

Report of Findings of the Final Evaluation

ASEAN Regional Mechanisms Project to Protect the Human Rights of Women and Girls in Southeast Asia 2010 – 2014

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Introduction

The *Regional Mechanisms to Protect the Human Rights of Women and Girls in South East Asia* Project was implemented by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) from 2010 to 2014. The project aimed to provide technical assistance to support the two ASEAN Human Rights bodies – the ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). It also sought to engage with and support the ASEAN Secretariat supporting these human rights bodies, National Women’s Machineries of the ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Departments of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and other entities that serve as the national secretariats that support the representatives to these human rights bodies.

The Project also aimed to strengthen the capacity of national and regional civil society groups in South East Asia that are working on issues related to the ASEAN human rights mechanisms and aimed to promote effective cooperation between the ASEAN bodies, governments, and civil society organizations.

The aim of the programme was to ensure that AICHR and ACWC uphold the commitments that ASEAN countries have made to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and to facilitate the realization of gender equality and human rights of women and girls in the region.

International Solutions Group (ISG), a Washington DC-based international development consulting organisation with specialist expertise in the areas of policy development and M&E, undertook a detailed evaluation of the project in 2014. ISG has utilised a participatory approach to measure programme impact, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability of the ASEAN Regional Mechanisms Project.

The evaluation engaged stakeholders from all ten ASEAN member States, focusing more on stakeholders in Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, countries to which evaluation team members undertook field visits.



ISG ASEAN Regional Mechanisms Project Evaluation Objectives:

- To determine whether the project was relevant;
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the administration and management of the Project in achieving its goals;
- To assess the immediate impact of the Project based on results achieved against those that were planned;
- To make recommendations for strategies for a potential future phase of the project.

The evaluation relied on a methodological approach that collected primarily qualitative data and included a desk review (DR) of documentation, key informant interviews (KII), and focus group discussions (FGDs) with stakeholders and selected UN Women staff in country and regional offices.

Findings

After an extensive review of the data, the ISG team concluded that the project largely achieved its intended goals of increasing the capacity of AICHR and ACWC to implement CEDAW and facilitate the realisation of gender equality and human rights of women and girls in Southeast Asia. The project has accomplished this by building the capacity of:

1. AICHR and ACWC to adopt programmes and encourage dialogue that effectively promote and protect human rights of women and girls;
2. National and regional women's groups and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to engage with AICHR and ACWC and advocate for them on women's human rights issues that need to be addressed at the regional level
3. The Secretariats for AICHR and ACWC within the ASEAN Secretariat to provide effective support to the respective commissions they serve in addressing human rights issues.

In particular, the project's regional approach (as opposed to a country-by-country approach) has added significant value by opening the space for increased dialogue and sharing of knowledge and experience by AHRMs and civil society.

Outcome 1

The project has built the capacity of AICHR and ACWC to adopt programmes and encourage dialogue that effectively promote and protect human rights of women and girls.

The project has achieved this outcome by ensuring that AICHR and ACWC representatives have a common understanding of the women's and girl's human rights situation and the role that the Commissions can play for the protection and promotion of gender equality. The ISG Evaluation Team has found that AICHR and ACWC Representatives are conversant with the conventions governing women's and girls' human rights and can clearly articulate the needs with respect to these issues within their own countries and regionally. UN Women has helped ACWC representatives in particular develop work plans and other tools that enable them to better promote women's rights.

"ACWC has broken territorial boundaries and borders"
-ACWC Representative, Malaysia

UN Women has undertaken considerable efforts over the course of the three years of project to bring this about. Examples of its efforts include:

- Promotion of a range of knowledge products on general women and girls' rights, CEDAW, the CRC, and other international instruments underpinning women and girls' rights among AICHR and ACWC representatives;
- An extensive level of exposure to extant practices globally, regionally, and nationally through briefings, meetings, tours, and visits;
- Support to the AICHR/UN Women Seminar Towards Achieving Substantive Equality seminar held in Jakarta mid-2011 for six AICHR members (including members of the AHRD drafting group), ASEAN Secretariat members and AICHR support staff;
- Support to joint regular meetings of AICHR and ACWC representatives and ad-hoc meetings and workshops addressing specific issues (e.g. 2012 AICHR roundtable discussion on migration and human rights; mid-2013 regional workshop with CEDAW committee member in Vietnam on

promoting the rights of ASEAN women and children through effective implementation of CEDAW and the CRC, December 2013 meeting on women, peace and security)

- A meeting between the UN Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights, the AICHR Chairperson, an ACWC representative, and two AHRD drafters in Cambodia in late 2011.
- Consultation on best practices and minimum standards in providing services to survivors of violence in 2012. The consultation included the Special Representative to the UN General Secretary on Violence against Children (SRSG-VAC), a CEDAW Committee member; and an expert advisor to the UN on service delivery for ending violence against women.

ACWC representatives, as individuals and as a Commission, expressed a growing confidence in their capacities to address women's human rights, engage and interact more publicly with diverse stakeholders and institutions including CSOs, and gain recognition even in the context of challenging political dynamics. Stakeholders have recognised that UN Women's support through this project has contributed to this growing confidence.

The actual implementation of much of the Project outputs has relied on the consensus-based dynamics of operation of ASEAN bodies. However, the Evaluation Team notes that effectively addressing human rights issues must strive to overcome the divergence of opinions among stakeholders, given differences in human rights norms and realities among ASEAN member countries. This is particularly relevant to potentially sensitive or divisive issues, such as the rights of sexual minorities, female migrants, women and children in armed conflict, or issues of religious practices.

International Exposure trips for AICHR/ACWC Representatives supported by UN Women

- UN Women New York Headquarters briefing for AICHR representatives in late 2010 to develop a common understanding among AICHR representatives on gender aspects of migration, peace and security , violence against children, global normative frameworks.
- ACWC representatives visit to UN offices in Geneva and Strasbourg in early 2011 to meet key many key UN human rights officials , NGO stakeholders/partners; observe CEDAW, the CRC and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) sessions.

Networking and Peer Learning

One of the most effective strategies cited by representatives is networking and peer learning. ACWC representatives from Brunei, Malaysia, and Myanmar noted that these strategies have helped representatives learn how other countries are addressing women's human rights issues, identify good practices, and examine their own activities at country level to identify potential improvement.

It has also motivated the formation of further organisations and groups in ASEAN countries that are bringing critical mass to national and regional movements on women's human rights.

Networking and Peer Learning Achievements

- *Philippines/Myanmar: The Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB – Philippines) is supporting a Myanmar women's group on the promotion of political rights, and mainstreamed gender perspectives in the Asia Pacific Forum statement to the heads of ASEAN member states.*
- *Cambodia: the Young Women Leadership Network (YWLN) is a recently formed CSO that is receiving capacity-building resources from UN Women.*
- *Thailand: UN Women's support to the Women's CSO Network (as part of the Women's Caucus) in Thailand via the Project has facilitated access to the HRCs by CSOs that serve more marginalised subgroups within society who find it difficult to access mainstream sources of assistance, i.e. disabled women.*
- *Thailand: regional ASEAN partner the Asia Indigenous People's Pact (AIPP) is disseminating UN Women-published material related to its mandate widely. For example, governments in the Philippines and India are using material produced by AIPP in developing their policies and procedures on women's human rights.*

Policy Action from Common Understanding of Women's Rights

The opportunities for building a common understanding of women's and girls' human rights brought about by the project increased the capacity of representatives to produce the ACWC 5-year workplan and Rules of Procedure for the period 2012-2016 and seminal policy documents on the issues.

The most significant achievement was the **Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Elimination of Violence Against Children (DVAWC)**, adopted at the 23rd ASEAN Summit in October 2013. Drafted principally by the ACWC, the Declaration:

1. Encourages ASEAN Member States to report on efforts to eliminate violence against women and children through the Universal Periodic Review Process, in which the ACWC is to assist where necessary;
2. Recognises the role of civil society (having incorporated several recommendations from individual CSOs and CSO networks such as the Women's Caucus) in prevention and responses to violence against women and children and requires ASEAN member states to create an enabling environment for the participation of women and children, including victims/survivors;
3. Includes good detail on various forms of violence, and highlights the importance of gender responsive planning and budgeting.

Policy Achievements of AHRBs

- *Recommendations from participants of the AICHR regional seminar on substantive gender equality (Jakarta, September 2011).*
- *Draft AICHR Declaration on Human Rights & Maternal Health developed at ASEAN conference on Human Rights and Maternal Health (Manila, 14-15 October 2011) pending adoption at the AICHR meeting in 2012.*
- *Two thematic studies on Migration & Human Rights and Business and Human Rights in 2013;*
- *Regional human rights training on promoting Access to Justice (AICHR, UN Women and Mahidol University for members of government, academia and CSOs) in 2012*
- *Advanced Training of Trainers (AICHR, UN Women, and Mahidol University a one-week intensive human rights training in 2012);*
- *Provision in 2012 of financial and technical support for an ACWC consultative workshop to develop a conceptual framework for an ASEAN Eliminating Violence against Women campaign. Following the workshop, members of the Commission and over forty CSOs held a meeting to share information and exchange views on violence and receive feedback on ACWC's proposed work-plan.*
- *Another regional dialogue was held in July 2012 and several other national dialogues were also held throughout the year aimed at collecting inputs on issues, challenges, and recommendations from national CSOs.*
- *AICHR has embarked on a new initiative, namely developing a 'Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women', discussed at its meeting in April 2014.*

AICHR Engagement with CSOs, NHRIs, etc.

Because CSOs in ASEAN member states are extremely diverse, individual approaches are necessary to engage them in the policy process. AICHR's engagement with civil society groups, national human rights institutes, and other non-governmental stakeholders has therefore not been systematic across ASEAN member states. Some Representatives did not expect that civil society would be motivated around ASEAN matters and AHRMs, but are seeing evidence that this interest has grown over the past years among mainstream CSOs and women's organizations and groups. Clarification of how AICHR engages with CSOs could present valuable opportunities for the future. The evaluation team recommends that the AICHR undertake active efforts to engage these organisations at an appropriate pace.

ACWC Engagement with CSOs, NHRIs, etc.

ACWC has exhibited open and constructive levels of dialogue (through workshops, road shows, seminars, etc.) with civil society, NHRIs and UN Women, in some cases with national government support. These activities have achieved positive outcomes in a variety of countries, including:

- In Thailand, where regional CSO partner APWLD is providing the Thailand ACWC representatives with administrative support and reports good engagement and dialogue.
- In Vietnam the ACWC representatives enjoy good government support, and implement a national network of 100 members from across the public and civil society spectrum to share priorities on women's and children's rights, agree on specific initiatives, disseminate information that the ACWC representatives in Vietnam can bring to the regional level and share information on key issues. This was made possible by funding from the Vietnamese government and UN Women
- ACWC representatives in Brunei Darussalam and Myanmar reported an increasing level of CSO activity in their countries, and a willingness on their part to increasingly engage with individual CSOs on women's human rights activities.

The AHRD

The ISG Evaluation Team notes that ASEAN Human Rights Declaration of 2012 generated vigorous debate amongst CSO actors in the region, most significantly around the “ASEAN values” and “morality” clauses of the HRD which some contend can be interpreted to deny women’s human rights. Regional CSO project partners report that their advocacy to address the issues in the HRD is ongoing, and are engaging with ACWC, AICHR, and NHRIs on the matters.

As noted above, UN Women engaged in significant advocacy work and supported a range of forums and consultations between AICHR and ACWC representatives on the HRD development process. Representatives of civil society and vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women, trafficked persons, migrant workers made a substantial range of recommendations to AICHR/ACWC. Upon adoption of the AHRD, however, the “Phnom Penh Statement” was issued. The Statement reaffirms ASEAN’s commitment to the UN Charter, the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, and other international human rights instruments to which ASEAN Member States are parties.

The establishment and development of HRMs is a major achievement and has brought human rights to the forefront of ASEAN society.

-AICHR Representative, Indonesia

Civil society respondents reported CSO consultation on the development of the subsequent Declaration on VAW and VAC as much improved, with incorporation of several recommendations from civil society. The content of the Declaration details various forms of violence, highlights the importance of gender responsive planning and budgeting, recognises the role of civil society in prevention and responses to violence against women and children, and requires ASEAN members states to create an enabling environment for the participation of women and children, including victims/survivors.

The Evaluation Team recommends that development of future regional declarations in this area build on the good outcomes of consultation and capacity illustrated above, with incorporation of feedback and input from civil society into such important instruments as key to their process.

UN Women Relationships with AICHR/ACWC

While important technical and financial support has been provided to ACWC and representatives have expressed significant appreciation for UN Women’s past and ongoing support, engagement between UN Women and AICHR is constrained by AICHR’s independence from the influence external parties. However, those AICHR representatives interviewed reported a growing level of trust building with UN Women and that AICHR is becoming more comfortable in its engagement with UN Women.

An important achievement has been the improved understanding and networking between AICHR and ACWC representatives through regional consultations, workshops, meetings, study visits, etc. AICHR and ACWC representatives have reported that this has helped them understand women’s human rights in the ASEAN countries, the common issues faced, and also the differences in each country. ACWC representatives, in particular, report good levels of joint work and support. Representatives report good communications and information-sharing with each other. Representatives of the ACWC in particular noted that the UN Women initiative started at the same time as the inauguration of ACWC. They highlighted that UN Women (and its predecessor, UNIFEM) had provided considerable assistance to ACWC, and its precursor working group, during its formation.

Recommendations and Opportunities

The project has also revealed opportunities for cultivating a common understanding of women's and girls' human rights among AICHR and ACWC representatives and translating that understanding into policy action that includes all stakeholders. The following are recommendations based on UN Women's best practices.

R1. CAPACITY-BUILDING

AICHR and ACWC should work to ensure all representatives have a comprehensive understanding of human rights issues, including how they fit with specific political, social, cultural and religious contexts in various countries (to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of group initiatives). As AICHR/ACWC representatives may not all share the same level of experience and expertise in the area of gender and/or human rights, a 'foundational' or introductory training curriculum (in the appropriate language) that provides new appointees with a solid background on WHR issues would be highly beneficial. This should be further discussed between UN Women and ACWC/AICHR representatives.

The programme could include training on potentially sensitive issues (such as rights of sexual minorities, female migrants, women's inheritance/land tenure, promotion of the rights of women and children in armed conflict and in the contexts of religious practices) to facilitate harmonise representatives' understanding of these, and other sensitive issues.

R2. ACTION-ORIENTED PLANNING

To more strongly link specific programmatic activities with definite outcomes, UN Women's engagement activities with ASEAN WHR bodies (such as consultations, study visits, workshops, seminars, etc.) should be associated with process and outcome indicators to ensure clearer accountability of resources and better follow-up. Some stakeholders interviewed support the idea that of the two ACWC meetings held each year, one should be a substantive meeting/consultation or knowledge-based conference and the other should be a regular business conference.

R3. CONTINUED SUPPORT TO AICHR/ACWC COORDINATION EFFORTS

The strong and productive working relationship between AICHR and ACWC representatives in many ASEAN countries demonstrates that collaboration between the two commissions presents a tremendous opportunity (especially for new representatives) to protect and promote the rights of women and girls. The commissions have taken important initial steps to capitalise on their joint potential through meetings in 2010, 2011 and most recently in April 2014, and they would benefit from UN Women's support to ongoing coordination of efforts in a constructive and structured manner.

R4. FORMAL GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CSOs AND NHRIs

Because CSOs, NHRIs and other non-governmental stakeholders in ASEAN member states are extremely diverse, individual approaches are necessary to engage them in the policy process. Guidelines for proactive, systematic regional engagement with these groups would be an important step in advancing women's human rights policy.

R5. UN WOMEN'S ROLE

Several commission representatives recommended a role for UN Women in advocating with ASEAN on integration of human rights and women's human rights across all three ASEAN pillars in the approach to the 2015 economic integration.

UN Women should continue to use consultations, meetings, forums, conferences, etc. to build representatives' capacity as to the application of their knowledge and skills.

There is a definite role for UN Women in ensuring more action-oriented outcomes from these events and focusing on AICHR/ACWC efforts to implement the agreed-upon actions. AICHR representatives recommended a more strategic role for UN Women in this regard, with more visibility, continued engagement, and a robust monitoring process by UN Women of the outcomes of these events on women's human rights policies and processes.

Outcome 2

The project has enhanced capacity of national and regional women’s groups and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to engage with AICHR and ACWC and advocate with them on the women’s human rights issues that need to be addressed at the regional level.

Outcome 2 was also largely achieved, with UN Women instituting and supporting a range of strong partnerships with national and regional CSOs and NHRIs across the Project countries. The project expanded networks and alliances of women’s human rights organizations in ASEAN region which actively engage with the ASEAN human rights Commissions.

Representatives of the CSOs interviewed consistently reported strong working relationships with UN Women and good support for their activities. All stakeholders agreed that UN Women has played, and continues to play, a crucial role in maintaining dialogue between stakeholders at all levels to facilitate the process of change.

CSO representatives expressed satisfaction with the level of achievement of project results, and of the technical capacity of UN Women in the area of women’s human rights. The consensus, was that UN Women’s capacity is increasing and it plays a key role as the definitive provider of technical support on women’s human rights and in linking civil society with national governments and ASEAN-level bodies.

The Women’s Caucus

The South East Asia Women’s Caucus on ASEAN, co-coordinated by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP), were the main partners for capacity development and coordination of advocacy by women’s human rights groups. Over the course of the Project period, the Women’s Caucus has been consistently expanding its network and alliance of women’s human rights organizations. In April 2010, the Women’s Caucus engaged with 49 organizations. This number increased to over 100 organizations by 2013. The Women’s Caucus coordinating agency, APWLD, started work with UN Women in 2009, and with UN Women’s assistance reported having undergone significant organisational growth and development since then.

Key Advocacy Publications by the Women’s Caucus

- *“Due diligence and violence against women: enhancing accountability to ASEAN women and girls” (submitted to ACWC);*
- *Compilation and analysis on the NGO alternative reports to CEDAW Committee;*
- *Position paper on ACWC rules of procedure;*
- *Recommendations on the ACWC workplan and on the discussion of thematic priorities and Rules of Procedure of ACWC in its formation period;*
- *Submission on the importance of including women’s human rights in the AHRD drafting;*
- *A consolidated position paper to AICHR (in 2012) analysed the proposed language of the AHRD and requesting that it eliminate references to “public morality” from the AHRD;*
- *In collaboration with the APWLD and IWRAP-AP, presented a paper to the ACWC outlining four key areas of due diligence that should be considered when addressing violence against women and girls; and*
- *A compilation and analysis of women’s human rights issues raised in NGO reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee and AICHR Secretariat*

Regional partners reported numerous regional and national-level meetings between the Women's Caucus, AICHR and ACWC representatives, and the ASEAN Secretariat on the AHRD and AICHR. In addition, the Women's Caucus made a number of submissions to ACWC/AICHR and/or ASEAN, National CSOs, and members of the Women's Caucus, e.g. WLB in the Philippines and Kalyanamitra in Indonesia have provided substantive inputs to ACWC representatives on Rules of Procedures, ACWC Work Plan, AHRD, and VAW.

In addition, regional partners prepared and disseminated a range of advocacy materials and undertook a wide range of workshops, consultations and dialogue meetings for members.

The Women's Caucus also undertook a range of internal organizational strengthening activities to clarify its structure and membership, and build the capacity of new members across all ASEAN countries to lobby, negotiate, and advocate on women's human rights issues with ASEAN. Capacity-building activities included increasing member's awareness and knowledge of ASEAN and assisting them in identifying strategies for engagement.

In particular, some Women's Caucus members have expanded their outreach into more remote areas of ASEAN member countries, increasing the membership of representatives of minority groups. Examples include UN Women-supported activities with minority and indigenous groups in northern Thailand, and the regional partnership with Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) that represents 47 indigenous people's organisations, including six women's organisations. APWLD and the Women's Caucus is also expanding its remit across other ASEAN countries (and Timor Leste). Philwomen in the Philippines has actively reached out to marginalized and excluded women, and has developed the capacity of local women's groups on ASEAN processes and structures and key areas for engagement with ASEAN on women's human rights issues.

Women's Caucus Engagement with AICHR and ACWC

Regional partners and national Women's Caucus members interviewed by ISG considered overall engagement with individual representatives from AICHR and ACWC among Women's Caucus membership to be good, particularly with ACWC representatives. The Evaluation Team noted that AICHR engagement with Women's Caucus membership is particularly strong in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. ACWC engagement efforts resulted in some concrete institutionalisation of feedback from the Women's Caucus to ACWC representatives.

Women's Caucus and AICHR/ACWC Achievements

- *The Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau, the Philippines Focal Point for the Women's Caucus (and its offshoot Philwomen on ASEAN network composed of more than 80 organizations representing different sectors and groups of women), successfully worked with ACWC representatives to create a feedback mechanism, through which ACWC representatives could provide information and updates to CSOs and women's rights groups.*
- *WLB also developed a clear strategy to engage with ASEAN HRMs, including lobbying with the Philippine representatives of AICHR and ACWC.*
- *SILAKA, the focal agency of Cambodia's national Women's Caucus, facilitated women's groups and Cambodian AICHR and ACWC representatives working together.*
- *The Indonesian Women's Caucus engaged with the Indonesian representative to ACWC on the 2013 ASEAN Declaration on Violence Against Women and Children.*
- *The Women's Caucus in Laos and Cambodia's SILAKA organized the strategic planning meeting for the ASEAN People's Forum and the workshop for generating recommendations to AICHR on CSO accreditation.*
- *In Thailand, Women's Caucus members trained grassroots CSOs in remote areas to build their capacities to advocate on women's human rights issues and engage with ASEAN human rights mechanisms.*
- *The Gender and Development Association (national focal point of the Women's Caucus in Lao PDR) has increased its capacity and membership over the course of the Project and engaged with the government of Lao PDR via the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry expressed appreciation of the Association's work on raising public awareness on ASEAN and requested them to speak at various national and international events as Lao representatives.*

Recommendations and Opportunities

R6. COORDINATION AND SUPPORT OF CSOs

The efforts of the Women' Caucus to improve the coordination of many CSOs have been extremely helpful in ensuring the project's success. To build on these efforts it is recommended that CSOs continue to share lessons and experiences, undertake and joint initiatives designed to optimize strengths and increase efficiency among CSOs (particularly where smaller CSOs may not individually have the capacity to engage formally with the UN system). These efforts would help avoid the fragmentation of CSOs that may result in counterproductive competition for space and resources.

CSO partners place significant strategic value on the informational and technical support made available to them from UN Women and the access it offers them to other key stakeholders, notably government stakeholders. UN Women should strive to maintain this support and use its high-level influence to convene stakeholders in appropriate forums, particularly on trans-boundary issues such as migration.

R7. ENGAGEMENT WITH NHRIs

NHRIs in the ASEAN project countries (Komnas Perempuan in Indonesia, Commission on Human Rights in Philippines, National Human Rights Commission in Thailand, Human Rights Commission of Malaysia) have been more focused on developing the capacity of the ASEAN Human Rights commissions than on building their own networks, as the CSO networks have been doing. Building on the recent public consultation among Indonesia's Komnas Perempuan, Indonesian representatives of ACWC and AICHR, and civil society actors, AICHR and ACWC representatives should engage with member countries' NHRIs. With increased capacity brought about by training programmes proposed above, as well as increased funding, ASEAN collaboration with NHRIs presents an important opportunity to promote women's rights.

Outcome 3

The Secretariats for AICHR and ACWC within the ASEAN Secretariat provide effective support to the respective Commissions that they serve in addressing women’s human rights issues.

ASEAN secretariat interviewees noted that on formation of AICHR and ACWC it was agreed by member states that the HRCs would not have a separate Secretariat but that the ASEAN Secretariat would provide support. Member states, however, did not foresee and perhaps fully understand the rapid development of the HRCs and their support requirement, nor the substantial responsibilities and workload of the Secretariat. As a result, achieving this outcome beyond a point has been challenging.

UN Women supported a number of initiatives to improve the knowledge and skills of ACWC Secretariat staff on women’s human rights and gender equality, including provision of background papers on CEDAW, national laws and policies on gender equality and women’s rights, and critical issues and recommendations from United Nations papers on gender equality and women’s rights. The Project also supported ACWC Secretariat staff participation in a number of trainings on women’s human rights.

ASEAN Secretariat Engagements

- *International women’s human rights and governance workshop organized by the Women and Gender Institute (WAGI), Philippines;*
- *Workshop on cooperation between the UN and regional mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights in Geneva, Switzerland (organized by OHCHR);*
- *UN Women/UNICEF consultation on violence against women and children, Philippines;*
- *Secretariat participation at a dialogue between ACWC and CSOs on “Eliminating Violence against Women and Children”;*
- *Secretariat attendance at a seminar on Gender Equality organised by AICHR with UN Women support, Jakarta;*
- *South East Asia Regional Dialogue with NHRIs and NHRMs on advancing Women’s Human Rights and Gender Equality, co-funded by UN Women, IWRAW-AP and OHCHR;*
- *Workshop on the development of a conceptual framework for an ASEAN Campaign on the Elimination of Violence against Women.*

Through UN Women support and that of other UN agencies, ASEAN Secretariat staff members have been exposed to knowledge, practices, and discussions of critical issues that may enable them to better support the implementation of the AICHR’s work plan. Additionally, UN Women has provided selected Secretariat staff exposure to national Secretariat staff working for AICHR representatives from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Secretariat representatives expressed to the Evaluation Team that further capacity development support is needed and expressed that they would welcome such initiatives in the future.

Recommendations and Opportunities

R8. SECRETARIAT TRAINING

Future capacity development by UN Women for the ASEC should be investigated, and could involve a more structured training process that maximises the availability of the ASEC and their potential contribution to the HRCs.

Unintended Results

Some examples of unintended Project results that stakeholders highlighted to the evaluation team are:

- The support provided as part of the Project to a range of individual CSOs/NGOs and national/regional networks have had secondary positive impacts on the capacity, competence, and confidence of individual organisations and support networks. The peer networking and support has (and continues to) motivated the formation of further organisations and groups in ASEAN countries that are bringing critical mass to national and regional movements on women's human rights, such as:
 - Philippines/Myanmar: The Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB – Philippines) is supporting a Myanmar women's group on the promotion of political rights, and mainstreamed gender perspectives in the Asia Pacific Forum statement to the heads of ASEAN member states.
 - Cambodia: the Young Women Leadership Network (YWLN) is a recently formed CSO that is receiving capacity-building resources from UN Women.
 - Thailand: UN Women's support to the Women's CSO Network in Thailand via the Project has facilitated access to the HRCs by CSOs that serve more marginalised subgroups within society who find it difficult to access mainstream sources of assistance, i.e. disabled women.
 - Thailand: regional ASEAN partner the Asia Indigenous People's Pact (AIPP) is disseminating UN Women-published material related to its mandate widely. For example, governments in the Philippines and India are using material produced by AIPP in developing their policies and procedures on women's human rights.
- ACWC representatives see themselves as working across 'territorial boundaries', with heightened confidence and mutual support of one another.
- ASEAN Secretariat staff and some CSO respondents generated and expressed demand for UN Women to proactively engage with and lend its expertise to ASEAN to ensure integration of women's human rights across the three ASEAN pillars.

A negative unintended result is the 'bar-setting' of the organisational/administrative requirements that are a necessary precondition of partnership of CSOs with the Project (i.e. the smaller members of the Women's Caucus). While UN Women undertakes a transparent public process for programmatic partnerships, smaller and less administratively capable CSOs find it challenging to meet the various technical requirements. UN Women also deliberately partnered with more established CSOs that were potentially able to mobilize others because the ASEAN process is complex and needs capable organizations to lead.

Relevance and appropriateness of results

Stakeholders in all countries confirmed that the Project is very relevant in the national, regional, and international context. All ASEAN countries are signatories of CEDAW and CRC, and are committed to the implementation of human rights, including women's human rights and child rights.

Stakeholders interviewed from across all the Project countries acknowledged the catalytic and lead role that UN Women has played in contributing to the development and capacity-building of ACWC and to its Terms of Reference and work plan. Interviewees acknowledged that the UN Women-supported capacity development activities for both ACWC and AICHR have been relevant and appropriate, and have enhanced their knowledge on women's human rights, gender equality, and substantive issues. ACWC representatives have particularly highly appreciated the capacity development activities, as they consider the activities useful to their work and to their individual and institutional responsibilities.

However, stakeholders noted that the process of follow-up on UN Women-supported consultations, roundtables, and/or meetings could be improved in any future initiative.

Girl-focused initiatives

While the focus of the Project was on building institutions, capacities, and relationships with respect to women and girls, the mandates of AICHR and ACWC lack adequate provision for issues of girls, which is an area of significant importance in the South East Asian region. While the DVAWC highlighted the special consideration required for girls and requires ASEAN members states to create an enabling environment for the participation of women and children, protection is a key area that could be addressed in a future phase of this project.

Sustainability of results

UN Women proposed the following specific sustainability mechanisms at project outset:

- Development of a mechanism for information-sharing/dialogue between gender advocates, AICHR, and ACWC;
- Creation of gender-responsive Rules of Procedures of AICHR and ACWC;
- Incorporation in the AHRD of a CEDAW definition of discrimination against women and a framework and provisions in line with international human rights standards;
- Creation of a gender-knowledgeable and effective secretariat for AICHR and ACWC;
- Building the knowledge and skills of gender advocates to maintain strong advocacy and monitoring of governments and the ASEAN, and influence selection of AICHR and ACWC representatives.

These five strategies have been partially achieved, although further work is required on each.

All stakeholders acknowledged that a foundation has been laid in developing the human rights mechanisms, AICHR and ACWC, and their capacity would be further enhanced as they implement their respective mandates and work plans. Key instruments (e.g. the AHRD and DVAWC) are tools that contribute to sustainability in the work of the AHRMs. However, a lack of consistent institutional funding for the human rights commissions means that sustainability of their work is challenging. ACWC representatives report that they are seeking to obtain a core budget allocation from their individual governments, with a number of country governments expressing willingness, so the process on the road to consensus. An opportunity for UN Women may lie in advocating ASEAN governments for institutional funding for ACWC.

Given the dynamics of engagement of UN Women with the HRCs (particularly given their voluntary, part-time nature), it is unlikely that the sustainability strategy would have been achieved within the proposed Project timeframe. Working to achieve consensus across these newly-established ASEAN bodies has taken longer than originally proposed. Future activities should take into account more realistic timescales for likely achievement of outcomes.

CSO stakeholders in all countries expressed that a certain degree of sustainability had been achieved through their network formation and institutionalisation, but that expansion and consolidation of CSO networks across the countries and region would require financial support. The larger (regional) CSO partners, in particular, expressed that UN Women's level of funding support to them through this initiative, while vital in their inception phase at project outset, has become smaller relative to the context of their overall resources. Currently, the primary added value that they derive from UN Women at this point is in terms of its strategic support and technical expertise.

Recommendations and Opportunities

R9. SUSTAINABILITY

Further project funding would ensure the results of the project continue to be translated into concrete gains for women's human rights in Southeast Asia. It would also help ensure continued expansion and consolidation of CSO networks in the region.

Future sustainability strategies should take into account a realistic timeframe in which these strategies can be achieved.

Partnerships

Overall, respondents highlighted very positive working relationships with UN Women, with the level of expertise in women's human rights and gender issues being ascribed a very high value by representatives who are typically not subject-matter experts themselves. As noted above, the previous administrative changes in UN Women impacted relationships and programmatic momentum.

Few stakeholders interviewed noted involvement at the development phase of this project. However, given that some of the key project stakeholders (i.e. ACWC, AICHR and a number of civil society partners) were formally constituted around the same time as the commencement of the Project, any possible consultation was necessarily limited. However, some individual stakeholder representatives (e.g. current individual ACWC representatives) were involved in women's human rights activities with UNIFEM at the time of project inception (e.g. the Vietnam ACWC representative who was collaborating with UNIFEM prior to inauguration of ACWC) and had the opportunity to contribute to the formation of the Project. This, coupled with the strong background of the UN Women/UNIFEM team in the area of women's human rights and a good understanding of the regional context, ensured that the Project activities were in line with the needs and priorities of the key project stakeholders.

The motivation and dynamism of individual AICHR/ACWC representatives have proven to be one of the most significant positive factors influencing sustainability of the Project. Many of the representatives have dedicated considerable personal resources from the offices that many of them occupy, and have obtained national government support for the commission work that they are undertaking. Building on these positive experiences, AICHR/ACWC stakeholders and ASEAN Secretariat pointed out that in going forward, steps should be taken to institutionalise a partnership between UN Women and AICHR/ACWC to ensure gains from individual relationships are realised more broadly. Given that the commissions only meet several times per year, the practicality of this mode of working should be considered carefully, and it is important that all parties remain open to collaboration.

UN Women has forged strong links with civil society organisations in all of the surveyed project countries, with substantial efforts made by UN Women staff to identify and partner with civil society organisations with a focus on women’s human rights, despite a limited pool of potential partners. The support to the Women’s Caucus and other women’s networks has been strong and contributed to its considerable growth regionally over the Project period. As noted, UN Women’s access to ASEAN and government stakeholders have been of considerable value to project CSO partners, particularly smaller CSOs and networks (for example the Women’s CSO Network in Thailand). CSO partners are also appreciative of the capacity-building activities, technical assistance, and mentoring provided by UN Women.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Stakeholders acknowledged that several important milestones have been achieved by the two human rights mechanisms, AICHR and ACWC, over the past four years which include:

- Formation and functioning of the two AHRMs,
- Finalisation of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) and workplans,
- Adoption of the AHRD, and
- Adoption of the DVAWC

Key Project Changes

- o *Improved awareness and appreciation of women's human rights among AICHR and ACWC representatives, including international best practices with respect to implementation of women's human rights and gender equality policies;*
- o *Improved relationships and initiation of a range of consultative activities and (albeit not yet formalised) mechanisms between the two ASEAN human rights commissions and civil society across all project countries;*
- o *Improved technical skills related to the issues and legalities of women's human rights and gender equality among all stakeholders;*
- o *Greatly expanded women-focused civil society activities in the ASEAN region via national and regional CSOs and CSO networks;*
- o *Greater visibility, capacity, and influence among women's human rights-focused civil society across ASEAN states, including in countries that historically have limited the development of civil society; and*
- o *An increasing focus on the rights of minority and indigenous women, and on issues that are of regional significance such as issues of protection, trafficking, and migration.*

As discussed above, improved understanding and networking between the respective representatives of the two HRCs and ACWC's facilitating dialogue with civil society groups is also a significant achievement of the Project. ACWC has engaged more deeply with civil society than AICHR, but UN Women has supported and facilitated a range of engagement processes with individual AICHR representatives as a result of extensive efforts and relationship-building.

UN Women plays a pivotal coordination role among many of the stakeholders involved in the Project, notably between civil society organisations and national or ASEAN-level bodies. Many civil society stakeholders underscored the significant benefits to their mandates that UN Women's efforts have brought, to the extent that if and when project funding ceases, they will seek to sustain these coordination activities. In this manner, synergies have been generated from the collective voice of civil society organisations that national governments (via the ASEAN commissions) are increasingly paying attention to. UN Women support and technical input have been key to developing the technical skills and building the confidence and motivation of many civil society organisations working for women's human rights and gender equality.

Other UN Women initiatives (including the other DFATD-funded initiative: CEDAW SEAP Phase II) are more complementary to the Project, with the CEDAW SEAP Phase II programme integrating well with

this project. Many of the CEDAW stakeholders who work on the regional mechanisms project also work to implement CEDAW programme activities in their respective countries (e.g. the Law Reform Commission of Thailand, the Laos National Assembly, and MOLISA in Vietnam). Such stakeholders report good linkages between the two initiatives – the capacity building activities of one initiative complement the rollout of the other.

Stakeholders consulted acknowledge the significant added value of the regional approach in the ASEAN project as having opened the space for increased dialogue and sharing of knowledge and experience by AHRMs and civil society. Regional AHRMs are in a position to and can bring pressure and influence to bear on women’s human rights issues including policies and agreements on broad regional issues, e.g. trade, trafficking, migration, etc. At the same time, the implementation of CEDAW is the obligation of States and national governments, and therefore interventions at both the national and regional level are equally important and mutually reinforcing.

Stakeholders also stressed the importance of information-sharing with the public and developing and implementing an active communications strategy to improve visibility at different levels. Working with strong partners in government can also enhance project visibility. In particular, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) (i.e. the internet/social media) can greatly enhance the visibility of the Project and stakeholders. AICHR/ACWC are progressing in this regard with technical support and funding from UN Women, but stakeholders acknowledge that much needs to be done to keep pace with the increasing penetration of internet technologies in ASEAN countries.

- R.1. UN Women should adopt targeted strategies to train new incumbents of the AICHR/ACWC to a 'foundational' or introductory training curriculum that provides new appointees with a solid background (in the appropriate language) on WHR issues.*
- R.2. Engagement activities (study visits, workshops, seminars, etc.) should be incorporated into a structured action-oriented plan with associated process and outcome indicators. This has been emphasised by several commission stakeholders, who want to see translation of their workplans and declarations into concrete activities.*
- R.3. UN Women should focus on opportunities for catalyzing collaboration and joint programming between the two commissions to enhance their combined strength.*
- R.4. Because CSOs, NHRIs and other non-governmental stakeholders in ASEAN member states are extremely diverse, individual approaches are necessary to engage them in the policy process. Guidelines for proactive, systematic regional engagement with these groups would be an important step in advancing women's human rights policy.*
- R.5. Several commission representatives recommended a role for UN Women in advocating with ASEAN on integration of human rights and women's human rights across all three ASEAN pillars in the approach to the 2015 economic integration. UN Women should also continue to facilitate consultations and action-oriented plans to further build capacity in ASEAN across the three pillars.*
- R.6. To build on these efforts of the Women's Caucus, the ISG team recommends that CSOs continue to share lessons and experiences, undertake and joint initiatives designed to optimize strengths and increase efficiency among CSOs. UN Women should strive to maintain its support of CSOs and should convene stakeholders in appropriate forums.*
- R.7. With increased capacity brought about by training programmes proposed above, as well as increased funding, ASEAN collaboration with NHRIs presents an important opportunity to promote women's rights. AICHR and ACWC representatives should engage with member countries' NHRIs with support from UN Women facilitating this engagement.*
- R.8. Future capacity development by UN Women for the ASEC should be investigated, and could involve a more structured training process that maximises the availability of the ASEC and their potential contribution to the lack of terms of reference for them.*
- R.9. Future work with the ASEAN commissions should focus on building capacity and knowledge on, and advocacy for the development of, policies and instruments for the protection of girls*
- R.10. Future sustainability strategies should take into account a realistic timeframe in which these strategies can be achieved.*