UN Women’s programme on Improving Women’s Human Rights in Southeast Asia, 2011-2016: What We’ve Achieved

The programme, which ends in June, covers eight countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam.

This is second phase of UN Women’s regional programme on women’s rights. The first phase, from 2004-2009, built general public awareness of the 1979 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The 2011-2016 programme aims to support individuals and institutions promoting women’s rights, influence legislation, and increase women’s access to justice at the national level. To achieve that, UN Women has been doing advocacy, training, consultations, and coordinating women’s rights activities by various groups.

The Government of Canada funded both programmes.

While all eight programme countries have ratified CEDAW, the substance and spirit of the treaty is not fully understood by all people in authority --- nor by women whose rights it enshrines.

Key results of UN Women’s 2011-2016 regional programme:

1. The number and the strength of national and regional groups committed to carrying out CEDAW have been increased and strengthened.
These include regional networks of judges, ASEAN bodies, and national human rights commissions. A UN Women partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth, strengthened Asia’s justice sector in dealing with violence against women. A national network of women judges has been formed in Cambodia. In the programme countries, civil society groups monitoring their country’s implementation of CEDAW have been strengthened.

2. New laws that advance women’s rights have been enacted.

These include Lao PDR’s Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children, Indonesia’s 2014/6 Regulation on Medicalization of Female Circumcision (which repealed a discriminatory law), and Thailand’s Gender Equality Law. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Interior Affairs issued an order authorizing commune leaders to take actions to prevent all forms of violence against women and children.

Across the region, 11 laws were amended including the Papua Provincial Regulation on the Protection of Women and Children Victims in Indonesia. Viet Nam revised its electoral law to ensure that the National Assembly comprises at least 35 per cent women. It also integrated gender concerns into the state budget law. Lao PDR and Viet Nam reformed their penal codes. Cambodia reformed its domestic violence and migration legislation.

In Philippines, proposals for a CEDAW-based Bangsamoro Basic Law have been drafted. A Gender Equality Bill has been drafted in Indonesia. Timor-Leste drafted the Municipality Elections Law, Decentralization and Local Power Law, Civil Registration Code, Suco (Village) Law, and the Decree Law on Administrative Pre-deconcentration.

Ten laws are in the process of being revised or adopted.
CEDAW principles have been incorporated into the curricula being used to train lawyers, judges, and prosecutors in lawyer training centres in Cambodia, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

3. **Five national strategic plans that advance women’s rights have been adopted.**


4. **The knowledge and skills of about 1,410 people in positions to champion gender equality in the region have been strengthened.**

These include government officials, parliamentarians, lawyers, civil society activists, private businesspeople, public security officers, prosecutors, and judges.

Members of the judiciary gained an increased understanding of CEDAW and its interpretation in laws, especially regarding gender stereotypes and indirect discrimination. In February 2015, three judges in Timor-Leste applied CEDAW in a court decision on a domestic violence case; two of them had received training organized by UN Women. Parliamentarians, especially women, learned about law-making that complies with CEDAW; this helped enable the passage of such laws.

5. **Diverse groups of marginalized women have been helped to identify and to stop the discrimination they face.**
They included rural and indigenous women, HIV-positive women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people, youth, and disabled women.

6. The monitoring of each country’s progress on carrying out CEDAW has been strengthened.

Several countries including Cambodia, Viet Nam and Timor-Leste put in place monitoring systems. During the programme period, all countries except one submitted CEDAW national reports to the CEDAW Committee, an international panel that monitors CEDAW implementation. (The remaining report is expected to be submitted in 2016.) Also, the quality of the reports has significantly improved. The Government of Myanmar developed its national report in a process that involved many ministries and outside groups, and substantial consultations.