

Indo-Pacific Era Strategic Centre

Mapping the Geopolitics of the Next Indo-Pacific Century.

March 2024



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Women's Equality in the ASEAN Community 2025

By S. Nanthini

On 22 November 2014, ASEAN was declared a 'Community' by ASEAN Leaders at the 27th ASEAN Summit. A realisation of the vision first communicated by ASEAN member states through the 'Roadmap for an ASEAN Community: 2009-2015', this declaration was followed by the endorsement of the ['ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together'](#). This in turn laid out a pathway for ASEAN to achieve its aim of building up of a Community which is ["politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible"](#). Considering this aim, women's equality has been a key focus for ASEAN as highlighted in the 2017 [ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals](#).

This ASEAN Declaration presents a series of detailed and wide-ranging initiatives including the need to improve data collection through strengthening ASEAN's databases, increasing engagement in political decision-making, and encouraging economic investment to close resource gaps for achieving gender equality. These "whole-of-ASEAN" initiatives and the importance of gender mainstreaming in ASEAN policy, practices and programmes were further emphasised when ASEAN adopted the [ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021–2025 in 2022](#).

As highlighted in these documents, stakeholders in the region are implementing the vision of a true – and equal – ASEAN community. Notably, there should be a more focus on the integration of women into decision-making processes. The importance of an inclusion of a gender perspective in the Political-Security pillar of ASEAN is currently reflected in the establishment of the 2018 [ASEAN Women for Peace Registry](#) and the 2021 adoption of the [ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security](#). While attempts towards gender parity are being made, more can still be done. One suggestion would be for policymakers to engage with advocates and practitioners from women's organisations, regionally and nationally. This would aid policymakers in increasing their awareness and contextual understanding

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of the political, economic, and social structures that discriminate against women, and in turn, aid them in developing effective policies which take into account the experiences of women.

Secondly, there is a need to improve data collection in the region. While gender-specific data availability in most ASEAN member states is above [the global average](#), others still have insufficient gender-disaggregated data collection, in turn hindering effective policy-making. Through regional platforms such as Statistics Division and the ASEAN Community Statistical System, member states can work together to develop sectoral guidelines on how to collect, process, disseminate, and use such disaggregated data as well as support capacity-building efforts.

Similarly, gender mainstreaming efforts in ASEAN should also take into account investment into women's economic empowerment. Currently, [24% of young women in ASEAN are outside of education and employment](#), and [58% of women in ASEAN make less than their partners](#) – heightening their economic inequality and overall vulnerability. This may be due to a number of factors including a sectoral and occupational bias favouring men, and the socio-cultural tendency for women to bear the brunt of unpaid care work, limiting their ability to participate in paid work. As such, initiatives which seek to improve the overall participation of women in the economy, must also work towards closing the gender gap in unpaid care work. For example, both the public and private sector should be encouraged to invest in care policies such as parental leave and flexible employment – for both men and women. This would in turn, encourage the distribution of the responsibility of care work, while also

harmonising work-home balance.

Overall, mainstreaming women's equality is a key component of building “a people-oriented and people-centered” community. Considering women make up more than half of ASEAN, they must be able to prosper – with policies specifically crafted for their unique experiences, needs and perspectives – in order for the ASEAN Community to reach greater heights and achieve success in the long-run.

SUGGESTED READINGS

ASEAN Secretariat. (2021). ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021–2025. ASEAN.

ASEAN. (2021). ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals. Manila: ASEAN.

UN Women. (2022). Handbook on Gender: Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results. UN Women.

UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division. (2022). Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022. UN Women and UN DESA.



Photo Credit: UN Women Asia and the Pacific/ flickr.com via creative commons

CLIMATE CHANGE



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

More climate records fall in world's warmest February

Last month was the world's warmest February in modern times, extending the run of monthly records to nine in a row. Each month since June 2023 has seen new temperature highs for the time of year. The world's sea surface is at its hottest on record, while Antarctic sea-ice has again reached extreme lows.

Mark Poynting

BBC | 8 March 2024

New study reveals insight into which animals are most vulnerable to extinction due to climate change

Species occupying climatic extremes (for instance in polar regions) were disproportionately vulnerable to extinction, and animals that could only live in a narrow range of temperatures (especially ranges less than 15°C) were significantly more likely to become extinct.

University of Oxford

8 March 2024

Australia's Great Barrier Reef suffers widespread coral bleaching as climate change puts 'tremendous pressure' on marine site

The coral bleaching is extensive in the shallow water areas. Coral can survive a bleaching event but it can stunt growth and affect reproduction.

Renju Jose

Reuters | 8 March 2024

Climate vouchers, coastal protection law among sustainability measures announced at Budget debate

Sustainability was a key pillar that was mentioned in the 2024 Budget debate for multiple ministries. Key announcements include an expanded climate voucher scheme for purchasing energy-saving and water-saving appliances to a new requirement for businesses to declare their carbon footprint.

Cheryl Tan

The Straits Times | 10 March 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

European climate risk assessment: Executive summary

Europe is the fastest-warming continent in the world. If decisive action is not taken now, most climate risks identified could reach critical or catastrophic levels by the end of this century. Hundreds of thousands of people would die from heatwaves, and economic losses from coastal floods alone could exceed EUR 1 trillion per year.

European Environment Agency

EEA Report 01 | 2024

The AI threat to climate change

There are two significant and immediate dangers posed by AI that are much less discussed: 1) the vast increase in energy and water consumption required by AI systems like ChatGPT; and 2) the threat of AI turbocharging disinformation—on a topic already rife with anti-science lies and funded by fossil fuel companies and their networks.

Climate Action Against Disinformation, Check My Ads, Friends of the Earth, Global Action Plan, Greenpeace, Kairos

2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference

The conference will be a key moment for governments, leaders, maritime sectors, philanthropy, universities, private sector, NGOs and more, to take stock of the achievements of the first three years of the Ocean Decade and define a collective vision for the coming years. Participants will benefit from concrete examples and best practices in ocean science to deliver "the science we need for the ocean we want."

Barcelona, Spain

10-12 April 2024

ENERGY SECURITY



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Financing Indonesia's energy transition: Will the next president finally spark change?

Prabowo-Gibran talked about revising regulations hindering new investment in the new and RE sector and improving incentives to encourage the exploration of new energy sources.

Anissa R. Suharsono and Yanuar Nugroho
Eco-Business | 15 February 2024

Philippines' top energy firms partner for \$3.3 bln LNG facility

The Philippines last year began importing liquified natural gas (LNG) as its only gas field is set to run dry by 2027. The Malampaya field supplies power plants that meet one-fifth of the power requirements of the country's main Luzon island, or more than one-10th of total installed capacity nationwide.

Mikhail Flores
Reuters | 3 March 2024

EU countries split over support for nuclear energy

A group of 13 pro-nuclear EU countries, led by France, called for stronger EU policies on nuclear energy. Meanwhile, Austria and Germany led a 13-country call to demand that Brussels should promote renewable energy instead.

Reuters
Channel News Asia | 4 March 2024

Vietnam has become the popular kid in class, which is why Australia has followed the US and China in signing a new deal

The agreement will further embrace Australia's exports of coal and liquefied natural gas. Australia was a key coal supplier to Vietnam, accounting for 44% of its total coal imports.

Jason Dasey and Stephen Dziedzic
ABC News | 7 March 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Does the urban-rural income gap matter for rural energy poverty?

This study employs a two-way fixed-effects model and conducts an asymmetry analysis to test the influence of the urban-rural income gap and financial development on rural energy poverty and analyse whether the urban-rural income gap can exacerbate rural energy poverty in China.

Yi-Shuai Ren, Xianhua Kuang and Tony Klein
Energy Policy, Vol. 186 | 2024

The effects of hydrogen research and innovation on international hydrogen trade

This study argues that that research and innovation progress is indeed associated with increased trade, especially with patenting and (international) standardisation, enhancing hydrogen export volumes.

Parsa Asna Ashari and Knut Blind
Energy Policy, Vol. 186 | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Asia Clean Energy Summit 2024

ACES is the region's leading event focusing on clean energy technology, policy and finance supported by leading government agencies, research institutes and industry in Singapore.

Singapore
24-26 October 2024

FOOD SECURITY



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Philippines struggles to lower rice price despite ample supply

Rice prices in the Philippines remain high despite a recent bumper crop. Philippine Agriculture Undersecretary Roger Navarro has argued that the higher price is reflective of the higher rice grain import prices from source countries like Vietnam and Thailand. The high price levels are attributed to the impact of India's rice export bans on international markets.

Huaxia

Xinhua | 17 February 2024

Rice imports lead farmers to bankruptcy, endangers food sovereignty: Serikat Petani Indonesia

Indonesia has in recent times disbursed a significant portion of its rice reserves, leading to the need for massive imports to meet government's minimum rice stock requirements. However, farmers are rallying against the timing of the decision to import, which coincides with the harvest seasons, thus depressing prices for farmers' rice.

Press Release by the Indonesian Peasants' Union (Serikat Petani Indonesia/ SPI)

La Via Campesina | 20 February 2024

Russia, Ukraine, and global food security: A two-year assessment

The author argues that receding global food prices, of late, mask an ongoing global food security crisis. She likewise argues that Russia has been using its food exports as a key tool for soft power.

Caitlin Welsh

CSIS Critical Questions | 27 February 2024

"Food chokepoint" disruptions and implications for Asia

The authors argue that ongoing disruptions to maritime traffic in the Red Sea and Suez Canal have highlighted the threats posed by "food chokepoints" in the flow of agricultural products. They call for greater consideration, among policymakers and private sector planners, of region-wide initiatives to circumvent such chokepoints.

Genevieve Donnellon-May and Paul Teng

RSIS Commentaries | 13 March 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Revisiting the controversy on hunger and food security in South Asia

The author discusses the controversy over undernourishment in India, which was brought up by the government of India in reaction to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's State of Food Security and Nutrition Report. The said report put India's undernourishment at 16.6% of the country's population, much higher than regional and global averages.

Puspa Sharma

ISAS Working Papers | February 2024

Institutions and agricultural transformation: A study of induced innovation in the Philippine rice sector

Despite significant support by the Philippine government over the past decades to its rice sector (as a share of GDP), rice productivity growth has lagged behind demand growth, leading to higher domestic rice prices compared to other countries, and worsening food security outcomes. This dissertation analysed this puzzle using the theoretical approach of rational choice institutionalism (RCI), whereby institutions shape individual behaviour, and are also shaped by individual behaviour.

Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros

Digital Repository – NTU | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

The HEAD Foundation Dialogues: Food Security Issues in Asia

This event discusses why matters of food security are paramount for Asia, which is home to half of the world's population and also has the largest number of food insecure people. It will also discuss the specific technologies that are likely to determine its future in the region, and the investments needed to enable an environment for technology to have impact.

Hybrid: Zoom and The Head Foundation Headquarters, Singapore

27 March 2024



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

WHO and European Union strengthen Indonesia's health system for a healthier tomorrow

The World Health Organization and European Union announced the completion of a three-year project to support Indonesia's emergency COVID-19 response, which was aimed to strengthen Indonesia's health system resilience and increase access to essential health services.

World Health Organization

19 February 2024

Health security: A national policy priority in the post-pandemic world

This article calls for countries to invest more domestically in preparedness, response, and to enhance global cooperation, so as to be better prepared for public health emergencies in the future.

Sahil Deo, Christian Franz, and Rithika Sangameshwaran

ORF | 22 February 2024

The Quad: Can this democratic coalition bolster global health security?

This article explores the potential of QUAD to boost global cooperation in health security, noting the contributions of QUAD members during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, it also highlights the problems of the coalition, such as geographic limitation and the risk of instrumentalising health cooperation.

Vivek N.D.

The Diplomat | 2 March 2024

Covid-19 lowered life expectancy by 1.6 years worldwide: Study

A study undertaken by a research team of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation finds that COVID-19 shortened the average life expectancy of people worldwide by 1.6 years in the first two years of the pandemic.

The Straits Times

12 March 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

World health statistics 2023: Monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals

This report reviews more than 50 health-related indicators from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13).

WHO

May 2023

One Health and planetary health research: Leveraging differences to grow together

This report was published to support the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the health emergency prevention, preparedness, response and resilience capacities. The updated benchmark now includes a critical new technical area, public health and social measures (PHSM).

Rafael Ruiz de Castaneda et al.

The Lancet Planetary Health 7(2) | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

2024 Planetary Health Summit & 6th Annual Meeting

The 2024 Planetary Health Summit will be convened by Sunway Centre for Planetary Health in partnership with the Planetary Health Alliance. This hybrid meeting (held in-person and virtually) will bring together scientists, educators, students, policymakers, civil-society, private-sector representatives, and others to learn about these complex relationships, seek solutions, and build skills for action and change.

Sunway University, Malaysia

16-19 April 2024

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF



Photo Credit: EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid on Flickr.com/Creative Commons

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

What can humanitarian expect from the UN's Pact for the Future?

Although some have extensive disagreements around the zero draft revolving around diplomatic bickering and a perceived lack of ambition on big ticket items such as UN Security Council reform, others regard this pact as a chance for incremental change.

Will Worley

The New Humanitarian | 20 February 2024

From content to harm: How harmful information contributes to civilian harm

Harmful information can enable or aggravate risks of harm for civilians. By identifying patterns in underlying risk factors, it may be possible to identify the circumstances in which civilian harm may result from the sharing of such harmful information.

Chris Brew

Humanitarian Law & Policy | 27 February 2024

Saving lives at sea in Southeast Asia – Is a course correction possible?

Since 2015, the humanitarian community has used humanitarian vessels for search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea. Similar efforts have not been seen in and around Southeast Asia so far, but there is now a growing likelihood of non-state maritime humanitarian actors emerging in the region.

Alistair D.B Cook

IDSS Commentaries | 29 February 2024

Humanitarians still haven't agreed what they should do about climate change

Despite years of reflection, there is still a distinct lack of clarity about the precise role of humanitarian aid in addressing climate change. Ideas range from a complete reconceptualisation of the humanitarian system, to a recalibration of the system.

Damian Lilly

Humanitarian Practice Network | 29 February 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

A review on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation: Gaps of governance in Malaysia

This article examines the current gaps in Malaysia practices on disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change.

Mohd Syukri Mandor et al.

Journal of Management Info 10(4) | 2024

People and planet: Addressing the interlinked challenges of climate change, poverty and hunger in Asia and the Pacific

By analysing how intensifying climate change threatens to increase poverty and hunger in Asia and the Pacific, this report highlights the need for stakeholders to better incorporate the effects of climate change into transformative solutions that increase resilience, and protect hard-fought development gains.

Asian Development Bank

2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Launch of the Gender Action Plan to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Gender Action Plan was designed to use existing mechanisms and networks to implement the 33 key actions of the Sendai GAP into DRR work at regional, country and local levels. It will help accelerate the efforts of all actors towards achieving the goal, outcome and targets of the Sendai Framework by 2030.

Online Event

18 March 2024

MIGRATION



Photo Credit: UN Women on Flickr.com/Creative Commons

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Myanmar's humanitarian crisis worsens under military rule

With an intensification of the conflict in Myanmar, it is estimated that there are more than 2.7 million internally displaced persons as of March. Health infrastructure is also under siege, with more than 1,000 attacks on the healthcare system.

Soe Nandar Linn

East Asia Forum | 13 February 2024

"We can't see the sun: Malaysia's arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees

There are about 12,000 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants held in 20 immigration detention centres across Malaysia. Detained migrants can spend months or even years in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions, and subjected to abuse by guards.

Human Rights Watch

5 March 2024

Reform of EU migration policy won't lead to Rwanda-style plans, says Ylva Johansson

The EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum will manage the arrival of asylum seekers and ensure a fair distribution for those granted international protection. Separately, Italy signed an agreement with Albania to build two asylum centres there. Activists have slammed the deal, as it could lead to human rights violations.

Jorge Liboreiro

Euronews | 12 March 2024

Protests in India as Modi enforces migration laws that exclude Muslims

India has implemented a citizenship law that has been criticised for being discriminatory against Muslims. Protests against the new law erupted across Assam and Delhi.

Alisha Rahaman Sarkar

The Independent | 13 March 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

The mobility key: Realizing the potential of refugee travel documents

Refugees often face difficulties acquiring the documents needed for travel. The Convention Travel Document, issued by the county of asylum, can allow their entry into countries that recognise them. The report suggests that asylum countries should adapt their laws to make refugee documents easy to use, while destination and transit countries should address gaps in how they handle the travel documents of refugees travelling through.

Migration Policy Institute

2024

ILO strategy on extending social protection to migrant workers, refugees, and their families

About 4.1 billion individuals lack access to social protection. Those that are especially vulnerable include migrant workers, refugees and their families. Their access to social protection benefits hinges on the availability of social protection schemes at the national level and may be impeded by inherent discrimination.

International Labour Organization

2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Sonia Shah: The Next Great Migration

An award-winning journalist unpacks the assumptions about migration which includes equating migrants with catastrophe. Instead of the apocalyptic portrayals of migration patterns in the media, the science and history of migration in animals, plants and humans tell a different story. The book examines how migration can be a natural, lifesaving process in response to environmental change.

Webinar

26 January 2024