



Aid flows and women and work in Southeast Asia

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Although Southeast Asian countries have all increased their level of economic development over recent decades, development assistance continues to be important for many countries in the region.

When measuring the impact of aid, and the power it gives donor countries to influence policy on gender and other issues, it is also important to consider the relative size of aid flows as compared to the recipient country's gross national income.

According to the OECD and World Bank data, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar have received the highest gross flows of aid from other countries over recent years. Yet while gross aid flows to Timor-Leste, Cambodia and Laos are relatively low, it is these countries that received the most development assistance as a percentage of gross national income.

Timor-Leste in particular received a very high level of support, with 7.8 percent of its gross national income coming from official development assistance in 2015. Similarly, Cambodia and Laos received relatively modest amounts, but in both cases it accounted for 4.0 percent of their gross national income. By contrast, the Philippines received the largest amount of official development assistance, but it accounted for 0.1 percent of its national gross income.

In Indonesia's case, over USD 3 billion in overseas development assistance received in 2015 comprised just a tiny proportion of gross national income.

Official Development Assistance in 2015

Recipient	ODA (USD Million)	Net ODA as % of GNI
Philippines	\$3117.6	0.1
Indonesia	\$3053.8	0.0
Vietnam	\$2589.5	1.7
Myanmar	\$2194.9	2.0
Cambodia	\$711.0	4.0
Thailand	\$478.7	0.0
Laos	\$341.8	4.0
Timor-Leste	\$157.1	7.8
Malaysia	\$60.9	0.0

Investing in women to achieve gender equity

	Livelihoods	Entrepreneurship	Workplace equality	Labour migration	Human rights	Health	Peace	Violence	Leadership
Australia	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Canada	x	x					x	x	x
Denmark							x	x	x
Finland		x	x		x	x	x		x
Norway	x				x	x			x
Sweden	x				x	x	x		
USA	x	x			x	x	x	x	x

In recent years Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States (USA) have all actively supported women's projects in Southeast Asia. While some of these countries support workplace-related projects through their national trade union movements, the largest number of directly funded projects focus on the themes of leadership and peace.

An analysis of information published online by each of these country donors shows that most tend to describe projects in Southeast Asia as focused on general themes such as participation in decision-making and leadership; sexual and maternal health; the role of women in peace-building; gender-based violence; or women's rights as human rights.

Far fewer projects address themes associated with women's economic empowerment, including the issues of livelihoods, entrepreneurship, labour migration, or gender equality in the workplace.

Among this cluster, women's livelihoods and entrepreneurship are the themes most commonly invoked. Far fewer projects target women as workers. In fact, only Australia and Finland describe some of their Southeast Asia work as involving a focus on women's experiences of formal sector work.

The Investing in Women Initiative is a major new Australian initiative that focuses not only on women as entrepreneurs but on helping businesses improve gender equality in large-scale workplaces in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam. In doing so, it is helping to stem the tide away from support for women in the workplace.

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