Addressing Gender in the Management of ASEAN Heritage Parks: A Proposed Plan of Action

Although women serve as custodians of biodiversity based on their reproductive/household functions, in most cases, they are not consulted in biodiversity conservation programs and projects, which has limited their participation in decision-making and control over natural resources.

To identify and address gender-related issues in biodiversity conservation in the ASEAN region, the Institutional Strengthening of the Biodiversity Sector in the ASEAN (ISB) project of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) conducted a gender assessment in five ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) and one protected area. The AHPs were Nam Ha National Protected Area in Lao PDR; Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park and Mt. Malindang Range Natural Park in the Philippines; and Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve and Bukit Timah Nature Reserve in Singapore. The lone protected area was Him Nam No National Protected Area in Lao PDR.

The assessment, entitled “Gender Assessment for Biodiversity Conservation in the ASEAN: The Case of Selected Protected Areas in Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Singapore” aimed to (a) generate updated information on gender in biodiversity conservation in protected areas in the selected ASEAN Member States; (b) identify issues, challenges, and opportunities concerning gender in biodiversity conservation; (c) formulate a gender strategy/framework for biodiversity conservation; and (d) recommend activities for mainstreaming gender in the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme.

Key findings and recommendations

1. All ASEAN Member States are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW, which was ratified in 1981, serves as the international bill of rights of women (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm).

2. The laws and policies that promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming are clearly defined in the ASEAN Member States. However, gender mainstreaming is still at different levels in different countries (ASEAN Secretariat Report, 2016).

3. Reproductive roles (i.e., household work and child rearing) are shared between women and men in the three ASEAN Member States visited.

4. The levels of awareness of gender and of gender skills vary among the ASEAN Heritage Parks and countries assessed. Gender has yet to be fully integrated in the programs, projects, and activities of ASEAN Heritage Parks to address their commitments to comply with the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD; i.e., conservation of genetic species and ecosystems; sustainable use of these resources; and access and benefit sharing).

5. Gender mainstreaming will involve a process of change: a transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women. To facilitate gender mainstreaming in the AHPs, the Gender
Plan of Action for ASEAN Heritage Parks (GPoA-AHPs) is proposed. The proposed GPoA-AHPs is consistent with the UNEP Gender Plan of Action (2006) and the CBD Gender Plan of Action (2008) developed by IUCN in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat. Its activities revolve around four spheres: policy, organization, delivery, and constituency.


6. The proposed GPoA-AHPs is based on the results of the field assessments of gender in relation to biodiversity in the three ASEAN Member States. These include the consultations and focus group discussions that were undertaken with various stakeholders in the selected AHPs and protected areas in Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Singapore.

The objectives of the proposed Gender Plan of Action for AHPs are:

- Promote gender equality in achieving the objectives of the AHP Programme, the CBD Programme of Work for Protected Areas, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity;
- Mainstream a gender perspective into the program, projects, and activities of the Regional Action Plan for the AHPs (2016-2020); and
- Increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the AHP Programme and Programme of Work for Protected Areas.

On the basis of the gender analysis that incorporated data and observations from only three ASEAN Member States with five AHPs and one protected area, the approved Regional Action Plan for AHPs 2016-2020, the NBSAPs, and AHP-level plans, the activities in the proposed GPoA-AHPs were identified for gender mainstreaming. Not all these activities are applicable to all AHPs. These are open for revision, depending on the local situation of the AHP concerned. The activities are also dependent on the needs of, and applicability in, the AMS/AHPs.

The proposed GPoA-AHP outlines major strategies to mainstream gender perspectives in the AHP Programme. The table below summarizes the GPoA Targets for AHPs and ACB.

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| Policy Sphere: Builds the appropriate policy framework that provides the mandate, political support, and resources needed to ensure that gender mainstreaming takes place | • Mainstream gender and biodiversity in the activities of the AHP RAP (2016-2020).  
• Secure funding support for gender and biodiversity activities.  
• Strengthen commitment of high-level government officials to gender equality and biodiversity.  

| Organization Sphere: Addresses gender equality in staffing, institutional capacity, staff development, accountability, and related equal opportunity policies | • Establish a Gender Secretariat to facilitate gender mainstreaming in AHPs.  
• Strengthen gender mainstreaming capacities of AHP staff.  
• Ensure that gender equality is reflected in human resource management.  
• Increase awareness of the responsibility of AHP staff for gender mainstreaming.  

| Constituency Sphere: Mobilizes partners and builds on existing efforts, good practices, and lessons learned to enhance effective and efficient gender mainstreaming | • Build partnerships and establish networks to promote gender mainstreaming in AHPs.  
• Link the GPoA-AHP with related activities of other agencies.  
• Build awareness of gender and biodiversity activities of AHPs among gender-related and women’s organizations.  

| Delivery Sphere: Deals with ways in which gender is addressed in the theory, methodology, and applied research upon which activities to be undertaken are based | • Collect and disseminate information on gender and biodiversity.  
• Identify/develop/improve and promote implementation tools and methodologies to mainstream gender into biodiversity-related activities.  
• Link gender, biodiversity, poverty eradication, and disaster risk reduction.  
• Collaborate with other institutions to promote exchange programs on gender.  

• Provide funding support for gender and biodiversity.  
• Strengthen commitment towards gender equality and biodiversity.  

• Establish a Gender Secretariat to facilitate gender mainstreaming in AHPs.  

• Strengthen mainstreaming capacities of AHP managers and AHP Committee members.  

• Develop/Collect and disseminate information on gender.