laws where enhancements can further protect women and children's rights. For example, setting a clear minimum marriage age can support efforts to prevent child marriage, whilst refining legal language in laws related to pornography can provide stronger protections and clearer safeguards for victims of sexual abuse and violence. Ensuring non-discriminatory provisions across all recognised beliefs and addressing regional policies can further Indonesia's commitment to inclusivity. Continued collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs can support the refinement and alignment of these laws, helping build a fairer, more protective legal framework for all citizens. In the Philippines, the Family Code needs to be revised on several provisions, including on the preference for a father's/husband's consent/decision to the marriage of children between the ages of 18-21, on giving preference to the husband's decision in cases of disagreement with his wife, and on giving preference to the father about parental authority over their common children. A priority is to revise the Penal Code to ensure women's equal rights in marriage and family relations. In Viet Nam, the Marriage and Family Law stipulates different marriage ages for men and women.

An analysis of the Law on Gender Equality in Lao PDR confirmed it to be gender-responsive, but it requires the development of further regulations or other legal mechanisms and procedures to be effective in practice. Whilst the Law on Making Legislation enables the Women's Caucus to comment on laws before they are finalised, it does not include gender-specific criteria for assessing the impacts of the proposed laws. In Viet Nam, inconsistencies remain between the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents. There is also significant inadequacy in the process of promulgating policies at the national level in the Law on Gender Equality.

A lack of clarity in the Employment Act in Malaysia creates room for employers to impose restrictions on employees which negatively impact women workers and allow for the existence of a 'glass ceiling'. As there is no specific law against discrimination, the legal system is weak when it comes to acknowledging the potential for discrimination to manifest itself in various forms. In Viet Nam, the revised Labour Code in 2019 stipulates different retirement ages for women and men. The Law on Social Insurance stipulates different ages for male and female employees to be eligible for pensions and shows differences in the calculation of monthly pensions for male and female employees.

3.1.1.5. *Implementation of temporary special measures/affirmative action (process and policies in place), where applicable (KPI 5)*

Quantitative policy and strategy targets and/or quotas to ensure minimum representation of women are the most prominent affirmative actions referred to in the national WPPL studies. Targets are set in terms of a certain percentage of representation of women, or in terms of setting a minimum quantity of women in elected political institutions and government agencies.

As for political parties, Indonesia has set quotas for women in political party management at the national and sub-national level, and political parties are required to consider a minimal level of women in the selection of cadres. Further, to be registered as election participants, the political parties are required to include at least 30% of women's representation in party management. In nominating its members in the DPR and

DPRD elections, each political party is required to have at least one woman in every three candidates. The Philippines applies incentives in the sense that political parties that field at least 30% of women candidates shall receive 10 points towards their accreditation as a dominant political party. Efforts are made to adopt a gender quota for candidates, providing incentives to political parties who have reached the quota in their leadership and policymaking structure and/or the roster of candidates for the elections. Wherein, neither gender comprises less than 40% nor more than 60% of the number of candidates on the party slate. Viet Nam requires a minimum level of female candidates in the official candidate lists for elections for National Assembly deputies and People's Council deputies. As for elected representatives, Lao PDR has set targets for women in the national assembly.

Cambodia applies percentage targets for women in leadership and management positions at both national and subnational levels. At least one female Secretary of State and one female Under-Secretary of State shall be appointed in each ministry. In all provincial and district departments and boards of governors, there must be at least one woman as a deputy director and a deputy governor, respectively. In the recruitment of new civil servants, the government encourages ministries to recruit women with a target of 20 to 50%. In Lao PDR, percentage targets for leadership and decision-making positions at central, provincial and Vientiane Capital levels as well as district and village levels are set, with the highest target at the central level and the lowest at the village level. Malaysia has set a quota for women representatives in the Village Community Management Council and for the representation of women among senators in the Upper House of Parliament. A minimum of 30% involvement of women in each sector is to be encouraged in Myanmar, whilst in a community-based infrastructure project, the policy is to have equal shares of women and men among committee members. The Philippines has detailed specific actions on WPPL to incrementally increase the number of women in third-level positions in the government to achieve a fifty-fifty (50-50) gender balance over the immediate five years following the enactment of the MCW. A minimum level of female membership of all development councils from the regional, provincial, city, municipal, and barangay levels shall be ensured. In Singapore, the Council for Board Diversity (CBD) has set measurable targets to achieve sustained increases in women representation on statutory boards, Institutions of a Public Character (IPCs), such as charities, as well as on boards of listed companies.

Qualitative affirmative measures to support the achievement of set quantitative targets include capacity building targeting women and requesting planning processes to include gender equality, sometimes focussing specifically on young women with the capability to become future leaders.

The Young Executive Programmes in Brunei Darussalam are intended to strengthen the capabilities of future leaders to meet the ever-changing needs of the public. Young women and men are selected in equal numbers. In Cambodia, each sub-national administrative level is required to formulate a clear plan that ensures the promotion of women to management positions. Whilst Malaysia has no specific measures to achieve set quotas, part of the state actions does include an annual conference (the Penang Women's Conference) to promote more active participation of women in politics and to create sufficient women leaders to lead the state. The Philippines refers to the adoption of laws and the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming, accompanied by the setting of minimum investment requirements in the planning and budgeting system, as well as the establishment of the gender and development focal system. In Viet Nam, the Prime Minister has approved the implementation of the programme 'Enhancing equal participation of women in leadership and management positions at all levels of policy planning for the period 2021 – 2030'.

3.1.2. Greater gender balance in political parties exist (KPI 6-8)

The ASEAN Progress Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality²⁶ concluded that the full political participation of women is an essential requirement to achieving gender issues being placed at the centre of an institution's political agenda. It was hoped that with a renewed and improved participation of women in politics, there would be greater direct engagement of women in public decision making and this would create the means to ensure better accountability to women. The WPPL study looks at the existence of gender balance in political parties along the following three (3) performance indicators (KPIs 6 to 8) and relates it to KPI 18.

26- ASEAN Secretariat. 2016. Progress Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

3.1.2.1. Women in selected political parties (members/candidates) (KPI 6)

Data from the AMS reveals that the average percentage of women candidates at the national level is 36.65%, whilst at the sub-national level it drops to 18.32%. Overall, women make up only 14.49% of political party membership across the region. There is significant variation among countries; for instance, Malaysia has achieved a remarkable 50% female membership, whilst other AMS report much lower figures.

Brunei Darussalam has only one registered political party, the National Development Party (NDP), which does not engage in elections. Therefore, it is excluded from the study for this KPI. Similarly, Singapore's civil service does not track political party activities. Key trends by country include:

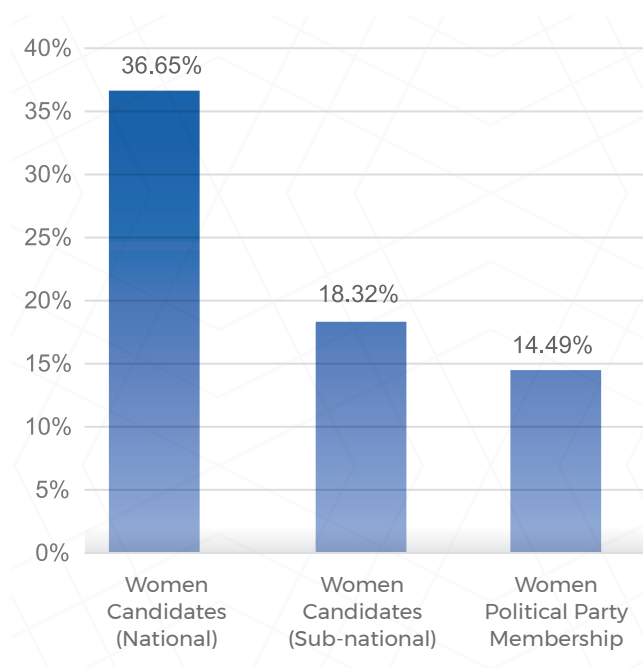
- Cambodia: employs a 'closed list' system; about 32% of candidates in the 2022 local elections were women.
- Indonesia: women comprised 23.17% of party membership and 37.65% of national candidates in 2014, rising to 32.80% of membership and at least 41% of candidates in 2019.
- Lao PDR: in the 2022 elections, 27.28% of party members were women.
- Malaysia: despite 50% female membership, only 10.76% were candidates in 2018, and 13.55% in 2022.
- Myanmar: women made up 4.23% of national candidates in 2010, increasing to 13.48% in 2015; local candidates rose from 3.78% to 13.04%.
- Philippines: the proportion of women candidates for national office has plateaued at around 19%, with minor fluctuations in recent elections.
- Thailand: the Pheu Thai Party fielded 14.90% women candidates in the 2018 elections.
- Viet Nam: women represented 10% of central party membership and 14.87% at local levels during the 2020-2025 term.

These findings illustrate the varied landscape of women's representation in political parties across the region, highlighting both progress and ongoing challenges. Despite some countries showing relatively high percentages of women candidates at the national level, the overall regional average of women in political party membership indicates a significant under-representation. This suggests that women are not adequately included in the political landscape.

3.1.2.2. Number of women candidates and placement on party list (KPI 7)

Regional trends reveal that women's representation as political party candidates in ASEAN remains low, typically between 10% and 38%. Indonesia leads with 37.77% of women candidates in the 2019 elections, yet barriers persist that hinder women's access to candidacy, a critical step toward elected office.

Figure 2. Percentage of Women Candidates and Membership of Political Parties in ASEAN (As of 2023)



A notable issue is that women are often placed in lower positions on candidate lists, which significantly reduces their chances of being elected. Candidates positioned higher on the list have a better likelihood of winning seats, reflecting entrenched gender biases and power imbalances within political parties.

- Cambodia: women's representation in national assembly elections was 12% in 2013 and 13% in 2018. In commune elections, it increased from 24% in 2012 to 29% in 2022, but most candidates were placed in lower tiers, with only 24% in the top five positions in 2022.
- Indonesia: women constituted 37.27% of candidates in 2014, decreasing to 37.77% in 2019. The majority were in the third tier of candidate lists, limiting their chances of winning.
- Malaysia: women candidates represented 10% in 2018 and 13.48% in 2022.
- Myanmar: women made up 13% of candidates in both the 2010 and 2015 elections.
- Philippines: the proportion of women candidates was 19% for national elections in 2019 and 2022 and 20-21% for local elections.

These findings highlight the need to implement meaningful reforms to effectively promote women's candidacy to enhance women's political representation across the region.

3.1.2.3. Location of women in political parties and their location in the decision-making hierarchy (KPI 8)

Despite some progress in increasing women's representation as political party candidates, men continue to dominate leadership and decision-making roles within most political parties in the region. This male dominance poses significant barriers to achieving gender parity in political representation. Factors such as traditional gender roles, entrenched social norms and limited access to resources hinder women's advancement and ability to attain leadership positions. Consequently, the lack of women in authoritative roles undermines the effective representation of women's interests within political agendas.

The AMS have begun adopting various strategies to enhance the political participation of marginalised women, including:

- Targeted Recruitment and Mentorship: programmes such as the Women's Leadership and Development Programme in the Philippines help women from marginalised communities gain the training and confidence needed to succeed in political office.
- Intersectional Quota Systems: Indonesia's expanded gender quotas include provisions for representing marginalised groups, increasing the diversity of women in leadership.
- Women's Wings and Caucuses: establishing dedicated platforms within political parties, such as women's wings in Malaysia, amplifies women's voices and ensures their issues are prioritised.
- Participatory Budgeting: in Indonesia and the Philippines, participatory budgeting processes empower women to influence resource allocation, thereby enhancing their political agency.
- Inclusive Electoral Reforms: reforms in Myanmar aim to enhance the political representation of women and ethnic minorities, breaking down historical barriers.
- Capacity-Building Initiatives: Cambodia's training programmes for marginalised women have increased their representation in local government.
- Accountability Mechanisms: community-based monitoring in Indonesia empowers women to hold governments accountable for gender-responsive policies.

Overall, these examples demonstrate the diverse range of approaches that the AMS have implemented to improve the political representation of marginalised women in the region. By targeting recruitment, expanding quota systems, empowering women in budgetary processes, implementing inclusive electoral reforms, building leadership capacity, and strengthening accountability mechanisms, these initiatives have made important strides toward addressing persistent barriers to women's political participation.

Whilst the implementation and impact of these approaches vary across the region, they demonstrate the potential for adapting successful models from other regions to the specific contexts of Southeast Asian countries. Continued investment, collaboration and learning from these initiatives can further strengthen the political representation and influence of marginalised women in the region. Efforts to monitor, evaluate and refine these policy interventions at the regional level can further enhance their effectiveness in addressing the intersectional barriers to women's political empowerment.

Indeed, achieving gender balance in political parties is a critical component of fostering inclusive governance and ensuring that women's perspectives and needs are adequately represented in decision making. Whilst there have been notable advancements in some ASEAN countries, with increasing numbers of women candidates and initiatives aimed at enhancing their participation, significant challenges persist.

The data in KPIs 6 to 8 indicate that women are still vastly under-represented in political party membership and leadership roles, and women face systemic barriers that limit their electoral success. Issues such as lower placement on candidate lists, entrenched gender norms and a lack of support mechanisms continue to hinder progress.

To move toward genuine gender balance, it is essential to implement comprehensive reforms that include establishing gender quotas, enhancing mentorship programmes and ensuring accountability within political parties. By addressing these barriers and fostering an environment that empowers women, political parties can contribute to a more equitable political landscape.

3.1.3. Establish and recognise gender-sensitive statistical systems and monitoring to track progress on women leadership and participation in public and private spheres (KPI 9)

3.1.3.1. Monitoring progress on women leadership and participation (KPI 9)

An established gender-data monitoring system is vital to enhancing women's participation and representation in politics across Southeast Asia. By collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data, these systems provide essential insights for policymakers to identify barriers that women face in accessing leadership roles. With clear evidence of the challenges women encounter, decision makers can prioritise initiatives that enhance women's voices in politics.

Most ASEAN countries have dedicated national agencies that oversee gender equality and monitor progress. These agencies develop policies, collect data, and engage stakeholders to drive gender mainstreaming and advocate for reforms. For example, the Philippine's Commission on Women and Indonesia's Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection serve as central hubs that gather data and drive advocacy efforts. These agencies not only collect valuable information but also champion the cause of women's political participation, ensuring that their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Across the region, the AMS are harnessing the power of gender-monitoring data to enhance women's political engagement and representation. In the Philippines, for example, this data plays a crucial role in implementing the Magna Carta of Women, a landmark law designed to elevate women's decision-making roles. By using evidence from gender monitoring, policymakers can ensure that women have the opportunities and support they need to participate actively in governance.

Similarly, Viet Nam leverages gender data to shape its National Strategy on Gender Equality. This strategic approach sets clear targets for increasing women's leadership across various sectors, ensuring that gender equality remains a top priority in national development. Indonesia also exemplifies the effective use of

monitoring data. By focusing on both economic and political empowerment, Indonesia is creating a more inclusive environment where women's voices can thrive.

Further, the AMS are also taking significant strides to enhance women's political participation by setting ambitious targets and ensuring transparency in their efforts. In the Philippines, the government is aiming for a remarkable 50% representation of women in elective positions by 2025. This bold goal reflects a commitment to gender equality and recognises the importance of women's voices in governance. Similarly, Viet Nam has set a target of 30% women's participation in legislative bodies by the same year, emphasising the need for balanced representation in decision-making. Indonesia and Malaysia are also making strides, each targeting 30% participation of women in decision-making roles by 2024 and 2025, respectively. These clear objectives not only signal intent but also provide a roadmap for progress.

To support these initiatives, many Southeast Asian nations have committed to transparency and accountability. The Philippine's Commission on Women regularly publishes reports detailing gender statistics, allowing citizens to track progress and hold leaders accountable. Malaysia enhances this accountability through annual reports from the Ministry of Women, which provide insights into women's status in various sectors. Indonesia, through a collaboration between the Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas) and the Central Statistics Agency, produces comprehensive gender statistics, ensuring that data is readily available for informed decision-making.

However, challenges arise when targets are not met. A lack of progress can lead to questions about the effectiveness of policies and the commitment of authorities to gender equality. Accountability mechanisms must be robust enough to address these shortcomings, requiring key national agencies to explain failures and outline corrective actions. Without proper accountability, the risk of stagnation or regression increases in women's political participation, undermining the very goals these nations strive to achieve.

Further, effective inter-agency coordination is crucial in these efforts. Indonesia's Gender Working Group actively reviews national indicators related to women's participation, whilst the Philippines employs the Gender and Development Focal Point System to align efforts across different government agencies. In both Viet Nam and Cambodia, national women's organisations collaborate closely with government bodies to integrate gender priorities into broader development agendas.

In essence, whilst the AMS are setting measurable targets for women's participation and establishing mechanisms for accountability, they must also confront the challenges that come with unmet goals. This combined approach is vital to the establishment of a more inclusive political landscape.

3.1.4. Institutional mechanisms are in place that mitigate and reduce violence and discrimination against women in politics (KPI 10)

3.1.4.1. *Existence of code of conduct and policies against gender-driven harassment in parliament and political parties are in place and/or developed (KPI 10)*

The output specifically refers to the existence of a code of conduct and policies being in place in parliament and political parties. The agreed definition of the KPI, however, broadens the coverage to 'work environment', retaining its focus by adding 'particularly the parliament, government institutions and within the political parties'.²⁷

Whilst there is no sexual harassment policy or law in parliament or political parties in any AMS, there is a range of policies, laws, programmes, plans, and suchlike in which the subject of gender-driven harassment is integrated. The legal framework in several AMS thus provides an opportunity to formulate dedicated policies against gender-driven harassment within parliamentary settings and political parties. Notwithstanding, there is no direct example of how parliament or political parties have exploited these legal opportunities to take measures against gender-based harassment in their respective institutions through internal specific codes of conduct, rules, regulations, or otherwise.

27- The monitoring of political parties falls beyond the mandate of the ACW Singapore.

Implementing measures to address gender-driven harassment can contribute to a sustained gender balance within parliamentary bodies at all levels, ensuring a safe environment for women's participation. Among challenges in addressing sexual harassment, several AMS refer to the under-reporting of incidents, with cultural barriers including the stigma and shame associated with discussing such issues as well as the fear of potential retaliation from perpetrators.

Provisions against sexual harassment and indecent behaviour in the workplace are clearly spelled out in the laws governing the labour market in Cambodia, for example. In Viet Nam, the Labour Code includes a clear definition of sexual harassment, specifying that enterprises must issue written rules and ensure there is prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. Whilst the Labour Law in Lao PDR does not define or explicitly prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace, the Decree on Ethics of Civil Servants prohibits sex discrimination and sexual violence in all workplaces. The Myanmar Penal Code includes provisions related to sexual harassment aimed to deter and penalise acts of sexual harassment.

The Employment Act in Malaysia defines sexual harassment and provides procedures and employers' responsibilities in managing sexual harassment. The recent Anti-Sexual Harassment Law, in turn, defines acts that constitute sexual harassment in the work, training and education environment. Prior to the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law, harassment carried out by members of parliament, whether verbally or physically, did not face any legal consequence because there were no specific laws addressing such behaviour. They are now addressed through the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (which applies to premises in Peninsular Malaysia and Labuan). In the Philippines, there is no policy criminalising sexual harassment in the workplace, or gender-based harassment in parliament or political parties. However, the Safe Spaces Act expands the anti-sexual harassment law to protect women against sexual harassment in all locations, including online platforms. This is not only based in power relations but also covers those actions perpetuated by peers and even by a subordinate to a supervisor, which would include the parliament and political parties.

Indonesia's recent law concerning sexual violence crimes significantly enhances protection for victims, although it does not yet criminalise gender-driven harassment. Whilst a Cabinet Resolution in Thailand includes measures to prevent and resolve gender-based harassment and violations in the workplace, so far there is no clause to criminalise it. In Brunei Darussalam, there are currently no specific legal provisions that define 'sexual harassment' as a distinct offence in general or in workplaces.

3.2. Number of women motivated/attracted to engaging in and leading in political processes has increased (KPI 11)

3.2.1. Various support networks for women are created and sustained

3.2.1.1. Platforms which facilitate women leaders to build networks at both regional and national levels are created (KPI 11)

The consolidated information and data from the national-level studies of relevant networks and platforms reveal a wide variety of platforms and networks across the AMS. Regional platforms such as ASEAN Ministerial Meetings on Women (AMMW), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation (AIPO), in which all AMS are members, are referred to as valuable across all AMS. Vital national-level platforms include those in parliamentary settings, embedded in government institutions, as well as platforms within civil society and business. Platforms that have evolved from social gathering spaces to now focus on empowering women in broader ways, such as promoting social welfare, raising awareness of women's rights, and encouraging active participation in diverse sectors including business and community services are in place in Brunei Darussalam.

Platforms and networks embedded in government institutions are highlighted in Cambodia and Myanmar. The Cambodian National Committee on Women (CNCW) reaches a broad range of stakeholders in reviewing progress and achievements on gender equality and empowerment. The Sub-Technical Working Group on

Women in Leadership and Governance at the national technical level, and the provincial and district levels and Women's and Children's Consultative Committees (WCCC) are also referred to. In Myanmar, the National Committee on Women (MNCW) involves deputy ministers and representatives from four prominent women organisations. There are four Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and a Steering Committee for developing the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) Phase II (2023-2032). In Lao PDR, a primary network is within the Party organisational structures, from the central level down to the village level, responsible for monitoring progress on women's leadership and participation.

In Indonesia, there is a forum for female politicians across political parties and a forum for female parliamentarians at both the national and local levels. There is also a joint platform for women leaders at the local level. In Malaysia, women Members of Parliament (MPs) across political parties in the Lower House form a platform for dialogue and sharing ideas for women leaders. In the Philippines, there is an umbrella organisation of all leagues of local government units and locally elected government officials, in which the Lady Local Legislators' League is a member. At the parliamentary level in Thailand, committees have been formed and tasked with overseeing state policies and monitoring budget allocations. A group of Vietnamese women parliamentarians has been established by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, and some provinces have established similar groups. The Cambodian Women Parliament Caucus (CWPC) has launched the 'Girl2Leader Cambodia' campaign aimed at sharing experiences and knowledge with young female students and, more importantly, instilling in them ideas of responsibility, decision making and women's leadership in politics.

In the public sector in Indonesia, there is a forum for women leaders to share knowledge, experience, and opportunities and an organisational forum for alumni. The Lao Women's Union reaches out to women from the national to the provincial, district, and village levels and serves as a bridge between the Party, the government, and women in urban and rural areas. In Malaysia, young women leaders involved in a fellowship programme at the national level can engage directly with an executive or a minister and become members of an alumni association which fosters a close network between youth leaders and government, corporate and NGO leaders. The Philippine's Government Employees Association organises government employees. In Viet Nam, women leaders at departmental and ministerial levels of central ministries and branches who are also members of the Executive Committee of the Viet Nam Women's Union form a network.

Civil society networks of various kinds are mentioned as relevant in several AMS. In Indonesia, civil society includes networks for women activists, and networks embracing marginalised women striving to realise justice and democracy. A platform for collaboration of women leaders across sectors has been formed to build solidarity between women in different fields. In Lao PDR there is an informal gender group of international organisations and local CSOs. In Malaysia, individual women leaders are members of non-governmental regional and global networks for exchange of ideas and dialogue. A platform for capacity building in leadership for women leaders at the grass roots is formed to update and support each other. The Philippines enjoys vibrant and strong civil-society support networks, and some refer to different spheres of WPPL, but there are concerns among the networks that the democracy space is shrinking. In Singapore, women volunteers and grass root leaders based at community centres and clubs form a network. Various Thai organisations collaborate to support and advocate for women's involvement in political participation whilst also enhancing women's leadership capabilities at local and national levels.

The role of business-related platforms in addition to political platforms that facilitate women leaders is highlighted by Singapore. One platform nurtures and connects young women leaders through networking, mentorship, leadership development, and opportunities to give back to society. A network of women entrepreneurs has been formed by the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) to coordinate the efforts of businesswomen. In Indonesia, the Ministry for State-owned Enterprises has set the goal of 25 % of women in leadership positions in state-owned enterprises.

In conclusion, there is solid information and descriptions of functioning networks and platforms. However, there is limited assessment as to how effective these platforms and networks are, and there is insufficient information to conclude as to whether these platforms and networks contribute to the intended outcome to increasingly motivate and attract women to engage and lead in political processes. It is nevertheless promising that platforms and forums to reach out to and mentor young women are mentioned.

3.3. Public recognition of women as equally suited and constructive political leaders

3.3.1 Increased positive representation of women leaders and women's political empowerment in the media (KPI 12)

3.3.1.1. Positive representation of women leaders and women's political empowerment in the media (KPI 12)

The media has the power to influence social norms and values. Equal media coverage of women and men in politics signals public recognition of women as equally suitable and constructive political leaders.

The analytical approach applied to review the representation of women leaders in the media varied across the national reports.²⁸ The choice of approach ranged from comparing how women and men are portrayed in fictional versus news media, to comparing the content of articles representing women versus men and undertaking a content analysis of the different media at the same point in time. Another approach was to conduct an analysis of media coverage of an election campaign. The functioning of state-controlled media was also analysed as well as the supply of information targeting women. The combined findings point to three overall conclusions.

i) Far fewer news articles on WPPL than on male leadership:

Whilst there is a lot of positive news about women, including in the political context, women's depiction in the public sphere is still often placed below that of men. Women's voices tend to be more visible in lifestyle and fashion content, whereas men tend to be the stronger voice in politics. Women are more often than men discussed in terms of gender, appearance, and personal life, with an emphasis on their gender over their qualifications and achievements. Women's career aspirations may even be played out as a source of conflict.

ii) Ambiguous gender stereotyping in media coverage:

Whilst gender stereotyping is clearly prevalent in some AMS, it is not universally observed. For example, findings from a content analysis in Cambodia did not indicate visible stereotypes regarding female leaders, whereas in Indonesia negative stereotypes about women remain a persistent issue. Traditional and stereotypical roles of women were often reinforced in the media reporting in Lao PDR and Viet Nam. Here, there was limited information to challenge gender roles or to support women's empowerment, and women were portrayed primarily in familial roles, reinforcing societal expectations of women as nurturers and homemakers. The gender stereotyping of female candidates in Malaysia during the recent general election campaign increased following the nomination of candidates, with the title and highlights of articles on women candidates being based on their appearance rather than their credibility as a candidate. The role of being a mother, moulded by Thai society, creates expectations defined by external characteristics and gender attributes for women in politics. An analysis of the primary media in the country, both online and offline, including print and television media, reveals female political leaders are often required to present a strong image and demonstrate higher skills than their male counterparts, highlighting strength, decision-making courage, especially in managing time and family responsibilities.

iii) Obstacles to promoting gender sensitivity in media:

The small number of female media professionals is referred to as a major obstacle. Traditionally, in several AMS, journalism has not always been considered a suitable profession for women as it requires more independence and mobility than is culturally acceptable. Similarly, only a few media organisations are focusing on women's empowerment in leadership. Female politicians and leaders should be interviewed and featured in media more often to enhance the visibility of successful women and inspire the next generation.

28- ACW Singapore has chosen not to track input on this KPI.

3.4. Number of women leaders in political institutions increased

Table 1. Proportion of Women in Political Institutions in ASEAN (as of 2023)

ASEAN Member States	Women in minister position	Women in deputy minister position	Women in senior or managerial positions in government	Women in supreme judicial body	Women Judges in Courts	Women Prosecutors	Women Lawyers	Women in Parliament	Women in Local Legislative Councils	Women as head at local government (sub-national level)
 Brunei Darussalam	7.14%	17.00%	45.46%	7.14%	66.70%	65.22%	73.63%	10.81%	10.81%	64.88%
 Cambodia	10.00%	33.00%	8.10%	16.40%	<i>no data</i>	13.70%	<i>no data</i>	20.80%	14.80%	32.00%
 Indonesia	17.65%	8.33%	20.05%	14.89%	27.00%	3.11%	<i>no data</i>	22.50%	17.70%	9.22%
 Lao PDR	15.80%	<i>no data</i>	36.00%	<i>no data</i>	27.40%	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	27.52%	32.00%	15.01%
 Malaysia	17.86%	29.63%	18.38%	69.00%	69.20%	<i>no data</i>	54.83%	20.40%	12.67%	18.30%
 Myanmar	11.76%	24.50%	53.41%	<i>no data</i>	52.84%	<i>no data</i>	53.91%	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>
 Philippines	13.00%	36.00%	31.52%	42.72%	53.16%	33.33%	<i>no data</i>	19.00%	23.00%	23.00%
 Singapore	15.00%	16.21%	43.50%	26.70%	46.30%	37.50%	43.20%	29.10%	<i>not applicable</i>	<i>not applicable</i>
 Thailand	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	81.63%	<i>no data</i>	1.92%	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	10.40%	19.20%	9.94%
 Viet Nam	13.63%	10.00%	<i>no data</i>	18.00%	12.50%	<i>no data</i>	38.28%	30.26%	29.00%	3.17%
Regional Average	13.54%	21.83%	37.56%	27.84%	39.67%	30.57%	52.77%	21.20%	19.90%	21.94%

Note: Using various data from 2020 to 2023 provided by AMS.

One of the key outcomes that the ACW has committed to strive to achieve under its current 2021-2025 Work Plan is to increase the number of women leaders in political institutions in the region. To follow ACW progress toward this end, women's participation in various aspects of the public sphere is being monitored, specifically looking at women in leadership positions in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, including their presence in local governance at sub-national levels. Table 1, above, provides an overview of women's political participation in the region.

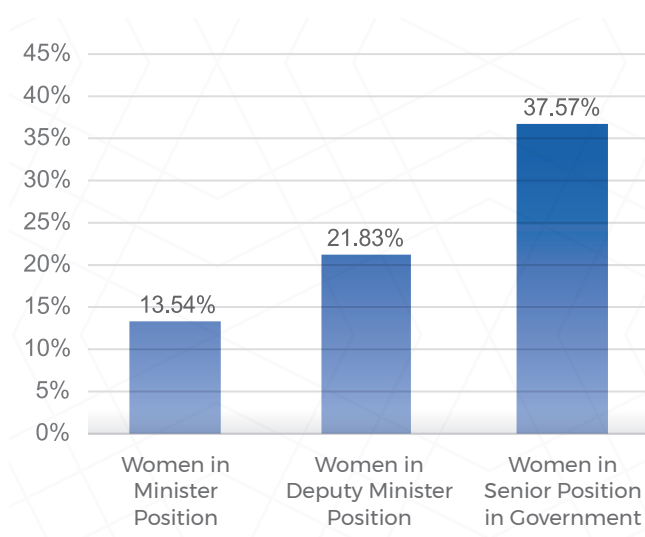
3.4.1. Proportion of women in minister and deputy minister positions (KPI 13)

To be covered under point 3.4.2 (KPI 14).

3.4.2. Proportion of women in senior or managerial positions in government (KPI 14)

At the executive level (KPI 13 and 14), there is significant variation in women's representation across the different levels of government positions in ASEAN countries. Whilst the regional average for women in minister positions is 13.54%, the representation increases to 21.83% at the deputy minister level and 37.56% in senior or managerial government positions. Some countries like Thailand, Myanmar, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore show relatively higher percentages of women in senior government roles, indicating progress in women's political leadership.

Figure 3. Percentage of Women Leaders in Government and Public Service in ASEAN (As of 2023)



The following key regional trends for women in minister, deputy minister, and senior or managerial positions in government across ASEAN countries have been noted for the year 2020:

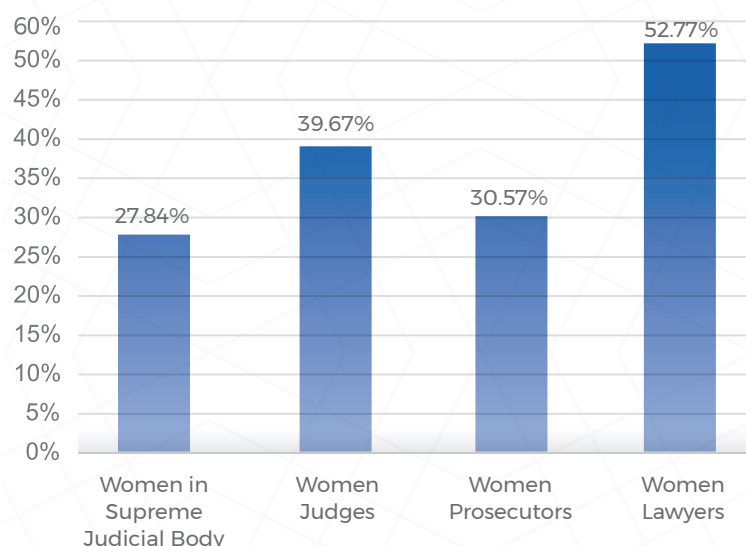
- **Women in Minister Positions:** the regional average percentage of women in minister positions is 13.54%, ranging from 7.14% to 17.86%. The country with the highest proportion is Malaysia at 17.86%, closely followed by Indonesia at 17.65%.
- **Women in Deputy Minister Positions:** the range of women in deputy minister positions is between 8.33% to 36%, posting a regional average percentage of 21.83%. The country with the highest proportion is the Philippines at 36%, followed by Cambodia at 33%.
- **Women in Senior or Managerial Positions in Government:** the regional average percentage of women in senior or managerial government positions is 37.56%. The country with the highest proportion is Thailand at 81.63%, followed by Myanmar at 53.41%

The data suggests that whilst women may be advancing in managerial capacities, their presence in high-level decision-making roles remains limited. This gap could be indicative of systemic barriers that inhibit women's ascension into ministerial roles, such as entrenched gender norms or inadequate support systems for women in politics.

3.4.3. Proportion of women judges in supreme judicial body and women judges in courts (KPI 15)

The ASEAN region shows relatively strong representation of women in the judiciary, with the regional average for women in the highest judicial body standing at 27.84%, while women judges make up 39.67%. Malaysia stands out with very high percentages of women in supreme judicial bodies (69%) and as judges (69.2%). The legal profession also sees reasonably good gender parity, with women making up 52.77% of lawyers on average across ASEAN. However, there are still some gaps, particularly in the prosecutor role, where the regional average is lower at 30.57%. It was noted, however, that data availability is also an issue, with several countries lacking information on women's participation in certain legal and judicial positions.

Figure 4. Women in the Judicial System in ASEAN (As of 2023)



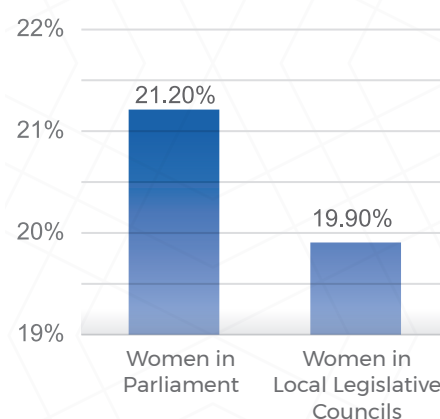
The gaps in representation across different judicial roles are indicative that systemic biases persist, hindering women's full participation. To support Vision 7, initiatives must focus on promoting gender equality within the legal profession and ensuring that women are represented across all judicial functions, reinforcing their leadership capabilities in the justice system.

3.4.4. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local legislative councils (KPI 16)

For women in the legislature, the regional averages for women's representation in parliament (21.20%) and local legislative councils (19.90%) remain below the global average of 25.4%²⁹, especially at the local level, indicating room for improvement to achieve gender parity. Vietnam stands out in the region with 30.26% women in its national parliament, while Lao PDR leads local council representation with 32% women. There is variation across ASEAN countries, with some like Singapore and Lao PDR showing relatively stronger women's representation in parliament, and others like Viet Nam and the Philippines having higher proportions in local councils.

Although these figures show gradual progress, they still fall short of parity. The under-representation of women in legislative roles limits diversity in governance and perpetuates policies that may not address the needs of the entire population.

Figure 5. Women in the Legislative System in ASEAN (As of 2023)



29- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Global Data on Parliaments. Accessed 29 July 2024 at https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_month=12&date_year=2020

3.4.5. Proportion of seats held by women as chief executive or head at local government (KPI 17)

At the sub-national level (KPI 17), the regional average of 21.94% for women as heads of local government indicates progress. However, there is still significant room for improvement to achieve gender parity. Cambodia leads the ASEAN region, with an average of 32% of women in local or sub-national leadership roles. Other countries like the Philippines (23%) and Malaysia (18.3%) also show relatively strong representation of women in local government leadership positions. However, data is missing for several ASEAN countries, so the complete regional picture could not be captured.

The data underscore the necessity for focused initiatives that can elevate women's roles in local governance. Strengthening women's leadership at this level is vital for grassroots empowerment and community engagement. By fostering a pipeline of women leaders in local government, ASEAN can create a ripple effect that encourages more women to pursue political careers, directly contributing to the aims of Vision 7.

Overall, monitoring data along KPIs 13 to 17 shows notable advancements in increasing women's representation across various political institutions; however, much remains to be accomplished. Some AMS have made commendable efforts by setting specific targets aimed at enhancing women's leadership. Although, despite these ambitious goals, the necessary follow-through actions to ensure these targets are met have often fallen short.

Establishing targets for women's representation is a crucial first step, yet the reality is that many of these targets are not consistently realised. A closer examination reveals several reasons why these goals remain unmet. Factors such as a lack of comprehensive action plans, insufficient coordination among government agencies, and inadequate allocation of resources contribute to this shortfall.

To truly make progress, it's vital that stakeholders engage in a thorough evaluation of why these targets are not being met. This includes identifying specific actions that various government agencies need to undertake. For example, agencies must collaborate more effectively to create streamlined initiatives that support women's leadership, ensuring that their efforts are aligned and impactful.

For Vision 7 to succeed in fostering women's leadership, establishing robust accountability mechanisms is essential. Such mechanisms would allow for regular monitoring of progress in women's representation within political roles. This approach not only promotes transparency but also empowers civil society to hold institutions accountable for their commitments to gender equality.

In summary, whilst some ASEAN countries have made significant strides in promoting women's leadership, the journey toward gender equality is far from complete. Setting targets is an important milestone, but without concrete actions and a strong emphasis on accountability, these ambitions may remain elusive.

By addressing the systemic barriers that hinder women's advancement, enhancing collaboration among various agencies, and instituting effective accountability measures, ASEAN can pave the way for a more equitable political landscape. This comprehensive approach will not only elevate women's voices in governance but also enrich the decision-making processes that shape gender equality and inclusive governance in ASEAN.

In summary, regional data suggests that whilst some countries have made notable strides in promoting women's leadership at various levels, more concerted efforts are needed across the ASEAN region to ensure equal opportunities and representation of women in political leadership roles.

3.4.6. Political institutions are welcoming to women political leaders (KPI 18)

3.4.6.1. *Manifesto of political parties and their documents in promoting women's leadership (KPI 18)*

Overall, it may be concluded that typically political parties in the region do not have manifestos that explicitly support women's leadership. The actual commitment of these parties to promote women's political representation and leadership is reflected in their accommodation of affirmative policies, yet an analysis of party manifestos and by-laws reveals that only six out of ten AMS have implemented derivative regulations concerning affirmative actions, despite existing quota requirements.

Whilst it can be concluded that most political parties in ASEAN tend to be relatively silent in their support for women's leadership within their manifestos, it is important to recognise that some, such as the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), actively demonstrate their commitment to promoting women's leadership and political participation. The CPP has articulated this commitment in its manifesto, which aligns with the government's policies and strategies, stating that the party is 'strongly determined to promote gender equality and enhance women's roles in management positions within civil service.'

After examining AMS across the region, it was found that there is a concerning lack of concrete policy actions related to women's political leadership and few political party policies supporting women's participation. In Lao PDR, the 2021 Party Resolution fails to address gender-specific issues related to female leadership. In Malaysia, during the 2022 elections, women candidates often had to create their own manifestos to attract voters, with some focusing on their expertise and others targeting women voters specifically. Thailand presents a mixed picture, where, despite proposals for policies supporting women in politics, political parties have been slow to implement these strategies. Viet Nam at least acknowledges gender equality in its Political Programme, affirming 'equal rights for men and women' since 1930.

The findings reveal a correlation between the absence of political party manifestos that advocate for women's leadership and the low representation of women within these parties (KPIs 6 to 8). Without formal commitments to gender equality, political parties are less likely to prioritise women's inclusion, leading to significant under-representation in political roles, as evidenced by the low averages of women in ministerial and parliamentary positions (KPIs 13 to 17).

Further, whilst women candidates are present in elections, they frequently find themselves relegated to lower positions on party lists, which drastically reduces their chances of being elected (KPI 7). This strategic placement underscores a lack of institutional support for women, compounded by the absence of manifesto commitments to women's leadership.

Additionally, the leadership structure within these parties remains largely male-dominated (KPI 8). This male-centric decision-making framework often overlooks the interests and issues relevant to women, making it more challenging to promote gender parity in politics. With few women in leadership roles, the impetus to develop policies advocating for women's advancement is severely diminished.

This pattern highlights the urgent need for political parties to adopt clear, actionable commitments in their manifestos to create an environment that fosters WPPL. Addressing these gaps is essential for achieving the goals outlined in KPIs 6 to 8 and KPIs 13 to 17, ultimately paving the way for a more equitable political landscape for women leaders in the region.

4. Conclusions

Conclusions on outcome-level strengths and weaknesses are presented first, in Section 4.1, drawing on the combined assessment of information and data for the 18 KPIs. AMS monitoring capacity is thereafter discussed in Section 4.2.

4.1. Strengths and weaknesses

Specific policies to enhance gender equality and/or policies for gender mainstreaming are in place, or in the process of being formulated, in all AMS. The policies define responsibilities and implementation methods, with measurable targets for women's representation in leadership and decision-making. Good examples of effectiveness discussions are found in some national WPPL studies. Overall, however, whilst procedures and institutional structures for the enforcement of policies are well described, there is less information on findings of how effectively the implementation mechanisms function in practice. An assessment of risks and risk management to the effective implementation of gender-equality and gender-mainstreaming policies, is overall not referred to.

Implementation challenges include insufficient financing, as well as limited political commitment to enforce measures such as agreed gender mainstreaming, whether for overall or partial gender mainstreaming. It remains unclear as to whether the established and/or appointed government agencies responsible for oversight have access to the leverage tools necessary for the actual implementation of approved policy measures. On the basis of the reported weak political commitment and reluctance to translate agreed measures into implementation, access to sanction mechanisms would seem to be an issue to consider. The hierarchical location of the gender machinery seems to most frequently remain at the line ministry level, thus with no leverage in relation to enforcing gender mainstreaming in peer line-ministries.

Deeply rooted challenges, such as transforming social values and norms, seem to largely be addressed through awareness-raising campaigns, sensitisation programmes and training that primarily targets women. It is not always clear whether the geographical coverage of awareness-raising programmes reaches nationwide or remains limited to certain areas. It also remains unclear whether these campaigns are limited to shorter periods of engagement. Engrained values and norms will require persistent nationwide efforts over longer periods to achieve the possibility for eventual transformation.

The extent to which these awareness-raising and training efforts are sufficient to achieve transformative results remains uncertain. Perceived positive effects, such as decreasing negative attitudes towards women in leadership and politics, are referred to in national reports. It is, however, acknowledged that there is no empirical evidence to support this perception. An attitudinal survey found that, in one decade, the share of people with no bias in gender social norms improved in one of four participating AMS, whereas a backlash was seen in three AMS (for details, see KPI 1). This indicates that claims of positive effects might deserve further investigation. As mentioned in some national studies, awareness-raising will most likely not on its own achieve the desired transformation of mindsets. Rather, a more comprehensive approach would be required, both in terms of the mix of policies and to ensure that it more strongly involves men and boys in addition to women and girls.

Maternity and paternity leave is legally guaranteed, with shorter periods for fathers. There is no general parental leave in any of the AMS, even though it is being discussed and progressively applied in some. Parental leave would be equally beneficial to women. It also signals that caring for children is the responsibility of both fathers and mothers and might thus indirectly contribute to transforming the engrained social norm that women alone bear the responsibility for the care of children.

The importance of the signalling effect of introducing parental leave or in the general provision of day-care facilities is referred to in some national studies. In some AMS, the requirement for providing day-care facilities is provided for in labour laws/employment acts. Employers with a certain amount of female

workers, or government bodies with a large share of female employees, are required to offer support for day-care facilities. Whilst this may immediately ease working women's work-life balance, it does signal that the issue of day-care facilities remains a women's issue. The effect of laws and measures might therefore benefit from being analysed from a signalling perspective as well as from the perspective of directly easing work-life balance challenges for women.

Steps seem to increasingly be taken to accommodate the special needs of working women in the workplace, although not yet on a full scale. This includes flexible working arrangements and women-friendly practices such as breastfeeding rooms and entitlement to break intervals to breastfeed, in addition to the regular time off for meals. However, such measures often remain limited to certain sectors of the labour market.

Women's unpaid care and domestic work negatively influence women's opportunities. The societal expectation that women should take on the burden of unpaid home care work is another challenge that follows on from traditionally rooted gender roles. Yet, there seem to be very limited dedicated measures in policies aimed to ease the burden on women from these traditional expectations. This may change considering the recently reaffirmed ASEAN commitment to address women's unpaid care and domestic work, acknowledging that a stronger mix of policies is required to reconcile the time requirements of the workplace with those of unpaid care work, and to transform the underlying societal expectations on women to be the main caregiver in the family.

Laws on domestic violence and gender-based harassment are in place in many of the AMS, although not in all, and not equally strongly formulated in terms of protection for women. Provisions against gender-driven harassment are integrated into a range of policies, laws, programmes, and plans, although there are not yet laws criminalising gender-driven harassment in all AMS. There are further laws with explicit provisions against sexual harassment and indecent behaviour in the workplace in several AMS, although not yet in all. There is no sexual harassment policy or law for parliamentary settings or political parties. The legal framework in several AMS does, however, provide an opportunity for the formulation of dedicated policies against gender-driven harassment within parliamentary settings and political parties.

Laws guarantee equality and non-discrimination in general, including rights for both women and men to vote and to be elected. Gender equality at work is also generally provided for in laws, although gender empowerment gaps remain in practice. Discriminatory laws and policies are no longer found in several AMS. The remaining discriminatory clauses are mainly found in laws relating to family, administration, and citizenship. Specific policies on gender equality were to a certain degree found to be inconsistent with other policies, or in need of additional regulations, legal mechanisms, or procedures to be effective in practice.

Temporary special measures and affirmative actions are most prominently defined by the setting of quantitative policy and strategy targets and/or quotas to ensure the minimum representation of women. There are few qualitative affirmative actions to support the achievement of the set quantitative quotas and targets.

Gender balance in political parties: over recent years, the AMS have adopted a variety of strategies to boost the political participation and leadership of marginalised women. These multifaceted efforts aim to tackle the persistent barriers that have historically restricted women's political representation, particularly for those from disadvantaged communities. Whilst the implementation and effectiveness of these initiatives differ across the region, they highlight the potential for adapting successful models from other regions to fit the specific contexts of ASEAN countries. Continued policy reforms, collaboration and learning from these initiatives can further enhance the political representation and influence of marginalised women.

However, several factors and barriers hinder the effectiveness of women's leadership initiatives and impede gender balance in political parties. The openness and competitiveness of the political environment significantly affect women's ability to gain nominations and secure elections. Additionally, the candidate selection processes within political parties heavily influence women's representation. In systems with 'closed lists,' parties maintain more control over candidate nominations, which can either facilitate or obstruct women's participation. The internal rules, norms, and practices regarding gender representation within parties are critical factors in this respect.

Strong legal protections, quotas and affirmative action policies are associated with higher levels of women's political representation. The lack of supportive frameworks in certain contexts limits women's opportunities to engage in politics. Traditional gender roles and social norms continue to uphold male dominance in political leadership, as family responsibilities, limited access to resources and prevailing societal expectations restrict women's capacity to participate in and advance within political structures. Furthermore, women often encounter significant barriers in accessing the financial resources, media exposure and political networks necessary for successful campaigning. Structural inequalities in education, employment and economic empowerment contribute to these political disparities.

Countries with a rich history of women's political mobilisation and empowerment movements tend to have higher levels of women's representation. In contrast, the absence of such legacies limits the pool of potential women candidates. The variation in women's political participation across Southeast Asia is shaped by a complex interplay of political, legal, socio-cultural, and historical factors, creating diverse pathways and barriers for women's entry and advancement in politics. Addressing these multifaceted challenges is essential to fostering more gender-inclusive political systems in the region.

Political parties' commitment to promoting women's political representation can often be assessed through their internal regulations, by-laws, and manifestos. However, it is noteworthy that there was only one political party across the region that has a manifesto explicitly supporting women's leadership. This general lack of formal commitment underscores the need for political parties to adopt affirmative policies that prioritise women's representation and actively work to create an inclusive political environment.

Promising gender equality monitoring mechanisms have been implemented across the AMS. These national-level monitoring approaches leverage a combination of government agencies, statistical data, and specialised studies/assessments to provide a comprehensive view of the gender landscape and inform policymaking in Southeast Asia.

Most countries have a dedicated national agency or ministry responsible for promoting gender equality and monitoring progress. These agencies play key coordinating and leadership roles in developing national policies and strategies, collecting, and analysing sex-disaggregated data, establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and producing periodic progress reports. The dedicated national gender-equality agencies collaborate extensively with their respective national statistics offices to strengthen the collection, analysis, and utilisation of sex-disaggregated data. Cross-cutting coordination mechanisms, embedded within the structures of national governments, help to ensure a systematic and coherent approach to advancing WPPL across the ASEAN region.

The effective use of gender data has enabled policymakers to identify and address the persistent barriers to women's equal participation, such as discriminatory social norms, limited access to education and resources, and the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work. The integration of WPPL indicators and targets into national gender equality strategies and action plans has been a crucial step in driving sustainable change.

Whilst the level of public disclosure and the specific data points shared may vary across countries, these examples demonstrate a growing commitment to transparency and accountability among Southeast Asian nations in their efforts to promote women's participation and representation at the national level. By making this data publicly accessible, governments are enabling civil society, academia and the wider public to engage in informed dialogue and contribute to the ongoing efforts to achieve gender equality.

A wide variety of platforms and networks exist across the AMS. Some platforms are embedded in government institutions, some are forums for female politicians and female parliamentarians across political parties, and others are for female leaders in government agencies. Civil society platforms and networks, including in business, are prevalent in several AMS. However, a more in-depth analysis of how well the described networks and platforms function would be required to conclude whether they function to increasingly motivate and attract women to engage and lead in political processes. In this respect, the initiatives to establish platforms for reaching out to and coaching young female potential leaders are encouraging.

Media coverage of female leaders is less than that of male leaders. Men tend to be the voice listened to in politics, whereas women's voices are more visible in lifestyle and fashion content. Women are more often discussed in terms of gender and appearance, rather than in terms of their capabilities and achievements. The findings on gender stereotyping are, though, ambiguous. In that, stereotyping is clearly prevalent in some AMS, whereas it is not found in others. The limited number of women working in the media is cited as a major obstacle to enhancing the positive representation of women leaders in the media.

Whilst there are significant strides for women in key executive positions at both national and sub-national levels, in the legislative as well as the judiciary, there are **uneven achievements across the AMS** and this signals the need for greater efforts to bridge the gender gaps still present in the political spheres of ASEAN.

The key barriers and gaps include:

- the persistent under-representation of women at the highest levels of political leadership;
- disparities in progress across ASEAN countries;
- under-representation in specific areas of the judiciary, and
- the need for improved data collection and monitoring to better understand and address the barriers faced by women in the political sphere.

It is noted that representation increases at the deputy minister level and in senior/managerial government positions; whilst the regional average for women's representation in minister positions remains low, at 13.54%. This indicates a significant gap at the highest levels of the executive branch, with room for improvement to achieve greater parity. The uneven progress across the AMS, both at the national and local levels, suggests the need for more coordinated and targeted efforts to address the barriers faced by women in different national contexts. Although the ASEAN region shows relatively strong representation of women in specific areas of the judiciary, there are still gaps, particularly in the prosecutor role, where the regional average is lower at 30.57%. This indicates that women may face additional barriers in accessing and advancing within the judicial system, which requires further investigation and remedial action.

The WPPL study also notes that data availability is an issue, with several countries lacking information on women's participation in various political institutions, particularly political party gender data. The lack of comprehensive and reliable data makes it challenging to track progress, identify gaps, and develop evidence-based policies to address barriers to women's political empowerment.

4.2. AMS monitoring capacity

Several key challenges in integrating gender and WPPL considerations into national data-collection systems in the region were noted by the WPPL study. Overcoming these multifaceted challenges requires a concerted, multi-stakeholder effort to strengthen the capacity of national statistics systems, foster collaboration between data producers and users, and prioritise gender-responsive data as a key element of national development monitoring and policymaking across Southeast Asia.

By prioritising these multi-faceted intervention areas, ASEAN countries can bridge the gap between gender data production and utilisation, empowering data-informed policymaking, and programme design to accelerate progress on WPPL. Effective dissemination and use of gender data can be a powerful tool for dismantling the barriers women face in the political sphere and realising their full and equal participation in public life.

4.2.1. Limited gender and statistical expertise

Many national statistics offices across the ASEAN region lack specialised expertise in gender statistics and gender analysis. There is a critical need to build the capacity of statistics staff to better understand gender concepts and issues, and design gender-responsive data collection methods. This skills gap can hinder the effective integration of gender perspectives into national data systems.

Relatedly, the dedicated gender equality agencies in ASEAN countries also often face constraints in their own statistical and analytical capacities. Many lack the in-house expertise to rigorously monitor and evaluate gender-related data and translate it into evidence-based policymaking. Strengthening the technical capabilities of these national gender machineries is crucial to driving more responsive and impactful gender data systems.

Effective integration of gender considerations into national data collection requires strong collaboration and coordination between the national statistics agencies and the gender-equality ministries/agencies. However, there are often siloed approaches and insufficient institutional linkages between these key stakeholders. Overcoming this divide and fostering greater synergies is essential for developing more comprehensive, gender-responsive data ecosystems in the region.

4.2.2. Managing the data gaps

In addition to the broader gaps in sex-disaggregated data across various domains, there are also significant shortcomings in the availability of data on women's participation in political parties and electoral processes in Southeast Asia.

Many ASEAN countries lack comprehensive, reliable data on the representation of women as candidates at both the local and national levels. Information on the gender composition of party leadership structures, candidate nomination processes and other intra-party dynamics that affect women's political empowerment is often scarce or fragmented.

This lack of granular data on women's political participation, from grassroots to the highest levels of decision-making, makes it challenging to fully understand the barriers and enablers shaping gender equality in political representation. It also hinders the ability to monitor progress and hold stakeholders accountable for advancing women's equal access to political leadership roles.

Filling these critical data gaps on women's engagement in political parties and electoral processes must be a priority for national statistics offices and gender equality agencies across the ASEAN region. Strengthening data collection, analysis and dissemination in these areas will be crucial to informing evidence-based policymaking and driving meaningful change towards gender-inclusive political systems.

4.2.3. Strengthening institutional coordination

Effective integration of gender considerations into national data collection requires strong coordination across multiple government institutions. This includes the national statistics agencies, gender equality ministries/agencies, electoral management bodies, as well as the civil service, judiciary, and legislative branches.

In many ASEAN countries, the siloed nature of these various government entities has hindered a comprehensive, coordinated approach to generating and using gender-responsive data. The national statistics offices, gender machineries and the electoral bodies can operate independently, lacking mechanisms to systematically share information, align methodologies and jointly analyse data related to WPPL.

Beyond these core agencies, the civil service, courts and legislative bodies also possess critical data and insights that are essential to understanding and addressing gender gaps in political representation and

decision making. Personnel records, judicial statistics and parliamentary proceedings all contain valuable sex-disaggregated information that is often underutilised.

It is crucial to strengthen coordination across this broader ecosystem of government stakeholders, and this could involve establishing high-level coordination bodies or technical working groups that bring together representatives from statistics, gender, elections, civil service, the judiciary, and legislature. Such platforms can facilitate regular dialogue, knowledge exchange and collaborative work planning on WPPL-related data and reforms.

Joint capacity-building initiatives to upskill personnel on gender-data concepts and methods can also help bridge institutional divides and foster a shared understanding. Formalising data-sharing protocols and joint programming between these diverse government agencies can streamline gender-data production, analysis and dissemination.

Embedding gender-specific indicators and methodologies into the official statistical system, with clear delineation of roles and responsibilities across the agencies, can institutionalise a more integrated, sustainable approach to gender-responsive data collection and use.

By fostering greater institutional collaboration across the whole-of-government, ASEAN countries can leverage the complementary expertise, resources and mandates needed to develop holistic, gender-responsive national data ecosystems. This will be pivotal for effectively monitoring and driving progress on women's equal participation and leadership in political processes.

At the regional level, the findings from the WPPL study underpin a system for continued data collection and analysis. The remaining challenge is to institutionalise monitoring using the ACW as both the vehicle and the venue. Crucial steps would be for the ACW to integrate WPPL indicators into its post-2025 work plan, support the strengthening of national statistics capacities, and create a regional platform for data exchange. Aligning this framework with existing guidelines will foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among the AMS.

The recommendations presented in the final section of this WPPL study highlight the need for future efforts to focus on enhancing monitoring tools, improving inter-agency collaboration to address data gaps, and providing capacity-building support (please see section 5.3). By ensuring the continuity of the WPPL progress-tracking initiative at the regional level, the ACW will pave the way to achieve sustained improvements in WPPL, maintaining momentum and accountability in advancing gender equality in the region.

4.2.4. Meeting resource constraints

Integrating gender considerations into national data-collection systems requires both additional financial and human resources. However, many ASEAN countries face budget limitations and competing development priorities that make it challenging to allocate sufficient resources to this effort. Securing sustainable funding and technical capacity remains a persistent obstacle.

Further, national statistics offices and gender equality agencies often operate with tight budgets, with limited dedicated funding streams for gender-responsive data initiatives. This makes it difficult to dedicate the necessary resources for activities such as:

- Conducting conducting specialised gender-focused surveys and analyses;
- developing sex-disaggregated data collection methodologies;
- enhancing gender equality data management and dissemination systems;
- Providing providing training and skills development for personnel; and,
- establishing functional coordination mechanisms across agencies.

The lack of budgetary allocations is compounded by the tendency for gender equality to be viewed as a lower priority compared to other development sectors vying for limited public funds. Gender-equality data is sometimes seen as a niche or supplementary concern, rather than a critical cross-cutting issue integral to evidence-based policymaking.

This resource crunch extends to human capital as well. National statistics offices and gender-equality agencies frequently face shortages of personnel with the specialised technical expertise required for gender-equality data production and analysis. It can be challenging to both recruit and retain staff that have the necessary skills in areas such as survey design, data disaggregation and gender-equality statistics.

Overcoming these resource constraints will require a multi-pronged approach. It is essential, here, to secure dedicated budget lines and funding streams for gender-equality data initiatives within national statistical plans and gender-equality strategies. This can be complemented by mobilising development partner support and fostering public-private partnerships to expand the resource base.

Investing in tailored capacity-building programmes to upskill existing personnel on gender-equality data competencies is also crucial. Strengthening collaborations with academic institutions and regional/global knowledge networks can further bolster technical expertise within national data ecosystems.

Ultimately, addressing this resource challenge requires elevating the political prioritisation of gender-equality data as a key enabler of gender-responsive governance and sustainable development. Greater resource mobilisation, accompanied by concerted efforts to build institutional and human capacity, will be pivotal for ASEAN countries to realise the transformative potential of gender-inclusive national data systems.

4.2.5. Dissemination and use of data

Even when gender data is collected, there are often challenges in ensuring that it is effectively disseminated and utilised by policymakers and other stakeholders. Bridging the gap between data production and data use remains a critical priority.

Many ASEAN countries face limitations in the dissemination and accessibility of sex-disaggregated data. National statistics offices and gender agencies may publish gender data in stand-alone reports or specialised publications, but these are not always widely circulated or easily accessible to diverse user groups. The data is often siloed and fragmented across different government agencies and websites, making it difficult for policymakers, civil society and the wider public to find and use the information.

Further, the format and presentation of gender data are not always user-friendly or tailored to the needs of specific stakeholders. Technical reports with dense statistical tables may not resonate with policymakers who require more concise, visual and actionable insights. Failure to translate data into local languages can also hinder its broader dissemination and uptake.

Beyond accessibility, there are often challenges in the actual utilisation of gender data for evidence-based policymaking. Policymakers, legislators and programme managers may not fully understand the relevance and implications of gender statistics or may lack the capacity to interpret and apply the data effectively. The lack of clear data-to-policy feedback loops means that valuable gender insights often do not translate into tangible policy reforms or programme interventions.

5. Recommendations

5.1. On governing structures, institutional mechanisms, networks, and media

■ **Future gender equality policies:** a stronger emphasis on a mix of measures is needed to achieve transformation of deeply rooted underlying obstacles that obstruct progress on gender equality. To move beyond just setting targets, there is a need to apply a stronger focus to the effective implementation of approved actions and measures in policies to achieve the set targets. Given the cross-cutting nature of gender equality, the bodies dedicated to the coordination and overseeing of implementation may need stronger enforcement tools. The limited financial resources, and limited human assets reported in some AMS, pose another obstacle to be overcome.

■ **Shared responsibility for change:** the burden of change should not be entirely placed upon women's shoulders. Even if well-trained, women alone do not hold the authority to bring about change. Since women are in the minority in all decision-making bodies, they inevitably depend on the need to achieve a consensus with male colleagues, and this signals the necessity for stronger measures in policies to enhance men's understanding of the benefits of improved gender equality. In this respect, proposed laws and measures should be analysed from both the perspective of the expected direct positive effect on women, and from the perspective of the potential signalling effect in relation to transforming social expectations.

■ **Risk analysis and risk management strategy:** the elaboration of an explicit risk analysis is recommended, along with an explicit risk management strategy as to how to address the potential risk of a lack of political commitment in the actual implementation of approved gender equality measures. This could include sanction mechanisms approved by the highest level of government.

■ **Attitude survey:** empirical evidence is needed to monitor progress in transforming social norms. An attitude survey to estimate the share of people with no bias in gender social norms would help provide a baseline against which to measure potential positive changes in biased social norms, thus capturing the combined effects of all measures and actions taken to uproot unsupportive attitudes and traditions.

■ **Women's unpaid care and domestic work:** it is recommended to analyse the possibilities for the acceptance and consequences of introducing parental leave. Parental leave can be arranged in many ways, all of which will contribute to immediately easing the work-life balance burden of women whilst signalling that caring for children is a shared responsibility and that paternal involvement should be the norm. It is also recommended to analyse more comprehensively how the introduction of the possibility for longer-term home care leave for women, but not men, plays out in relation to prevailing unsupportive norms that women are to be the main unpaid care worker.

■ **Sexual harassment, in general, and in the workplace:** this is a serious obstacle to women's political participation which requires stronger efforts. On this, the socio-economic-political context of each AMS sets limits; however, it is recommended to strengthen efforts to ease the stigma and shame victims experience in filing their cases. It is also recommended to strongly lobby for the formulation of a code of conduct in parliament, exploiting to the extent possible the opportunities in current laws.

■ **Young female leaders:** initiatives to promote and support young women to take on future leadership roles are in place in several AMS. They provide good models to learn from and to scale up to be prevalent not only at the national level but also at the sub-national level.

5.2. On increasing women participation in political parties and public institutions

Ultimately, addressing the socio-cultural barriers to women's political participation in Southeast Asia requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that tackles the deep-rooted patriarchal norms, institutional biases and structural inequalities that have historically constrained women's access to power. By implementing policy reforms in a contextually relevant manner, countries in the region can take meaningful steps toward achieving more gender-inclusive and representative political systems.

■ **Promote gender-sensitive civic and political education:** one of the most fundamental steps is to challenge the deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and biases that discourage women from entering politics. This requires a concerted effort to reshape the public discourse and social norms around women's political leadership. Comprehensive civic education programmes in schools and communities can play a vital role in this regard. These programmes should expose students to positive role models of women in politics, discuss the importance of gender parity in decision making, and equip young people, both girls and boys, with the knowledge and skills to participate actively in the political process. Complementing this, media and public awareness campaigns can further amplify efforts to shift societal perceptions about the legitimacy and capability of women in leadership positions.

■ **Implement gender quotas and affirmative action policies:** given the entrenched structural barriers that women face, proactive measures such as gender quotas and affirmative action policies are often necessary to create a more level playing field. Introducing legal quotas for women's representation in elected bodies and political party candidate lists can immediately boost the number of women in decision-making roles. However, these measures need to be designed and implemented carefully, with clear monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure meaningful and sustainable change. Additionally, providing financial incentives and other support systems to encourage political parties to field more women candidates can further strengthen the pipeline of aspiring women leaders.

■ **Strengthen women's political networks and mentorship programmes:** building strong networks and support systems for women in politics is crucial to enhancing their visibility, confidence, and access to resources. Cross-party women's caucuses and mentorship programmes can play a vital role in this regard. These platforms allow aspiring women politicians to learn from experienced leaders, expand their professional connections, and collectively advocate for their interests. Structured mentorship initiatives, where successful women politicians or civic leaders guide and support younger women, can be particularly impactful in nurturing the next generation of female political talent. Such peer-to-peer learning and mutual support can help women navigate the often male-dominated political landscape more effectively.

■ **Address gendered barriers in political financing:** the role of money in politics is a significant barrier for women, who often face greater resource constraints compared to their male counterparts. Providing public funding and subsidies to support women candidates can help level the playing field. Additionally, introducing campaign finance regulations to limit the influence of money and ensure more equitable access to resources can create a more inclusive political environment. These measures should be coupled with targeted capacity-building programmes to enhance women's skills in fundraising, budgeting, and financial management, further empowering them to run successful campaigns.

■ **Enhance support for women politicians:** the demanding nature of political careers, particularly when combined with the persistent gendered division of household and care giving responsibilities, can pose significant challenges for women seeking to balance their professional and personal lives. Implementing family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave, accessible and affordable childcare support, and flexible work arrangements, can create more inclusive working environments for women in elected bodies. Ensuring the provision of safe and respectful workplaces, free from harassment and discrimination, is also crucial to enabling women to thrive in the political sphere.

■ **Promote gender-responsive governance:** integrating a gender perspective into the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and legislation can help address the differential impacts on women. Requiring gender impact assessments and ensuring the representation of women in key decision-

making roles within political institutions can foster a more inclusive and gender-sensitive system of governance. This can enhance the responsiveness of the political system to the needs and priorities of women constituents, further strengthening their engagement and trust in the political process.

■ **Leverage digital and social media tools:** the rapid proliferation of digital and social media platforms presents both opportunities and challenges for women in politics. These tools can empower women to connect directly with voters, raise their profiles and mobilise support more effectively. However, the online space is also rife with misogynistic harassment and abuse targeted at women politicians. Leveraging the positive potential of digital tools whilst simultaneously implementing robust measures to combat online violence and ensure digital safety can create a more enabling environment for women to thrive in the political arena.

5.3. Sustaining and institutionalising the tracking of WPPL progress in ASEAN

Bridging the gaps in data dissemination and use will be critical to empowering WPPL at the national level. A multi-faceted approach is required, which could include the elements set out below.

- Developing user-friendly data portals and dissemination platforms that centralise and streamline access to sex-disaggregated data on political participation. This can help policymakers, civil society and the wider public access the information needed to identify barriers and opportunities for women in politics.
- Producing data visualisations, policy briefs and other knowledge products that translate complex gender data into actionable insights for stakeholders engaged in WPPL initiatives. Tailoring the format and content to the needs of diverse user groups can enhance data utilisation.
- Strengthening the data literacy and analytical capacities of policymakers, legislators and other key decision makers. Targeted training can equip them to better interpret gender data and apply the insights to strengthen women's political representation and leadership.
- Fostering robust mechanisms for data-informed policymaking, such as mandating the use of gender data in the design and evaluation of policies, programmes and reforms related to WPPL. This can help ensure that gender considerations are systematically integrated into political processes.
- Promoting a culture of data-driven decision-making and gender-responsive governance within government institutions. This can cultivate an enabling environment where gender data is valued and used to drive evidence-based strategies for advancing women's political empowerment.

At the regional level, monitoring WPPL progress is closely tied to the efforts of the ACW under its Work Plan 2021-2025, particularly under Vision 7 on 'Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership'. There are two key achievements in this regard, the first is forging consensus on the WPPL indicators to be monitored. The second step is the establishment of a baseline through the WPPL Regional Study. The remaining challenge in the coming years would be to institutionalise the continued and systematic collection of data across AMS to monitor progressive realisation of WPPL in the region.

5.3.1. Forging AMS consensus on WPPL indicators

Overall, the consultative and collaborative approach adopted by the ACW in developing the regional WPPL indicators has been instrumental in ensuring their relevance, feasibility and ownership by the AMS. This consensus-based framework lays a solid foundation for the ACW's regional monitoring and evaluation efforts on WPPL.

Through the WPPL study, the ACW has facilitated a consultative process to reach a consensus among the AMS on a set of regional WPPL indicators. This collaborative approach has ensured the indicators are aligned with the national priorities and data collection capacities of each Member State, thereby enhancing their relevance and feasibility.

This participatory approach allowed the ACW to gather inputs on the priority areas, data availability and measurement challenges for WPPL at the national level. By incorporating the perspectives and needs of each individual AMS, the ACW has ensured the ownership and commitment of the Member States toward the regional monitoring framework. The consultative process also enabled the ACW to assess the existing data collection capacities and limitations across the AMS. This has informed the selection of WPPL indicators as to which are feasible for the Member States to report on, in consideration of their statistical infrastructure and resources.

By actively engaging the AMS throughout the indicator development phase, the ACW secured their commitment to implementing the regional WPPL monitoring framework. This buy-in from the Member States is crucial for ensuring sustained data collection, analysis and reporting on the agreed indicators.

This consensus-building process has also enabled the harmonisation of WPPL data and measurement approaches across the AMS. This regional comparability will enhance the ACW's ability to track progress, identify best practices, and facilitate peer learning among the Member States.

5.3.2. Establishing a WPPL baseline

The WPPL study was designed and intended to establish a comprehensive baseline of sex-disaggregated data on various dimensions of WPPL across the region. This baseline information is crucial for the ACW's regional monitoring and evaluation framework, enabling the setting of measurable targets and benchmarks for progress.

The comprehensive baseline data generated through the WPPL study provides the ACW with a set of benchmarks and measurable targets to monitor progress on WPPL at the regional level. These benchmarks can now be used to track improvements over time, identify best practices, and foster healthy collaboration among the AMS. The baseline data provides crucial insights into the current state of WPPL in the ASEAN region. This information can be utilised to inform the design and implementation of targeted policies, programmes and interventions by the AMS and the ACW to address the identified gaps and challenges in women's political empowerment.

5.3.3. Sustaining and institutionalising WPPL progress monitoring post 2025

The results and findings of the WPPL study now serve as the baseline and foundation for the ACW's regional monitoring and evaluation framework. Through the WPPL study, the ACW was able to develop a system to regularly collect, analyse, and report on WPPL progress across the ASEAN region. Building on the findings and recommendations of the WPPL study, the ACW is in an advantageous position to institutionalise this mechanism and process for regularly tracking regional WPPL progress. This could involve the following tasks.

- Integrating the WPPL indicators and data collection protocols into the ACW's post-2025 work plan and monitoring processes.
- Strengthening the capacities of national statistics offices and gender machineries to generate and report WPPL data in a harmonised manner.
- Establishing a regional platform for the regular exchange of WPPL data, analysis, and good practices among the AMS.
- Aligning the WPPL monitoring framework with the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines and other relevant regional and global frameworks.

The WPPL study and the subsequent regional monitoring mechanism have established a robust foundation for continued collaboration and knowledge-sharing on women's political empowerment among the AMS. This foundation can be further strengthened and enhanced to ensure the long-term sustainability of the WPPL progress-tracking initiative.

The continued WPPL progress tracking that builds on an existing process and utilises data collection tools that are already familiar with the ACW focal points will promote greater coordination and alignment of efforts across the ASEAN region. It will also ensure that the AMS can capitalise on synergies and amplify the impact of their interventions. Moving forward, this can be achieved by:

- Enhancing the existing monitoring tools and frameworks: the ACW can work with the AMS to streamline and simplify data collection and reporting processes, making them more user-friendly and efficient;
- strengthening inter-agency collaboration to address data gaps: the ACW can facilitate greater collaboration among national statistics offices, gender machineries and other relevant agencies to improve the availability and quality of data on WPPL; and
- providing capacity-building support: the ACW can offer targeted training and technical assistance to the AMS to enhance their ability to effectively utilise the WPPL monitoring tools and interpret the data for evidence-based policymaking.

Fostering the ACW's commitment to sustain the WPPL progress tracking initiative using the WPPL existing tools beyond 2025 is not only practical but also, more importantly, efficient. Moreover, it strongly aligns with ASEAN's broader efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.

By ensuring the continuity of the WPPL progress-tracking initiative and building on the tools of this regional study, the ACW is positioning the ASEAN region to achieve sustained improvements in WPPL over the long term. The continuation of this regional programme will allow the AMS to achieve these sustainable goals:

- Monitor progress and trends over time: the longitudinal data collection and analysis will enable the AMS to track progress, identify areas of improvement and measure the effectiveness of their interventions.
- Adapt to emerging challenges: the ongoing monitoring will help the AMS identify new barriers and challenges to women's political empowerment as they arise, allowing them to swiftly respond with targeted and evidence-based policies and programmes.
- Maintain momentum and accountability: the sustained commitment to WPPL progress tracking will keep the issue high on the regional agenda, maintaining momentum and ensuring continued accountability among the AMS for advancing women's political leadership.

Annexes

Annex 1: Key Performance Results Framework

Annex 2: Definition of Key Performance Indicators, Data Collection Tools, Methodology and Key Informant Guide Questions

Annex 3: Summary of Findings at the National Level under each Key Performance Indicator

Annex 4: Updated Data and Information beyond the Agreed Cut-off Date of 31 December 2023

Annex 1: Key Performance Results Framework

IMPACT: WOMEN MEANINGFULLY PARTICIPATE AND LEAD IN POLICY DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AT ALL LEVELS.

OUTCOME 7.1.
GOVERNING STRUCTURES AND ARRANGEMENTS STIMULATE GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING BODIES

OUTPUT 7.1.1.
LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOSTER GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES BODIES

- KPI 1. Policies that stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies
- KPI 2. Legal frameworks which foster gender balance, are available
- KPI 3. Enforcement of laws and regulations, where relevant, in support of gender equality
- KPI 4. Review of laws and discriminatory clauses in laws and policies, where relevant
- KPI 5. Implementation of temporary special measures / affirmative action (process and policies in place), where applicable

OUTPUT 7.1.2.
GREATER GENDER BALANCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES EXIST

- KPI 6. Percent of women in selected political parties (members / candidates)
- KPI 7. Number of women candidates and placement on party list
- KPI 8. Location of women in political parties and their location in the decision making hierarchy

OUTPUT 7.1.4.
ESTABLISH AND RECOGNISE GENDER-SENSITIVE STATISTICAL SYSTEMS AND MONITORING TO TRACK PROGRESS ON WOMEN LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES

- KPI 9. Development (or existence) of AMS-specific gender monitoring tools to track the progress of women leadership and participation

OUTPUT 7.1.5.
INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS ARE IN PLACE THAT MITIGATE AND REDUCE VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

- KPI 10. Existence of code of conduct and policies against gender-driven harassment in parliament and political parties are in place and/or developed

OUTCOME 7.2.
NUMBER OF WOMEN MOTIVATED ATTRACTED TO ENGAGING IN AND LEADING IN POLITICAL PROCESSES HAS INCREASED

OUTPUT 7.2.2
VARIOUS SUPPORT NETWORKS FOR WOMEN ARE CREATED AND SUSTAINED

- KPI 11. Platforms which facilitate women leaders to build networks at both regional and national levels are created

OUTCOME 7.3.
PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF WOMEN AS EQUALLY SUITED AND CONSTRUCTIVE POLITICAL LEADERS AS MEN

OUTPUT 7.3.2.
INCREASED POSITIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN LEADERS AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN THE MEDIA

- KPI 12. Number of media programmes contributing to transforming mindset

OUTCOME 7.4.
NUMBERS OF WOMEN LEADERS IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS INCREASED

- KPI 13. Proportion of women in minister and deputy minister positions (or upper levels, where relevant)
- KPI 14. Proportion of women in senior or managerial positions in government
- KPI 15. Proportion of women judges in supreme judicial body and women judges in courts
- KPI 16. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local legislative councils
- KPI 17. Proportion of seats (nominated and/or elected) held by women as chief executive or head at local government (sub-national level)

OUTPUT 7.4.2.
POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS ARE WELCOMING TO WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS

- KPI 18. Manifesto of political parties and their documents in promoting women's leadership

Annex 2: Definition of Key Performance Indicators, Data Collection Tools, Methodology and Key Informant Guide Questions

OUTCOME 7.1. GOVERNING STRUCTURES AND ARRANGEMENTS STIMULATE GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING BODIES

OUTPUT 7.1.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOSTER GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES BODIES

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
ACW VISION 7 Indicator: 1. Policies that stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies	Policies are rules, commitments, ministerial decisions, principles, guidelines, frameworks, standards, high-level declarations, statements, circular letters, memos, or programmes, projects, strategies and national plans that are officially adopted by the AMS to achieve long term goals. Policies are formulated to direct and exert influence on all the major decisions to be made within the country and keep all government activities within a set of established boundaries. These are usually set out in a written format that is easily accessible. Policy decisions are frequently reflected also in resource allocations. This indicator refers to policies that promote women empowerment, including but not limited to those on women leadership and political development, but also those on labour market, child care, social protection, education, health, infrastructure investments, and others that support women leadership development.	• Government Gazette • Websites of ministries • Public expenditures and budget • SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency • Women's organisations (CSOs)	• Desk review and assessment of selected policies • Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII) with stakeholders from national government and selected women's organisations

Guidance Note:

1. Collect soft or hard copies of selected policies to be reviewed and assessed.
2. Assess specifically how the policy directly stimulates gender balance in government and decision-making bodies. Which measures are taken to directly stimulate women's political representation and opportunities to participate in governance and leadership in decision-making bodies?

3. Assess indirect political empowerment of women through easing constraints for women. Which specific measures are proposed:
 - 3.1. To transform traditional social and cultural norms and stereotypes in society such as gender division of family responsibility and women's unpaid domestic care work
 - 3.2. To facilitate women's work-life balance
 - a. Maternity leave
 - b. Paternity leave
 - c. Home care leave
 - d. Leave to take care of a sick or elderly family member. Please specify
 - e. Childcare facilities and services - provided by employer or otherwise supported, including subsidies for childcare. Please specify
 - f. Flexible start and working hours and time saving. Please specify
 - g. Part-time employment solutions. Please specify
 - h. Specific measures to accommodate the needs of pregnant women (e.g. facilities, working time allocated for resting, etc.). Please specify
 - 3.3. To ensure infrastructure investments address women's needs to the same extent as men's
 - 3.4. To strengthen gender equality in access to opportunities in the labour market and income earning (... also an issue for labour law...)
 - 3.5. To ease any other constraint you may identify In reference to KPI 4:
4. Assess specifically how sections or clauses in the policies discriminate and negatively impact on the implementation and application of gender equality. Please specify (refer to indicator 4 below)
5. Implementation process and arrangements:
 - 5.1. Does the policy include clear lines/division of accountability?
 - 5.2. Does the policy include clear monitoring requirements with specified indicators to monitor proposed measures related to gender equality and empowerment of women?
 - 5.3. Are proposed indicators sex dis-aggregated as relevant?
6. Are budget expenditures allocated to support the implementation of the proposed measures?
7. Arrange focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informants interviews (KIIs) to follow up on findings from the desk review and assessment of policies. Questions for the FDGs and KIIs:
 - 7.1. What are the views of participant/-s regarding actual implementation of measures proposed in the assessed policies?

- a. Have proposed measures been translated into actions? Please specify how and include evidence as relevant
 - b. Which entry points do the participant/-s see for further strengthening gender equality perspectives in selected (discussed) policies?
- 7.2. Do the participant/-s experience informal/invisible obstacles which constrain women's political participation in practice - e.g. non transparency in information sharing, or decision-making sessions and meetings that take place at times which are incompatible with the schedule of women who are also in charge of their families (late at night, weekends, dinner time) - etc.
- 7.3. Who are the key agents of change to transform social norms to promote gender equality in society, in public life, and in politics and leadership. Please specify
- 7.4. Are women in managerial and decision-making positions confined to the 'traditional' sectors (such as women's affairs; family; impaired people; etc.) or are women represented in managerial and decision-making positions also in 'non-traditional' sectors (such as in charge of infrastructure, environment, finance, defense, etc.)
- 7.5. In relation to KPI 4:
- a. do the participant/-s know of clauses in policies that discriminate and negatively impact on gender equality?
 - b. do the participant/-s agree with your assessment regarding clauses that discriminate against the implementation of gender equality?
 - c. who are the key agents of change to eliminate discriminatory clauses in policies?

NOTE: The assessments shall be brief and direct to the point and shall include reference to where in the policy additional information may be found. Specific quotes from the provisions of assessed policies or laws could be placed in the footnotes or endnotes and/or provided as an annex to the national report).

OUTPUT 7.1.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOSTER GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES BODIES

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
ACW VISION 7 Indicator: 2. Legal frameworks which foster gender balance, are available	Legal frameworks are laws, issuances, regulations, executive orders, legal documents, that advance and cultivate gender equality / equity and empowerment, which includes those on women leadership and political development, but also those on child care, social protection, education, health and others	- Government Gazette - Websites of ministries - SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency - Women's organisations (CSOs) - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) documentation package (i.e. State party's report; Concluding observations; List of issues (LOI and LOIPRS); Replies to list of issues; Follow-up to concluding observations - Info from civil society organisations and info from other stakeholders to CEDAW	- Desk review and assessment of relevant legal frameworks - FGD and KII with relevant stakeholders from ACW, national government, women leaders, political parties and relevant CSOs

Guidance Note:

1. Collect soft or hard copies of selected legal frameworks and laws, issuances, regulations, and executive orders to be reviewed and assessed.
2. Assess specifically how the legal documents directly stimulates gender balance in government and decision-making bodies.
 - 2.1. Which clauses in the reviewed legal documents do directly stimulate women's political representation and opportunities to participate in governance and leadership in decision-making bodies? Please specify

In reference to KPI 4:

3. Assess specifically how the legal documents discriminate and negatively impact on the implementation and application of gender equality
 - 3.1. Which clauses in the reviewed legal documents discriminate and negatively impact on the implementation and application of gender equality? Please specify (Refer to indicator 4 below)
4. Arrange FGDs and KIIs to follow up on findings from the desk review and assessment of the legal documents.
 - 4.1. Do the participant/-s agree with your assessment regarding clauses that stimulate as well as clauses that discriminate?
 - 4.2. Which entry points do the participant/-s see for further strengthening the legal documents?
 - 4.3. Who are the key agents of change to achieve stronger clauses to foster gender equality in legal documents?

4.4. In relation to KPI 3:

- a. What is the view of the participant/-s when it comes to enforcement of laws in support of gender equality?
- b. Do the participant/-s know of any evaluation which provide evidence of enforcement of laws and regulations in support of gender equality? Please
- c. Specify and ask for copies
- d. Do the participant/-s know of successful as well as unsuccessful court cases following from laws in support of gender equality? Please specify and ask for copies or where to find copies.

5. In relation to KPI 4:

- 5.1. Do the participant/-s know of clauses in legal documents that discriminate and negatively impact on gender equality?
- 5.2. Do the participant/-s agree with your assessment regarding clauses that discriminate against the implementation of gender equality?
- 5.3. Who are the key agents of change to eliminate discriminatory clauses in legal documents?

1. OUTPUT 7.1.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOSTER GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES BODIES

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
2015 Monitoring Indicator: 3. Enforcement of laws and regulations, where relevant, in support of gender equality	Refers to how well the laws and regulations on gender equality / equity that facilitate women's participation in decision-making and political processes are applied and practiced; also indicates if the laws are consistently and effectively practiced	• Ministry of judicial issues • Ministry in charge of civil service • SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency • Evaluations by government and CSOs • Successful and unsuccessful court cases • CEDAW documentation package (see above)	• Desk assessment • FGD and KII with relevant stakeholders from ACW, national government, women leaders, political parties and CSOs

Guidance Note:

1. Questions to be included in FDGs and KIIs which are arranged for KPI 2.

1.1. In relation to KPI 3:

- a. What is the view of the participant/-s when it comes to enforcement of laws in support of gender equality?
- b. Do the participant/-s know of any evaluation which provide evidence of enforcement of laws and regulations in support of gender equality? Please specify and ask for copies.
- c. Do the participant/-s know of successful as well as unsuccessful court cases following from laws in support of gender equality? Please specify and ask for copies or where to find copies.

2. Collect and review documents which are provided by the participant/-s in the FDGs and KIIs.

2. OUTPUT 7.1.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOSTER GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES BODIES

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
2015 Monitoring Indicator: 4. Review of laws and discriminatory clauses in laws and policies, where relevant	Identify existing laws or discriminatory clauses in laws and policies that directly and negatively impact on the implementation and application of gender equality laws and regulations	• Government Gazette • Websites of ministries • SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency • Women's organisations (CSOs) • CEDAW documentation package (details see above)	• Desk review and assessment • FGD and KII with relevant stakeholders from national government and selected women's organisations

Guidance Note:

1. See guidance for KPI 1 and KPI 2 respectively for document review and assessment.
2. Questions to be included in FGDs and KIIs which are arranged for KPI 1 to follow up on findings from the assessment of policies:
 - 2.1. Do the participant/s know of clauses in policies that discriminate and negatively impact on gender equality?
 - 2.2. Do the participant/-s agree with your assessment regarding clauses in policies that discriminate against the implementation of gender equality?
 - 2.3. Who are the key agents of change to eliminate discriminatory clauses in policies?
3. Questions to be included in FGDs and KIIs which are arranged for KPI 2 to follow up on findings from the assessment of legal documents.
 - 3.1. Do the participant/s know of clauses in legal documents that discriminate against the implementation of gender equality?
 - 3.2. Do the participant/-s agree with your assessment regarding clauses in legal documents that discriminate against implementation of gender equality?
 - 3.3. Who are the key agents of change to eliminate discriminatory clauses in legal documents?

3. OUTPUT 7.1.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOSTER GENDER BALANCE IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES BODIES

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
2015 Monitoring Indicator: 5. Implementation of temporary special measures / affirmative action (process and policies in place), where applicable	Affirmative action refers to temporary measures or positive steps and practices taken by either government, political parties or state institutions that are designed to increase the representation and participation of women in politics and public life from which they have been historically excluded. This could include, but not limited to, quota systems for women, adoption of legislation seeking to ensure minimum representation by women in the institutional structures of the state/government, targeting women for appointment to public office, and implementing educational programs aimed at increasing women's political participation and leadership, among other measures.	• CEDAW reporting package • CEDAW reporting agency/-ies • Council of ministers • Political parties	• Desk review and assessments • FGD or KII with key stakeholders in relevant national government institutions as relevant in each AMS

Guidance Note:

1. Collect and review documentation to assess whether or not temporary special measures/affirmative actions are applied. Please specify where as well how they are applied.
2. Arrange FGDs and KIIs to follow up on findings from the desk review and assessment. Questions to be included in FGDs and KIIs:
 - 2.1 How is women political leadership and participation promoted within government structures? Is the government taking affirmative actions to promote women in political leadership and decision-making positions?

4. OUTPUT 7.1.2. GREATER GENDER BALANCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES EXIST

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
ACW VISION 7 Indicator: 6. Percent of women in selected political parties (members / candidates)	Refers to the percentage of women members and women fielded as candidates in 3 to 4 major (dominant and leading) political parties in the country	- Published statistics and data on political parties' websites - Party leadership - Party public lists of fielded candidates - as relevant in each AMS - Electoral management body	- Political party website searches for statistics (gender dis-aggregation of members in 3-4 major political parties, and of women candidates in these parties in 2 major national and sub-national elections as relevant) - Website search for statistics published by election responsible agency - Review of party fielded candidate lists FGD and KII with key party stakeholders and election agency stakeholder

Table 1a. Percent Women Members and Candidates in Political Party Election Cycle 1. (Please indicate Year)

Name of Political Party	Total Members	Percent (%) Women	NATIONAL CANDIDATES		SUB-NATIONAL CANDIDATES	
			Total Candidates	Percent (%) Women	Total Candidates	Percent (%) Women
1,						
2.						
3.						
4.						
Average:						

Table 1b. Percent Women Members and Candidates in Political Party Election Cycle 2. (Please indicate Year)

Name of Political Party	Total Members	Percent (%) Women	NATIONAL CANDIDATES		SUB-NATIONAL CANDIDATES	
			Total Candidates	Percent (%) Women	Total Candidates	Percent (%) Women
1,						
2.						
3.						
4.						
Average:						

Guidance Note:

Through a KII or an FGD with women leaders and members of political parties:

1. Provide insight on the factors that support or hinder women to be fielded as political candidates.
2. Inquire on actions being undertaken by the political party to address these barriers, including affirmative actions, if any.

5. OUTPUT 7.1.2. GREATER GENDER BALANCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES EXIST

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
2015 Monitoring Indicators: 7. Number of women candidates and placement on party list	Refers to the placement of women nominees in the candidate list of the major 3 to 4 political parties in the last 2 major national and sub- national elections. This indicator examines the tendency to place women at the bottom or the last spot of the list from which party-list representatives shall be chosen in case the party obtains the required number of votes which impedes women from getting elected positions, including lists of representatives who are appointed in government sector.	• Published statistics and data on political parties' websites • Party leadership • Party public lists of fielded candidates • Responsible agency as relevant in each AMS • Electoral management body	• Political party website searches for statistics (gender dis-aggregation of members in 3-4 major political parties, and of women candidates in these parties in 2 major national and sub-national elections as relevant) • Website search for statistics published by election responsible agency • Review of party fielded candidate lists • - FGD and KII with key party stakeholders and election agency stakeholder

Table 2a. Placement of Women Candidates on Party List Election Cycle 1. (Please indicate Year)

Name of Political Party	Placement of Women Candidates on Party List													
	NATIONAL							SUB - NATIONAL						
	Total No. of Candidates	Total No. of Male Candidates	Total No. of Female Candidates	1st 25%	2nd 25%	3rd 25%	4th 25%	Total No. of Candidates	Total No. of Male Candidates	Total No. of Female Candidates	1st 25%	2nd 25%	3rd 25%	4th 25%
1.														
2.														
3.														
4.														
Average:														

Table 2b. Placement of Women Candidates on Party List Election Cycle 2. (Please indicate Year)

Name of Political Party	Placement of Women Candidates on Party List													
	NATIONAL							SUB - NATIONAL						
	Total No. of Candidates	Total No. of Male Candidates	Total No. of Female Candidates	1st 25%	2nd 25%	3rd 25%	4th 25%	Total No. of Candidates	Total No. of Male Candidates	Total No. of Female Candidates	1st 25%	2nd 25%	3rd 25%	4th 25%
1.														
2.														
3.														
4.														
Average:														

Table 3a. Position of Women Candidates Election Cycle 1. (Please indicate Year)

Name of Political Party	POSITION OF WOMEN CANDIDATES									
	NATIONAL					SUB - NATIONAL				
	Total Number of Candidates	Total Number of Male Candidates	Number of Male Candidates in Primary Position	Total Number of Female Candidates	Number of Female Candidates in Primary Position	Total Number of Candidates	Total Number of Male Candidates	Number of Male Candidates in Secondary Position	Total No. of Female Candidates	Number of Female Candidates in Secondary Position
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
Average:										

Table 3b. Position of Women Candidates Election Cycle 2. (Please indicate Year)

Name of Political Party	POSITION OF WOMEN CANDIDATES									
	NATIONAL					SUB - NATIONAL				
	Total Number of Candidates	Total Number of Male Candidates	Number of Male Candidates in Primary Position	Total Number of Female Candidates	Number of Female Candidates in Primary Position	Total Number of Candidates	Total Number of Male Candidates	Number of Male Candidates in Secondary Position	Total No. of Female Candidates	Number of Female Candidates in Secondary Position
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
Average:										

Table 4. Percentage of Women Members Nominated to Government Positions Per Political Party

Name of Political Party	Total Members	% Female Members Nominated to Government	% Male Members Nominated to Government
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Guidance Note:

1. Please provide data that cover the last 2 election cycles. Please indicate the election year.
2. Depending on respective electoral system, AMS is requested to provide data for "Placement in party list" AND/OR provide data for "Candidate Position".
3. For the Placement in Party List, divide the list in 4 equal quadrants or parts. Please indicate the number of women candidates placed in the top or first 25% or first quadrant of the list; and in the second quadrant or second 25%; the third quadrant or third 25%; the fourth quadrant or the bottom or fourth 25% of the list.
4. For column on Candidate Position, please indicate 1 if women are listed as candidates as head or primary position (example: National Position would be President; for Sub-national it could be as Governor, Mayor) and for secondary position (example: Vice President for National Position; Vice Governor, Vice Mayor for sub-national positions).
5. For Table 4, please indicate percent of women who are nominated as representatives in government or in state institutions. It will also be ideal if an indication on which types of positions and in which government sector.

6. Similar to KPI 7:

- 6.1. Provide insight on the factors that support or hinder women to be fielded in upper elective positions or being nominated as representatives in government.
- 6.2. Inquire on actions being undertaken by the political party to address these barriers, including affirmative actions, if any.

6. OUTPUT 7.1.2. GREATER GENDER BALANCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES EXIST

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
2015 Monitoring Indicator 8. Location of women in political parties and their location in the decision making hierarchy	Refers to the percentage of women officers / women in the political hierarchy in the 3 to 4 major political parties. Data should be able to provide an indication whether women officers in the political party occupy positions that influence decision-making	- Published statistics and data on political parties' websites - Party leadership - Party public lists of fielded candidates as relevant in each AMS - Electoral electoral management body	- Political party website searches for statistics (gender dis-aggregation of members in 3-4 major political parties, and of women candidates in these parties in 2 major national and sub-national elections as relevant) - Website search for statistics published by election responsible agency - Review of party fielded candidate lists - FGD and KII with key party stakeholders and election agency stakeholder

Table 5. Percentage of Women Officers / Women in Hierarchy in Political Parties, including Positions Occupied

Name of Political Party	Total Officers in Hierarchy	% Male Officers / Male in Hierarchy	Positions Occupied By Men	% Women Officers / Women in Hierarchy	Positions Occupied By Women
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
Average:					

Guidance Note:

1. Aside from looking at the percentage of women in leadership in the political party, it would be good to also see whether women occupy traditional positions assigned to women. It will also be interesting to illustrate if women are given key or top positions in the party and reflect on how women are able to influence decision-making within the party both as members and as part of the political hierarchy.

7. OUTPUT 7.1.4. ESTABLISH AND RECOGNISE GENDER-SENSITIVE STATISTICAL SYSTEMS AND MONITORING TO TRACK PROGRESS ON WOMEN LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
ACW VISION 7 Indicator: 9. Development (or existence) of AMS-specific gender monitoring tools to track the progress of women leadership and participation	Refers to whether there is a platform, mechanism or a system in place in government and/or related state institutions to track progress on women leadership, representation and participation	• Government statistics agency • Ministry in charge of civil service • SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency • ACW Focal Point	• FGD and KII

Guidance Note:

1. Through existing secondary sources or through key informant interviews with the relevant government agencies identified with the ACW Focal Point, please determine whether there is a system or a platform that systematically monitor the progress of the AMS in WPPL.
2. If there is a system, inquire on the following:
 - 2.1. Describe the monitoring system? What are the WPPL indicators being monitored?
 - 2.2. Please describe the monitoring process or system, including the monitoring structure and responsible agencies.
 - 2.3. Is the monitoring consistent and how often is the monitoring undertaken?
 - 2.4. How are the monitoring data used to inform policy formulation to support WPPL?
 - 2.5. What are the challenges and how are they addressed?
 - 2.6. What are the lessons and best practices?
3. If there is no existing system or platform:
 - 3.1. Are there plans to develop a monitoring system or platform?
 - 3.2. What are the constraints and issues that prevent the creation of the platform? How can these be addressed moving forward?

8. OUTPUT 7.1.5. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS ARE IN PLACE THAT MITIGATE AND REDUCE VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
ACW VISION 7 Indicator: 10. Existence of code of conduct and policies against gender-driven harassment in parliament and political parties are in place and/or developed	Refers to policies, programs, plans, laws, regulations / arrangements that are in place that address and penalizes gender-driven harassment / violence against women in the work environment, particularly the parliament, government institutions and within the political parties.	• Party leadership of 3-4 major political parties • Women party caucus (as relevant) • Women parliamentary/national caucus and sub-national caucus (as relevant) • Key women stakeholders in Parliament and sub-national bodies • Electoral management body	• FGD and KII • Collection and review of secondary data

Guidance Note:

1. Inquire whether the Political Party includes in its Code of Conduct and/or policies against gender-based harassment. Please get a copy of the Code and/or policy.
2. Organize a key informant interview with Political Party Officers and members on the following questions: If there is a Code of Conduct / Policy:
 - 2.1. How are the members made aware of the Code of Conduct / policy against gender-based harassment within the Party and/or Parliament?
 - 2.2. How are these policies enforced and implemented?
 - 2.3. How are violations on the Code and policies addressed? Please describe the process, procedures and party structure. Please describe the composition of the body that will take up the harassment case.

If there is no Code of Conduct / Policy:

- 2.4. Get a sense whether they see a need for a policy or a Code of Conduct dealing with gender-based harassment within the Party or in the Parliament. Why is there a need or why is there no need?
- 2.5. Would they be willing to support the development of such policy or Code?
- 2.6. What are the issues and challenges in the issuance of a policy / or a Code? How is the Party leadership addressing these challenges?
- 2.7. If there is no policy or Code, how are gender-based harassment addressed within the Party and/or Parliament?

3. Convene a KII with women members and leaders of the political party to inquire on the following:

If there is a Code of Conduct:

- 3.1. Are you aware of the Party's Code of Conduct or policy?
- 3.2. Are women in the Party amply protected and their issues safely addressed if a harassment case arise?
- 3.3. Were there any cases? How were they resolved? Were they resolved in a fair and just manner?

If there is no Code of Conduct / Policy:

- 3.4. Do you see a need for a Code of Conduct or policy on gender-based harassment both within the party and in Parliament?
- 3.5. Why and why not?
- 3.6. How are gender-based harassment in the Party and in the Parliament being resolved?
- 3.7. Are there ample redress mechanisms to respond to harassment within the Party and in the Parliament in a fair and just manner?

9. OUTPUT 7.2.2. VARIOUS SUPPORT NETWORKS FOR WOMEN ARE CREATED AND SUSTAINED

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
ACW VISION 7 Indicator: 11. Platforms which facilitate women leaders to build networks at both regional and national levels are created	Refers to the existing platforms and networks both at the regional, national and sub-national levels that support and allow women leaders to connect, get support and build alliances	• Women parliamentary/national caucus and sub-national caucus (as relevant) • Ministry in charge of civil service • CSO networks • Social media networks • Political parties	• KIIs (in parliamentary and sub-national bodies and relevant ministry/-ies) • Mapping of organizations and assessment of their engagement with each other, including engagement with existing ASEAN organizations

Guidance Note:

1. Please identify existing platforms and networks that support WPPL and women in politics in general both at the national and regional levels.
2. Who are these organisations? Please indicate whether local, national or regional.
3. What types of support are provided to women leaders. Describe how women leaders are able to access these forms of support. Please provide a sense of the scope and breadth of the support these organisations are able to provide.

10. OUTPUT 7.3.2. INCREASED POSITIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN LEADERS AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN THE MEDIA

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
2015 Monitoring Indicator: 12. Number of media programmes contributing to transforming mindset	Refers to public (government) and private (CSOs, political parties etc) efforts and initiatives to address women leader stereotypes and portray women in media as equally qualified leaders	• Media organisations • Journalist organisations • Political parties • Women's CSOs	• FGD and KII with stakeholders from relevant organisations • Review and assessment of selected printed media over 1 month • Review and assessment of selected major digital media over 1 month

Guidance Note:

1. Select which printed/digital media to review for gender stereotyping - and select a month for which to conduct the review.
 - 1.1. Specify how/why the media and the month were selected.
2. Collect soft or hard copies of selected printed/digital media for all days of the selected month.
3. Assessment - review the selected media and:
 - 3.1. List each article of a woman leader that is reviewed (note day in which it was published in the selected media).
 - 3.2. Assess if/how there are visible stereotypes when portraying a female leader as compared to when portraying a male leader? For instance:
 - a. Are the women portrayed primarily in her capacity as a leader - or primarily as a 'mother', a 'care giver'?
4. Arrange FGDs or KIIs with women representatives from relevant media, journalist, and women organisations and from political parties.
 - 4.1. What is the experience from the participants when it comes to portraying female v. male leaders in the media? Please specify differences.
 - 4.2. In their view, is there a stereotype reporting of women leaders? Please specify how.
 - 4.3. Which efforts have their organisation arranged to address women leader stereotypes in media? Please specify each such arrangement.

11. OUTCOME 7.4. NUMBERS OF WOMEN LEADERS IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS INCREASED

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
13. Proportion of women in minister and deputy minister positions (or upper levels, where relevant)	Refers to the percentage of women occupying minister and deputy minister level positions in government (or similar level positions)	- Statistical agency data base - SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency - Civil service agency	Data base search
14. Proportion of women in senior or managerial positions in government	Refers to the percentage of women occupying senior positions in government. Senior positions can be individually defined per AMS depending on prevailing government structure. In the Philippines for instance, senior management position is proposed to be defined as women occupying assistant secretary and director level positions in government. This could be further discussed in a workshop to calibrate and ensure that the positions identified per AMS are relatively the same across the member states. To facilitate, each AMS is requested to share their respective bureaucracy or administrative structure and identify which positions have been considered for this indicator.	- Statistical agency data base - SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency - Civil service agency	Data base search (for positions as relevant for each AMS)
15. Proportion of women judges in supreme judicial body and women judges in courts	Refers to the percentage of women justices on the AMS supreme judicial body and the percentage of women judges, prosecutors and lawyers in courts	- Statistical agency data base - SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency - Supreme Court / Ministry of Justice	Data base search
16. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local legislative councils	Refers to the percentage of women in national parliaments and in local legislative councils or bodies	- Statistical agency data base - SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency - Electoral management body - National Parliament Secretariat	Data base search
17. Proportion of seats (nominated and/or elected) held by women as chief executive or head at local government (sub-national level)	Refers to percentage of women leaders as chief executive or head of local government. This is further classified depending on the political administrative subdivision of the AMS. In the Philippines, the sub-national level political administration is as follows: (i) provinces are headed by a governor; (ii) cities are headed by a mayor; (iii) municipalities are headed by a mayor; (iv) villages or barangays are headed by a barangay captain or a village chief. AMS is requested to provide a description of their respective local political administrative divisions as context.	- Statistical agency data base - SDG 5 responsible monitoring and reporting agency - Electoral management body - Political Parties - Ministry in charge of local / sub-national government	Data base search (for positions as relevant for each AMS)

Table 6. Proportion of Women in Minister and Deputy Minister Positions

Key Performance Indicator	Total Number (2020)	% Female (2020)	% Male (2020)	Indicate Ministries / Area of Responsibility
KPI 13a. Proportion of women in minister and deputy minister positions				Please indicate the Ministries headed by women.
KPI 13b. Proportion of women in deputy minister positions				Please indicate the area of responsibility within the ministry (Example: in Planning, Finance and Administration, Operations, Legal etc)

Table 7. Women Leaders in Government, Courts, Parliament and Local Government

Key Performance Indicator	Total Number (2020)	% Male (2020)	% Female (2020)
KPI 14. Proportion of women in senior or managerial positions in government			
KPI 15a. Proportion of women judges in supreme judicial body			
KPI 15b. Proportion of women judges in courts			
KPI 15c. Proportion of women prosecutors			
KPI 15d. Proportion of women lawyers			
KPI 16a. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament			
KPI 16b. Proportion of seats held by women in local legislative councils			
KPI 17. Proportion of seats held by women as chief executive or head at local government (sub-national level)			

Guidance Note:

1. The data collected in Table 6 and 7 will give an overall picture of the extent of participation of women leaders in the public political sphere. It will also provide the baseline for tracking the progress of women leaders in terms of indicating whether women in political institutions are increasing or not and appropriate policy action can be undertaken both taken at the national and regional levels.
2. Table 6 will not only give a sense of how many women occupy minister and deputy ministry positions, but also in which ministries. This will aid an assessment whether women are relegated in ministries traditionally seen as “fit for women” or are designated in key ministries that support the national priority development agenda.
3. Based on the data in Table 7, please provide analysis / insight on the factors the support or prevent women’s participation and ways that these obstacles are being addressed.

12. OUTPUT 7.4.2. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS ARE WELCOMING TO WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS

ACW Vision 7 / 2015 Monitoring Tool Indicators	Proposed Definition	Indicative Data Sources	Data Collection Method
2015 Monitoring Tool Indicator 18. Manifesto of political parties and their documents in promoting women's leadership	Refers to a quick review of political party documents and manifestos that show or indicate support for women leadership	• Websites and leadership of political parties	• Review and assessment of manifestos • FGD and KII with stakeholders from 3-4 major political parties

Guidance Note:

Request for copies of the Party's Party documents that promote women leadership and greater participation within the party and in the public sphere as a whole.

1. For the key informant interviews, please get both the perspective of the Party leadership as well as the perspective of women leaders / members in the party. A separate KII or FGD may be arranged for this purpose.
2. Questions for the KII:
 - 2.1. How are members of the Party made aware of these policies? How are these policies enforced and implemented?
 - 2.2. How is women leadership and participation promoted within the party? Is the party taking affirmative action to field women members as candidates during election or implement a quota to include more women in the party list?
 - 2.3. What are the challenges? How are they addressed?

Annex 3: Summary of National-level Findings under each Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

Governing structures and arrangements stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies

KPI 1: Policies that stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies

Agreed Definition:

Policies are rules, commitments, ministerial decisions, principles, guidelines, frameworks, standards, high-level declarations, statements, circular letters, memos, or programmes, projects, strategies and national plans that are officially adopted by the AMS to achieve long-term goals. Policies are formulated to direct and exert influence on all the major decisions to be made within the country and keep all government activities within a set of established boundaries. These are usually set out in a written format that is easily accessible.

Policy decisions are frequently reflected also in resource allocations.

This indicator refers to policies that promote women empowerment, including but not limited to those on women leadership and political development, but also those on labour market, childcare, social protection, education, health, infrastructure investments, and others that support women leadership development.

Here, we present information and assessment from the national WPPL studies on key national-level policies³⁰ and the institutional machinery responsible for the implementation, budget allocations, and policy measures to address constraints identified as key challenges and barriers that inhibit women's political participation and leadership, specifically in relation to work-life balance, social prejudices, and the elimination of gender-based violence.

Brunei Darussalam adopts a holistic approach to human development, rooted in a strong Islamic faith, which acts as the basis for just and equitable policies for both men and women. Policies are embedded within national development frameworks, such as the Brunei Vision 2035 (Wawasan 2035), contributing to broader human development goals. The key pillars of Vision 2035 include three main goals, namely, 1) educated, highly skilled, and accomplished people, 2) high quality of life, and 3) a dynamic and sustainable economy; to ensure that all citizens have access to fundamental resources and equal opportunities to thrive, irrespective of gender. The policies that form part of this national framework and National Development Plans focus on various development outcomes such as equal educational opportunities, human resource development, and a high standard of living.

Brunei Darussalam's approach ensures that both men and women have equitable access to opportunities in leadership and public life based on merit, skills, and talent. Trends towards increasing gender parity in the government have been observed since 2020. The country recorded the highest proportion of women (37%) to hold middle and senior managerial positions at work within the region. Furthermore, the growing representation of women in policy and decision-making positions is reflected in the increasing proportion of women in senior and middle management levels to 65% in 2022. It is widely recognised that Brunei Darussalam has made great strides in women's development. While women hold many leadership roles, their contributions may be less prominent in high-level decision making. This is partly due to norms, leadership pathways, and appointment structures. The public sector employs a growing number of women, and the Employment Order ensures a safe working environment, fair treatment, and protection from unfair dismissal during maternity leave. Working mothers have access to maternity benefits, including 105 days of fully paid maternity leave, as stipulated in the 2011 Maternity Leave Regulations. This policy supports women and families in achieving a work-life balance.

30- Each of the 10 AMS has by now accessed or ratified the CEDAW with deposition of its Treaty between August 1981 and May 2006, and will thus be discussed herein only when directly referred to for findings presented. Treaties deposited by Brunei Darussalam (May 2006), Cambodia (October 1992), Indonesia (September 1984), Lao PDR (August 1981), Malaysia (July 1993), Myanmar (July 1997), Philippines (August 1981) Singapore (October 1995), Thailand (August 1985), and Viet Nam (February 1982).

While Brunei Darussalam's policies are not gender-specific, efforts are currently being made to identify policy gaps that would provide concrete and evidence-based insights, and that will guide the formulation of a cohesive National Plan of Action on Women. These efforts include a study on women's development, launched in 2022, aimed at obtaining critical data and nuanced insights on women's issues, needs, and concerns in Brunei Darussalam. The findings will help to formulate more specific policies and programmes to enhance women's development.

In *Cambodia*, a hierarchy of national policies is in place to ensure consistency. The five-year 'Neary Rattanak' (NR) (2019-2023) serves as a policy roadmap for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) in partnership with line ministries and stakeholders. The most recent NR VI was launched in April 2024 and represents a third generation of NRs with its core focus being on gender transformation. The first two generations of NRs each lasted for ten years, with a focus on gender sensitivity in the first generation and on gender responsiveness in the second generation (together covering NRs I-V). The NR VI delineates clear indicators with baselines and set targets, key activities, and responsible actors in the six strategic thematic areas, one of which is the empowering of women in leadership and governance (the other five strategic thematic areas are to increase women's economic empowerment; to promote the education of women and girls; to promote the health of women and girls; legal protection for women and girls; and gender mainstreaming and empowering women and girls in climate change). MoWA has worked closely with the Royal School of Administration (RSA) to set up a gender-responsive curriculum and offer training on women's leadership programmes.

The development of the NR is guided by the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) (2019-2023), which in turn serves as the roadmap for implementing the national Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency (RS) (2019-2023) and other government development agendas. From 2024 the Pentagonal Strategy (PS) is being implemented, in which the government remains committed to women's empowerment by enhancing their capacity and increasing the proportion of women holding decision-making positions at both national and sub-national levels, in ministries and institutions, and in both political and technical positions. An important achievement is the recognition of gender equality as integral to the main government reform programmes (Public Administration Reform, Legal & Judicial Reform, Public Finance Management Reform, and Decentralisation & Deconcentration Reform).

Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAG) have been established in all ministries (since 2005) headed by a female secretary of state or undersecretary of state in the respective ministries. The main role of the GMAGs is to develop Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) in their sectors, in alignment with the priorities/actions of the NSDP. While the development of the GMAP mechanism seems a practical approach and a good starting point, the implementation of GMAP is more ad hoc and has not entirely materialised. GMAPs are mainly concentrating on training events, while there should be more innovative ideas of how to effectively mainstream gender equality and empower women in their respective sectors. Another key challenge in executing GMAPs is the budget for implementation.

At the sub-national level, the National Program on Sub-National Democratic Development Phase II (NP-SNDD) (2021-2030) strengthens the opportunities for citizens to participate in governing and decision-making processes at the three sub-national levels (Provincial/ municipal, district/ khan, and Community/ Sangkat levels). In its first phase, gender was the cross-cutting issue, which in the second phase has been expanded to gender equality, social equity, and inclusiveness. It continues to emphasise the participation of women in sub-national administrations and to ensure equal participation and access for women and men to leadership and decision-making positions.

MoWA has been advocating for establishing a daycare centre in government institutions and has acted as a forefront role model since 2018 by operating a daycare centre within the Ministry's premises. In 2021, MoWA developed 'Guidelines on the Operation of Daycare Centre', which was officially launched in May 2024. The establishment of daycare centres is yet to be implemented in other line ministries, more possibly due to budget constraints. Childcare in the private sector is provided for in the 1997 Labour Law of Cambodia. Managers of enterprises employing a minimum of 100 women (over the legal age for employment) shall set up a nursing room and a crèche (childcare centre), either within their premises or nearby. However, the law does not offer details on the required standards for on-site crèches nor gives any guidance on how much allowance should be paid if children are placed in outside crèches.³¹

31- Following the issuance of this law, it makes Cambodia one of the 26 countries out of 189 in the world in which employers are legally required to provide or support childcare services for employees.

The five-year National Action Plans to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW) (2019-2023) focuses on preventing violence, providing legal protection, enhancing the legal framework, and establishing a framework and system for monitoring and evaluation. The Safe-Village-Commune-District Policy was launched by the Ministry of Interior in 2021 and serves as a priority policy mechanism urging the local level authorities to ensure that there is no domestic violence, no trafficking of women and children, or other crimes occurring at any commune in Cambodia.

In *Indonesia*, the government has integrated gender equality into every stage of the national mid-term development plan (RPJMN, Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional), since its first phase starting in 2005 to the current RPJMN IV (2020-2024). The Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 mandated Gender Mainstreaming (PUG - Pengarusutamaan Gender dalam Pembangunan) to be applied in all seven national development processes (planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, supervision, and reporting). It is emphasised that gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve gender equality and equity through policies and programmes that consider the experiences, aspirations, needs, and problems of both women and men.

The government also issued a Joint Circular Letter between four ministries regarding the National Strategy for PUG through Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (PPRG) to accelerate the implementation of PUG. This joint circular was designed as an instrument to address gaps in access, participation, control, and benefits between women and men in the implementation of development to realise a more equitable programme and budget that encourage equality of access, participation, control, and the benefits of the budget, both at the central and regional levels.

The Ministry of Finance issued a regulatory framework that became a guideline for ministries or government agencies in formulating PPRG, mandating that planning and budgeting use the Gender Analysis Pathway (GAP), which aims to identify and assess whether policies/ programmes/ activities are gender-responsive or not. In its implementation, GAP has encouraged various ministries and government agencies to issue gender-responsive policies, both at the national and local levels. For example, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued a regulation introducing the planning and budgeting system using the GAP and Gender Budget Statement. This regulation has encouraged local governments to begin integrating PUG into development stages in the regions.

The implementation of the PUG strategy, however, still faces several challenges, including the lack of political commitment to implement the PUG in all aspects of planning and budgeting. Budget allocations to programmes supporting gender equality, easing women's work-life balance, or reducing challenges from patriarchal legacy are not sufficient, including policies and programmes designed to combat gender-based violence. There is further a lack of understanding of the PUG analytical tools. At the regional level, the understanding of provincial and district/ city governments regarding concepts and issues of gender equality and the benefits of PUG in development is also low and varied. In addition, the institutional capacity to carry out gender mainstreaming, especially the availability of qualified human resources and the provision and use of gender-based data at each stage of development remains inadequate. There has, as of yet, not been a special evaluation to directly assess these weaknesses and their consequences and impacts.

The government has issued policies to facilitate the special needs of working women, such as breastfeeding rooms and daycare services. The implementation of these facilitation and support policies, however, shows weaknesses. There are no strict sanction mechanisms to follow up on parties who violate these policies and rules. In practice, there are many ministerial offices and other government agencies that do not yet have a policy (or have not provided information) regarding the provision of such facilities.

Policies against gender-driven and sexual harassment in political institutions and the work environment have only started to exist since 2020 and are limited to one ministry agency (the Ministry of Finance). There is, as of yet, not much information regarding how this policy has had an impact on the level of sexual violence in the Ministry or to what extent the policy is enforced in cases of sexual violence in this Ministry.

In *Lao PDR*, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) dominates the political process at all levels of government (*'The Party leads, the State implements, and the People are the owners'*). The Party assigns authority and responsibilities to localities at each level in the decision-making process under a clear regulatory and legal framework, and state actions move according to Resolutions of the Party Congress held every five years.

In the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2021-2025, key gender targets for women's participation in decision-making and leadership are set for women in leadership and management positions, from the central to the village levels. Management functions and implementation responsibilities are clearly assigned between the central and local levels, between the provinces and districts, and between the districts and grassroots administrative units.

The Lao Women's Union (LWU) is mandated to represent women of all ethnic groups and serves as a bridge between the LPRP, the government, and Lao women in urban and rural areas. The LWU promotes and monitors the implementation of women's development programmes based on its own strategic plan which reconfirms the targets set in the NSDEP.

The National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers, and Children (NCAWMC) endorses a Five-Year National Plan of Action on Gender Equality, which also reconfirms the targets set in the NSED. The NCAWMC is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, with the President of the LWU as Vice Chair and standing member and with the Secretariat as its executive agency. It is located at the LWU.

The 1989 *Malaysia* National Women Policy (NWP) predated the establishment of a designated Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFC) and the key constitutional amendment to prohibit gender discrimination by more than a decade. The NWP was reviewed in 2009 along with the development of a Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women which outlines 13 sectors (covering economy, poverty, law, violence against women, health, education and training, science and technology, media, environment, sports, cultural arts and heritage, decision-maker and politics mechanism, women development machinery and institute).

The Malaysian Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (MSNV 2030) is a comprehensive development plan launched by the Malaysian Government in 2019. In the document, the Malaysian Government claims to have implemented gender mainstreaming policy as one of the priorities to ensure effective policy implementation. It states that government policies based on gender sensitivity will increase women's participation and leadership in the public and private sectors, especially at the highest management level.

A Five-year National Development Plan, termed the Malaysia Plan (MP), each guide the country's development and budget allocation prioritisation, with the 12th MP (2021-2025) now being implemented. The 2023 Malaysian budget further includes funding for an initiative to fund programmes that support women's participation in the workforce and leadership positions (Cahaya Mata Keluarga Malaysia). The Rural Development Policy 2030 listed several strategies to increase the participation of rural women in the decision-making process. Having a minimum of 30% representation for women is a guiding principle towards equality, and quotas may be adjusted to ensure that gender equality is maintained. However, men and women leaders deem that the policy will only be effective if it is embraced by both genders and in both the public and the private domains. Leadership positions are limited and come with power and men will not just make a way for women to be leaders. There is an urgent need to have the men that are in leadership positions acknowledge that the lack of women in leadership is a problem and that there is a need for a minimum of 30% of women in the decision making.

Alongside the policies, the prime minister and relevant ministers regularly deliver consistent policy statements to support the goal of women decision-makers and to ensure that this vision remains aligned with the prevailing circumstances and that it continues to progress. The government further reinforces these policy statements through the annual budget presentations. The 2021 budget statement included a policy supporting the formulation of security-related acts including the approval of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act and the forthcoming establishment of the Tribunal for Anti-Sexual Harassment.

In the 2022 Budget Speech, it was announced that each ministry would establish a Gender Focal Team (GFT) to ensure that gender considerations are integrated into all policies. Subsequently, 44 Gender Focal Points (GFPs), comprising deputy secretaries-general of ministries and deputy directors of government agencies were appointed. These GFPs are 'agents of change' and will support the government's commitment to gender equality by building their capacity and capabilities in gender-related issues. The 2022 Budget, however, did not include significant allocations for advancing women's leadership. The only two measures related to women's leadership were a RM 5 million allocation for the Women Leadership Foundation (WLF) and a mandate for all public listed companies to have at least one female board director.

To facilitate women's work-life balance, the Public Service Department allows women workers to take non-paid leave for childcare for up to five years, in addition to maternity and paternity leave. Women workers can take leave to take care of their own child, adopted, fostered, or de facto child who the woman worker has been taking care of for over two years. According to the MP12, several groups will benefit from flexible working arrangements, including women, single parents, and persons with disabilities. Flexible working arrangements include working part-time, working remotely, or a combination of both. This workplace flexibility enables employees to organise their working hours that meet the needs of both the employee and the agency. To support flexible working arrangements, departments and agencies will provide the necessary digital infrastructure. Flexible working hours are to ensure women are retained in the workplace, perform better, and can acquire leadership positions in the long run.

Myanmar's first-ever National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) (2013-2022) outlined how the Government planned to address the UN CEDAW and the twelve priority areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. The budget for NSPAW implementation has, however, been limited. A review of the NSPAW, undertaken in 2019, aimed to assess its effectiveness and outcomes. Based on the findings and challenges revealed in the NSPAW review, NSPAW Phase II (2023-2032) is being formulated. One of NSPAW's priority areas has been women's full and effective participation and equal leadership opportunities. However, women's participation and representation in leadership and decision-making roles remain to be improved. Cultural norms and social practices, related to men's superiority, women as bearers of culture, and politeness and respect, affect how women participate and take on leadership roles.

The Myanmar National Committee on Women (MNCW) functions as the main inter-ministerial mechanism for overall decision-making, policymaking, coordination, and accountability for implementing the NSPAW. It is led by the Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement. Committee members are the Deputy Ministers from relevant ministries and representatives of women's organisations. Four technical working groups (TWGs) have supported the effective implementation of the NSPAW (Violence against Women and Girls TWG, Women Participation in Politics and Economic TWG, Women, Peace and Security TWG, and Gender Mainstreaming TWG). Members of the TWGs include representatives from relevant government agencies, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Women Committees (WC) are established under the MNCW in states/ regions, districts, and townships as a government and civil society network. The WC's main task is to implement the MNCW's decisions of which they become aware by participating in the biannual meetings organised by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). The WC structure is not a full-time institution with its own staff or systems; the WCs themselves must promote the institutional capacity and resources required to lead a mandate such as the NSPAW implementation. The WC's function in NSPAW is mostly viewed as inadequate in so far that it is mostly limited to biannual meetings occupied fully by stakeholder presentations with fewer opportunities for discussions and decision-making.

The Union Election Commission endorsed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and Action Plan 2019-2022, including measures to ensure equal participation of all genders, ethnic groups, youth, persons with disabilities, and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) by removing barriers and discrimination throughout the electoral process. Involved actors worked to increase women's participation as candidates, election workers, observers, media personnel, and as voters for the next elections.

In the *Philippines*, the overall policy framework emanates from its laws. Foremost of these laws is the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) or Republic Act (RA) 9710, a comprehensive law that outlines women's human rights and seeks to eliminate gender-based discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfilment, and promotion of the rights of Filipino women, with specific provisions to elevate the status and conditions of women in the marginalised sectors of society.

The MCW promotes gender mainstreaming as a strategy to enable the government as the main duty bearer and the whole of society to integrate actions towards gender equality in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all areas of political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Point System was created, mainly led by the head of the agency or local chief executive as the implementation mechanism of the gender mainstreaming strategy. All government agencies and local government units are required to allocate at least 5% out of the total agency budget as the GAD Budget for the implementation of the gender programmes.

The minimum requirements to achieve gender equality are set through the GAD planning and budgeting system, supported by various policy issuances, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation framework, and a system that sets the parameters for GAD budget utilisation, and fiscal accountability measures through the Commission on Audit. Specific to advancing women's political leadership, the MCW provides for institutional arrangements and actions, including temporary special measures, affirmative action,³² institutional set-ups, and recognition of exemplary practices in promoting gender equality. One specific results area of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Plan is to transform social norms and values by 2025. Measures include sensitisation training of partners, advocacy campaigns, and to develop more lessons for basic education to promote gender equality.

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), currently under the supervision of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), serves as the primary policymaking and coordinating body on women and gender equality concerns. The PCW also serves as the monitoring body and has oversight responsibility to ensure the implementation of the gender equality goals. The PCW is then expected to influence the systems, processes, and procedures of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government so that the country can progressively achieve its gender equality goals.

Addressing care work and other barriers that affect women more than men is the subject of several laws emphasising that the responsibility for care is a social responsibility of public institutions and the state. Daycare centres shall be established in every barangay and national government agencies and government-owned and controlled corporations are requested to provide daycare services to children of their employees who are under five years old. The services should be within the office premises or in nearby accessible areas. Lactation rooms should also be provided.

Singapore's approach is founded on the principle of meritocracy, where equal opportunities are available to both men and women. In the Singapore Public Service, women are appointed to leadership positions based on the principles of equal opportunity and meritocracy. These principles also apply to the selection of participants in talent and leadership development programmes in the public sector. Candidates, both men and women, are nominated and selected for such programmes based on their performance and leadership potential.

In April 2022, the Singapore Parliament unanimously endorsed the White Paper on Singapore Women's Development. This White Paper was developed with insights drawn from year-long, nationwide Conversations on Singapore Women's Development. Singaporeans from various walks of life, both women and men, participated in the Conversations to share feedback and aspirations for Singapore women. The White Paper reflects a shared vision towards a fairer and more inclusive society, where men and women partner each other as equals, and both can pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest. The White Paper sets out action plans by the Government, in partnership with the community, in areas most salient to women. It covers five areas, namely a) equal opportunities in the workplace; b) recognition and support for caregivers; c) protection against violence and harm; d) other support measures for women; and e) mindset shifts.

Singapore's workplace policies enable men and women to participate more fully in the workplace and achieve their career aspirations. The Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices (TGFEP) require employers to assess workers on the basis of merit and not on factors unrelated to their ability to perform the job, such as marital status or family responsibilities. The Government will take a stronger stance against unfair employment practices of all forms, including against women, by enshrining the established TGFEP in law.

Efforts towards alleviating women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere include encouraging shared responsibility for care giving. Paternity Leave was doubled to four weeks from 1 January 2024. Fathers can also apply to share up to four weeks of Shared Paternal Leave from their spouse's maternity leave, sending a clear message that paternal involvement should be the norm. The current Shared Parental Leave scheme will be replaced with a new Shared Parental Leave, which will provide ten weeks of paid parental leave shared between both parents, on top of the Government-Paid Maternity Leave and Government-Paid Paternity Leave. The Government will roll this out in two phases to manage the impact on employers. First, six weeks of shared leave will be provided for babies born from 1 April 2025. This will be increased to the full ten weeks a year later. The ten weeks of shared leave will also be paid for by the government. In addition,

32- Under MCW, temporary special measures and affirmative action are used interchangeably.

the Public Service adopts progressive work practices for our officers. In line with the Tripartite Standards for Flexible Work Arrangements and Work-Life Harmony, public officers can request flexi-place, flexitime, or flexi-load arrangements to enable officers to balance their work and personal responsibilities. The Ministry of Manpower (MoM) actively supports all workers to enter and remain in the workforce, whilst managing both their work and personal responsibilities, by supporting and promoting the adoption of Flexible Work Arrangements as well as other work-life harmony strategies.

The Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum has been enhanced to address mental models and stereotypes more directly, especially those that impact women in their career choices and familial roles. In schools, girls are encouraged to pursue their choice of career. The CCE curriculum emphasises the value each person brings to careers and the family, irrespective of gender, and students learn to appreciate that families can be different. Shared parental roles and familial responsibilities are discussed and mutually agreed upon.

Thailand has launched an Action Plan on Women's Development (2023-2027) with the vision to ensure that women and girls are capable of accessing self-development to their full potential; are equally treated; live freely from all forms of violence and discrimination in a Thai society that recognises and understands gender equality. The six pillars of the action plan are to strengthen women's human capital; to eliminate all forms of violence against women; to empower women's participation in decision-making at all levels; to create public awareness and cultivate a mindset on gender equality; to develop tools for women's empowerment and gender equality promotion; and to enhance core competence of women's mechanisms at all levels.

The implementation is overseen by the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (DWF) of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security; and this includes evaluating various projects and activities in accordance with women's development policies and the 2021-2027 action plan. For inter-agency coordination, the two mechanisms of the Chief Gender Equality Officer (CGEO) and Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in all line ministries and departments have been set up.

The DWF further acts as the national focal point on gender equality promotion, as well as the secretariat of two multi-agency bodies (the National Committees on Policy and Strategy for the Improvement and of the Status of Women, and the National Committee on Gender Equality Promotion). Both committees are composed of high-level representatives of government agencies, experts, and representatives from civil society, chaired by the Prime Minister with the Minister of Social Development and Human Security as Deputy Chair. The responsibility of the committees is to provide recommendations to the Cabinet regarding policy and plans for the promotion of women's advancement and gender equality promotion, legislative amendments, and monitoring and evaluation of the implementation regarding such issues.

Efforts are being made to promote the adoption of guidelines and manuals that facilitate the advancement of gender equality within public organisations. These include the Guide to Promoting Gender Equality in the Public Sector, Basic Knowledge on Gender Equality (2020), and Guidelines for Preventing and Addressing Gender-Based Harassment or Discrimination in the Workplace (2021).

In *Viet Nam* Party Resolutions direct the implementation of the National Strategies on Gender Equality, with the most recent for 2021-2030 setting out goals and targets in the political sphere; economy, and labour; in family life and prevention and response to gender-based violence; in the medical field; education and training; and information and communication. It provides a framework for implementing gender equality policies and programmes, and the mechanisms put in place include gender mainstreaming, legal framework, and institutional structures.

The strategy assigns specific tasks to ministries, branches, agencies, and localities in organising the implementation, and sets targets for the share of state management agencies and local governments at all levels with key leaders being women by 2030. Indicators of women's participation are detailed by the Party Politburo at different levels in the Party, in socio-political organisations, and in administrative units, and thereafter reconfirmed in the subsequent National Strategy on Gender Equality.

The National Committee for the Advancement of Women is responsible for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs is responsible for implementing

gender equality policies. A monitoring and evaluation system has been established which ensures that the implementation of gender equality policies is regularly evaluated to identify areas in need of improvement. The legal framework in turn provides for sanctions and penalties for individuals and organisations that violate gender equality.

Funding for implementing programmes, strategies, and activities on gender equality has been allocated in the regular budgets of ministries, branches, and localities according to the current state budget decentralisation. In particular, the National Target Program for Socio-Economic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas in the 2021-2030 period has its own project on gender equality with an earmarked budget.

Nevertheless, investment in financial resources for gender equality programmes and their implementation were not a priority in several ministries, sectors, and provinces/ cities. This issue has been raised frequently in annual reports: the five-year preliminary review report on gender equality law implementation, the Review report on the ten-year implementation of the gender equality law, and in government and the national assembly meetings. In seminars held in the provinces/ cities, the issues of financial and human resources were also put forward as the principal hindrance to the effective execution of gender equality work in general and the realisation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020 objectives and targets in particular.

The report on ten years of implementing the Law on Gender Equality (at the national level) has acknowledged that the funding for gender equality work generally has been allocated but at a very ‘modest’ level that does not meet the requirements. It was further noted that there is no separate budget allocated specifically for gender equality activities, resulting in an unstable budget. The budget mainly comes from targeted support programmes and projects. Limited budget resources lead to a shortage of human resources for this work and restrict the implementation of gender equality measures. Some localities do not allocate funds, and there are even localities that do not provide funds for gender equality work for the Departments of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs, instead prioritising other activities.

KPI 2: Legal frameworks

Agreed Definition:

Legal frameworks are laws, issuances, regulations, executive orders, legal documents, that advance and cultivate gender equality/ equity and empowerment, which includes those on women leadership and political development, but also those on childcare social protection, education, health and others.

A summary of the selected national laws and legal documents, for each AMS, including a brief narrative of key aspects as described in the respective national report, can be seen in the table below.³³ Undersigned international treaties and agreements referred to in national WPPL reports are not listed, as it has not been specifically confirmed that these international treaties have the force of national law and binding effect at the national level.³⁴

33- The listed laws were mainly discussed under KPI 2, but in some cases found in other sections of the national reports. The laws and other relevant documents that have been selected by each AMS for inclusion are discussed in some detail in the respective national WPPL report.
34- On the contrary, it is explicitly clarified that the CEDAW does not have the force of law and no binding effect in Malaysia.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
 Brunei Darussalam:	
Islamic Family Law Act, Chapter 217	- Aims at providing protection of women's rights, especially in the context of family life, separation, divorce, reconciliation, and inheritance. - The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) under the Department of Community Development has jurisdiction to oversee and investigate social welfare, including domestic violence.
Penal Law	- Contains a clause on criminal intimidation insult and annoyance. Word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman.
Syari'ah Penal Code Laws	- Aims to provide greater protection for Muslim women against penal code offences. Includes laws on: causing a woman to miscarry, without her consent, death to the woman; kidnapping/ abducting a woman to compel her to marriage; procreation with a minor girl; A-I Sexual offences against women and girls (2017 amendments); criminal intimidation, threats to impute unchastity to a women.
Employment Order (2009)	- Addresses labour rights and maternity leave regulations (105 days of paid maternity leave). - Contains some elements for the protection against discrimination, but the extent of these protections may be tenuous.
Maternity Leave Regulation (2011)	- Outlines measures towards the coordination of the pre- and post-natal needs of women, as well as the health interests of working mothers.
Workplace Safety and Health Order (2009)	
Children and Young Persons Act, Chapter 219	- Includes the protection of girls against exploitation and abuse. Provides a framework of guardianship and custody, educational and healthcare provisions, juvenile justice, and social services and rehabilitation for the protection of children's welfare.
Education Act, Chapter 56	- Provision of equal educational opportunities as a means to empower women and promote gender balance in the long run.
National Council on Social Issues	- Advisory and coordinating body that aims to address social issues including domestic violence, gender equality, and women's empowerment
Married Women's Act, Chapter 190	- Ensures that married women have legal rights and responsibilities as if they were single, and grants them autonomy, empowering them to make their own choices and decisions in regard to property and finances. - Promotes a level playing field between men and women within a marriage, in essence promoting gender equality, and the protection of women by granting them independent legal rights.
Mentioned under KPI 1 without text added	
Women and Girls Protection Act, Chapter 120	
Old Age and disability Allowances Act, chapter 18	
Persons with disabilities Act, chapter 234	
Child Care Centers Act, Chapter 218	
Unlawful Carnal Knowledge, chapter 29	
Islamic Adoption of Children Act, Chapter 206	

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
 Cambodia:	
Constitution	- Affirms the equal rights between men and women in participating in political and public life. Stipulates that women are not to be discriminated against because of pregnancy and are fully entitled to take maternity leave with full pay and with no loss of seniority or other social benefits. - Integrates gender harassment and gender-based violence.
Election Laws: - Law on the Election of the Members of the National Assembly (1997, amended 2012) (lower house of the Parliament)	- Representatives of both genders are equally allowed to register as candidates for political parties. The nomination and orders of party candidates are decided by party central committees.
- Law on Senate Election (upper chamber of the Parliament)	- Men and women have equal rights to be electoral candidates provided their parties nominate them.
- Law on Elections of Capital, Provincial, Municipal, district and Khan Councils - Law on Administrative Management of the Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts, and Khans (2008)	- Men and women have equal rights to compete as candidates to be council members. The councils are composed of three committees, one of which is the Women and Children Consultative Committee (WCCC).
- Law on Commune/ Sangkat Council Elections(2001) - Law on Administrative Management of Communes/ Sangkats	- Both men and women have the same rights to be candidates. Each political party internally identifies key people as their candidates to put on their party list. - The number of council members can be between five and eleven, and one of them must be a woman who carries out a role in a Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC). The CCWC is responsible for the managing and coordinating of women and children affairs within the communes. - The CCWC participates in the implementation of the Village-Commune-District Safety Policy to ensure that there is no trafficking of children and women, no domestic violence, or other crimes affecting women and children. However, the voice of a single woman can be too small when she wishes to challenge male-dominated decisions.
Land Law (1997) and Marriage and Family Law (2001)	- Guarantee men and women equal rights to own and inherit land. Protect the rights of female-headed households and people with disabilities, specify that men and women have the right to co-sign land titles, and recognise joint property rights.
Labour Law (1997)	- Specifically prohibits sexual harassment and indecent behaviour in the workplace. - Managers of enterprises employing a minimum of 100 women (over the legal age for employment) shall set up a nursing room and a crèche (childcare centre), either within their premises or nearby. If the company cannot afford a childcare option on-site or nearby, female workers with children from 18 months old to 36 months are entitled to place them in any crèche, where the charges shall be paid by the employer.
Civil Code	- Empowers women to have equal rights with men in the case of divorce. - Strengthens the foundation of gender equality in civil matters.
Penal Criminal Code (2009)	- Provides the framework for prosecution of domestic violence and sexual violence. - Provides a clear definition of committing sexual harassment.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims (2005)	- Promulgates the responsibility of the nearest authorities in charge to intervene in cases of domestic violence. Commonly these are the Commune Authorities. - Provides for protection orders to protect the survivor from any further violence and gives authority for mediation in cases of domestic violence that are classified as petty crimes and misdemeanours. - Criminalises physical and psychological abuse against dependent household members, as well as forms of sexual aggression including sexual harassment and violent sex.
 Indonesia	
Election Law and Law on Political Parties (2/2008 and 10/2008) Revised Election Bills (2014 and 2019)	- Require political parties to place at least 30% of women in party management. - Require a modified <i>zipper model</i> candidate list, i.e. in every three candidates there is at least one female candidate. - Stipulate the need to promote women's representation in electoral management bodies. - The provisions in the two laws are still very normative and do not have sanction mechanisms.
Labour Law (13/2003)	- Provides a legal framework to promote gender equality in the work environment. Regulates the rights of women workers, such as equal access to employment, and standardised wages, as well as the rights for maternity leave, menstrual leave, and sick leave. A revision of the Labour Law is being discussed to include a clause on parenting leave for six months. - Derivative regulations concerning exclusive breastfeeding and the provision of gender-responsive work facilities and daycare in the workplace.
Elimination of Domestic Violence Law (23/2004)	- Regulates sexual violence within the context of the household, such as marital rape. Domestic violence includes physical, psychological, sexual violence, and household neglect. - Provides mechanisms for the prevention and handling of domestic violence and recovery for victims of domestic violence. - Provides legal procedures for handling cases of domestic violence and regulates the rights of domestic violence victims, including the right to protection and rehabilitation. - Provides guidelines for law enforcement officers in handling cases of domestic violence. - Encourages the establishment of special service units in the police and other agencies to handle cases of domestic violence.
Law concerning crimes against sexual violence (12/2022) (Undang-Undang Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Seksual, UUTPKS)	- Protects victims of sexual violence and provides a clear legal framework for law enforcement to handle cases of sexual violence. - Covers various forms of sexual violence such as rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking for sexual purposes. - Provides mechanisms for prevention, protection, and recovery for victims of sexual violence. Regulates victims' rights, including the right to protection, rehabilitation, and compensation. - Provides guidelines for law enforcement officers in handling and investigating cases of sexual violence. - Encourages collaboration between law enforcement agencies and NGOs in providing support to victims.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
 Lao PDR	
Constitution	- Stipulates equal rights for both genders in the political, economic, cultural, and social fields and in family affairs. Guarantees that all citizens are equal before the law. - Requires the State to promote women's and children's rights, including education, health, and work in skilled labour.
Law on Women's Development and Protection (2004)	- Protects women's rights and interests and ensures equality between women and men, including to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women, to prevent and combat trafficking in women and children and domestic violence, - Requires the State to ensure that women enjoy equal political rights as men, such as the right to vote and to be elected, as well as to be appointed to appropriate positions at all levels in Party and State and mass organisations. The society and family should create conditions for women to exercise these rights.
Law on Gender Equality	- Mentions that women and men are equal in casting votes, running for election, and being appointed to various positions or organisations across all sectors according to their respective stipulated criteria and conditions.
Law on Making Legislation (2012)	- Requires wide consultations at national and provincial levels and enables the Women's Caucus to comment on laws before finalisation. It does not, however, include gender-specific criteria for assessing impacts of the proposed laws. It also does not include the essential concepts of equality and non-discrimination. Therefore, it is categorised as not yet gender mainstreamed.
Law on Lao Women's Union (LWU) (2013)	- Assigns the LWU the right to propose its members who have sufficient qualifications and conditions to be a leader in each organisation at all levels.
Labour Law (revised 2014)	- Provides the legal framework for non-discrimination and equality at work. - Provides the same retirement age for both men and women. Removed restrictions on women's night work (2006). - Prohibits women from being employed in certain types of work during pregnancy and when recently having given birth. Gives the female workers the right to rest one hour per day in order to feed, vaccinate, or otherwise take care of their child. - Does not provide a definition of the term 'discrimination' and does not define or explicitly prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace.
State Employee Law (2015)	- Female employees are entitled to five months of maternity leave for childbirth, which can be taken after or before giving birth. In cases of twin birth, the maternity leave will be extended by two months. In cases of abortion occurring between the second and sixth month of pregnancy, the maternity leave will be three months.
Law on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (2015)	- Protects women from family violence and abuse, rape, sexual assault and other gender-based violence.
Penal Law (revised 2005)	- Criminalises the discrimination and exclusion of women from participating in any political, economic, socio-cultural, or family activity on the basis of sex. - Criminalises sexual violence where using force, armed threats, drugs or other substance or other means places a woman in a state of helplessness in order to have sexual intercourse with the woman against her will, where such a woman is not the offender's spouse. - Criminalises child sexual violence. - Rehabilitation measures are not a penalty option for discrimination (as it is for many other offences).
Education Law (revised 2015)	- Ensures that all people of the Lao nation have equal rights to participate in education, without differentiation because of ethnicity, religion, sex, age, or socio-economic status.
Family Law (revised 2008)	- Men and women have equal rights in all aspects pertaining to family relations.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
Inheritance law (2008)	- Endorses the same inheritance rights for women and men, girls and boys (in contradiction with the customary land inheritance system, in which the inheritance system varies between ethnic groups related to traditional residence patterns after marriage, with matrilineal or patrilineal inheritance of land and assets).
Land Law	- Land is owned by the State, but all citizens have equal rights to use the land. - Land acquired by a couple is supposed to be issued a joint land-use certificate or title. Names and surnames of the married couple who have received the land use right are registered in the land register book.
Electoral Law	- All citizens over the age of 18 have the right to vote. - All citizens over the age of 21 have the right to be elected to the National Assembly, regardless of their gender, ethnic group, social status, or profession.
Law on People's Courts	- All citizens have the right to take court action on issues pertaining to any action that affects their lives, health, rights and freedoms, dignity or properties.
 Malaysia	
Constitution	- Guarantees equality and non-discrimination of citizens on the grounds only of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender. Provides that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal protection of the law. - Any law that is in contradiction with the provisions of the Constitution is considered null and void.
Acts of Parliament/ Statutes	- Refers to laws enacted by legislative bodies, other than the Federal Constitution.
Code of Practice on Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (1999)	- Implemented in the private sector but lacked legal force.
Service Circular No.8 of 2018 (replacing Service Circular No. 22 of 2005)	- A binding subsidiary legislation regulating the civil service. - Aims for better procedures for dealing with cases of sexual harassment in the workplace.
Employment Act (2012) (amended 2022)	- Amended to increase the paid maternity leave to 98 days (restricted to 5 surviving children). Added protection against dismissal during pregnancy or in the event of complications following birth. Note: all female employees in the private sector are covered by the maternity provisions of the Employment Act (though generally the Employment Act only applies to low-paid workers and their supervisors). - Introduced paternity leave, with seven consecutive days of paid paternity leave (for up to five births) for married male employees. Paternity leave shall be restricted to five confinements, irrespective of the number of spouses. - Amended to include provisions on sexual harassment. - Defines sexual harassment and provides procedures and employers' responsibilities in managing sexual harassment. Employers are required to conspicuously exhibit a notice to raise awareness on sexual harassment. The amendment also proposes to increase the fine that an employer is liable to pay for failure to, amongst others, inquire into complaints of sexual harassment. - Amendments proposing that employees will be allowed to make an application for flexible working arrangements; implementing flexible working arrangements to increase women's participation in the labour market.
Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (2022)	- Enforced by stages since 28 March 2023. Only applies to premises in Peninsular Malaysia and Labuan. - Intends to improve the existing justice system through the establishment of a special tribunal to handle sexual harassment complaints promptly, by using the civil law standard of proof and awarding compensation to victims. - A quasi-judicial function to make it more accessible to the public.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
Anti-stalking Bill (through amendment of the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code) (2023)	- Makes stalking, virtual or otherwise, a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment of up to three years. - Defines stalking as repeated harassment intended or likely to cause a person to worry, fear, or be concerned for his or her safety.
 Myanmar	
Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008)	- Guarantees equal rights for men and women. Every citizen shall have the right to elect and be elected in accordance with the law. - Reserves a certain number of seats for women in the national and regional parliaments. - Allows for regional and state governments, which can lead to more localised decision-making. - Gender stereotypes (Section 352): implies that certain roles are more suited to men.
Civil Service Personnel Law (2013)	- Specifies criteria for merit-based recruitment and promotion (typically seniority, performance, and qualifications). Provides transparency and prevents favouritism. - Emphasises anti-discrimination measures, and training opportunities that could enable women to advance in their careers. - Lacks specific gender-related provisions and affirmative action measures to address the historical under-representation of women in leadership positions. - Specifies maternity leave rights: six weeks before giving birth and eight weeks after giving birth, with an additional four weeks if twins have been delivered. Up to a maximum of six weeks of leave is allowed in the cases of miscarriage. Full wages may be paid during the maternity leave. Fathers are allowed two weeks of leave.
Labour organisation Law (2011) Settlement of Labour Dispute Law and Rules (2012) Social Security Law (2012) Minimum Wages Law (2013) Employment and Skill Development Law (2013)	- Enacted to protect labour rights and is mostly gender neutral, with some provisions specific to women's needs (such as maternity rights to ensure that women are valued and paid in equal terms).
Penal Code	- Includes provisions related to sexual harassment aimed to deter and penalise acts of sexual harassment. Whomever assaults or uses criminal force on any woman, intending to outrage her modesty, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term that could extend to two years, with a fine, or with both. - Prescribes that using words, gestures, or acts intended to insult the modesty of any woman can be imprisoned for up to one year, or fined, or both.
National Human Rights Commission Law (2014)	- Includes the provision to address human rights violations, including gender-based violence, by establishing a complaint mechanism as well as implementing inspections to ensure rights are being honoured. - One of the commission's members must be a representative from the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation to address gender-specific issues effectively. - The Law lacks specific provisions addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment, threats and social biases that hinder women's political engagement.
Election Laws (2010)	- Three types of Hluttaws: Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyothar Hluttaw, and Region or State Hluttaws. Combination of Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyothar Hluttaw is called Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and is the supreme power of the legislation in the Union. - State that for each Hluttaw individuals who meet specified criteria or qualifications are allowed to run for political office in an election, without discrimination based on their gender (sex) or religious beliefs.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
 Philippines	
Magna Carta of Women (MCW)	- Comprehensive law outlining women's rights and seeks to eliminate gender-based discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfilment, and promotion of the rights of Filipino women, with specific provisions to elevate the status and conditions of women and marginalised sectors of society. - Provides for women's advancement in different fields (including the military). - Provides for the allocation of at least 5% of the budget of all government agencies and donor funding portfolio to fuel the mainstreaming of gender and development in all government planning and programming. - Provides for the institutional arrangements and actions, including temporary special measures, affirmative action, institutional set-up, and recognition of exemplary practices in promoting gender equality. Complementary laws and policies are also indicated in this section.
Local Government Code (1991)	- Recognises the autonomy of local governments (provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays) to create local laws (through local development councils) and to enforce them (through its executive branches). - One seat in local development councils is reserved for local women's sectoral representatives and the councils are mandated to create a committee on women and family affairs. - An enabling law has not yet been adopted to determine the manner of election for local sectoral representatives (at present usually done by appointment by the local chief executive).
Indigenous People's Rights Act (1997)	- Provides for the representation of Indigenous women in consultative bodies or traditional leadership structures and in all decision-making bodies, at all levels. At least two of the Commissioners shall be women.
Bangsamoro Organic Law	- Recognises the constituted Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao as a political entity with its own structure of governance - executive, legislative, and judicial. - Provisions on the equal rights of women are deeply enshrined in the law, including affirmative actions to ensure women's representation in the governance structures and in consultation mechanisms. Requires at least one woman to be appointed in the Bangsamoro Cabinet.
National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009	- The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos shall have at least one Commissioner from the women sector.
Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act	- Seeks to enhance equal partnership between national and local governments and the basic sectors with the government. Created the National Anti-Poverty Commission under the Department of Social Work and Development as a multi-agency and multi-sectoral platform for the development and implementation of national anti-poverty strategies.
Civil Code with amendments through the Family Code	- Provide a legal framework for individual decision-making, particularly on matters that affect women. - Many provisions that foster gender equality such as equality in the eligible age of marriage; legal separation to be caused by abuse of a partner or their children, threat, or abandonment; custody of children to be given to innocent spouse; equality and mutuality in the marriage relationship and marital responsibilities; the principle of absolute community of property or conjugal property. The Civil Code also allows women the choice, after marriage, to use their spouse's surname or to keep their maiden surname.
Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act	- Recognises that gender equality and women's empowerment are central elements of reproductive health and societal development.
Climate Change Act	- Provides for the representation of the PCW as a member of the advisory board of the Climate Change Commission.
National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act	- Mandates that disaster risk reduction and climate change measures are gender-responsive, sensitive to Indigenous knowledge systems, and respectful of human rights through the representation of women in national and local disaster risk reduction and management councils.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
Universal Health Care Act	- Guarantees the right of every citizen to access quality and affordable health care and services and are protected from financial risks. Requires at least three women members representing the expert panel and the sectoral panel in the PhilHealth Board.
Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) Act	- Serves as the national poverty reduction strategy and a human capital investment programme in the form of conditional cash transfers to poor households. One of its premises is to promote gender equality, and women and children's rights.
Anti-Sexual Harassment Law (further expanded to the Safe Spaces Act)	- Defines acts that constitute sexual harassment in the work, training, and education environment. - Sexual harassment consists of acts that are done either to demand sexual favours or to request similar in nature contingent to the receiver's employment, job performance or opportunities, or related acts that are considered unwelcome, unreasonable, or offensive to the recipient, or that may create an intimidating, hostile, or humiliating environment to the recipient. Sexual harassment may be acts committed by superiors or peers. - Provides for the creation of an independent internal mechanism or a committee on decorum and to investigate and address complaints of gender-based sexual harassment to be headed by a woman. - The Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) protects women against sexual harassment in all locations including public spaces and online platforms.
Decent Work and Employment - various national laws	- Ensure that women can participate in decent work and that their rights are not violated nor curtailed. Include prevention of trafficking in persons; taking punitive measures against the abuse of children online and in other exploitation materials; instituting stronger measures against mail-order spouses; protecting rights and welfare of domestic workers or <i>kasambahay</i> (household helpers); supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises and barangay micro-business; as well as other laws.
Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act (2004)	- Criminalises any form of violence against women and children and covers all scope of intimate and family relationships. - Defines 'abuse' to include economic abuse as acts that make or attempt to make a woman financially dependent.
Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act	- Aims to ensure that children and vulnerable groups are provided assistance and are protected against all risks of abuse during a state of calamity.
Labour Code Strengthening the Prohibition on Discrimination Against Women with Respect to Terms and Conditions of Employment Act	- Provides for the facilities, maternity leave benefits, family planning services and incentives, and prohibited discriminatory acts. - Makes it unlawful for any employer to discriminate against any woman employee solely on account of her sex, which may be evident in terms and conditions of employment, payment of lesser compensation, wage or salary, and giving undue disadvantage in promotion, training, study, and scholarship. - Subsequent laws on night schedules included provisions for women to be provided with alternative work-schedule options during pregnancy or after childbirth.
Paternity Leave Act	- Provides for seven-day paid leave for every married male employee in the private and public sector, up to the fourth child.
Maternity Leave Act	- Expanded paid maternity leave coverage to 105 days (regardless of whether the delivery was normal or caesarean). Maternity leave is available for 60 days, with full pay, in cases of miscarriage or emergency termination of pregnancy. - The mother may transfer seven days of the paid leave to the child's father regardless of the marital status of the parents; this is on top of the paternity leave benefits (per the Paternity Leave Act). Maternity leave credits may also be transferred to alternative caregivers in the absence of the father (such as a relative within the fourth degree of consanguinity or the current partner of the female worker sharing the same household).

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
Day Care Law	- Mandates the establishment of a daycare centre in every barangay. It also involves the provision of care for the children of working mothers.
Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act	- Health and non-health facilities, establishments, and institutions are to establish lactation rooms. Nursing employees are entitled to break intervals in addition to their regular time-off for meals to breastfeed or express milk. Such breaks shall not be less than 40 minutes for every eight-hour workday.
Commission on Election resolutions on determining the dominant party in connection with the national and local elections	- Provides that political parties that field at least 30% women candidates shall be given the weighted average points of 10 points for the purpose of determining the dominant parties.
 Singapore (discussed under KPI 3)	
Constitution	- Enshrines the principle of equality before the law; and encompasses the protection of women against unfair discrimination.
Women's Charter (Amendment Bill, passed in Parliament on 4 July 2023)	- Institutionalises the equal standing of men and women in marriage and ensures the welfare and protection of women. - Amended to strengthen the protection of survivors of family violence and enhance rehabilitation and accountability for the perpetrators of family violence.
Penal Code Amendments (2021)	- Enhancing penalties for domestic violence. Offences against the body (including wrongful confinement, hurt, and rape) may be punished with up to twice the maximum punishments for these offences if committed against a person that was in a 'close' or 'intimate' relationship with the offender at the time of the offence. - Repealing marital immunity for rape. - Outrage of modesty - increasing the maximum imprisonment term from two to three years. - Increasing the maximum imprisonment term from one to two years for engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a minor or causing a minor to view a sexual image (here the minor is below 16 years of age, or between 16-18 years of age in an exploitative relationship with the offender).
Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) (2014) (amended 2019)	- Introduces protection from anti-social and undesirable behaviours. - Amended to better protect victims from harassment, intimate partner violence, and related anti-social behaviour. Introduced a specialist Protection from Harassment Court, which among other things, adopts simplified procedures to provide expedient relief to victims.
Online Safety Act (2023)	- Regulates Online Communication Services to protect especially women and girls from online harm. - Requires social media services with significant reach or impact to put in place measures to comply with the codes of practice.
Workplace Fairness Legislation	- Takes a significant step to enshrine the tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices into law.
Employment Act Children and Young Persons Act Criminal Procedure Code Prevention of Human Trafficking Act	- Said in a report to 'Also protect women' with no further details added.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
 Thailand	
Constitution (2017)	- Stipulates that men and women shall enjoy equal rights; identifies the principle of discrimination against persons' status including sex shall not be permitted.
Gender Equality Act (2015)	- Prohibits state, private, and individual discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. - Provides a channel for those who face gender-based discrimination to submit a petition to the committee to investigate. - Marks a significant milestone as the inaugural anti-discrimination legislation safeguarding not only women but also individuals with diverse sexual orientation.
Action Plan on Women's Development 2023-2027	- Envisions that 'women and girls are capable of access to self-development to their full potential; are equally treated; live freely from all forms of violence and discrimination in Thai society that recognises and understands gender equality'.
The Protection of Domestic Violence Victim ACT B.E. 2550 (2007)	- Aims to safeguard individuals from domestic violence, focusing on human rights and family institution strengthening. Key aspects included mandatory reporting, comprehensive protection for all stakeholders, temporary protective measures by government teams, and victim rehabilitation.
Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)	- A critical tool designed to create budgets that address the needs of all individuals—women, men, girls, boys, and persons with diverse identities. By considering and analysing the unique requirements of each group, GRB ensures that resources are efficiently and equitably allocated, reducing inequalities and promoting gender equality.
Chief Gender Equality Officers (CGEOs) and Gender Focal Points (GFPs)	- The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, through the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development, acts as the central coordinating agency. At the ministry and department levels, CGEOs and GFPs are tasked with promoting gender equality within their organisations. Each ministry and department must appoint a Deputy Permanent Secretary or a higher-ranking official as CGEO and establish a GFP unit.
Measures to prevent and address sexual harassment and misconduct in the workplace (April 21, 2020)	- The Thai Cabinet approved a set of measures to prevent and address sexual harassment and misconduct in the workplace. These measures include: (1) a declaration of commitment from executives and organisations in a written form; (2) the development of guidelines for prevention and resolution of issues; (3) awareness-raising efforts regarding gender equality among employees; (4) the creation of a safe working environment; (5) the establishment of complaint mechanisms within organisations; (6) procedures for addressing issues internally within organisations both formally and informally; (7) efficient response management in cases of misconduct; (8) confidential investigation processes; (9) protection and support for complainants and witnesses; (10) fair treatment of accused individuals; (11) operation reports; and (12) the establishment of the Center for the Prevention and Resolution of Sexual Harassment and Misconduct (under the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development), which is tasked with promoting understanding among government agencies, state organisations and the private sector to implement these measures correctly and comprehensively. Moreover, the centre monitors the progress of these measures and reports annually to the Gender Equality Promotion Committee.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
 Viet Nam	
Constitution (2013)	- States that men and women have equal rights in all aspects.
Law on Gender Equality (2006) Prime Minister's Directive on implementation of the Law (2007)	- State that policies are to ensure gender equality in all aspects of politics, economy, culture, society, and family; supporting and creating conditions for men and women to demonstrate their abilities and have equal opportunities to participate in the process and enjoy the results of development; taking measures to eliminate gender inequality. - Provides the recognition of gender equality in the political sphere, at all administrative levels, and ensures 'appropriate proportions...in line with national gender equality objectives'. - Stipulates the responsibility of the Women's Union to introduce qualified women to participate in the management and leadership of agencies in the political system to contribute to the achievement of gender quality goals. - Ministries, Government bodies, and localities have implemented the integration of gender equality in the development of legal documents (including reviewed, amended, supplemented or cancelled several legal documents to be in accordance with the principles of the Law on Gender Equality).
Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (amended in 2022)	- Concept of violence against women by intimate partners as a punishable offence.
Law on People with Disabilities (2010)	- Provides favourable conditions for women with disabilities.
Land Law (amended in 2013)	- Favours equal inheritance rights to land and other property attached to land for men and women and prohibits the disenfranchisement of surviving wives.
Law on Marriage and Family (amended in 2014)	- Sets up marriage age for men and women.
Law on Social Insurance (amended 2014)	- Codifies protections related to maternity, as well as time off work for miscarriage, abortion, and stillbirth.
Civil Code (amended in 2015)	- Regulates the right to inherit property, including land use rights. The wife, husband, biological father, biological mother, adoptive father, adoptive mother, biological children, and adopted children of the deceased are ranked in the first line of inheritance. - Right to change the name of a person who has re-determined sex or changed gender.
Law on State Budget (revised in 2015)	- Requires the government to allocate funds for gender-equality activities.
Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents (2015) (amended 2020)	- Requires gender-equality issues to be integrated into all laws/ policies.
Law on Election of National Assembly deputies and People's Council deputies (2015)	- Sets out a target of 35% of general assembly deputies of the total number of candidates on the official list.
Legal Aid Law (2017)	- Provides free legal aid to people in financial difficulty, including those experiencing domestic violence and limited financial access, most likely women.
Law on Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (2017)	- Provides the definition of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) owned by women for their support.
Labour Code (revised in 2019)	- Covers several essential gender gaps, especially retirement age, sexual harassment in the workplace, and maternity leave. - Includes a clear definition of sexual harassment, specifying that enterprises must issue written rules and ensure there is prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Name of National Law / Legal Documents	Core Aspects
Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment Prevention and Control in the Workplace (2015)	- Closely following the provisions of the Labour Code. Issued jointly by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour and the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Remains a recommendation only but shows commitment.
Law on Vietnamese workers working abroad under contract (2020)	- Provides equal chances and protection for women workers.
Law on Access to Information (2016)	- Ignores ethnic minorities and women in disadvantaged areas, downplaying the importance of considering gender factors when providing information to citizens. - Lacks provisions requiring state agencies to provide age and sex-appropriate information for children.
Law on Press (2016)	- Does not contain provisions prohibiting the publication, radio, and television broadcasting of gender-stereotyped information and gender discrimination; requirements for correction, apologies for posting such discriminatory information; nor does it stipulate the obligation to promote gender equality in journalism.
Law on Education (2016)	- Does not provide special measures to support women and girls in education. For example, there are no regulations on the percentage of women holding managerial positions in educational institutions. Special measures are not strong enough or adequate to address inequality for girls in disadvantaged rural areas, mountainous areas, and remote areas, where many poor households do not have enough money or do not want to invest in their daughter's further education. Article 85 of the 2019 Education Law does not mention girls in particularly disadvantaged areas when providing special support for different groups. - The special measures needed to reduce gender gaps and promote gender equality in higher education have not been mentioned in the Law on Higher Education. - Gender equality issues have not been included in the Education Law as a priority in the development of general education curricula and teacher training.

KPI 3: Enforcement of laws

Agreed Definition:

Refers to how well the laws and regulations on gender equality/ equity that facilitate women's participation in decision-making and political processes are applied and practised; also indicates if the laws are consistently and effectively practised.

Laws and regulations are enforced through various enforcement mechanisms. In the national reports, the enforcement of policies is discussed alongside the enforcement of laws and regulations. Drawing a clear line of distinction between policy and laws and regulations is a challenge, with an inevitable degree of overlap or cross-referencing, as evidenced previously in KPI 1 and KPI 2.

The enforcement discussion is split into two sub-sections. We first summarise the findings from the national WPPL studies on overall enforcement and then present a summary of the modes of enforcement of laws related to gender-based violence (as a reference point for the performance indicator on sexual harassment and code of conduct in KPI 10 below).

Overall enforcement of policies

In Brunei Darussalam the enforcement of laws related to stimulating gender balance and women's empowerment is an amalgamation of efforts by various government agencies and departments, each carrying out their own responsibilities within its jurisdiction, but most important is the fact that there is most often than not a concerted effort through the Whole of Nation Approach (WoNA) framework. Coordination and collaboration between agencies are common, and the National Council on Social Issues brings together various agencies for this very purpose.

In Cambodia, the government uses the Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW) and the Gender Mainstreaming Action Group (GMAG) established in each ministry and institution as mechanisms to follow up on the implementation of national laws as well as national policies related to women's empowerment. All line ministries are mandated to report their gender equality progress to the CNCW, which will then compile the report for its annual meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, and with high-level participation from line ministries (refer further to KPI 11).

However, social norms and other pressing issues imposed on women remain prevalent and hinder the full achievement of set goals, despite the government's efforts to promote gender equality and women empowerment through putting in place laws, temporary special measures, and policies. Women perceive that they have lower capacities compared to their male counterparts and need more support in building their competencies and confidence. Additionally, although women have equal rights in political participation under the law, social norms that women should shoulder most household duties can be a burden that curbs women's active involvement in politics.

In Indonesia, a presidential instruction mandates gender mainstreaming in all national development processes, including the political, economic, and social sectors. To enforce affirmative policies, there are various programmes created and carried out by government institutions to encourage women's participation and leadership in the political sphere, including public campaigns to increase the role of women in elections, training programmes for female legislature candidates, training programmes to increase understanding and strengthen the capacity of women activists, as well as training for members of the DPR RI.

In the political sphere, there are however several problems that hinder the achievement of gender equality. The 30% quota will for instance not be achieved when an affirmative provision only stipulates to 'pay attention' to it. The lack of commitment of political parties prevents women from being placed at the top of party lists (see further KPIs 6-8 below).

In the economic sector, the achievement of gender-responsive policies is still very low. In practice, women still face many challenges to become equal to men in the economic and employment fields. In addition to the inequality in participation in the workforce, there is also a problem in the wage gap between men and women. There is no strict sanction mechanism to follow up on parties who violate policies to facilitate the special needs of women, such as breastfeeding rooms and daycare centres. The lack of political commitment to gender equality can result in important laws for the protection of women's rights not being passed or not being implemented effectively. This includes laws on domestic violence, protection of female workers, and access to health and education services.

In Lao PDR the main modes of enforcement are through the Lao Women's Union (LWU) which disseminates information to the public about the constitution, laws and legislation, and international conventions related to the legitimate rights and interests of women and children. The LWU also provides counselling services to women and children with family and social problems. At the village level, the LWU participates in mediation, solving problems related to the protection of the rights and interests of women and children. Free legal aid is provided through the Legal Aid Office of the Bar Association.

It is noted that despite the legislation and institutional mechanisms in place, shortcomings and challenges remain, particularly regressive attitudes and negative stereotypes that affect the livelihoods and development of women and children. The proportion of women in occupations and decision-making roles or in leadership positions is still low as compared to men, and the LWU representative may be the only female voice around the table.

In *Malaysia*, law enforcement in protecting women's rights, especially about family law has been assisted by two main bodies: the Legal Aid Center (LAC) and the Legal Aid Department (LAD). The LAC is funded by the Bar Council and carries out activities to raise legal awareness among the public, in partnership with NGOs, and provides services such as a walk-in clinic, Syariah legal clinic, Doc Brief program, Community legal aid clinic, LAC prison program, and urgent arrest.

The LAD is a government department that provides legal aid services to eligible persons through the Legal Aid Act of 1971. The government aims to provide legal services to the public at a lower fee as an alternative to services offered by private lawyers. Through the provision of legal aid, the government also assists the community in general, and particularly women, in navigating the legal system. According to history, this legal aid is also a battle that Malaysian feminists demanded to protect their rights.

To enforce labour laws and to create a conducive environment for women, the government is taking action in accordance with NWP 2009. It is overall concluded that the emphasis should be placed on enforcing a policy rather than solely enacting it. Laws are meaningful only if enforced.

In *Myanmar*, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) conducted gender awareness training related to CEDAW and gender-based violence for civil service personnel, women organisation members, and the community.

In the *Philippines*, the implementation of the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) must be reported by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) to Congress every three years. The focus is on the enforcement of the Gender and Development (GAD) Planning and Budgeting. Aside from the MCW, the GAD Planning and Budgeting is also used to implement various national laws on WPPL. The PCW produces an annual report on the implementation of the GAD Planning and Budget by national agencies.

A key factor for increasing compliance to GAD planning, budgeting, and reporting is the effective coordination between the PCW and other relevant agencies. The MCW states that the utilisation of the GAD mainstreaming budget (at least 5% of the agency's total GAD budget appropriations) should be annually monitored and evaluated 'in terms of success in influencing the gender-responsive implementation of agency programmes funded by the remaining 95% GAD budget'. The PCW, in accordance with its obligation under the law, is only able to review and monitor the GAD plans and budgets of national agencies, state universities and colleges, and government-owned and controlled corporations. The oversight role over local government units (LGUs)' compliance is with the DILG (Department of Interior and Local Government).

In *Singapore*, the government has taken decisive measures to combat violence and harm against women through legislation, enforcement, and policies. Information in the national WPPL report was discussed under KPI 2 as it relates to the enactment and amendment of laws.

In *Thailand*, two committees were established under the Gender Equality Act. The Gender Equality Promotion Committee is chaired by the Prime Minister and oversees the implementation in general, such as issuing regulations, proposing new policies, or conducting related research. Members are ten representatives of ministries, and nine experts on women's issues and gender/ sexual diversity and CSOs. The Gender-Based Discrimination Adjudication Committee is mandated to investigate and decide individual cases of alleged discrimination. The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development is in charge of the administrative work of both committees, conducting relevant research, receiving complaints of alleged discrimination, and coordinating any related work.

In *Viet Nam*, governance, accountability, and reporting processes and procedures have been put in place to ensure the effective implementation of gender equality laws. Regular monitoring and evaluation have been used to improve existing policies and programmes. All concerned government agencies report regularly, with public disclosure, to the government on its progress in implementing the gender equality law. The government is responsible for the consolidation of these reports and in turn reports to the General Assembly. There are clear accountability mechanisms for holding government officials accountable for their actions related to gender equality including sanctions for non-compliance with gender equality laws.

Whilst awareness of gender equality has improved, especially in rural areas, many people only have limited knowledge and understanding of the law on gender equality, which hampers the effective implementation of gender equality policies and laws. The deeply engrained patriarchal culture, where men are considered superior to women, makes it difficult to change attitudes toward gender equality. In addition, there is a general lack of the necessary resources and infrastructure to effectively implement gender equality. The under-representation of women in leadership positions, both in government and the private sector, limits women's ability to influence policy and decision-making processes.

Enforcement of Gender-related violence laws

In *Brunei Darussalam*, the main stakeholders and policy actors involved in the enforcement include the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (which has jurisdiction over social and welfare issues, including those about women and children); the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) (which oversees matters pertaining to the Islamic Family Law that often involves gender implications); the Royal Brunei Darussalam Police Force (which is responsible for law enforcement, particularly through its women and Children Abuse Investigation Unit, that often does roadshows and awareness programmes, and works closely with other government agencies and NGOs to provide a comprehensive approach to addressing these issues); and the Attorney General's Chambers (responsible for the legal frameworks and the creation of laws).

The *Cambodian* government established the Samdech Techo Volunteer Law Group to aid victims and to ensure social justice and the rule of law. Poor women victims of domestic violence can also seek free legal assistance in court cases from the Bar Association of Cambodia (BAC), which also provides legal education to CNCW, judicial police officers, and members of the MoWA. There will be at least two women in the ranks of each subordinate unit in line with the Police Academy of Cambodia Action Plan.

In *Indonesia*, the UUTPKS (sexual violence law) is a breakthrough in women's protection. Notwithstanding, several problems threaten to hamper the effective enforcement of the law. Several things that must be considered are related to reporting and handling mechanisms, as well as mechanisms for protecting and empowering victims. At the national level, there is still a need to standardise service providers to protect women and children. Meanwhile, at the regional level, potential obstacles for provinces and districts/ cities include very limited human resources, including professional staff for victim assistance, minimal outreach and victim recovery costs, inadequate buildings, minimal socialisation regarding the UUTPKS, and the difficulty of reaching victims. Loopholes in legal provisions cause many victims to withdraw reports or complaints. State actors/ state apparatus functions as a mediator rather than following up on reports of victims of domestic violence due to a lack of gender perspective among officers.

In *Malaysia*, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) is responsible for enforcing the recent (2022) Anti-Sexual Harassment Act. It should prioritise educating the public and enhancing their comprehension and awareness of the gravity of sexual harassment issues before the full enforcement of this act. The enforcement of the act includes defining sexual harassment and promoting awareness and prevention of it within the community. When there is an improved understanding and heightened awareness of sexual harassment and its impact on victims within the community, it directly contributes to creating a safer environment. This safer environment, in turn, bolsters women's confidence to participate more actively in decision-making within their organisations and in politics. Under the recent Anti-stalking Law, the first individual was charged under the new section of the Penal Code in August 2023. Although this act has just been established, the law has been implemented and enforced to protect women.

With the introduction of new acts such as those related to sexual harassment and anti-stalking it is crucial to assess the enforcement of both acts. Therefore, the government should conduct a review of enforcement after a period of five years.

Myanmar has a 24-hour Help Line System to address all forms of violence including domestic violence and sexual harassment by providing case management services (health, psychosocial, legal, and safety services). There are in addition seven One-Stop Women Support Centers. Access to legal services is facilitated in cooperation with legal firms. Support is provided in filing a report in order for it to be taken to the Supreme Court.

In the *Philippines*, victims of gender-based sexual harassment in streets and public spaces can seek assistance from the LGUs via the local Anti-Sexual Harassment (ASH) hotline, Women and Children's Protection Desks in police precincts, local Social Welfare and Development Office, local traffic enforcers, and the Public Attorney's Office. For online gender-based harassment, the victim can file a complaint directly with the National Bureau of Investigation through its Cybercrime Division, the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group, or the Office of Cybercrime of the Department of Justice.

Further, the Philippine National Police launched the Project Aleng Pulis Everywhere to increase and ensure the presence of female law enforcers in women's and children's desks nationwide and to help victims to comfortably open up about sensitive experiences. This is strengthened by their online presence, as a cybersquad is available for concerns reported online.

Singapore takes a victim-centered approach in investigating sexual crimes, treating victims with care and empathy. Investigators play a key role in their recovery and ultimately foster victims' trust in the Singapore authorities. Female officers are present in interviews. Sexual Crime and Family Violence Command Centers have been set up this year to oversee policies on and investigations into sexual crime and family violence. The Police Force works closely with public transport operators and partners to raise awareness among commuters.

Thailand has a mechanism to handle internal complaints with the responsibility of taking action upon receiving complaints. Informal resolution methods, such as friendly discussions and mediation, should be employed, with both parties agreeing to the mediation process. The mediator must be a neutral party respected by both sides and conditions should be established to control the behaviour of the parties involved, preventing any recurrence. This process should be initiated within 15 days of when the complaint was received and must remain confidential unless both parties agree to disclosure.

In *Viet Nam*, the implementation of the Program on Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response for 2021-2025 and awareness campaigns is said to have improved the awareness of gender-based violence.

KPI 4: Review of discriminatory laws and policies

Agreed Definition:

Identify existing laws or discriminatory clauses in laws and policies that directly and negatively impact on the implementation and application of gender equality laws and regulations.

In *Brunei Darussalam* Laws are generally non-discriminatory toward men and women as they have been crafted to be applicable to all in a fair and equitable manner. It is, however, also noted that reviewing laws is an on-going process, with an assessment and reviews of current laws and policies being provided in the publication of the SDG's Voluntary National Reports (VNR).

The *Cambodian* Constitution lays down a fundamental legal mechanism, especially on the equal rights and opportunities between men and women in leadership and political participation. Therefore, any provisional clause of law or policy that discriminates against women means it violates the Constitution.

In *Indonesia*, monitoring and reporting from women's organisations have documented various discriminatory policies against women, both in the national laws and local government regulations. A small portion of these policies has been revised, while most have been kept by the government until now.

Three laws at the national level that still discriminate against women are i) in the law concerning marriage, the stipulated minimum age for marriage for women is 16 years, which is considered to have the potential to encourage child marriage; ii) the law on pornography discriminates against women as it reduces the right to feel safe due to formulations that tend to criminalise citizens with morality judgments, creates legal uncertainty and reduces the guarantee of legal protection due to the expansion of phrases in the law which have multiple interpretations, and tend to criminalise victims of sexual violence due to the inability of the law to see women as victims of gender-based violence, including in the context of the pornography industry; and iii) population administration law contains discriminatory articles related to six religions recognised

by the state (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Confucianism) which causes discrimination against adherents of beliefs. At least six types of violence faced by women adherents have been reported, including intimidation, stigma/ labelling, forced clothing, sexual harassment, persecution, and murder. Several CSOs have proposed policy changes, but, so far, they have not been successful.

At the sub-national scale, an increasing trend of discriminatory policies against women has been seen from 2016 to 2020 (report from National Commission on Violence against Women), often found in regional regulations, along with the enactment of regional autonomy which gives local government the authority to form their policies. The Ministry of Home Affairs has cancelled more than 3,000 local regulations considered discriminatory; however, none of them were related to discrimination against women.

In *Lao PDR* a gender analysis was conducted of the key relevant laws and policies to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination. It was found that the Law of Gender Equality is gender responsive and incorporates important principles and goals, but does yet not include a definition or dedicated provision on either direct or indirect discrimination; does not provide sufficient clarity on the nature of gender discrimination; and does not adequately cover the range of actions which amount to gender discrimination or reference the effects of gender discrimination (all of which are required in the CEDAW Convention). The law requires the development of further regulations or other legal mechanisms and procedures to be effective in practice.

The Law on Making Legislation was found to be not yet gender mainstreamed as, while it enables the women's caucus to comment on laws before they are finalised, it does not include gender-specific criteria for assessing the impact of the proposed laws. It also does not mention the concepts of equality or non-discrimination.

The Federal Constitution of *Malaysia* explicitly prohibits gender discrimination, although several court cases have shown a limited interpretation of this law by the courts. There are gaps in the Constitution in which gender discrimination persists as the prohibition against discrimination only binds the government and public authorities and not the private parties. It was emphasised that CEDAW as an international treaty does not have the force of law and thus no binding effect in Malaysia.

In relation to rights to citizenship, the federal constitution provides different rights to men and women regarding the nationality of their children.

There is a lack of clarity in the Employment Act and employers may have room to impose restrictions on employees which negatively impact women workers and allow for the existence of a 'glass ceiling' that hinders their advancement and representation in leadership positions.

Whilst Malaysia has committed to ending discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, the absence of a specific law for discrimination means that the legal system is weak to acknowledge the potential for discrimination to manifest in various forms, encompassing direct, indirect, or intersectional aspects both in the public and private spheres. Thus, the development of the Anti-Discrimination Against Women Bill is something to look forward to and with the latest government announcement to table amendments on citizenship law, hopefully, other discriminatory laws against women will be addressed as well.

The Constitution of *Myanmar* includes a section that implies gender stereotypes in appointing or assigning duties to civil service personnel. It begins with a positive assertion that the Union shall not discriminate for or against any citizen based on certain characteristics, including gender, while it is thereafter states that, 'However, noting in this section shall prevent appointment of men to the positions that are suitable for men only'. This can reinforce traditional gender roles and limit opportunities for women in certain positions.

The *Philippines'* MCW calls for the government to take steps to review and, when necessary, amend and/or repeal existing laws that are discriminatory to women within three years of it becoming effective. LGUs are also directed to review existing ordinances and policies and repeal or amend them accordingly with the participation of women's groups.

Identified gender-discriminatory provisions in national laws that remain to be amended include several articles of the Family Code to repeal the preference of father/ husband's consent/ decision to the marriage

of children between the ages of 18-21, on the administration and enjoyment of community and conjugal properties, over the persons of their common children, and with regard to parental authority.

A priority is to revise the Penal Code to ensure women's equal rights in marriage and family relations. The 2019 amendments to the revised rule on evidence did not change the substance of disputable presumptions concerning sex. The clause of removal of criminal liability of the rapist when the victim marries him shall be repealed and the acts or elements that constitute rape shall be redefined.

It is also recommended that expert legal opinion on the consistency of the 2021 proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Code of Muslim Personal Laws with the CEDAW should be undertaken. The PCW has further identified the Women's Political Participation and Representation Law that will mandate the establishment of gender quotas and other measures to increase the quantity and quality of women's participation in elected positions as a priority agenda (for the 19th Congress).

Singapore regularly reviews its laws to ensure that they are updated, remain relevant as society evolves, and fit for purpose for protecting women and girls against discrimination and harm. Views and feedback gathered from Conversations on Singapore Women's Development have been considered.

In *Thailand*, discriminatory laws against women have been revoked or amended, particularly in the participation in decision-making since the ratification of the CEDAW. Currently, there is thus no discriminatory law against women to review. However, in general, Thailand reviews the effectiveness of laws every five years to find room for improvement.

Some laws in *Viet Nam* have a direct discriminatory provision against women and a few laws are directly discriminatory on sex or gender. The Marriage and Family Law stipulates the marriage age for men at 20 years but for women at 18 years. The revised Labour Code in 2019 stipulates the retirement age at 60 for women and 62 for men. The Law on Social Insurance stipulates different ages for male and female employees to be eligible for pensions and shows differences in the calculation of monthly pensions for male and female employees.

There are remaining differences between the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents related to the requirement of gender drafting in the development of legal documents. According to the Law on Gender Equality, this is a mandatory requirement for all projects and drafts. Meanwhile, according to the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents, gender integration into the project/ draft, appraisal by the Ministry of Justice, and verification by the National Assembly's Social Affairs Committee will only be conducted if the project/ draft is related to gender equality. However, the Law does not specify how to determine when a project/ draft is 'relevant to gender equality'. This shortcoming can create a basis for policymakers and lawmakers to simply use gender-neutral language and ignore potential adverse gender impacts.

On the other hand, while the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents (in some specific cases) requires the People's Councils and People's Committees to conduct gender integration and assess the impact of policy proposals in the draft proposal of the decision of People's Council or the People's Committee, the Law on Gender Equality does not have such provisions.

There is, further, a significant inadequacy in the process of promulgating policies at the national level, as the Law on Gender Equality only stipulates the responsibility of gender integration in the development of legal documents while there are multiple highly gender-sensitive issues such as socio-economic development plans, highways, railways, international airports, national target programmes (e.g., such as the poverty reduction program), etc., with no requirement for gender integration in applicable laws (such as the Law on Gender Equality, the Law on organisation of the National Assembly, and the Law on Government organisation). The Law on Gender Equality does also not specifically stipulate gender equality in the fields of environment, religion, foreign affairs, defence, and security, although they all have direct or indirect impacts on gender, while the 2013 Constitution has an appropriate regulation, covering all fields when recognising that men and women are equal in all landscapes. The 2015 Law on Statistics needs additional provisions requiring state agencies, especially the Ministry of Planning and Investment to provide gender-disaggregated information and data.

KPI 5: Temporary special measures and affirmative action

Agreed Definition:

Affirmative actions refer to temporary measures or positive steps and practices taken by either government, political parties or state institutions that are designed to increase the representation and participation of women in politics and public life from which they have been historically excluded. This could include, but is not limited to, quota systems for women, adoption of legislation seeking to ensure minimum representation of women in the institutional structure of the state/ government, targeting women for appointment to public office, and implementing educational programmes aimed at increasing women's political participation and leadership, among other measures.

The Young Executive Programme in *Brunei Darussalam* is intended to strengthen the capabilities of future leaders to meet the ever-changing needs of the public. In this programme young women in the civil service at their early career stage are selected to participate in equal numbers as young men, acknowledging that while equal access to education at all levels has been achieved, a remaining challenge is women's political participation and representation in executive decision-making roles. Women's representation in cabinet minister positions as well as in the Legislative Council has historically been limited.

Cambodia has set targets for women's representation at all levels of decision-making. In the recruitment of new civil servants between 20% and 50% shall be women, and it was aimed to have 18% of women in decision-making positions by 2023. The government has also set a policy to appoint at least one female Secretary of State and at least one female Under-Secretary of State in all ministries. At the sub-national level, in all provincial/ district departments and boards of governors there must be at least one woman as a deputy director and a deputy governor respectively. At the commune level, the CCWC must be led by a woman. It is responsible for managing and coordinating women and children's affairs, advocating for women and children's issues, and taking part in the decision-making process in the commune meetings. In each village committee, if the village chief is male, there must be at least one woman as the deputy chief of village. Each sub-national administrative level is required to formulate a clear plan, by their situation, that ensures the promotion of women to management positions.

Indonesia has set two quotas for political parties. In establishing political party management at the national and sub-national level, a minimum 30% quota of women officers shall be considered, and need to consider at least 30% of women in the selection of cadres. The affirmative actions in the election laws are promoted in two ways: firstly in the requirements to be registered as election participants, the political parties are required to include at least 30% of women's representation in party management; and secondly, in nominating its members in the DPR and DPRD elections, each political party is required to include at least 30% of women in its candidate list and the placement of at least one woman in every three names of the candidates. If a political party cannot fulfil these conditions, then the nomination of candidates for the relevant electoral district cannot be accepted.

In *Lao PDR*, by 2025 women are to account for at least 30% of members of the National Assembly and Provincial People's Assembly. As for leadership and decision-making positions, women shall comprise at least 30% at the central level, at least 20% at the provincial and Vientiane Capital level as well as district level, while the target is set at 10% for women representation in leadership positions at the village level. In The Ministry of Education and Sports, at the director general and director levels at least 30% shall be women. In the Ministry of Health, the share of female leaders shall be increased up to 50%, and 35% being ethnic women and 1% women with a disability. The Ministry of Public Security shall ensure that 15% of police officers are female. The Ministry of Education and Sports shall ensure that 40% of female staff receives technical training and shall integrate the issue of violence against women in schools' curricula at all levels.

Malaysia has set a 30% quota of women representatives in the Village Community Management Council. A minimum quota of 30% for the representation of women among senators in the Upper House of Parliament has been adopted, but no specific measures have been announced to increase the representation of women.

One part of state actions includes an annual conference (the Penang Women's Conference) to promote the more active participation of women in politics and to create sufficient women leaders to lead the state. A platform for sharing knowledge and capacity-building towards achieving a 30% quota of women representation in decision-making has also been launched. Women and Family Development Committees in every constituency are set up to focus on the implementation of programmes for women and families at the grassroots level. One of its main tasks is to identify potential local women's talent for leadership development. Further, a woman agency has been set up in each state to carry out programmes to cater to women's needs in each state, but do not necessarily empower women to be political leaders.

Myanmar promotes a minimum 30% quota system for women's representation in all sectors. In a community-based infrastructure project, the policy is to have 50% women of the committee members.

In the Philippines, the enactment of the MCW was a key achievement. Among the detailed specific actions on WPPL is to incrementally increase the number of women in third-level positions in the government to achieve a fifty-fifty (50-50) gender balance over the immediate five years following its enactment. At least 40% of female membership of all development councils from the regional, provincial, city, municipal, and barangay levels shall be ensured, and political parties that field at least 30% of women candidates shall receive 10 points towards their accreditation as a dominant political party. Efforts are further to adopt a candidate gender quota, providing incentives to political parties who have reached the quota in their leadership and policymaking structure and/or roster of candidates for the elections, using the forty-sixty formula, wherein neither sex comprise less than 40% nor more than 60% of the number of candidates on the party slate.

In general, affirmative actions taken by the government to promote gender equality in all spheres has been through the adoption of laws (and consequently repealing gender-discriminatory laws), through the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in development planning, implementation, and evaluation accompanied by the establishment of the gender and development focal system as the institutional mechanism, and through setting minimum investment requirements in the planning and budgeting system.

Singapore is committed to accelerating the progress of women's participation in areas where women may still be under-represented. In decision-making roles, for example, the Council for Board Diversity has set measurable targets to achieve sustained increases in women representation on statutory boards, Institutions of a Public Character (IPCs), like charities, as well as on boards of listed companies. Outcomes so far have been positive; women on boards of the top 100 Singapore Exchange listed companies have increased three-fold from 7.5% in 2014 to 22.7% as of June 2023. As of June 2023, the proportion of women directors on statutory boards also reached a new high of 32%, while women on boards for the top 100 IPCs is at 29.5%. As for the public sector, the goal is to have more women in leadership positions, which is achieved through the principle of meritocracy. The leadership pipeline consists of:

- Women who make up 44% of decision-making positions at director-level and above; and
- Women who form 46% of officers on the key leadership development programmes for the Public Service (i.e. the Administrative Service and Public Service Leadership Programme), which aim to develop officers for senior leadership positions (i.e. Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, CEO), as of December 2022.

The Thai Action Plan on Women's Development (2023-2027) sets targets to increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels. Three measures are to be taken: implement a learning process to foster women's inclusion in decision-making; advocate policy-driven measures and promote understanding about the benefits of temporary special measures to enhance women's participation; and develop women's skills for inclusive decision-making at the managerial level.

The Vietnamese election Law on the Election of National Assembly deputies and People's Council deputies requires that at least 35% of female candidates be on the respective official lists of candidates. For additional details on targets and targeted levels of women's representation, please refer to the respective AMS national-level WPPL study.

Positive steps and practices include the implementation of the programme 'Enhancing equal participation of women in leadership and management positions at all levels of policy planning for the period 2021 – 2030', approved by the Prime Minister. Some ministries, branches, and localities have applied separate regulations for female cadres, civil servants, and public employees to create better conditions for women in training, capacity building, and promoting the participation of women in leadership and management. The National Target Program for Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas 2021-2030 includes supporting women to participate in leadership in the political system. Further, a first-ever Communication Programme on gender equality until 2030 has been approved by the Prime Minister aiming to create a breakthrough in quality and effectiveness in communication on gender equality, raising awareness of law compliance, behaviour change, and active support of the whole society in gender equality.

KPI 6: Women in selected political parties (members/ candidates)

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the percentage of women members and women fielded as candidates in 3 to 4 major (dominant and leading) political parties in the country.

The key trends per country in terms of women's membership and candidacy by political parties is presented below.

Cambodia uses a 'closed list' system where political parties decide the nominations and order of candidates. The nominations and orders of party candidates are decided by party central committees, and voters vote for their communal leaders based on the candidate list. Around 32% of candidates listed by the 17 parties in the 2022 commune/ sangkat elections were women.

Indonesia: In the 2014 elections, women made up 23.17% of total political party membership and 37.65% of total candidates at the national level. In the 2019 elections, the percentage of women increased to 32.80% of total political membership, and of the total candidates at the national level, at least 41% were women candidates.

Lao PDR: In the 2022 elections, 27.28% of the total 404,844 political party members were women.

Malaysia: It has been revealed that a mere 19.5% of female members participated in the recent internal leadership elections conducted from 2018 to 2022. In the 2018 elections, 50% of the total members were women, but only 10.76% were women candidates. Similarly, during the 2022 elections, while 50% of political party members were women, only 13.55% of the candidates were women.

Myanmar: In the 2010 elections, 4.23% of total national candidates were women. This increased to 13.48% during the 2015 elections. At the local level, women candidates only comprised 3.78% during the 2010 elections, which increased to 13.04% during the 2015 elections.

Philippines: The ratio of women running for office incrementally increased in the past five elections, from 19% to 21%, the proportion of women candidates running for national office has remained steady over the last three elections at 19%. The rate of increase in women running for national office has plateaued at 19%, or a zero percentage change over the last three elections. In the 2019 and 2022 elections, 18.80% and 20.21% of total candidates, respectively, at the national level were women. In the 2019 and 2022 elections, the percentage of women candidates at the local level remained about the same at 20.21% and 20.53%, respectively, of the total candidates that were fielded for elected positions.

Thailand: For the Pheu Thai Party in the 2018 elections, 14.90% of candidates were women.

Viet Nam: In the 2020-2025 term, 10% of the central party membership were women, while 14.87% of total members at the local levels were women.

KPI 7: Women candidates and placement on party list

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the placement of women nominees in the candidate list of the major 3 to 4 political parties in the last 2 major national and sub-national elections. This indicator examines the tendency to place women at the bottom or the last spot of the list from which party-list representatives shall be chosen in case the party obtains the required number of votes, which impedes women from getting elected positions, including lists of representatives who are appointed in the government sector.

A summary of the key points on the percentage of women candidates and their position in the candidate lists in selected political positions based on the national reports from the AMS, is presented below:

Cambodia: In national assembly elections, women candidates accounted for 12% in 2013 and 13% in 2018, on average across parties. The proportion varied from 10-16% in 2013 and 7-15% in 2018. In commune/sangkat elections, the proportion of female candidates increased from 24% in 2012 to 29% in 2022. However, most women candidates were placed in the lower tiers of the candidate lists, limiting their chances of being elected. Only about 10% were in the top three positions in 2017, increasing to 24% in the top five positions in 2022.

Indonesia: In the 2014 general election, women made up 37.27% of candidates, with 10.4% in the top tier, 19% in the second tier, 54% in the third tier, and 15.6% in the fourth tier. In 2019, women were 37.77% of candidates, with 14.5% in the top tier, 24.3% in the second tier, 51.85% in the third tier, and 16.8% in the fourth tier. For both elections in 2014 and 2019, women candidates are mostly placed in the third tier (54% and 51.85%, respectively), thus limiting opportunities to win a seat.

Malaysia had 10% women candidates in 2018 and 13.48% in 2022.

Myanmar had 13% women candidates in both the 2010 and 2015 elections.

The Philippines had 19% women candidates in 2019 and 2022 for national level elections and 20-21% for the local elections.

KPI 8: Women in political parties and in the decision-making hierarchy

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the percentage of women officers/ women in the political hierarchy in the 3 to 4 major political parties. Data should be able to provide an indication whether women officers in the political party occupy positions that influence decision-making.

Some of the key highlights of the findings on women's leadership within the political party structures, based on the information provided in the national reports, are presented below.

Cambodia: The government has promoted gender equality, leading to an improved status and role of women in politics. Political parties, such as the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), have recognised the important contribution of women and have some female representation in leadership positions. However, political party leadership in Cambodia is still dominated by men due to factors like family responsibilities, limited access to resources, and social norms.

Indonesia: Administratively, the major political parties in Indonesia's parliament have fulfilled a minimum of 30% representation of women in party management at the central level. However, women are still marginalised from strategic positions and the decision-making process within political parties. The percentage of women in strategic positions in party management is still below 30% across all major political parties.

Lao PDR: The 11th Central Party Committee was elected during the 11th National Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party on 15 January 2021 and is composed of 71 ordinary members and 10 substitutes. The Central Party Committees formulates policies that the state implements. Very few female members of the Central Party Committee were ranked within the top ten. Only one woman was ranked 3rd during the 9th, 10th, and 11th term of the Central Party Committee, and she was the Vice President of Lao PDR in the present term and President of the National Assembly during the 9th and 10th National Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.

KPI 9: Monitoring progress on women leadership and participation

Agreed Definition:

Refers to whether there is a platform, mechanism or a system in place in government and/or related state institutions to track progress on women leadership, representation and participation.

The national gender agencies across ASEAN have made significant strides in establishing monitoring and reporting frameworks to track progress on women's political participation and leadership. However, it is important to recognise that there is still much work to be done to strengthen these systems and ensure they are effectively driving action and accountability.

The discussion below delves into the specific monitoring approaches adopted by select ASEAN countries. These diverse national models can help draw out valuable lessons to inform more effective, evidence-based policymaking and programme implementation aimed at accelerating women's equal representation and leadership in the political sphere across Southeast Asia.



Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is currently in the process of completing a national-level study on women's development, which will provide the necessary data and insights as a foundation and baseline for monitoring and evaluation as well as inform policy decisions and actions to promote women's leadership and participation.

- Currently, there are no specific tools or mechanisms in place to systematically monitor the progress of women's leadership and participation in Brunei Darussalam. The leadership positions are obtained based on a merit-based system that focuses on individual qualifications, regardless of gender.
- However, recent developments include a national-level effort to launch a study on 'Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam' in 2022. This research, led by the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS), aims to gather critical data and insights to inform the development of targeted policies and programmes for the holistic development and empowerment of women in Brunei Darussalam.
- The findings of this national study on women's development will be used as input to enhance the National Plan of Action on Women and to formulate general policies to improve the level of development among women in Brunei Darussalam.
- The CSPS also engages with various stakeholders through forums and dialogues to receive feedback on the significance of the study and its policy recommendations.
- Whilst there are no specific policies against gender-driven harassment in parliament and political parties in Brunei Darussalam, the existing laws and legal frameworks apply across all sectors of society and individuals.



Cambodia has established a monitoring and evaluation system involving various government agencies and stakeholders to track progress on WPPL in the public sphere.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) has a strategic plan with key performance indicators (KPIs) related to women's participation in leadership and public roles. For instance, the target is to increase the share of women in legislative bodies from 25% in 2019 to 30% by 2023.

- The MoWA develops annual work plans and budgets for implementing activities to achieve these KPIs, in partnership with other line ministries and institutions.
- The government institutions responsible for data collection and monitoring include the MoWA, the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW), the National Election Committee (NEC), the Ministry of Civil Service (MCS), and the Ministry of Interior (MoI).
- The MoWA regularly publishes progress on these indicators in its Neary Rattanak newsletter and coordinates the preparation of progress reports, which are shared with stakeholders at national and sub-national levels, as well as with development partners.
- The MoWA also conducts five-year Gender Assessments that analyse the overall gender situation in Cambodia, including an assessment of gender disparities in politics and public decision-making. These assessments provide recommendations to policymakers and other stakeholders.
- Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) in line ministries also produce regular reports for the CNCW, providing updates on the status of gender equality and identifying areas where more action is needed.



The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) is responsible for monitoring the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) at the national, provincial, and municipal levels.

- The monitoring is done through a specific PUG evaluation platform, using methods like observing the achievement of PUG indicators and stakeholder interviews on planning, implementation, and the results of programmes.
- The indicators used refer to the Gender Empowerment Index developed by KemenPPPA, which includes assessing the number of women in the legislature, executive, judiciary, and other formal/professional institutions.
- This monitoring is usually done every six months or annually, such as tracking changes in the number of women legislators.
- At the provincial level, KemenPPPA issued guidelines for monitoring and evaluating PUG implementation, as well as compiling and utilising gender-disaggregated data to support PUG.
- The provincial-level monitoring covers areas like building commitment, preparing policies/ programmes, institutionalising PUG, capacity building, programme coordination, and M&E.
- However, KemenPPPA faces challenges in data collection due to uneven understanding and implementation of PUG across ministries/ agencies and local governments.



Lao PDR has established a multi-layered monitoring system involving the party, government, and mass organisations to track progress on women's participation and leadership at various levels. Three main organisations are responsible for monitoring progress:

- The Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) - monitors through monthly/ annual party meetings and a staff performance assessment system.
- The Lao Women's Union (LWU) - has an Inspection Department that monitors and inspects the LWU's work, including female leadership.
- The National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers, and Children (NCAWMC) - coordinates monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality.

The LPRP monitoring system includes:

- Monthly and annual party meetings to review and supervise the recruitment of leaders, including women.
- A staff performance assessment system to evaluate the leadership performance of all party members.
- The Resolution No. 3 of the Central Party Committee in 2021 includes guidelines for monitoring leadership development.

The LWU Inspection Department has 242 staff responsible for monitoring and inspecting all aspects of LWU's work, including female leadership. They organise workshops to build the monitoring and inspection capacity of their staff.

The CAWMC at central and local levels, along with all sectors, participates in monitoring, inspecting, and evaluating the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality. They coordinate with the Ministry of Planning and Investment to integrate gender equality targets into the national socio-economic development plan.

The monitoring and evaluation results are regularly reported by the party organisations, state agencies, the Lao Front for National Development, and mass organisations to the relevant personnel management agencies.



Overall, Malaysia has multiple monitoring platforms but could benefit from more systematic mechanisms and key performance indicators to track the effectiveness of policies promoting women's leadership.

- Malaysia has two main domains for monitoring women's leadership and participation - government/ state-sponsored platforms and civil society/ NGO platforms.
- Government platforms include legislative, executive, and judiciary bodies, but women's representation in the lower house of parliament has remained around 10-15% for the last 20 years.
- The Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development (MWFCD) is responsible for monitoring women's leadership and participation, through divisions focused on assessment, monitoring, and women's capabilities.
- The government also produces the Malaysia Gender Gap Index (MGGI) based on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, to track progress in areas like education, health, economic participation, and political empowerment.

- Civil society groups like the National Council of Women's organisations Malaysia (NCWO) also play a role in monitoring, advocacy, and supporting women leaders, especially during elections.
- Other initiatives like the 30% Club Malaysia work to increase women's representation in corporate leadership.
- Political parties also have Women's Wings that aim to empower and increase women's political participation.



The Myanmar National Committee on Women (MNCW) plays a central role in overseeing and reporting on Myanmar's commitments related to gender equality. The MNCW's biannual meetings, reporting to CEDAW, and the NSPAW mapping and review processes demonstrate Myanmar's systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating progress on women's participation and gender equality commitments.

The key ways the MNCW monitors progress are:

- Submitting reports to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- Monitoring the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) through biannual meetings that bring together key stakeholders like state/ regional social ministers. This allows the MNCW to analyse NSPAW's nationwide implementation progress.
- In 2016, the Department of Social Welfare collaborated with national and international women's organisations to develop an NSPAW mapping analysis report under MNCW's guidance. This informed the creation of four TWGs to implement NSPAW more effectively.
- In 2019, a comprehensive NSPAW review was undertaken with UN Women's support. This review assessed NSPAW's effectiveness and outcomes and informed the development of NSPAW Phase II (2023-2032) to further promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Myanmar.



The Philippines established a comprehensive system to track women's participation and gender equality, primarily through gender mainstreaming efforts, results-based monitoring and evaluation frameworks, harmonised guidelines and indicators, and robust data collection and reporting mechanisms.

Gender Mainstreaming:

- Requiring all government agencies and local government units to formulate and implement Gender and Development (GAD) plans, integrate gender equity measures in development plans, and monitor and evaluate them.
- Requiring allocation of at least 5% of total agency budgets for the implementation of gender-responsive programmes.
- Creation of the GAD Focal Point System as the implementation mechanism for the gender mainstreaming strategy.
- Designation of the Commission on Human Rights as the Gender and Development Ombud to investigate complaints related to discrimination and violation of women's rights.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Results Framework:

- The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) monitors and evaluates the implementation of the Magna Carta of Women through the GAD Plan and Budget system, reporting on national gender mainstreaming performance, and reporting on international commitments like CEDAW, Beijing Declaration, and SDGs.

Harmonised GAD Guidelines and GEWE Indicators:

- Development of a self-assessment scoring system called the Harmonised Gender and Development Guidelines to assist agencies in formulating their GAD plans.
- The GEWE indicators complement the guidelines by providing a tool for agencies to select indicators and means of verification for their GAD plans.
- For local government agencies, the Gender-responsive Local Government Unit Assessment Tool was developed to guide data collection and the monitoring of gender mainstreaming efforts.

Core GAD Indicators:

- The Philippine Statistics Authority collects and publishes sex-disaggregated data across various sectors through the Inter-agency Committee on Gender, Children, and Youth Statistics.
- The Core Gender and Development Indicators serve as the basis for generating and analysing GAD data, considering national and international indicator systems.

Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms:

- Progress in gender equality is tracked through legal reviews, strategic plan reviews, and international commitment reporting.
- Data is coordinated, consolidated, and made public through the Philippine Statistics Authority's annual Fact Sheet on Women and Men and other gender and development statistics.



Singapore

Singapore has a dedicated division within the Ministry of Social and Family Development that serves as the secretariat for the Inter-Agency Committee on the White Paper on Singapore Women's Development. This division tracks the implementation of the action plans and monitors the representation of women in key sectors, with the progress reported to the Singapore Parliament every five years.

Strategy and Women Development (SWD) Division in the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF):

- The SWD division acts as the secretariat for the Inter-Agency Committee on the White Paper on Singapore Women's Development.
- It tracks the implementation of the action plans outlined in the White Paper on Singapore Women's Development.
- Progress on the implementation of the White Paper is reported to the Singapore Parliament every five years, with the next review due in 2027.

Tracking Women's Representation in Key Sectors:

- MSF tracks the progress of female parliamentarians, publicly available on the Singapore Parliament website.
- MSF tracks the representation of women in public service, with data publicly available on the Department of Statistics website.
- MSF tracks the representation of women in the judiciary, with data publicly available on the Department of Statistics website.
- MSF tracks the representation of women on boards of the Top 100 SGX-listed companies, statutory boards, and Top 100 Institutions of Public Character (IPCs), with data publicly available on the Council for Board Diversity's website.

Comprehensive Monitoring and Reporting:

- The progress in women's participation is tracked through a comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism.
- The data is made publicly available on government websites, ensuring transparency and accessibility.
- The regular reporting to the Singapore Parliament every five years provides a structured platform for review and accountability.



Thailand

Thailand primarily monitors progress in women's participation by tracking the number of election candidates and elected officials by gender. However, the monitoring mechanisms lack specific tools and rely more on observing policy implementation and societal acceptance. The focus is on legal development and ensuring gender rights through legislation and enforcement.

Tracking Election Candidates and Elected Officials:

- The key data points used to monitor progress are the number of election candidates and elected officials categorised by gender.

Limitations in Monitoring Mechanisms:

- The monitoring of the progress of women leaders, both at the political party level and within governmental organisations, lacks specific mechanisms or tools for verification.
- The predominant approach is presenting policy guidelines by political parties or organisations, which may vary depending on the type of roles and responsibilities.
- The monitoring process involves observing policy implementation, and women's affairs offices mainly serve as policy support units through state agencies.

Reliance on Legal Development and Societal Acceptance:

- Achieving women's participation in Thailand is considered a matter of legal development, acceptance, and greater knowledge and understanding rather than strict control.
- Laws that emphasise promoting gender equality are seen as a step forward in ensuring gender rights, and in the case of a violation, legal action should be taken.



Viet Nam

Overall, Viet Nam has a well-structured monitoring and accountability system involving various government agencies at different levels to track progress in women's participation and gender equality.

Monitoring Structure:

- At the national level, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) is responsible for monitoring and promoting gender equality and women's participation in politics.
- The National Assembly Standing Committee's Committee on Social Affairs is responsible for overseeing the implementation of policies related to women's political participation.
- At the provincial level, the People's Committee is responsible for monitoring and promoting gender equality and women's participation.
- At the grassroots level, the Women's Union plays a crucial role in this respect.

Accountability Mechanisms:

- The Committee on Social Affairs of the National Assembly is responsible for overseeing the implementation of policies related to women's political participation.

Tracking Indicators:

- In 2019, the Ministry of Planning and Investment issued a circular on the national set of gender development statistical indicators, including 11 indicators on leadership and management.
- The National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2021-2030 sets goals and targets for the participation of women in leadership and management and requires ministries, branches, and localities to report on implementation results annually.

Reporting and Evaluation:

- The government reports to the National Assembly every year on the implementation of the national target on gender equality.
- The government also reports to the CEDAW Committee, with the latest being a composite report (No. 7 and No. 8) on the implementation of CEDAW in Viet Nam.
- Agencies have also issued decisions and circulars on sets of statistical indicators, some of which are specific on gender equality, and some are disaggregated by sex.
- The General Statistics Office announced a new set of gender development statistical indicators with 78 indicators in 2019.
- Gender analysis is also carried out in censuses, such as the 2019 Population and Housing Census, which provided sex-disaggregated data.

KPI 10: Existence of code of conduct and policies against gender-driven harassment in parliament and political parties are in place and/or developed

Agreed definition:

Refers to policies, programmes, plans, laws, regulations/ arrangements that are in place that address and penalise gender-driven harassment/ violence against women in the work environment, particularly the parliament, government institutions and within the political parties.

Findings discussed below build on input from nine national WPPL reports.³⁵ Whilst the output specifically refers to the existence of a code of conduct and policies being in place in parliament and political parties, the agreed definition of the KPI broadens the coverage to 'work environment', retaining its focus by adding 'particularly the parliament, government institutions and within the political parties'.

In the Penal Code of *Brunei Darussalam*, there are provisions addressing certain forms of misconduct related to modesty, such as 'word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman' (Section 509) and 'assault or use of criminal force with intent to outrage modesty' (Section 354). The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) under the Department of Community Development has jurisdiction to oversee and investigate social welfare issues, including domestic violence. To take legal action requires filing a report with the police force. Cultural barriers and a sense of shame work against the filing of a police report, and in most cases, the Family Law or Islamic Law is therefore applied (depending on whether it is a Muslim woman/ couple or not).

The Labour Law in *Cambodia* includes an explicit provision against sexual harassment and indecent behaviour in the workplace. The Penal Code provides the framework for the prosecution of domestic violence and sexual violence.

³⁵- The monitoring of political parties falls beyond the mandate of the ACW Singapore.

In *Indonesia* a recent law concerning crimes against sexual violence protects victims and provides a legal umbrella for law enforcement officials to handle cases of sexual violence, but with no explicit provision to criminalise sexual violence.

The Labour Law in *Lao PDR* does not define or explicitly prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace. However, the Decree on Ethics of Civil Servants prohibits sex discrimination and eliminates sexual violence in all workplaces and nominates the head of government organisations to mediate and solve conflicts of violence against women and gender-driven harassment. The Penal Code in turn criminalises sexual violence, except when the woman is the offender's spouse.

In *Malaysia*, the Employment Act defines sexual harassment and provides procedures and employers' responsibilities in managing sexual harassment. The employers are required to conspicuously exhibit a notice to raise awareness of sexual harassment. Prior to 2022, sexual harassment carried out by members of parliament, whether verbally or physically, did not face any legal consequences because there were no specific laws addressing such behaviour, now addressed through the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (which applies to premises in Peninsular Malaysia and Labuan). A special Tribunal is to be set up to promptly handle sexual harassment complaints by using the civil law's standard of proof and awarding compensation to victims. The Anti-Stalking Bill (through amendments to the Penal Code in 2023) defines stalking as repeated harassment intended or likely to cause a person to worry, fear, or be concerned for his or her safety.

The formulation of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022 provides an opportunity for the formulation of dedicated policies against gender-driven harassment within parliamentary settings and political parties. The prevailing immunity enjoyed by all members of parliament (MPs) may contribute to the evidence of incidents of male MPs making derogatory and sexist comments towards their female counterparts during parliamentary sessions. An amendment of the Standing Order in 2012 did prohibit sexist remarks, but the Parliament's rules of conduct have not been observed by some male MPs. Gender-based threats and violence towards women candidates and women politicians was rampant in elections, including on social media platforms. There are, as of yet, no formal avenues for reporting or monitoring such incidents within political parties or the Election Commission. Despite women frequently facing diverse forms of violence, including threats, there is a lack of internal procedures and regulations within major political parties to address gender-based harassment.

In *Myanmar*, the Penal Code includes provisions related to sexual harassment aimed to deter and penalise acts of sexual harassment. It prescribes that using words, gestures, or acts intended to insult the modesty of any woman can be imprisoned.

The complaint mechanism to address human rights violations, including gender-based violence, does not include provisions to address gender-based discrimination and harassment, threats, and social biases that hinder women's political engagement. A recent study of sexual harassment in the workplace showed that 58% of all 271 surveyed women experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in their place of employment, including harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and/or sexual coercion.

In the *Philippines*, the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law defines acts that constitute sexual harassment in the work, training, and education environment. Sexual harassment may be acts committed by superiors or peers. It provides for the creation of an independent internal mechanism or a committee on decorum and an investigation to address complaints of gender-based sexual harassment to be headed by a woman, although there is no mention of criminalising sexual harassment in the workplace. Acts considered sexual harassment include making misogynistic and sexist remarks. The law indicates penalties for sexual harassment violations.

The Safe Spaces Act expands the anti-sexual harassment law to protect women against sexual harassment in all locations including in online platforms. The Civil Service Commission updated its administrative rules on administrative proceedings for sexual harassment complaints where the offender is a government employee to be consistent with the Safe Spaces Act, i.e. reporting and investigating and case management through the Committee on Decorum and Investigation (CODI), which covers government agencies as well as the private sector.

Whilst there is no specific policy against gender-based harassment in parliament or political parties, the Safe Spaces Act expanded the definition of sexual harassment to not only be based in power relations (teacher-student, employer-employee, etc.) but to also cover those perpetrated by peers and even by a subordinate to a supervisor, whether in physical public spaces such as malls, restaurants, schools, training environment, workplace, or online and in digital media. Thus, as defined, public places include the parliament as both a physical space and as a public sector entity.

Whilst the coverage of political parties is absent in the law, the intent of the law can be liberally construed to apply to political parties as their activities take place in the public space. Sexual harassment cases in the workplace are under-reported due to fears of reprisal. The Gender Ombud has issued (in 2022) a statement condemning sexist and misogynistic campaigning and violence against women in politics including urging for the Commission on Elections to adopt a Code of Conduct for candidates.

The Penal Code in *Singapore* includes penalties for domestic violence, the Protection from Harassment Act protects victims from harassment, intimate partner violence, and related anti-social behaviour, and the Online Safety Act regulates online communication services to protect especially women and girls from online harm. There is, however, no mention of sexual harassment in the work environment.

In *Thailand*, a Cabinet Resolution provides for prevention and resolution of gender-based harassment and violations in the workplace.

In *Viet Nam* the Labour Code includes a clear definition of sexual harassment, specifying that enterprises must issue written rules and ensure that there is prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. A Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment at Work, with recommendations only, has been jointly issued by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, and the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This classifies behaviour into three groups: physical, non-physical and verbal harassment. Serious acts such as sexual assault and rape have been regulated by criminal law, whereas acts that belong to harassment but that cannot be criminally handled are difficult to legally pursue and are open to interpretation. As of today, there is currently no official data on sexual harassment in the workplace in Viet Nam.

KPI 11: Support networks for women

Agreed Definition:

Refers to existing platforms and networks both at the regional, national and sub-national levels that support and allow women leaders to connect, get support and build alliances.

Regional platforms such as the ASEAN Ministerial Meetings on Women (AMMW), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation (AIPO), in which all AMS are members, are not further elaborated herein. However, other regional platforms and networks that are referred to in the national WPPL studies are included below.

Platforms in *Brunei Darussalam* initially emerged to primarily serve as social gathering spaces where women could share interests and develop domestic skills but have now evolved to focus on empowering women in broader ways, such as promoting social welfare, raising awareness of women's rights, and encouraging active participation in diverse sectors including business and community services. NGOs have played an important role in advocating for women's rights as a platform and a safe space for the provision of more opportunities for women's development and have implemented various programmes to develop the abilities of women and girls alike. Today thirteen NGOs are affiliated with the Council of Women Brunei Darussalam (CWBD), an anchor organisation to bring together all women-led NGOs under one umbrella. By sheer observation, it is remarkable to see the hyper-visibility of young women in various social movements and interest groups under this NGO umbrella.

The *Cambodia* National Committee on Women (CNCW) reaches a broad range of stakeholders in reviewing progresses and achievements on gender equality and empowerment and whether they are aligned with the government's commitments outlined in the national plans and strategies. The CNCW's annual meeting is chaired by the Prime Minister and all government ministries and agencies participate at the national and sub-national level (including ministers and provincial governors), as well as members of the parliaments, the councils of ministers, UN agencies, embassies, international organisations, and private sector business. The event is significant as the Prime Minister always gives recommendations on measures to further mainstream gender equality and further enhance women's empowerment.

A Sub-Technical Working Group on Women in Leadership and Governance, with members from the public sector, development partners, and CSOs, has been established as part of the Technical Working Group on Gender (TWGG). The Sub-TWGG meets quarterly to review progress in performance and to share experiences related to women's leadership and gender mainstreaming in reform programmes.

At the sub-national level, the provincial and district Women's and Children's Consultative Committees (WCCC) regularly meet with the Board of Governors on women, youth, and children's issues. To achieve better delivery of services to rural men and women, the Commune Committees on Women and Children (CCWC) have been established.

Groups of female politicians and leaders have also engaged in international gender-related frameworks and mechanisms. In 2021, the Cambodian Women Parliament Caucus (CWPC) launched the 'Girl2Leader Cambodia' campaign aimed at sharing experiences and knowledge with young female students and, more importantly, instilling in them ideas of responsibility, decision-making, and women's leadership in politics.

The *Indonesian* Political Women's Caucus (Kaukus Perempuan Politik Indonesia, KPPI), comprises female politicians across political parties and focuses on efforts to empower female politicians through advocacy strategies and capacity-building programmes. It encourages the implementation of affirmative policies for political parties and the strengthening of affirmative policies by working together with KemenPPPA, CSOs, and academics. While it has succeeded in building women's solidarity across political parties, both at the national and regional levels, it has not yet succeeded in encouraging significant changes in terms of strengthening affirmative policies within political parties or promoting women's candidacy in party lists.

The Parliamentary Women's Caucus of the Republic of Indonesia (Kaukus Perempuan Parlemen Republik Indonesia, KPPRI) is a forum for female members of the legislature at the national (DPR RI and DPD RI) and local (Provincial and Regency/ City DPRD) levels. It is still perceived as an exclusive organisation and has not yet become a focal point for promoting gender mainstreaming in the legislation process. It created the Post-Legislative Scrutiny mechanism aimed at identifying whether a policymaking process in the parliament has considered a gender perspective or responded to gender problems, which has, however, not yet been implemented massively down to the regional level.

The Association of Women Village Heads (Asosiasi Perempuan Kepala Desa Perempuan, APKADESI) is a joint platform for women leaders at the local level. This association focuses on efforts to strengthen women's rights related to achieving sustainable development goals, such as the health sector, preventing child marriage, and various other issues. The association responded to these issues by incorporating gender-responsive policies in the village work plan (Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Desa) as well as in the village revenue and expenditure budget (Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Desa).

In the public sector, the Association of Indonesian Cross-Professional Women (Perhimpunan Perempuan Lintas Profesi Indonesia, PPLPI) is a forum for women leaders to share knowledge, experience, and opportunities to uplift women's dignity through empowerment in the political, economic, social, cultural, and health fields, both on a national and global scale.

The Association of Indonesian Women Leaders (Perkumpulan Perempuan Pemimpin Indonesia, PPPI) is an organisational forum for alumni who have received the Indonesian Women's Award (API). The organisation was established based on the spirit of providing support for Indonesian women and children from women leaders in the public and private sectors, both at national and regional levels.

Civil society network organisations for women activists include the Indonesian Women's Congress (Kongres Wanita Indonesia, Kowani) which focuses on several areas (such as the education sector, health sector, rule of law and constitution, people's welfare issues, the dignity of the nation through legal certainty and the protection of women as victims of criminal acts, environment issues, human rights issues, gender equality, and justice in all aspects of national and state life, especially in the decision-making process).

The Indonesian Women's Coalition (Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, KPI) strives to realise justice and democracy. It encompasses marginalised women's groups such as Indigenous women, elderly and women with disabilities, professional women, informal sector women workers, urban and rural poor women, youth, and students. It has become one of the women's organisations that actively advocates for various gender-responsive policies in various fields, including politics, and is also active in building collaborative networks with other women's organisations as well as the KemenPPPA.

The Advanced Indonesian Women (Maju Perempuan Indonesia, MPI) is a forum for the collaboration of women leaders across sectors, including political parties, parliament, ministries/ state agencies, regional heads and deputy regional heads, academics, CSOs, and community organisations. It was formed to build solidarity between women in various fields, become a forum for coordination and the exchange of information, make strategic efforts to prevent discriminatory policies against women and make strategic efforts to encourage WPPL in various fields.

UN Women Indonesia works with the government, CSOs, academia, the media, and public and private sectors to address national priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment. In the field of women's leadership itself, UN Women Indonesia has forged alliances with women MPs and started work to promote women in peacekeeping operations.

Lao PDR mentions three main support networks for female leadership. The first network is based within the Party organisational structures, from the central level down to the village level (with 36 party committees of ministries and equivalent agencies, 18 provincial party committees, 148 district party committees with a total of 2,422 grassroots party committees, and 8,961 grassroots party units under the grassroots party committees). Each Party committee or unit at each level holds responsibility for monitoring progress on women leadership and participation.

The Lao Women Union (LWU) is the second support network. With its organisational structure reaching from the central to the village level, the LWU reaches out to women from the national to the provincial, district, and village levels and thereby serves as a bridge between the Party, the Government, and Lao women in urban and rural areas. Through its extensive networks, the LWU has been able to bring women's voices into public administration, albeit often as the only female voice at the table. The LWU's focus on implementing Party policy and its limited ability to represent the interests of women from more remote areas—particularly amongst non-Lao Tai ethnic communities—are at times in tension with its empowerment and gender equity goals.

An informal gender group of international organisations and local CSOs constitutes the third support network. Members are from UN agencies, embassies, INGOs, local CSOs, and individual consultants. It conducts the Gender Working Group Meeting quarterly, with representatives from the Government agencies sometimes being invited to participate.

In *Malaysian* politics, women leaders are confined to their own political parties' platforms, networks, and activities. Networks at regional and global levels are geared more towards multilateral and bilateral relationships between the Malaysian Government and other states, and global and regional institutions.

The Malaysian Parliament Women's Caucus is composed of women MPs across political parties in the Lower House (Dewan Rakyat). This platform is an informal structure in Malaysian political institutions but formal in terms of its network operation due to its membership. The most important point of this caucus was its commitment to women's networks and collaboration across political parties as well as to raising women-related issues in parliament. However, it does not have a strategic plan or a plan of action and lacks substantive power.

The Council of Malaysian Women Political Leaders (COMWEL) was launched officially by the Speaker of the House of Representatives in conjunction with International Women's Day on the 8 March 2021. It provides a platform for dialogue and sharing ideas for women leaders by organising public forums and articulating women's issues via press statements. It has voiced women's standpoints on critical issues, including sexual and gender-based harassment, illegitimate children, citizenship of children, a minimum 30% women in decision-making, as well as on international issues pertaining to women in Palestine and Afghanistan. In terms of feedback from the public towards COMWEL activity, its forum on Islam and Women's Leadership received about 500 offline participants and over 3,000 online.

There are further platforms in which individual women leaders become members. One of these is the non-governmental, multi-party network Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) which informs and mobilises individual legislators in all regions of the world to advance human rights, democracy, gender equality and inclusion, and international peace and security under the Rule of Law. Other political women leaders are involved in humanitarian work and activities related to Palestinian issues. By joining such activities, women leaders can widen their networks with like-minded NGOs across the regions and the globe. This type of network helps women leaders to make themselves visible to the public. Visibility is important to ensure credibility and that their effective leadership is recognised by male leaders in the party structure. It has made it easier for women to gain trust and be given a formal place in the party hierarchy.

Young women leaders at the national level are involved in the Perdana Fellowship Programme and can engage directly with an executive or a minister. Through internships at government agencies and corporations, and work with politicians, young women are exposed to crucial elements of leadership and politics and gain a better understanding and experience of politics. Upon completing the fellowship, fellows become members of the Perdana Fellows Alumni Association (PFAA), which fosters a close network between youth leaders and government, corporate, and NGO leaders. In academia, networks between women leaders in higher education institutions can be connected and enhanced through the Higher Education Leadership Academy (AKEPT). Based on observation, these platforms are limited to the national level, and not specific to women. There is no policy on promoting women's academia leadership in AKEPT.

At the state level, Sidang Wanita was established in three states as a platform for capacity building in leadership. Women from all over the country are recruited to realise and hone their talents as leaders and prepare them for higher levels of leadership. Sidang Wanita also serves as a platform for women leaders at the grass roots to update and support each other.

Other forms of networks that support Malaysian women are global sisterhood in civil society activism across the Southeast Asian region, such as the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisation (ACWO) via Malaysia's representative the NCWO, and to some extent the networking among humanitarian aid activists (not gender based networks). These networks provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and resolutions that need to be translated into actions on issues and interests relevant to women and the gender equality agenda. The role of NGOs in providing a platform for women leaders is important in nourishing women's talent, as an approval of their effective leadership, and to some extent as a platform to prepare them to become political leaders.

The *Myanmar* National Committee on Women (MNCW) involves deputy ministers from relevant government ministries, ensuring that high-ranking officials are actively engaged in advancing women's interests and gender-related initiatives. Four prominent women's organisations that play a pivotal role in advocating for and championing women's rights and empowerment are also members (the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF), the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA), the Myanmar Women and Children Development Foundation (MWCDF), and the Myanmar Women's Sports Federation (MWSF)). By incorporating both government officials and CSOs, the MNCW fosters a synergistic partnership that leverages the strengths and resources of multiple stakeholders.

Four TWGs focus on these key areas: Violence against Women and Girls; Women's Participation; Women, Peace, and Security; and Gender Mainstreaming. Each of these TWGs includes representatives from UN organisations, INGOs, CSOs, as well as government organisations. The inclusion of such a broad spectrum of partners allows for a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing the goals and objectives of NSPAW.

Since NSPAW (2013-2022) has expired, a steering committee for developing NSPAW Phase II (2023-2032) has been organised with the Chair of MNCW, with deputy ministers of relevant Ministries as members. In developing NSPAW Phase II, the directors general of the relevant departments have been assigned as the chair of working committees on each priority area. This effort primarily focuses on introducing a sense of ownership within each designated area and promoting cooperation with relevant departments for gender mainstreaming.

Directors are assigned as the GFPs to contribute to promoting gender equality within their respective departments, currently, there are a total of 46 focal points. These focal points are assigned to contribute to gender mainstreaming and to address the gender equality issues in their departments as well as to effectively implement the activities of NSPAW Phase II (2023-2032) and provide the support to the working committee of NSPAW.

In the *Philippines*, the role of a vibrant and strong civil society for support networks is highlighted with several support networks for different spheres of WPPL. The National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) is a platform for the convergence of diverse women's groups particularly from the marginalised sector and includes Local Development Councils, Women's Sectoral Representation, and Bayi Foundation. However, a key concern is that the democracy space is shrinking, where women leaders who oppose the government are targeted or tagged as 'communists'.

For elected officials, The Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) is the umbrella organisation of all leagues of local government units (LGUs) and locally elected government officials. It was reinforced with the provision that no funding requirement of ULAP shall be charged to the National Government. The Lady Local Legislators' League is a ULAP member. In addition, there is the Lady Municipal Mayors' Association of the Philippines. ULAP has six Presidents, all male, and its board consists of six women out of twenty members.

For government employees, The Philippine Government Employees Association organises government employees and creates the Public Sector Labour Management Council, while there are three associations for the judiciary (the Women Lawyers Association of the Philippines, Philippine Women Judges Association, and Circulo de Abogadas).

Singapore points to the role of business-related platforms in addition to political platforms that facilitate women leaders to build networks at various levels. The Young Women's Leadership Connection (YWLC) is a women's organisation that nurtures and connects young women leaders through networking, mentorship, leadership development, and opportunities to give back to society. YWLC holds Leadership Roundtables to discuss leadership journeys and the lessons of female leaders and change-makers, and an annual Future Women Leaders Forum which aims to equip young women as they transition from tertiary education to the workplace. The YWLC's Leadership Development interview series features a line-up of remarkable female leaders in Singapore on their social media.

The Singapore Women Entrepreneurs Network (SG-WEN) was formed by the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) to coordinate the existing efforts of businesswomen within the community and to serve as a platform to connect with other women-entrepreneurs' associations in Asia-Pacific, particularly across ASEAN.

The People's Association (PA) Women's Integration Network (WIN) Council is a grassroots organisation and the coordinating body of more than a hundred Women's Executive Committees (WECs). WECs are composed of women volunteers and grassroots leaders based at community centres and clubs. The Council organises many events to recognise the achievements and contributions of women grassroots leaders and holds focus group discussions on national issues of concern to provide a platform for the voice of women in the community.

At the parliamentary level in *Thailand*, committees have been formed to address child affairs, youth, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic groups, and gender diversity. These committees are tasked with overseeing state policies and monitoring the budget allocations within relevant civil service organisations. In addition, the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (DWF) and the Ministry of Social

Development and Human Security also conduct a series of training courses annually to build the capacity of women in decision-making at all levels; for example, women and leadership, women's participation in peace and security, campaign techniques and skills.

Additionally, various organisations collaborate to support and advocate for women's involvement in political participation whilst also enhancing women's leadership capabilities at local and national levels. Key networks, both within Thailand and internationally, play a significant role in this effort. UN Women Thailand, for instance, consistently organises seminars and training programmes aimed at unlocking the potential of women, especially those in local communities and ethnic groups, with a primary focus on WPPL. The International Republican Institute (IRI), a non-profit organisation funded by the U.S. Congress through the National Endowment for Democracy and the U.S. Agency for International Development, has recently initiated a programme for capacity building in political participation for women in collaboration with Chiang Mai University. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) has concentrated its efforts on academic and training programmes for women in Thai politics, collaborating with higher education institutions to contribute academically, generate knowledge, and advance the role of women in society.

In *Viet Nam*, members of the Women Leaders Network include female leaders at departmental and ministerial levels of central ministries and branches who are also members of the Executive Committee of the Viet Nam Women's Union. The network operates for a five-year term, and in 2022 the membership was expanded to include central agencies, associations, and social organisations. It is a forum for members to share common interests in life and work, to exchange and supplement with new knowledge and skills, and to contribute to improving leadership, management, and other soft skills for work. The network was established to promote the role of female leaders in ministries and branches in Women's Union activities and policy advocacy related to women, acting as a bridge between the Women's Union and other branches and fields.

The Group of Vietnamese Women Parliamentarians was established by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly to create a forum for female National Assembly deputies to have the opportunity to exchange experiences on the skills of deputies as well as to learn from the experience of international female parliamentarians, thereby contributing to improving the quality of activities of the National Assembly, creating a forum for female deputies to have a common voice on issues related to the activities of the National Assembly and, at the same time, supporting the deputies to better and more effectively operate their representative roles.

At the local level, based on the central-level models of the Women Leaders Network and Vietnamese Women Parliamentarians Group, some provinces have established similar groups such as the Women's National Assembly, and Assembly Deputies. People's Council (Nghe An, Phu Tho province); Club of Women's National Assembly and People's Council deputies (Hai Duong, Bac Kan, Phu Yen, and other provinces); Club/ network of female leaders confident of international integration (Thai Binh province, Kon Tum, Thai Nguyen, etc.).

KPI 12: Positive representation of women leaders and women's political empowerment in the media

Agreed Definition:

Refers to public (government) and private (CSOs, political parties etc.) efforts and initiatives to address women leader stereotypes and portray women in the media as equally qualified leaders.

The applied analytical approach varies in the national reports.³⁶

The portrayal of women in fictional drama and television programmes in *Brunei Darussalam* has tended to run parallel with robust ideas surrounding traditional and conservative gender roles and responsibilities. Women in these stories tend to play domesticated roles, while men are perceived as the more capable leaders and patriarchs. Generally, women's career aspirations play out as a source of conflict, creating

36- ACW Singapore has chosen not to track input on this KPI.

tensions between pursuing one's career and managing the emotional burden that often accompanies making choices outside the traditional norms and expectations. In contrast, women are shown in a positive light in content created by official government media (television news programmes, government newspapers like *Pelita Brunei Darussalam*, and other associated production houses as well as social media accounts). The daily news never fails to portray women in leadership positions, including coverage of events in public settings where female leaders in public service can be seen to conduct their business (e.g., women leaders as guests of honour during event launches or other government and non-governmental functions). In an interview with the Minister of Education (Datin Seri Setia Hj. Romaizah Mohd Salleh) in 2022, she reflected on her achievements, women empowerment, and her role as the first female Cabinet Minister in Brunei Darussalam.

A review of articles published in ten news media outlets in *Cambodia* in December 2022 revealed that there are far fewer news articles on WPPL than articles related to male leadership. Only a few media organisations are focusing on women's empowerment in leadership. One is Women Media Centre with a specific radio programme inviting women in any leadership position to discuss and share their experiences. Besides this, Voice of Democracy has one content category, gender in politics, writing to promote WPPL. On the positive side, the contents of news articles did not indicate any visible stereotypes about female leaders. The content on women's empowerment and leadership mainly encourages people to be aware that women can do what men do. Women could be in higher positions, take leadership roles, and engage in politics. Women are no longer only housewives, wives, or mothers, but they can be what they want to be. Women's participation in politics and leadership is very significant to showcase that women are as equal to men and can contribute to the country's development. Although a more rigorous study on this issue is required, the findings hint that Cambodia needs more journalists, probably more women in media, who are passionate about promoting WPPL. Female politicians and leaders should be interviewed and featured in the media more often to inspire the next generation.

In *Indonesia*, the content of television programmes addressing women's narratives is limited to telling stories about women's experiences, emphasising their domestic roles with no discussion of social or political issues. In a study from 2022, based on a content analysis of articles during December 2020 from three online media sources, it was found that, in general, the media reproduces pre-existing dominant ideologies so that the portrayal of women cannot be separated from gender, maternal ideology, and morality, as well as religious values. The analysis was carried out in the form of identifying news framing of women's leadership and the stereotypes within it. The three selected media sources had different characteristics and ideological differences: one being an Islamic-based media (*Republika.co.id*) and one more nationalist (*Kompas.com* and *Kompas.id*). MyTV, however, is a television station devoted to women and its presence is a good step toward narrating more women's voices. Further, TVOne also has a good programme to accommodate the presence of women leaders, which focuses on discussing social and political issues raised by panellists consisting of women experts in their fields. Whilst there is a lot of positive news about women, especially in the political context, women's depiction in the public sphere is still often placed below that of men. Therefore, the attachment of negative stereotyping towards women remains a problem in the Indonesian media. Mainstream media such as Kompas and Republika should be able to use a more gender-friendly lens and be at the forefront of breaking the ropes of gender inequality which often places women in an unpleasant position.

All public social and political debates in *Lao PDR* must be presented in terms acceptable to the state media authority. Lao media often reinforces the traditional and stereotypical roles of women. News reporting and news formats are traditionally very structured, with limited information to challenge gender roles or support women's empowerment. To date, there is no specific media platform through information and communication technologies (ICT) for women to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making. Realising this limitation, the LWU organised a workshop for Lao journalists, including the Vientiane Times and Lao National Television, on how they could be more sensitive when producing and reporting news about violence against women, gender-based violence, and gender issues.

An obstacle to promoting more gender sensitivity in the media is the small number of female media professionals. Traditionally, journalism has not been considered a suitable profession for women as it requires more independence and mobility than is culturally acceptable. Increasingly, Laos is exposed to media from other countries, through television, radio, and the internet; Thai television in particular. Whilst the use of the Thai language is a concern for many government officials, the increasing access to Thai

and other international media may help young Lao to challenge and question the traditional perception of women, gender roles and stereotypes, and the sex-based division of labour. The Lao Government has policies, strategies, and programmes to mainstream gender concerns into in particular radio broadcasting. It may be noted, however, that for instance, only 13% of rural women listen to the radio once a week yet around 70% watch television at least once a week. The LWU has a specific television broadcast on women issues, and this included a campaign to encourage voters for more female parliamentarians to be elected during the recent national Assembly election in 2021.

Monitoring the media in *Malaysia* during 14 days of the election campaign for the general election in 2022 showed that the representation of women leaders and women's political empowerment enjoys positive developments, influenced by the activities of NGOs and academia in promoting the agenda of female candidates, as well as the network built by the media with the parties. However, within the 14 days of campaigning, women appeared less than men in the news, and when they did the topics often related directly to their gender and personal life rather than talking about national issues or their political skills. In the earlier phase of the campaign, the news reporting or agenda setting by the media leaned towards a positive articulation, frequently covering issues that related to the commitment of the political parties to achieve a minimum of 30% women candidates, the importance of women's participation in politics, political advocacy, and the elimination of all discrimination towards women.

However, a week after the nomination day, the media reporting turned to a narrative of 'false hope' of the political parties and their commitment to a minimum of 30% women candidates. More space and attention were now given to the leaders of major coalitions or political parties which coincidentally are male, followed by a minimum and biased media reporting towards women candidates in terms of gender stereotyping. The titles and highlights of articles on women candidates were based on their appearance rather than their credibility as a legitimate candidate. Phrases used to describe women candidates were full of gender biases, namely as *pakej lengkap* (a complete package) and *mencuri perhatian* (attention-grabbing) concerning their look and appearance. For female politicians, their gender was frequently the focus of debate and they were given a secondary role compared to male politicians. An attempt has never been made by their political parties to address the issue of there being a lack of media attention for women leaders.

Moving forward, the media should be more competitive among their 'media contenders' to serve their readers with more women-friendly and gender-sensitive reporting during the election campaign. At the same time, women candidates should also actively engage with the media and position themselves in the limelight by commenting on various issues including gender-related ones. Many works of research have found that whilst the media is an important factor influencing women's political participation, women do not hold statistically significant numbers of leading positions within the industry.

In *Myanmar*, efforts have been made to allow more women's voices to be included in interviews on Myanmar Radio, and broadcasting more songs and news related to women. The media coverage of female leaders can perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination, portraying women as emotional, nurturing, or less capable of handling complex political and business matters. The representation of female leaders in Myanmar's media is often sparse and tends to emphasise their gender over their qualifications and achievements. Despite these challenges, the media can also serve as a platform to highlight successful female leaders as role models and advocates for gender equality. Women who hold powerful positions, including those who hold powerful positions in national politics, are generally represented positively. Women leaders at sub-national levels, or in less powerful positions, are under-represented in the media. Despite some positive portrayals, their achievements might not receive as much attention or coverage compared to their male counterparts. When women are covered, the focus might sometimes be on their gender and the challenges they face, rather than solely on their professional capabilities and successes.

Outside of political news, many televised programmes target women viewers with valuable insights and information to enhance their financial independence and entrepreneurial skills. Likewise, several political and INGO-related programmes appear regularly on social media, allowing wide dissemination of women's support programmes. These programmes provide updates on political developments, advocacy for women's rights, and information about INGO-led projects and initiatives designed to uplift women. International embassies located in Myanmar also frequently provide training and development programmes for Myanmar women. These programmes encompass a wide array of subjects, such as skills development, entrepreneurship, leadership training, and educational opportunities, and most of them are advertised on social media and thus made accessible to a broad audience of women.

The *Philippines* Media and Gender Equality Committee (MGEC), an inter-agency body composed of national agencies responsible for media communications, has published a guidebook to aid in eliminating gender stereotyping, promote gender balance across various forms of media and communication, and enhance the representation of women's roles in the community and development through media content. However, whilst the guidebook is a helpful tool, there is no mechanism to monitor implementation.

The result of a three-day exercise to assess the representation of women in major newspapers (reported in the Gender-Fair Media Guidebook) revealed that men's stories are given more prominence than women's, and are the source of information and opinion including as spokespersons, experts, and the 'voice of the people'. News reporting is skewed toward male voices in politics and government, economics and business, war and conflict, science and technology, sports, and other general news. Women's voices are visible in around 50 to 70% of the lifestyle and fashion content, whilst as a voice in the coverage of the political elite, content featuring women is around 25 to 30%. Between 2013 and 2016, the PCW and the Media and Television Review Classification Board (MTRCB) called out six instances of violations related to the derogatory portrayal of women besides incidents that sparked public protest which were immediately corrected.

Lessons can be learned in the advertising industry's self-regulatory mechanism that has led to a reduced portrayal of women in a derogatory way. However, stereotyping remains an issue. A 2013 study on gender representation in Philippine television advertisements revealed that characters in television advertisements consisted of 58% females and 42% males; but if advertisements for cosmetic products and toiletries were excluded, the ratio would be more balanced. The setting of the advertisements served to reinforce gender differences; where workplace settings showed more men and home settings showed more women and the product categories followed stereotyped patterns. Men in television advertisements were fully dressed (89%) compared to women (45%) and more women were 'suggestively dressed' (53%) than men (7%).

Women face more challenges than men regarding their image related to their roles in politics in *Thailand*. The role of being a mother, moulded by Thai society, creates expectations defined by external characteristics and gender attributes. An analysis of the primary media in the country, both online and offline, including print and television media, reveals that presenting the image of women in politics or female leaders has both positive and negative features. On the positive side, news presentations often focus on educational background and relevant past experiences linked to past success, such as holding high positions in organisations or language proficiency. Female political leaders are often required to present a strong image and demonstrate higher skills than their male counterparts, highlighting strength, and decision-making courage, especially in managing time and family responsibilities. On the negative side, women are often criticised for behaviours deemed culturally inappropriate within the framework of Thai society. Their private photos on social media platforms may be misinterpreted in discussions about clothing, and their use of communication language may be judged as inappropriate even in private communication spaces. Furthermore, issues related to family responsibility in the roles of wives and mothers continue to be part of the negative portrayal of female candidates, especially during election campaigns.

Media organisations face criticism for not actively promoting a positive image of women to challenge gender biases and diminish the perception of male superiority. The gender imbalance in election candidates (in 2023 a mere 18% were female candidates) contributes to a significant disparity in media coverage between female and male candidates. At the organisational level of the Mass Media Council, only 7 women are serving as vice chairs and members out of a total of 23 members (The National Press Council of Thailand 2023). The limited representation of women in the Thai Mass Media Council may potentially influence the direction of promoting women's roles in the media, leading to a scarcity of news coverage featuring women.

In *Viet Nam*, women leaders and their achievements have been covered in the news media, though the frequency and depth of coverage can vary. The portrayal of women in selected media can also vary, influenced by cultural norms, societal expectations, and evolving perspectives on gender roles. An overview of how women are generally presented in different types of media reveals that traditional media often reflects traditional gender roles, portraying women primarily in domestic settings or in supportive roles to male protagonists. Whilst there are positive representations of successful women in professions like business or academia, they may not receive as much coverage as their male counterparts. Women are frequently depicted in familial roles, reinforcing societal expectations of women as nurturers and home makers. Efforts to eliminate these stereotypes include advocacy campaigns, initiatives promoting women's leadership, and increasing the visibility of successful women in various fields.

Efforts, both public and private, to address stereotypes about women's leadership and promote gender equality in political participation through the media include government-led campaigns aiming to raise awareness about gender equality issues, including media campaigns that highlight women leaders and their contributions. The Ministry of Information and Communications further coordinates with the Central Propaganda Department and the Viet Nam Journalists Association to regularly direct and orient newspapers and radio agencies, promoting communication activities and raising awareness about gender parity. Through press briefings, it has also praised and recognised news articles and reports with good content, which have an impact on regulating social behaviour in information work on gender equality.

Increased women leadership in political institutions

KPI 13: Proportion of women in minister and deputy minister positions

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the percentage of women occupying minister and deputy minister level positions in government (or similar level positions).

Data discussed in the regional report.

KPI 14: Proportion of women in senior or managerial positions in government

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the percentage of women occupying senior positions in government. Senior positions can be individually defined per AMS depending on prevailing government structure. In the Philippines for instance, a senior management position is proposed to be defined as women occupying assistant secretary and director level positions in government.

This could be further discussed in a workshop to calibrate and ensure that the positions identified per AMS are relatively the same across the Member States. To facilitate, each AMS is requested to share their respective bureaucratic or administrative structure and identify which positions have been considered for this indicator.

Data discussed in the regional report.

KPI 15: Proportion of women judges in supreme judicial body and women judges in courts

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the percentage of women justices on the AMS supreme judicial body and the percentage of women judges, prosecutors and lawyers in courts.

Data discussed in the regional report.

KPI 16: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local legislative councils

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the percentage of women in national parliaments and in local legislative councils or bodies.

Data discussed in the regional report.

KPI 17: Proportion of seats held by women as chief executive or head at local government

Agreed Definition:

Refers to the percentage of women leaders as chief executive or head of local government. This is further classified depending on the political administrative subdivision of the AMS. In the Philippines, the sub-national level political administration is as follows: (i) provinces are headed by a governor; (ii) cities are headed by a mayor; (iii) municipalities are headed by a mayor; (iv) villages or barangays are headed by a barangay captain or a village chief.

Each AMS is requested to provide a description of their respective local political administrative divisions as context.

Data discussed in the regional report.

Political institutions are welcoming to women political leaders

KPI 18: Manifesto of political parties and their documents in promoting women's leadership

Agreed Definition:

Refers to a quick review of political party documents and manifestos that show or indicate support for women leadership.

The party system varies across the AMS.³⁷

In Brunei Darussalam, no political parties share or contest governing responsibilities.

In Cambodia, political parties claim to have policies to promote gender equality, yet it is hard to find concrete party policies or actions related to WPPL. A review of political parties' manifestos compiled by the National Election Committee (NEC) for the sub-national commune/ sangkat elections in 2022 revealed that none of the parties mentioned WPPL in their manifestos, although some parties advocated for the promotion of women and marginalised groups in general. One party alone (the CPP) explicitly mentioned in its manifesto that the party is strongly determined to promote gender equality and uplift women's role in management positions in civil services, however, without specifying plausible affirmative measures to achieve this.

Similarly, in Thailand, whilst political parties prioritise policies for women's well-being, with a notable link between having a female leader and support for diverse women-centric policies, they are slow to implement strategies promoting women in politics. Initiatives for women's political participation may take a backseat compared to other priorities within political parties, emphasising the complexity of advancing women as candidates and leaders in both party dynamics and the broader political landscape.

In Indonesia, a political party is regulated and required to include a minimum of 30% of women's representation in the party's establishment and management at the central level. In practice and technically, however, each political party has the authority to regulate these provisions in its internal party rules. The actual commitment of political parties to promote women's political representation and leadership is therefore seen from the extent to which parties accommodate affirmative policies by providing derivative regulations in their respective parties, including the extent to which affirmative actions have in effect been carried out by parties to encourage women's representation both in party management as well as in candidacy at the legislative and executive levels. An analysis of the manifestos and by-laws of ten political parties in parliament (PDIP, Golkar, Gerindra, Nasdem, PKB, PKS, PAN, PPP, Demokrat, and Hanura), shows

37- In Singapore's context, the civil service does not track the work of political parties nor have any influence over them. Singapore will therefore not be providing input to this KPI.

that only six political parties have derivative regulations in their party regarding affirmative action (Hanura, PPP, PKB, Nasdem, Gerindra, and PDIP) stipulating the representation of at least 30% of women's quota in party management. However, only the PPP has a written policy that female cadres must be placed at *serial number 1* in 30% of the electoral districts. Meanwhile, in the four other parties in parliament (Demokrat, PKS, PAN, and Golkar), their internal party documents state that party management pays attention to gender equality with no more rigid provisions included in their political manifesto or other party documents.

In *Lao PDR*, the Party Resolution No 03 of Central Party Committee (dated 30 September 2021) does not identify gender-specific issues related to female leadership but refers to comprehensive policy issues to be used as references for all party organisations at the central, provincial, district and village levels to recruit leaders, enhance their knowledge and skills, monitor, and evaluate leadership performance.

In *Malaysia*, a comparison of (i) the manifesto of political parties, and (ii) political parties' documents of three coalitions (PH, BN, and GAGASAN) during two general elections (May 2018 and November 2022) revealed a shift in gender-related content between the two general elections. Whilst the PG coalition, when compared to the BN and GAGASAN, had a significantly higher proportion of gender-related content in its manifesto in the 2018 general election, the BN consistently improved its initiatives and incentives for women in the 2022 general election. The PH, despite having a comprehensive approach to women's leadership issues in their 2018 manifesto, failed to propose specific programmes or provide clear statements on women's leadership in their recent manifesto. On the other hand, the BN pledged to increase the number of women in the Upper Chamber of Parliament and throughout the civil service. Therefore, political party coalitions need to make bold and specific pledges to empower more women in decision-making roles, including making clear statements on women's leadership, proposing dedicated programmes or measures, and outlining social support systems for women. During the 2022 general elections, women candidates often created their own manifestos to attract voters, with some emphasising their expertise and others specifically targeting women voters. Whilst all women candidates in this study acknowledged the importance of their presence as role models for individuals of all genders, but particularly women, they were less likely to emphasise women's leadership issues during their 2022 campaigns. Female politicians stressed that their role was to represent all genders, not solely women.

Myanmar has requested manifestos from each respective political party but has not yet received them. It is likely such manifestos may still be in the early drafting stages due to the recent implementation of the Political Parties Registration Law of 2023.

In the *Philippines*, the political party system is personality-oriented rather than ideology-based, and its goal is to seat the candidate above anything else. As such, a 'manifesto' of a political party is completely absent. Philippine political parties shift in shape and form every election year with the majority party, which is a coalition of several political parties, being more of a numbers game to influence who will become the Senate President and the Speaker of the House.

In the absence of a political party manifesto, this study looked at the presidential candidate profiles for the 2022 national elections, and whether there was mention of women's empowerment and gender equality goals in the candidates' platform and track record. None of the ten presidential candidates had a theme or specific platform highlighting women's empowerment. Only the profile of the presidential candidate Leni Robredo, the only female candidate, mentioned her track record in women's empowerment.

In *Thailand* data shows that political parties prioritise policies for women's well-being, with a notable link between having a female leader and support for diverse women-centric policies. Despite proposed policies, parties are slow to implement strategies promoting women in politics, likely due to the primary goal of winning elections. Initiatives for women's political participation may take a backseat compared to other priorities within political parties, emphasising the complexity of advancing women as candidates and leaders in both party dynamics and the broader political landscape.

The Pheua Thai Party has declared a policy focusing not on gender but on suitability. The Move Forward Party, in collaboration with the 'Think Forward Center,' organised an event presenting ten policies for gender equality across all age groups from birth to old age. The United Thai Nation Party emphasises

the importance of women's rights and gender equality by engaging in grassroots activities, focusing on empowering girls and young women to participate in creating sustainable innovations and technologies, aiming to achieve lasting gender equality. The Thai Sang Thai Party promotes a non-discriminatory approach based on gender and supports individuals of all genders, as long as their qualifications match the job requirements. The party actively seeks to increase the number of female candidates.

In *Viet Nam*, the 'equal rights for men and women' was affirmed in the Political Programme of the Communist Party of Viet Nam in 1930. To firmly build and develop a contingent of women cadres was an important part of the content of the Party's cadre work strategy set out in 2007 (Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW of the Party's Politburo dated 27 April). In one Directive (No. 21-CT/TW issued on January 20, 2018) the Secretariat requested the heads of Party committees and authorities at all levels to direct and organise the synchronous implementation of solutions to achieve the targets on female cadres set out in Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW. The request included building a source of young female cadres and ethnic minority women, completing regulations on cadre work to ensure the principle of equality between men and women in terms of age in planning, training, appointment, and rotation for several groups of women holding leadership and management positions suitable for each stage, and for researching on retirement age for some groups of female workers in accordance with the labour law and the country's development process. There is no mention of specific measures to be taken to achieve the set targets.

Annex 4: Recent Data and Information (Beyond Cut-off Date of 31 December 2023)

The strengthening of women's political participation and leadership is a continuous process, thus continuously generating additional and valid data and information for the monitoring and evaluation of the selected Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Whilst maintaining December 2023 as the baseline for the WPPL Regional Study, the study team acknowledges the value of capturing more recent developments. In this annex, the updates from 2024 and 2025 submitted by some AMS are highlighted, including election results and new gender policy data. These updates were not included in the main analysis but do provide context and serve as a bridge to future monitoring cycles.

These updates are presented below by KPI to allow for easy reference to findings discussed in the WPPL Regional Study.

1. KPI 1: Policies that stimulate gender balance in government and decision-making bodies

Workplace policies

In Singapore, the Workplace Fairness Bill was passed in the Singapore Parliament on 8 January 2025. The Bill prohibits workplace discrimination, including on the basis of sex, marital status, pregnancy status, and caregiving responsibilities, as well as on age, nationality, race, religion, language, disability and mental health conditions. The Workplace Fairness Bill strengthens protection for jobseekers and employees against discrimination, promotes communication and amicable resolution of workplace issues by requiring firms to have grievance handling processes; and provides calibrated enforcement levers to deal with egregiously unfair employment practices

KPI 2: Legal frameworks which foster gender balance are available

Maternity and paternity leave

In Indonesia, the recent Law No 4/2024 includes maternity leave for six months under certain conditions.

In Singapore, Government-Paid Paternity Leave was increased from two to four weeks on a voluntary basis from 2024. From 1 April 2025, the additional two weeks of Government-Paid Paternity Leave will be made mandatory.

In Viet Nam, the recent Land Law (2024) now strictly prohibits gender discrimination in land management and use (Clause 11, Article 11). The Law on Social Insurance was updated in 2024.

Flexible work arrangements

In Singapore, the Tripartite Partners implemented the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (TG-FWAR) on 1 Dec 2024, to shape norms and expectations around Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs). The guidelines set out the process for employees to formally request FWAs, and for employers to properly consider and respond to such requests based on reasonable business grounds.

KPI 4: Review of discriminatory laws and policies

Gender mainstreaming

In Viet Nam, supplementary legal documents with more specific regulations on gender impact assessment in the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents (point c, clause 2, article 29 on Policy Impact Assessment) will take effect from April 1, 2025.

KPI 5: Temporary special measures and affirmative action

In Singapore, outcomes for women's representation in the private sector have been positive: as of the end of December 2024, the percentage of women on the boards of the Top-100 listed companies has reached 25.1%, which is more than a three-fold increase from 7.5% in 2014. The proportion of women directors on statutory boards also reached a new high of 34.3%, while those on the Top 100 Institutions of a Public Character is at 31.8%.

KPI 6: Women in selected political parties (members/candidates)

In Indonesia, women representation in parliament has reached 22%, based based on the 2024 election results.

KPI 11: Platforms which facilitate women leaders to build networks at both regional and national levels are created

In Indonesia, the Ministry for State-owned Enterprises has committed to support women leadership and has set the goal of 25% of women leadership in state-owned enterprises.

ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All

www.asean.org



asean



asean



@asean



Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI)