

Workshop on the Institutional Strengthening of National Women's Machineries in South-East Asia

8-11 November 2011
Meeting Room H
United Nations Conference Centre
Bangkok

Aide-mémoire

I. Background of the Workshop

In all countries of South-East Asia, National Women's Machineries (NWMs) have been established as key institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. Research on NWMs indicates that as institutions they mostly remain marginalised in national government structures. The result is a lack of sufficient financial and human resources, as well as political support, in order to effectively coordinate gender mainstreaming within government structures across national policy, budget and programmes and to influence policies directly focused towards women's empowerment and rights. The better positioning and enhanced capacities of NWMs within the larger policy environment remains a common challenge across the subregion.

The importance of strengthening NWMs has been highlighted and mandated by the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing + 15, adopted by governments of the Asia-Pacific region at a High-level Intergovernmental Meeting convened by ESCAP in November 2009, reaffirming the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference Platform for Action. Accordingly, ESCAP has initiated, in cooperation with UN-Women, a series of capacity strengthening subregional workshops in the Asia-Pacific region that involves senior officials representing NWMs in each of the participating countries.

The first Workshop of this series was conducted for the South and South-West Asian subregion from 18 to 21 January 2011. The current Workshop is the second in this series on the institutional strengthening of national women's machineries in South-East Asia.

II. Organizational arrangements

The Workshop on the Institutional Strengthening of National Women's Machineries in South-East Asia will take place in Meeting Room H, the United Nations

Conference Centre, for four days from 8 to 11 November 2011, Bangkok. It is being organised by ESCAP jointly with UN-Women East and South-East Asia Sub-Regional Office.

III. Participation

The Workshop will bring together country teams of three senior-level government officials from NWMs in the following countries of the South-East Asia subregion: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

IV. Objectives and expected outcomes

The Workshop aims to enhance the institutional capacity of NWMs to strengthen their strategic positioning and ability to effectively advocate and negotiate gender mainstreaming within government structures across national policy, budget and programmes. It also aims to identify and address areas of strategic concern for the advancement of women's equality and rights.

Participants will also engage in concentrated discussions on institutional capacity of NWMs to fulfill specific accountability responsibilities and coordination roles in relation to international commitments, in particular the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

A special focus on shared priorities and strategies for subregional cooperation will be maintained and priorities for follow-up at national and subregional levels will be identified. Specifically, the Workshop aims to achieve the following:

1. Increased understanding of the roles and functions exercised by NWMs in the South-East Asia subregion through cross-country sharing of experiences and practices;
2. Strengthened capacity for applying diverse tools and methodologies to mainstream gender within government structures through critically reflecting on successes and challenges;
3. Enhanced knowledge with regards to the identification of areas of strategic concern for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights;
4. Strengthened capacity and knowledge of NWMs to fulfill their responsibilities in coordinating implementation of CEDAW;
5. Enhanced awareness of shared concerns and priorities at the national and subregional levels.

V. Format

South-South cooperation is a guiding framework of the Workshop. The active participation of Workshop participants in open floor discussions and group work is expected in order to draw on the experiences and expertise of senior NWMs' officials present in formulating strategies for strengthening the institutional framework for NWMs to influence national policy agendas. The Workshop will be facilitated by a moderator with expertise in leading workshops on capacity development and institutional change. Furthermore, experts in various fields related to the Workshop's topics will guide specific discussions and group activities. The Workshop's format will thus be a mixture of focused expert presentations and participants' inputs and contributions. This format is employed in order to inform and contextualise analyses in national realities. The experiences and lessons learned from the Workshop, as well as the relevant strategies identified, will be consolidated in order to identify common priorities and next steps at national and subregional levels.

VI. Expected substantive contributions by participants

Participants will be expected to actively engage in discussions and group work to share national and practical expertise on successes and challenges facing NWMs, as well as to identify strategies for affecting institutional and policy change. In order to support the application of the skills and insights learned from the Workshop, participants will be expected to identify strategies and priority actions for follow-up at national and subregional level. This includes critically analysing cooperation between NWMs and the UN system, and means by which the latter can support NWMs in their roles and responsibilities.