Donor action on women’s employment in ASEAN countries – Complement

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Question

Provide an indicative overview of donors’ attempts to improve women’s workforce participation and conditions in states that are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Look at recent donor action (past five years) and current ones. Ideally, provide information on results and impact; where this is not available, describe the activities or programmes.

If possible:
1. Provide examples of donors’ attempts to address inequity in the workplace and workforce, and to support women entrepreneurs;
2. Disaggregate information between donors and technical agencies, and between projects focused on women’s empowerment and those integrating gender equality concerns;
3. Consider of donor-funded work by NGOs and private sector foundations.

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1. Overview

Gendered differences and disadvantages for women have remained a structural feature of the labour market in ASEAN countries, despite improvements in factors such as women’s education. A rapid review of the literature attempted to find out what action donors had taken in the past five years to change this (Combaz, 2014). That initial research found few indications on this. The present rapid review is a follow-up and complement to the initial work. This additional report is based on a wider-ranging search in online resources (databases and websites) and on requests for information addressed to a large number of aid entities and practitioners. Further literature searches and expert responses on this query have identified additional material.

But they have also confirmed that donor action on women’s employment and entrepreneurship has been limited or very recent in ASEAN countries (e.g. expert comments). This translates into having little relevant academic and grey literature to draw from. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is confirmed as the major aid entity involved in action on women’s employment in ASEAN countries, be it through funding or technical cooperation. Other major active entities include the Asian Development Bank (ADB), UN Women and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The initial analysis of the knowledge base has thus been largely confirmed in follow-up research, regarding the size, methods, consistency and coverage of the topic at hand (see Combaz, 2014: 3). Limitations and gaps in the literature are also confirmed. Among others, the methodological rigour of available knowledge is decidedly uneven, ranging from self-reporting with no information on methods used to solid quantitative or qualitative studies. Information, in particular on large projects with significant funding, is rarely sex-disaggregated, and projects seldom have specific results chains for women (expert comment). The level of action discussed in references also varies greatly, ranging from specific places, organisations or projects, to country-wide and regional dimensions or programmes. Some countries are less discussed, such as Myanmar. This follow-up rapid research confirmed significant gaps in knowledge about some social structures of inequality (especially those based on ethnicity and disabilities) and about their interactions (e.g. women workers with disabilities, women workers from ethnic minorities).

Donor action to improve women’s employment and entrepreneurship has addressed:

- **Cross-cutting policies and institutions:**
  - **Key labour policies and institutions:** informing public policies on labour through gender perspectives (UN Women and ILO in ASEAN countries); mainstreaming gender in labour institutions (ILO in Indonesia).
  - **Key policies and institutions affecting gender equality in labour:** promoting inclusion and women’s rights (UN Women across ASEAN); changing gender norms (UN Women across ASEAN).

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1 It will therefore not repeat information on donor action already conveyed in the initial report. Both reports should be read together to have a full picture.

2 For the purpose of this report, where information was available only on basic aspects (activities, inputs and outputs), this is provided. Where information on results and impact was also available, this is focused on rather than basic information.
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- **Specific labour dimensions:**
  - **Working with the private sector for gender equality:** integrating gender equality in employer organisations (ILO in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and Myanmar); making the business case for improved women’s employment (IFC in Thailand and Viet Nam); institutionalising dialogue and cooperation with the private sector (UN Women across ASEAN); advancing women’s participation at all levels of the workforce (ILO across ASEAN, ADB in Viet Nam).
  - **Improving women’s benefits in value chains,** in green production and trade by rural poor women (Joint UN Programme in Viet Nam) and in agribusiness training for higher-quality coffee supply (IFC in Indonesia and Viet Nam).

- **Specific social groups:**
  - **Young women:** promoting youth employment and entrepreneurship (World Bank in Lao PDR); technical education and vocational training (ADB in Cambodia and Viet Nam).
  - **Women migrant workers.** Support has taken the form of gender-responsive policies and capacities for migrant workers (ILO in multiple ASEAN countries). Other efforts have sought to combat abuse, forced labour and trafficking of migrant workers (ILO in Indonesia, UN Women in ASEAN region).
  - **Women homeworkers** (ILO in Indonesia).

- **Entrepreneurship.** Examples include the frequently mentioned WEDGE project in Viet Nam (ILO and Irish Aid); small- and medium-sized enterprises development (ADB in Viet Nam); and the ‘10,000 Women’ project (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UNESCAP] across ASEAN).

Sections 2 to 5 detail these interventions and, where possible, their results and impact. Section 6 presents the resources that were searched for this rapid report. Section 7 details the experts and entities contacted about this query.

2. Cross-cutting policies and institutions

**Key labour policies and institutions**

*Informing public policies on labour through gender perspectives (UN Women and ILO in ASEAN countries)*

Not all work is equally empowering, and working conditions matter. **UN Women** has therefore been informing labour policies so that they actively promote formal work or at least extend some of the characteristics of formal work to workers in the informal sector (expert comment). Within ASEAN, UN Women aims to encourage policy-makers to adopt labour policies that increase both the availability and quality of jobs (expert comment).

The expert adds that this is especially pressing in the face of integration through the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 (expert comment). Whether the AEC accelerates social progress will depend heavily on its effects on the labour market, directly (freer flow of skilled labour) and indirectly (trade and investment liberalisation). Increased openness will also have important implications for the structure of economies, jobs, skills, wages and labour mobility. UN Women, ASEAN and the
Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung are coordinating a study on the connections between economic integration and equitable development, to guarantee that the opportunity of the AEC brings inclusiveness (expert comment).

At regional level, the ILO in Bangkok works on extensive policy advice with regional bodies like the ADB, offering evidence-based contributions on gender and employment (expert comment).

UN ESCAP recently completed a project on women’s economic empowerment funded by China. It addressed both women’s economic participation and gender-responsive budgeting. It engaged government officials from several countries in the region, including Indonesia, India and Bangladesh, with the production of a paper and two regional forums (expert comment).

**Mainstreaming gender in labour institutions (ILO in Indonesia)**

Norway provided funding to the ILO in 2012-2013 to ensure that the ILO-Norway partnership in Indonesia mainstreams gender (ILO, n.d.). Specifically, one objective is to **improve labour inspectors’ skills and knowledge** to address gender equality in the workplace. The purpose is to enhance performance and strengthen compliance with labour law. This is to be done through gender-balanced and gender-sensitive labour administrations and inspectorates.

A second objective is to create momentum and capacity on policies for **gender equality among confederations and domestic workers’ organisations** (ILO, n.d.). The goal is for these entities to organise and form coalitions to support fundamental workers’ rights and specific rights for women and domestic workers. They should be able to integrate gender systematically into general policies on the labour market and macroeconomy. They should also be able to address specific issues such as the gender pay gap, protection against discrimination, measures on work-family balance and childcare, sexual violence and harassment, and female employment.

In practice, the project has already developed Pay Equity Guidelines (ILO, n.d.). Future activities include developing and giving tailored trainings to labour inspectors, domestic workers leaders, trade unions, unorganised workers and employers. Training topics are gender equality and workers’ rights, especially for workers in the informal economy. The project also entails advocating for the ratification of key ILO conventions and for rights-based national legislation for domestic workers’ rights (ILO, n.d.).

**Key policies and institutions affecting gender equality in labour**

*Promoting inclusion and women’s rights (UN Women across ASEAN)*

UN Women has identified future **strategies to promote more inclusive growth** for women in ASEAN countries. Legislation must remove barriers to equal opportunities in education and the economy. Existing laws must be implemented (e.g. on equal pay for equal work). At the same time, problems such as women’s immense burden of unpaid care work and time-consuming household tasks like collecting water and fuel need to be tackled. Women and girls must also have access to quality education and training, and to productive resources like land and credit. These changes will require the contribution of many actors, including youth, ‘men and boys, religious leaders, cultural and traditional authorities, the military and the private sector’ (expert comment).

UN Women has also been **examining the implications of violence against women** for economies, labour and women’s economic empowerment, at household level (expert comment). With Australian support, the
UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) has been studying the economic costs of violence against women (VAW) and its response.

In 2013, a mixed-method study measured the economic costs of VAW in Viet Nam. The study found that the biggest cost was foregone income due to missed work (paid and unpaid). In total, out-of-pocket expenses and lost earnings represented nearly 1.41 percent of GDP. Women experiencing violence earn 35 percent less than those not abused. This represents a significant drain on the economy, with an estimated overall productivity loss of 1.78 percent of GDP (expert comment).

UN Women ROAP is now in discussions about developing additional research and programming on the implications of VAW for women’s economic participation and economic growth, as well as on the sectoral impact, as economies change (expert comment).

**Changing gender norms (UN Women across ASEAN)**

**UN Women** is working to change the cultural norms of femininity and masculinity where these cause women’s low economic participation. These norms can be explicit or implicit in families, culture and society at large. Some remain at the unconscious subjective level and appear natural or ‘god-given’. This is an important obstacle for economic interventions (expert comment).

Changing social or economic norms is not enough to tackle inequality, as recent research has shown the importance of creating social and psychological change. This requires attention to how media and social communications construct femininities and masculinities, in both the public and private spheres (expert comment).

### 3. Specific labour dimensions

**Working with the private sector for gender equality**

**Integrating gender equality in employer organisations (ILO in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and Myanmar)**

The ILO has been working to ensure that organisations representing employers be ‘strong, independent and representative’, and that they integrate gender equality (Söderbäck, Westermark & Saegaert, n.d.: 1). Norway has partnered with the ILO on this latter goal, supporting efforts in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and Myanmar in 2012-2014. It funded a global survey on women in business and management. It has also funded a resource network where employers can share good practices and advocacy on advancing women in business and gender equality (Söderbäck, Westermark & Saegaert, n.d.: 1). ILO has supported women in business networks in mainstream employers organisations like the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (expert comment).

An independent evaluator conducted a desk-based survey of employer organisations that are in partnership with the programme in Indonesia, Laos and Myanmar (Söderbäck, Westermark & Saegaert, n.d.). It found that attitudes and activities for gender equality and non-discrimination were ‘fairly positive’ (idem: 3). A field-based country case study on Cambodia showed gender was an integral part of most activities funded by Norway.

By contrast, the evaluation found that ‘considerable challenges’ for the mainstreaming of gender equality in processes related to a toolkit on Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprise, funded by Sweden
among others. In several cases, gender was absent from business agendas there (\textit{idem: 3}). More generally, the evaluation observed that initiatives for gender equality often remain fairly “isolated islands” within membership-based organisations (\textit{idem: 4}).

One recommended priority includes broadening the membership base of employer organisations (\textit{idem: 4}). Another is to strengthen their capacity for analysis and advocacy on gender equality. Indeed, the evaluation authors advocate using successful gender initiatives to influence the organisational structures of employer organisations and their advocacy, e.g. on national business agendas (\textit{idem: 4}).

Similarly, a gender expert notes that further investments are needed to support women in mainstream business networks, as trade, industry and labour ministries and employers organisations have been male-dominated (expert comment). They do not understand how to create an enabling environment for transforming women’s survival micro-businesses into viable enterprises. Conversely, women’s ministries, mechanisms and networks do not have the capacity to ensure gender-responsive action in macro-economy, employment and labour (expert comment).

\textbf{Making the business case for improved women’s employment (IFC in Thailand and Viet Nam)}

The global World Bank Group established a partnership with the private sector in 2012, \textbf{WINvest (Investing in Women)} (IFC, 2013: 7). The two-year initiative brings together IFC clients and private sector partners with an interest in substantiating the business case for better work conditions and opportunities for women. It aims to:

- Showcase firms operating in emerging markets that include women more in their workforce.
- Identify and provide guidance on successful approaches that can be replicated.
- Capture and communicate the business rationale for how improving conditions for women can enhance business performance.

Participants include Continental, a leading company manufacturing automotive parts that is an IFC client, and Nalt Enterprise, a garment factory in Viet Nam that also takes part in the IFC/ILO Better Work programme (IFC, 2013: 6). In a report commissioned by IFC (IFC, 2013), examples of profitable policies and best practices for supporting women employees are drawn among others from these two companies. This feeds into, “the business case for women’s employment” (IFC, 2013: 1).

In Viet Nam, the IFC/ILO Better Work programme has led to well-documented improvements (IFC, 2013: 15). Factories there enjoy higher profits when they support better employment for women workers, who make up 74 percent of workers in better work factories. Such benefits occur particularly where the threat of sexual harassment, verbal or physical abuse, or unfair pay is lower, and where workers have access to training and a trade union they trust (IFC, 2013: 15). Overall, 65 percent of factories have increased their total sales and 62 percent their production capacity after joining the program. 60 percent have also increased employment by an average of 800 jobs each (IFC, 2013: 15).

In addition to participating in the Better Work programme, Nalt Enterprise took a number of measures that IFC identifies as good practices. The company established a free kindergarten nearby for workers’ children, with qualified teachers and the provision of meals, clothing, school bags and books (IFC, 2013: 43). It has been increasingly popular, particularly for migrant workers from other provinces who cannot rely on their extended family for childcare (IFC, 2013: 88). The firm also designed its staff policies to support both women and men, and guaranteed that sexual harassment would not be tolerated. This signalled their commitments to gender inclusion throughout the employment relationship (IFC, 2013: 3). The company
also went beyond the statutory minimum in its health clinic for workers by registering with the national health insurance and staffing it with a doctor, a dentist and two nurses (IFC, 2013: 87).

The company has benefited in several ways (IFC, 2013: 86-90). Since the creation of the kindergarten, staff turnover has fallen by one third (IFC, 2013: 16). This, in turn, saved money to the company by minimising the high costs of finding and training new recruits (IFC, 2013: 16). In addition, being attractive to women workers with families has worked well with its business model, which involves forward planning rather than a lot of last-minute overtime (IFC, 2013: 88). Together, the kindergarten and clinics have contributed to a steady decrease in worker absenteeism (IFC, 2013: 88).

The IFC also documents that, in Thailand, Continental increased gender diversity and saw a positive impact on team performance as a result (IFC, 2013: 2). The firm has also attracted women by making simple adaptations to the workplace, such as providing specially designed uniforms for pregnant women and reducing the weight of some boxes by 30 percent without productivity loss (IFC, 2013: 41, 46). Its medical insurance also covers workers families which makes it greatly valued by workers (IFC, 2013: 44). It provides 17 transport routes to its clients and has invited women to comment “on how safe they feel at pickup and drop-off points” (IFC, 2013: 47). More broadly, it has strived to capture both women’s and men’s voices and suggestions (IFC, 2013: 73).

The company has benefited from its attention to women workers (IFC, 2013: 69-73). By being an employer of choice, it has tackled turnover and labour shortages. It has drawn on “complementary skill sets” brought by women and men, including in technical and managerial positions (IFC, 2013: 72). Working environment with better gender balance has created more cohesive team dynamics (IFC, 2013: 73).

**Institutionalising dialogue and cooperation with the private sector (UN Women across ASEAN)**

UN Women works along multi-stakeholder platforms like the Business Call to Action and the UN Global Compact. It has also developed Women’s Empowerment Principles. Some business leaders in ASEAN have signed up to the statement of support and work with UN Women to implement the principles (expert comment).

In 2014, UN Women launched its Private Sector Leadership Advisory Council, where UN Women and private sector actors advise one another. Companies on the Council have a strong presence in ASEAN countries. The Council is focused on accelerating economic and social progress for women and girls worldwide. It does so by combining the expertise, reach and resources of the private sector and UN Women (expert comment).

ILO has promoted better work and equality of opportunity, remuneration and treatment in labour-intensive industries (expert comment). Specifically, it has worked with textile, garment and footwear factories that provide formal employment. Its action against sexual harassment has contributed to prohibitions included in legislation (in Viet Nam) and codes of conduct in companies (e.g. in Indonesia and Viet Nam). Enforcement of basic maternity protection has been another area of work (expert comment).
Advancing women’s participation at all levels of the workforce (ILO across ASEAN, ADB in Viet Nam)

ILO will have a major publication and action on **women in management and business** in Asia and the Pacific in May 2015 (expert comment). Higher-level positions in particular have significant labour shortages, while there are many well educated women. Women’s participation can be advanced through management in male-dominated mainstream employers’ organisations and through women-specific networking. Many employers’ organisations are interested in equality and diversity promotion. ILO has developed guidance materials on equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity or social origin for employers in Cambodia and Indonesia (expert comment).

The ADB in Viet Nam has mainstreamed gender considerations into its own **procurement** for a project on transport connections in the Northern Mountainous Provinces (expert comment). Contracts provisions include core labour standard. They also require safe and women-friendly working conditions, such as separate latrines and hygienic condition for male and female workers, awareness-raising of HIV/AIDS among workers, and encouragement to hire local unskilled women workers where possible. The provisions also entail monitoring compliance. Initial 2014 results show that 37 percent of the unskilled local labourers hired were women (444 out of 1,207)³.

Improving women’s benefits in value chains

**Green production and trade for the rural poor (Joint UN Programme in Viet Nam)**

The government of Viet Nam and the UN ran a “Joint Programme on Green Production and Trade to Increase Income and Employment Opportunities for the Rural Poor” in 2010-2013 (Eiligmann, 2013). The programme supports the handicrafts sector, an important source of income for smallholder farmers and landless poor. It aims to increase income and employment for raw material growers/collectors and grassroots producers of handicrafts in four northern provinces. It was supported by the Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F).

An independent impact assessment was conducted using mixed methods, including a quantitative endline survey (Eiligmann, 2013). It found that in 70 percent of all cases, women were reported as the main beneficiaries of the programme. The programme has significantly contributed to income generation for women. But their average income remained much lower than male beneficiaries’ (Eiligmann, 2013: 12). Male beneficiaries’ total income was 62.1 percent higher than women’s, and their income from surveyed crafts was 126.9 percent higher (Eiligmann, 2013: 46).

A study focuses on one **case within that programme**: the Hoa Tien Textile Cooperative, a group of women weavers from the Thai minority (Matsuura, 2012). The programme helped to enhance the business and marketing skills of women participants and to improve the Cooperative leaders’ management and organisational skills. It also led to better working conditions and improved availability of raw materials. It provided vocational skills training and technology innovations, and improved Cooperative members’ access to support services. All this, in turn, enhanced quality and productivity, including new products and market diversification. Ultimately, women enjoyed higher confidence as well as better acknowledgement and recognition.

support from men. Cooperative members achieved an increased income, and women in the community had improved employment opportunities.

**Including women in agribusiness training for higher-quality supply (IFC in Indonesia and Viet Nam)**

IFC works with major coffee producer ECOM in Indonesia and Viet Nam to set up for training centres (IFC, 2014). Their goal is to help farmers improve coffee productivity and quality, reduce costs and obtain international certification for sustainable production.

IFC has helped integrate women into this programme (IFC, 2014). It identified women’s roles in the on-farm supply chain. It deployed women trainers and volunteers, and engaged leaders of women’s unions, farmers associations, and villages. In addition, it adjusted the trainings. Schedules accommodated women’s needs. It developed gender specific materials and used additional visual aids (e.g. videos). It trained ECOM staff and local communities in gender. Lastly, it introduced a simple tool for financial management to help women farmers analyse expenditures in their household and farm.

IFC self-reports that, as a result of these efforts, the ratio of women trainees increased from 16 to 27 percent in Indonesia and from 12 to 25 percent in Viet Nam. Nearly 1,600 women were trained in Indonesia, and over 2,300 in Viet Nam. In Indonesia, mixed-gender training groups reported a 92 percent increase in their productivity level, while farmers who did not receive training from the ECOM-IFC programme reported only a 37 percent increase (IFC, 2014). Productivity improved by 131 percent when both women and men farmers were trained, compared to only 95 percent when only men were trained (expert comment).

4. Specific social groups

**Young women**

**Promoting youth employment and entrepreneurship (World Bank in Lao PDR)**

The World Bank has been piloting the Adolescent Girls Initiative in Laos since 2008. The programme is designed to support adolescent girls’ and young women’s success in the labour market (expert comment). An evaluation revealed significant impact on employment and earnings for young women (expert comment). But outcomes were mixed on empowerment, measured for example by improvements in self-confidence or sexual and reproductive autonomy. The following elements were shown to be critical to girls’ successful transition from school to work: ‘in-depth understanding of the target group; involvement of community, parents and girls; support for “soft skills” such as self-confidence and leadership as well as “hard skills”; assistance to find a job placement following training; attention to institutional context and capacity’ (expert comment).

As part of the Adolescent Girls Initiative, the World Bank has implemented a pilot project called ‘Supporting Talent, Entrepreneurial Potential and Success’ (STEPS) in Laos between 2011 and 2013 (World Bank, 2013: 1). STEPS aims to help youth transition to the labour market (ibidem).

A marketplace competition promotes a culture of entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2013: 1-2). It is implemented in partnership with a local business association (Young Entrepreneurs Association of Laos - YEAL). The competition identifies and supports young entrepreneurs who are seeking to start or expand a business. The project also aims to build the capacity of YEAL to support aspiring young women.
entrepreneurs. In addition, affirmative action for women included proactive outreach and explicit gender targets during the participant selection process. This ensured 50 percent of female participation in the first round of competition and 70 percent in the second round (World Bank, 2013: 2).

After one year of completing the STEPS training, 59 percent of participants reported starting or expanding a business (World Bank, 2013: 2). This led to the creation of 140 new full or part-time jobs. Women held 55 percent of the new jobs. 68 percent of female-run businesses (and 76 percent of all businesses) were profitable. Furthermore, the number of female members doubled in YEAL between 2010 and 2012 (World Bank, 2013: 2).

However, some obstacles for women participants remained pervasive (World Bank, 2013: 2-3). Women lacked confidence in business decision-making and social support compared to men. 40 percent of new female owners said their spouse or another person made business decisions. Female-led businesses still had a higher failure rate (33 percent compared to 24 percent among male-led businesses). Both male and female trainees who did not start or expand a business cited insufficient capital as the most common reason. But women’s second most critical barrier was insufficient time.

Marketplace competitions can thus effectively foster public-private partnerships and support the most promising entrepreneurs (World Bank, 2013: 4). But a competition model limits the number of beneficiaries and is likely to bypass the more vulnerable.

STEPS also entails students at two universities receiving job placement and career counselling services (World Bank, 2013: 3). The schools were chosen in part due to their large female student body. The programme encourages women students to apply and explicitly recruits female counsellors. Of the students who received a one-day training in work readiness skills, 68 percent were women.

Commenting on both STEPS interventions, the World Bank (2013: 4) concludes that affirmative action plans can work when gender targets are included in the results framework. It adds that business organisations can be more inclusive for young women. For example, mentoring can build women’s capacity and confidence in decision-making for business, in response to women’s disadvantages (fewer resources, smaller networks, and social stigma). Membership can be made affordable by linking fees to business size, as women tend to have smaller businesses and less capital.

Based on the lessons of the STEPS project, the World Bank (2013: 4) argues that broader efforts should address women’s constraints on their participation in the Lao labour force. Constraints on their time and mobility stem from their greater share of household duties. This prevents them from enjoying equal access to paid work (World Bank, 2013: 4).

Technical education and vocational training (ADB in Cambodia and Viet Nam)

In Cambodia, the ADB has supported technical and vocational education and training sector development (TVETSDP) that integrates gender equity and mainstreaming. It aims to increase female enrolment, retention and completion of formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and to enhance workplace readiness (expert comment).

The government has committed to the gender action plan, so that (expert comment):

- 30 percent of poor and disadvantaged stipend recipients for middle-level training be women.
- 20 percent of women receiving stipends be enrolled in non-traditional training courses.
- 4 dormitories for resident women be constructed, and career mentoring provided for them.
- 40 percent of the 200 youths participating in the competency assessment pilot be female.
30 percent of the approximately 9,000 students trained at all levels be female.

The programme will train staff at the Directorate General of TVET in the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. The Directorate should then be able to monitor a social marketing campaign to improve public perceptions of TVET and vocational occupations (expert comment).

The ADB is also funding a project in Viet Nam on skills for employment. This seeks to increase employment opportunities for young people through the provision of technical education and vocational training (expert comments)\(^4\). Gender-specific activities include (expert comment):

- A target of at least 20 percent of women enrolled in male-dominated trainings by project end.
- A gender-responsive social marketing plan to increase female enrolment, including specific actions to attract women into non-traditional areas.
- Pilot initiatives to increase female enrolment in non-traditional areas within skills enhancement projects (e.g. all-female classrooms, extra support or study sessions for women, or day care facility with trained attendant).

**Women migrant workers**

*Gender-responsive policies and capacities for migrant workers (ILO in multiple ASEAN countries)*

The ILO conducts a project for the rights of migrant workers in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, between 2012 and 2016 (Mahy, 2014). The ILO, with funding from Canada, aims to reduce labour exploitation of migrants. This entails strengthening regional policies and capacities in the recruitment and labour protection of women and men migrants. The project calls for gender-responsive policy, legislation and enforcement. The summary of an independent mid-term evaluation simply notes that the gender-responsive approach was found to be coherent (Mahy, 2014: 2).

**Combating abuse, forced labour and trafficking of migrant workers (ILO in Indonesia, UN Women in ASEAN region)**

The most vulnerable women workers in the region are probably migrant workers (expert comment). The ILO Jakarta Office, with funding from Norway, ran a project in 2008-2012 to combat forced labour and trafficking of Indonesian migrant workers (Freeman, 2012). Regarding women and gender specifically, the project benefited from work on gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS and from a regional project on developing gender policy and tools.

An independent final evaluation deemed the project as successful overall (Freeman, 2012). The evaluator recommended that the ILO continue to develop awareness gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. These affect migrant workers, but results have been drawn together only recently (Freeman, 2012).

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\(^4\) No reference on results or impact is available yet (expert comment). General information about the project is available at:

[http://lnadbg1direct.asiandevbank.org/sec0086p.nsf/0/6AFC1AFCBDB8C0648257C0D002A697E/$file/R102-10.pdf](http://lnadbg1direct.asiandevbank.org/sec0086p.nsf/0/6AFC1AFCBDB8C0648257C0D002A697E/$file/R102-10.pdf)

UN Women has been working on safe migration within ASEAN (expert comment). Now, through a DFAT-funded project, it is also strengthening protections against abuse, violence, trafficking and exploitation that women migrant workers suffer (expert comment). The strategic areas of the programme are the following (expert comment):

- Improving the use of knowledge about the gender dimensions of the worst forms of labour exploitation and unsafe migration as input into national and regional policy.
- Normative and evidence-based advocacy on policy. The purpose is to enhance the capacities and accountability of states to prevent exploitation of women migrant workers.
- Social mobilisation and campaigning. UN Women works to strengthen the leadership of and peer support for young women in sending areas (including current or potential migrants). Simultaneously, its public campaigns and messaging seek to reduce acceptance of abuse and exploitation of women migrant workers. This especially targets young people in receiving areas.

Women homeworkers (ILO in Indonesia)

The ILO has led a gender-specific programme on homeworkers in Indonesia (MAMPU), with funding by DFAT and management by Co-water. The programme ‘addresses the subcontracting situation of women and their families in the most vulnerable positions’ (expert comment). It maps the situation of homeworkers and value chains in specific industries. Simultaneously, it organises and builds the capacity of the women workers and their supporting organisations, to increase homeworkers’ agency (expert comment).

A gender expert observed that this project has generated very good results and products (expert comment). However, the expert noted some difficulties arising from the meeting of large bureaucracies like DFAT and ILO. For example, one-year funding cycles ‘are very problematic as impact requires continuation of dedicated staff’ (expert comment).

5. Entrepreneurship

WEDGE project in Viet Nam (ILO and Irish Aid)

Since 2009, the ILO and Irish Aid have funded a project on Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) in Viet Nam – as well as in other countries (ILO COVN, 2011). In Viet Nam, the aim is to help low-income women and their families secure decent employment and income through women’s enterprise development. In turn, gender equality and local economy development are meant to create jobs and alleviate poverty (ILO COVN, 2011: 9). This is a frequently mentioned project in the literature examined for this rapid review.

The WEDGE project, under ILO leadership, commissioned a report to documents good practices and lessons from different stakeholders. Desk- and field-based reviews using mixed methods were conducted for this purpose in 2009-2010 (ILO COVN, 2011: 10). The report details interventions and findings from nine selected sub-projects. It also synthesises crosscutting conclusions (ILO COVN, 2011: 51-58).

5 To keep this report brief, details specific to subprojects are not presented. The subprojects reviewed are:
- ILO – Project on Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women.
- ILO – Poverty reduction through integrated small enterprise development project.
- Care International – Thai Nguyen Women’s Economic Collaboration for Development.
**Implementation approaches**

The first approach used was to create an **enabling environment** for the development of small and micro enterprises, including those owned or operated by women (ILO COVN, 2011: 51). Subprojects used different mechanisms.

Some projects worked on **public-private partnership** (PPP). They focused on developing relevant approaches, pilot models, awareness among stakeholders, and training. However, these activities have not reached out to small and micro enterprises, especially to informal businesses where women are more present (ILO COVN, 2011: 51-52).

All projects have worked on **building capacity** for a diverse range of stakeholders, implementing agencies and partners, and service suppliers. Topics of trainings have included: enabling environments; information and advocacy for the development of small and micro enterprises; association management; rural market studies; economic cooperation for poverty reduction; and gender equality and mainstreaming in the project cycle. Most capacity-building has been participatory and well designed, with assessments of the training needs of intended audiences and trainers, and an evaluation of trainees. However, many projects did not assess the impact of their training courses and capacity building. This makes it impossible to ascertain if new knowledge and skills have been integrated into the operations of organisations working on entrepreneurship (ILO COVN, 2011: 52-53).

Few activities have tried to improve the **institutional capacity** of partner organisations working for women’s entrepreneurship. Yet an enabling environment with good regulations and mechanisms relevant for women entrepreneurs is necessary for business development. Such activities were also not well designed or implemented, except in one case. Little was done beyond strengthening the skills of individual businesswomen. The agencies offering support and facilitation thus remained with limited institutional capacity, and state agencies tasked with producing an enabling environment for women’s entrepreneurship lacked good cooperation mechanisms. One good practice was establishing business development offices with district branches operated by the Women Union. But their work and functions still needed to be examined is to avoid overlap with other agencies (ILO COVN, 2011: 53-54).

The second approach was to provide **business development services**, offered via women entrepreneurs’ groups, women clubs or women’s cooperation groups. The most prevalent services were as follows.

- **Raising awareness and building capacity** on entrepreneurship and enterprise development, typically through trainings. However, few organisations developed comprehensive manuals for publication, dissemination and use in trainings. Most trainings were for specific groups and on specific topics. They were well-prepared and relevant to trainees’ needs. Stakeholders found the trainings highly valuable. In general, capacity building was most effective for women members of production or collaboration groups, and for poor women who already had a good business idea (ILO COVN, 2011: 54).

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- Paz y Desarrollo – Project on Improving Economic Capacity of Women.
- IFAD-GTZ - People’s Committee of Ha Tinh - Project on “Improving Market Participation for the Poor”.
- UNIDO - Project on Women’s Entrepreneurship Development in Food Processing in Central Viet Nam.
- Viet Nam Women Union – Project on Capacity-Building for Female Entrepreneurs.
- Viet Nam Women Union of Ho Chi Minh City - Support Model on Women Landladies Groups.
- Oxfam Quebec – Rural enterprise expansion project.
Donor action on women’s employment in ASEAN countries - Complement

- Supporting **access to markets**, through activities such as: trade fairs, study tours, market studies, trademarks, support for productive quality, legal advice, and consultancy on products, design, packaging and marketing. There is no information on effectiveness or results about this line of action (ILO COVN, 2011: 55).

- Supporting **linkages with micro-credit and service suppliers**. Women's savings and credit groups are often used for income generation rather than business development. However, poor women thus have opportunities to attend trainings. The skills they gain in this way are then useful in using their own financial and social capital (ILO COVN, 2011: 55).

- Conducting **studies on value chains**. Two subprojects commissioned such studies. However, the lack of detailed and easy to understand tools prevented local stakeholders from fully using such analyses (ILO COVN, 2011: 55).

The third approach was to support **vocational training and improved production** (ILO COVN, 2011: 56). Many organisations helped women groups and cooperatives improve their production techniques and adopt new technology. As a result many beneficiaries increased their production capacity, reduced their production costs and increase their profits. A UNIDO projects exemplified many good practices in this area. Its training manual was of high quality, and it mainstreamed related knowledge about production (e.g. on the environment, labour safety and food safety). Overall, projects used in-kind support, through either funding or a hire-purchase plan. This helped women entrepreneurs with insufficient funds start or expand their business.

However, small enterprises and household-based producers had difficulties applying new technology (ILO COVN, 2011: 56). Reasons included a lack of capital for equipment purchase, a lack of confidence to invest, or competition from large companies. Another concern was that projects had failed to encourage women to learn non-traditional skills, i.e. outside dominant gender norms and secure types about their abilities (ILO COVN, 2011: 56).

**Lessons**


- Providing **business development service** through collaboration groups (including women's groups) is relevant. It enables women to learn and share good experiences. This builds linkages between individuals and between groups, which benefits both individuals and groups. However:
  - Applicants’ needs, financial and labour capacity, and willingness should be assessed. This will ensure that the target group is committed to learning skills and engaging in business.
  - Projects should develop the management skills of key members in women's clubs. These persons can drive progress and sustainability of the whole group. This is a particular issue for poor women, who often faced obstacles to production after projects end.
  - Projects should raise awareness about the groups’ performance beyond group members. This helps solicit support for the group from mass organisations, family members (especially husbands) and the whole community.

- **Detailed and reliable studies** must be the starting points for the selection and design of business development services for women. The information needed includes the market for the products and the needs of small and medium enterprises. Such studies should engage local businesses and business associations.
• **Vocational training** to improve production and quality is relevant to develop micro-enterprises. It is especially useful in areas where many women and ethnic minorities live in poverty. Such support should be offered as a package that applies to the whole production process.

• Efforts to improve the **enabling environment** for small and micro entrepreneurship have failed to reach micro and small businesses owned or operated by women. Those efforts had focused on the awareness and capacity of business entities. Better models are needed for women’s start-up and development of businesses. So are PPPs at meso levels (e.g. provinces or districts).

• To achieve **gender mainstreaming** in entrepreneurship development, a clear strategy is required. This entails identifying the targeted areas, methods and stakeholders’ responsibility. Mainstreaming should happen throughout the project cycle.

• Projects for entrepreneurship should **connect and share** good practices and contents.

**Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises Development (ADB in Viet Nam)**

The ADB ran its second programme for the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises in 2010-2013. Key gender-specific results include the following (expert comment):

• It supported the approval of the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011-2020, which calls for a 30 percent increase in the number of women’s entrepreneurs.

• It helped 286,000 women entrepreneurs access targeted credit via the Vietnam Women Union.

• It built provincial registrar officers’ capacity to implement the new national business registration system. Around 40 percent of officers trained were women.

**‘10,000 Women’ project (UNESCAP across ASEAN)**

UN ESCAP has been implementing a project on women entrepreneurs with the Goldman Sachs’ "10,000 Women" initiative. The first phase assessed the barriers to women establishing and developing their businesses. The current phase focuses on the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration on women entrepreneurs. It pays particular attention to policy implications for promoting enabling environments (expert comment).

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6. Resources searched

A rapid literature search for references relevant to the report query has been conducted on the following resources (arranged roughly by decreasing amount of information relevant to the query available in the resource). Some of these resources were already searched in the initial report and were revisited at the request of the report requester. Others were considered for the first time for this complementary report.

Rapid searches were conducted in two ways. One was a general search of the entire website of the entity, using targeted keywords in Google. The other was a search for relevant information from within the website architecture, based on geography (website pages on ASEAN countries) and themes (website pages on gender and women, and on labour and enterprise).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Type of resource searched</th>
<th>Examples of starting pages used for searches from within websites</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>Web pages and databases</td>
<td>UNDP – Women’s economic empowerment:</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus_areas/focus_gender_and_poverty/women_s_economicempowerment/">http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus_areas/focus_gender_and_poverty/women_s_economicempowerment/</a></td>
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<td>UNDP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>Web pages</td>
<td>UNDP Asia-Pacific – Inclusive development – Other useful resources for gender and macroeconomic issues:</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.inclusivedevelopmentasiapacific.net/node/587">http://www.inclusivedevelopmentasiapacific.net/node/587</a></td>
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<td>ASEAN Foundation – Project Database:</td>
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<td>UN Women</td>
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<td>UN Women – Gender Equality Evaluation Portal: <a href="http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/">http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/</a></td>
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<td>Knowledge gateway for women’s economic empowerment:</td>
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<td>Web pages</td>
<td>UN Women – Asia and the Pacific – Women, Poverty &amp; Economics:</td>
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<td><a href="http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/women-poverty-economics">http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/women-poverty-economics</a></td>
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<td>IFC – Gender at IFC</td>
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<td>GEM Consortium</td>
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<td>GEM Consortium – Global reports [looked at 2012 and 2013 reports]: <a href="http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/cat/1/global-reports">http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/cat/1/global-reports</a></td>
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<td>GEM Consortium – National reports [looked at most recent reports on Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam]: <a href="http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/cat/4/national-reports">http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/cat/4/national-reports</a></td>
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3ie – Systematic Reviews: [http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/evidence/systematic-reviews/?q=&title=&author=&region=East+Asia+and+Pacific+%28includes+South+East+Asia%29&equity_focus=Gender&published_from=&published_to=](http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/evidence/systematic-reviews/?q=&title=&author=&region=East+Asia+and+Pacific+%28includes+South+East+Asia%29&equity_focus=Gender&published_from=&published_to=)  
|---|---|---|
7. Contributing experts and entities

The table below lists the experts and entities who contributed help with or input on the query before the deadline, grouped by organisation.

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<th>Organisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
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<td>Thailand Resident Mission</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>Tuan Anh Le</td>
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One additional contributing expert did not wish to be identified.
8. References


http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/1400404_AGI_Note_Results_Laos.pdf

**Suggested citation**


**About this report**

This report is based on eight days of desk-based research. It was prepared for the Australian Government, © Australian Government 2014. The views expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of GSDRC, its partner agencies or the Australian Government.

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