

Preface

Tackling discriminatory social norms and practices – such as those restricting women’s decision-making power or limiting their access to economic resources and assets – can translate to an additional 3.3 percentage points in annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth in Southeast Asia alone.

Southeast Asian countries are committed to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment. All countries have ratified the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and in 2010 they adopted the comprehensive Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children. Moreover, the region committed to reducing violence against women with the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN in 2013. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are also mainstreamed in the ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals. Still, there is a long way to go before equality between men and women is achieved. In 2018, women spent, on average, 3.8 times more time than men did on unpaid care and domestic work, including raising children, caring for sick or elderly family members and managing household tasks.

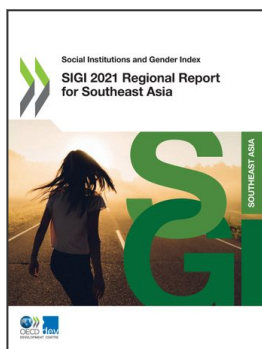
Since 2009, the OECD Development Centre’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) has supported Southeast Asia to better understand the persistent and structural barriers to gender equality in the region. The *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Southeast Asia* shows that despite significant progress towards gender equality since the third edition of the SIGI in 2014, deeply rooted informal laws and practices, and pluri-legal systems continue to hinder women’s and girls’ advancement in several areas.

This publication calls on Southeast Asian governments and all relevant stakeholders to work towards the eradication of gender-based discrimination in social institutions. More specifically, this report makes a strong case for investing in gender equality by i) updating legislation in line with international standards; ii) developing justice enforcement mechanisms; iii) adopting a holistic approach that accounts for women’s diversity while engaging men and boys; iv) strengthening the scope and quality of gender-disaggregated data collection; and v) improving communication and awareness on gender-based discrimination. As Southeast Asian policy makers seek to incorporate a gender approach into national recovery efforts, the OECD Development Centre continues to optimise the SIGI’s policy relevance for the region and thereby contribute to achieving gender equality in all spheres of life in a post-COVID-19 world.

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