

## **CEVAW Submission to International Gender Equality Strategy**

### **1. What are international gender equality priorities?**

- Elimination of gender-based violence (GBV)

The cost of violence against women (VAW) is estimated to be 2% of Gross Domestic Product, or US\$1.5 trillion.<sup>1</sup> The Asia and Pacific regions are no exception to experiencing the costs of VAW. Over 37% of women in South Asia, 40% of women in South-East Asia and up to 68% of women in the Pacific have experienced violence at the hands of their partners.<sup>2</sup> This does not include experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public spaces, transport, workplaces, and at the hands of other family members and strangers let alone the psychological and economic violence experienced by women especially those in vulnerable groups such as disability, ethnoreligious minority, LGBTQI+, and migrants/refugees.

Investment in higher education as a site for the promotion of domestic and regional design of research and policy on gender-based violence will create a knowledge-based economy that achieves social, economic, and political public good.<sup>3</sup>

- International gender equality priorities include regional priorities and norms

The ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, for example, has identified the need to prioritise educational and research opportunities to promote gender equality within and across Southeast Asian countries:

Priority Action 3.2.2. Undertake innovative pilot programmes such as “edutainment” programmes and other public information campaigns and advocacy strategies to ensure all women and men can feel empowered and supported to report security concerns and

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women. 2016. The economic costs of violence against women. Remarks by UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Lakshmi Puri at the high-level discussion on the “Economic Cost of Violence against Women, 21 September. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO. 2021. Call to action to end violence against women in Asia and the Pacific. 21 December. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/call-action-end-violence-against-women-asia-and-pacific#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20violence%20against%20women,the%20hands%20of%20their%20partners.>

<sup>3</sup> Mollica, C., Davies, S.E., True, J., Eddyono, S.W., Fonseka, B., & Johnston, M. 2022. Women and the Justice Divide in Asia Pacific: How can Informal and Formal Institutions Bridge the Gap? *Human Rights Quarterly* 44(3), 612-639. doi:10.1353/hrq.2022.0029; True, J. 2013. *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women*. New York: Oxford University Press (Chapter 10).

risks to authorities and have the capacity to mitigate and address risks in their own spheres of influence and daily practices where appropriate.

Priority Action 3.2.3. Carry out research and analysis to understand the barriers to women’s full involvement in confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding at local, national and regional levels, that includes analysis of intersectional variables such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, etc., to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness to “the diverse needs of all women. This analysis should also identify enabling factors—delving into success stories.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. What are the most effective approaches for achieving gender equality globally?**

To date, most of the research on how to reduce and prevent VAW has not paid attention to the role of higher education sector investment as informing and driving locally-led research and ownership of VAW reduction strategies. A recent study on VAW research found that less than 1% of total Official Development Assistance (ODA), globally, goes to violence against women and girls research or programming, with even less (0.05% of total ODA) spent on research evaluation. Further investigation into these investments found that none went on to recommend independent research on VAW, or investment in research outside of existing government structures.<sup>5</sup> However, there is a large volume of research demonstrating that sector-specific higher education investment is vital for building a knowledge economy in a particular industry or sector and for nurturing local policy entrepreneurs.<sup>6</sup> Investment in higher education as a sector essential to build prevention and evidence-based approaches needs to be applied to the GBV and VAW sector and embedded in Australian foreign and international development aid policies.

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<sup>4</sup> ASEAN. 2022. ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security. P.29. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/32-ASEAN-Regional-Plan-of-Action-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> SVRI. 2022. ‘Tracking the Funding Flows: Funding for Research on Violence Against Women in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. Sexual Violence Research Initiative. Pretoria: South Africa. P.20, 27. <https://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-03-15/Trackingfunding.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Mintrom, M. Maurya, D., and Jingwei He, A. 2020. Policy entrepreneurship in Asia: the emerging research agenda, *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 13:1, 1-17, DOI: 10.1080/17516234.2020.1715593 Wenham, C., Wouters, O., Jones, C. Juma, P., Mijumbi-Deve, R.M. Sobngwi-Tambekou, J.L. and Parkhurst J. 2021. Measuring health science research and development in Africa: mapping the available data. *Health Res Policy Systems* 19, 142. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-021-00778-y>

To date, the majority of VAW prevention education investment is on comprehensive sexuality education programmes at the primary/high school/college level.<sup>7</sup> These investments are important, but to create leadership in the sectors best placed to create innovative policy and practice initiatives to reduce VAW (health, legal and justice systems, political institutions and technology), requires direct investment in building local VAW experts who are trained in how to build and use evidence to drive change in policy and practice.<sup>8</sup>

There needs to be investment in cross-institutional higher education research programs, courses and degrees, and research collaboration that promotes research and knowledge on violence against women across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. With research-based knowledge and experience gained through postgraduate education, local experts can lead in data collection, longitudinal research and research translation to policy. They can stay connected to international knowledge networks for learning, exchange and policy transfer while also educating the next generation and creating broader societal awareness through their thought leadership.

This investment would create momentum for the development of a strong, research-informed group of policy entrepreneurs across Asia and the Pacific who will advocate, inform, and create national and local policies for the effective prevention of VAW. It would be directly linked to the achievement of Australian, and Indo-Pacific, gender equality objectives.

### **3. How can Australia best support efforts to achieve gender equality internationally?**

Transnational networks or epistemic communities are created through educational and research experiences that have long-lasting effects in terms of normative alignment and change.

The Australian government has invested in gender equality, with a specific focus on ending sexual and gender-based violence, in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>9</sup> These investments have focused on humanitarian response, relief and recovery, economic empowerment, advocacy, and data collection. The missing link in these investments is prioritisation of a sustainable GBV research

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<sup>7</sup> Kerr-Wilson, A., Gibbs, A., McAslan Fraser, E., Ramsoomar, L., Parke, A., Khuwaja, H.M.A., and Jewkes, R. 2020. A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls. What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls Global Programme. <https://ww2preventvawg.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/19.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Oo, P. and Davies, S.E.. 2021. Access to Whose Justice? Survivor-Centered Justice for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Northern Shan State, *Global Studies Quarterly*, 1: 3. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksab014>

<sup>9</sup> DFAT. nd. Australia's international support for gender equality. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/gender-equality/Australias-international-support-for-gender-equality>

sector capacity across the region. There is a need to invest in building expertise and research capabilities on gender-based violence in Asia and the Pacific. This requires training a large number of individuals, through the Australia Awards scheme, who can then return to Asia and the Pacific to lead higher education programs that can conduct ongoing analysis of frameworks, evidence, gaps, prevention approaches and policy responses to VAW reduction, prevention, and protection.

#### **4. What should the government/DFAT consider when developing the new international gender equality strategy?**

Fundamentally social and political change are shaped by knowledge transfer and networks. Many decision-makers in the region note their higher education experience in Australia and its enduring impact on their thinking. There are existing Australia Award schemes that have provided PhD training and research collaboration on, for example, women's roles in the prevention of Violent Extremism in SEA, that have led to research connections with the Indonesian government, such as the National Research and Innovation Agency (Indonesian: *Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional*, BRIN).<sup>10</sup> There are also training schemes, such as the Australia Award Women's Leadership Initiative,<sup>11</sup> which could serve as a model for DFAT's investment in the GBV research sector. These schemes have provided training, early career research opportunities, and research networks. There is a need to capitalise on these investments and expand higher education expertise across the region in order to support, for example, DFAT's investment in the Gender-Based Violence Platform for Southeast Asia. We suggest the focus of dedicated Australian Awards for Higher Education and Research on Gender-Based Violence in three areas:

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<sup>10</sup> Alexandra Phelan and Irine Hiraswari Gayatri. 2022. Integrating Gender into Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Lessons From the ASEAN Region. Australian Outlook. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/integrating-gender-into-preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-lessons-from-the-asean-region/>

Alexandra Phelan, Irine Hiraswari Gayatri, Jacqui True, Amporn Marddent, Yolanda Riveros-Morales and Sitte Janine Gamao. 2022. Gender Analysis of Violent Extremism and the Impact of Covid-19 on Peace and Security in ASEAN: Evidence-based research for policy. [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/FINAL\\_EN\\_Gender%20Analysis%20of%20Violent%20Extremism%20and%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20Peace%20and%20Security%20in%20ASEAN\\_0.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/FINAL_EN_Gender%20Analysis%20of%20Violent%20Extremism%20and%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20Peace%20and%20Security%20in%20ASEAN_0.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/Pages/australia-awards-womens-leadership-initiative#:~:text=The%20Australia%20Awards%20Women's%20Leadership,sectors%20and%20spheres%20of%20society.>

1. Masters level and PhD level investment. Focused investment in Gender-Based Violence research with opportunity for students from the Pacific and Southeast Asia to enrol in Australian higher education institutions to study gender-based violence, with financial support for industry internship and fieldwork placements within their home country. Creation of an alumni network run by the study cohort, but supported by an Australian research institution, to foster future collaboration.
2. Academic investment. A Fellowship scheme (multiple per year) that support early and mid-career academics from Southeast Asia and the Pacific, across multiple disciplines, to visit Australia on 'secondment' to higher education institutions conducting best research and teaching practice in gender-based violence research. Create and foster cross-institutional learning and research between Australian and Pacific, as well as Southeast Asia, research institutions.
3. Research investment. Support regional gender-based violence 'seed' research projects on shared areas of interest and focus, i.e. GBV during disasters, GBV and technology, GBV and disability, to incentivise research collaboration between Australian, Pacific, and Southeast Asian higher education research institutions.

This targeted investment would have the benefit of building strong research, research networks and capacity, and research translation and influence, as well as 'people to people' networks across Australia and the region from the base of universities and research institutions in the area of gender-based violence. Which would be unique to this region and complimentary to the Australian Research Council's investment in the Centre for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEVAW), of which DFAT is a partner.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.arc.gov.au/funding-research/discovery-linkage/linkage-program/arc-centres-excellence/arc-centre-excellence-elimination-violence-against-women>