

# The ASEAN



one vision  
one identity  
one community

ISSUE 01 | MAY 2020



## A Shared Identity Becoming ASEAN

ISSN 2721-8058



**SHIFTING CURRENTS**  
COVID-19: A Collective  
Response in ASEAN

**THE INSIDE VIEW**  
Unity, Diversity  
and ASEAN Identity

**SNAPSHOTS**  
ASEAN Heritage Park Conference  
Highlights Sustainability and Innovation



# ASEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

Take a Virtual Tour

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Manjusri Sculpture is from a collection of the National Museum of Indonesia. The sculpture carries great national value for being an iconographic-innovation and the only silver-metal artwork from the Hindu-Buddha period found in the archipelago.

<https://heritage.asean.org/>

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## Launch of ASEAN Year of Identity

With the launch of the ASEAN Year of Identity in 2020, we seek to generate public discussion on building a shared identity



## Women's Month

In celebration of the Women's month, we explore how women are shaping the peace and security agenda in the region



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# The ASEAN

Secretary-General of ASEAN  
**Dato Lim Jock Hoi**

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)  
**Kung Phoak**

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## Message from the Secretary-General of ASEAN

It is with great pleasure I present the first issue of *The ASEAN* magazine, which aims to share and communicate ASEAN's work to its citizens. ASEAN's vision goes beyond attaining regional peace, stability, and economic development. This vision essentially provides for building a community and improving the quality of life of our people.

Much work has been carried out in ensuring the needs of vulnerable sections of society are heard and addressed. Initiatives include protecting children from abuse and exploitation, empowering youth with relevant skills for the 21st century, and ensuring ASEAN is ready to accommodate the needs of a rapidly aging population. Furthermore, the region's migrant and informal workers are being provided with protection through various ASEAN declarations and commitments. ASEAN also conducts various projects to empower girls and women, and steps have been taken to ensure that the region is more disabled-friendly. As a disaster-prone region, ASEAN has initiatives in place to respond to natural disasters in a more effective and collective manner. We are also addressing regional health and environmental challenges through ASEAN mechanisms and projects.

As we look into global best practices, we seek to adapt and adopt methods using the ASEAN way, with emphasis on our shared values and common goals. We have identified the need to convey these narratives in more engaging and accessible ways. Tangible results and outcomes of our meetings, programmes, and initiatives have to be explained to our stakeholders in words that people speak, understand, and feel, beyond the language of diplomats and academics. This magazine aims to bridge this gap and to contribute towards nurturing a sense of belonging and unity among ASEAN citizens that is based on common grounds, aspirations, and a celebration of our differences.

It is our aspiration that *The ASEAN* will reach a wider audience outside of our region's 650 million citizens. I hope our readers will be inspired by the stories we have to offer and understand why our founding fathers agreed to craft our unity under ASEAN. I wish that this magazine brings people closer, foster a greater sense of belonging, and help build a true ASEAN Identity among us all.

**Dato Lim Jock Hoi**  
Secretary-General of ASEAN



## Message from the Ambassador of India to ASEAN

My heartiest congratulations to the team at the ASEAN Secretariat, for producing the first issue of *The ASEAN* magazine.

I hope that this magazine will serve as a powerful platform to spread awareness amongst citizens in the 10 ASEAN Member States, on the work that is being done by ASEAN and the real impact this is having on their day to day lives including their security and prosperity. I also hope that it will contribute to forging a strong sense of an 'ASEAN Identity' in the minds of citizens particularly the youth who have to continue the valuable work done by their previous generations in building a cohesive and united ASEAN to meet the challenges of the future.

*The ASEAN* can also serve to bring ASEAN out of the shadows for audiences in the wider international community, who seem to know little about its work and even less about the important contributions that ASEAN and ASEAN led multilateral platforms have been making over the last decades to the maintenance of regional peace, security and prosperity.

India's ties with all 10 ASEAN Member States are deeply rooted in history, and our ancient civilizational and cultural linkages. In contemporary times, India as a Strategic Partner of ASEAN has a strong and abiding interest to see ASEAN grow into a cohesive and effective regional organization in the Indo-Pacific region. The core strength of any regional organization is its sense of being a cohesive Community, sharing common values and common purposes. India is honored to be part of a project that is going to contribute to developing this core strength.

My very best wishes to the team at the ASEAN Secretariat for this exciting new adventure they are embarking on.

**Rudrendra Tandon**

Ambassador of India to ASEAN





## Message from the Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN

*The ASEAN* magazine's inaugural issue comes out at a time of profound uncertainty for ASEAN and its people. The COVID-19 pandemic is posing serious challenges to ASEAN Member States in their pandemic preparedness and response mechanisms, health systems, and economies. It is also testing the ASEAN's capacity for regional cooperation.

All these issues—people's health, livelihoods, care for the vulnerable, access to food and basic necessities, and education—are the core work of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Significant progress has already been achieved in improving the lives of people across ASEAN Member States, but there are certainly numerous gaps that still need to be filled and some of those have been highlighted by the crisis.

Existing regional mechanisms were activated since the outbreak hit the region in early January. As each Member State continues to respond to the pandemic and mitigate its impact on its citizens, ASEAN, as a regional bloc, is presented with opportunities to find new ways of working together during a crisis of this magnitude.

ASEAN Member States, along with our partners and international organizations, and the ASEAN Secretariat have mapped out more robust mechanisms for coordination and cooperation.

COVID-19 is a threat that is far larger than one nation can handle.

ASEAN people share common values of caring for family and for community. These values are illustrated in stories about citizens extending assistance to health workers, front liners, and to the most vulnerable members of their communities.

The idea for a magazine was conceived at a time when ASEAN was preparing to launch a campaign to set 2020 as the designated year of ASEAN Identity.

In this issue, our readers will find articles from the Information and Culture and Arts sectoral bodies, as well as The ASEAN Foundation, and an interview with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi that expound on the need to define what being an ASEAN citizen means.

The hope is that ASEAN will come out of this crisis stronger, better, and more united, sharing a common goal for the peaceful and economic aspirations of the people.

*The ASEAN* magazine will be here to chronicle these stories, defining moments of a region and a generation, to demonstrate how the vision of the ASEAN founding fathers have cascaded to the unity of the people: that our Asian values and culture have more similarities than differences, and that, ultimately, We Are One Community.

### **Kung Phoak**

Deputy Secretary General  
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community



# Inside View

## **BECOMING ASEAN: THE INSIDE VIEW**

What is ASEAN Identity? ASEAN experts and insiders draw on history, culture, and ASEAN's guiding principles to shed light on what makes us "ASEAN"

# Unity, diversity and the ASEAN Identity

**BY AARON MANIAM**

CHAIR, SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING RESPONSIBLE FOR INFORMATION (SOMRI)  
DEPUTY SECRETARY (INDUSTRY AND INFORMATION)  
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION  
SINGAPORE

**I have always been a bit of a polyglot. Ethnically, my mother is half-Malay and almost half-Pakistani—with a smattering of Chinese from her great-grandmother (who was adopted and raised by their Pakistani family).**

My father is part-Tamil and part Portuguese Eurasian, similar to the community in Malacca, Malaysia. My brothers are both married to ethnic Chinese women. Religiously, my mother's family is Muslim while my father's is mostly Roman Catholic; he converted to Islam when he married her. Linguistically, we all converse in English. Like many others in Singapore, we learned either Mandarin, Malay or Tamil in school, and unlike many others, we also speak smatterings of Kristang, the Eurasian patois found in Malaysia and Singapore.

## Unity in Diversity

In other words, most of my life has been spent making sense of jostling identities. Over time, I've realised that none of these markers of who I am—ethnic, religious, linguistic, or anything else—needs to dominate my life at the expense of others. A special kind of unity rests within the deep diversity.

Similar trends, but writ large, are at play in how ASEAN has evolved. It is a region of unparalleled diversities: in ethnicities, religions, languages, political systems, economic profiles, and many other dimensions. In such situations, it is natural, some might even say desirable, that people feel a deep affinity for their immediate communities and countries. But just as the Malay, Tamil, Eurasian, Pakistani, and Chinese



segments of my identity do not negate one another, our regional variegation supplements, not supplants, our ASEAN Identity. This is particularly true since ASEAN's regional identity includes valuing the multiculturalism of our people, peaceful relations, economic development, and social harmony—within and between our Member States.

## Constant Work in Progress

As with all communities and regions, ASEAN's Identity is still a work in progress. But there are encouraging signs that our collective identity is deepening. A Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information (SOMRI)-endorsed Poll on ASEAN Awareness, launched in November

2019, revealed that 96% of respondents were aware of ASEAN and felt a high sense of belonging, with nine out of 10 identifying themselves as an "ASEAN citizen" at some level. Clearly, there is a growing sense in ASEAN of what the great historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson called "imagined community"—the notion that a community occurs when enough people perceive themselves as possessing substantive connections with others.

However, broadening and deepening this regional identity cannot be a purely organic process. Natural evolution needs to be accompanied by deliberate policies and programmes. For instance, ASEAN governments should actively communicate and demonstrate what ASEAN means for the average person. If a strong sense of collaboration and mutual support are encouraged at the regional, national, and individual levels, a growing sense of identity is likely to follow.

It is timely, therefore, that we have designated 2020 as the Year of ASEAN Identity. This is an opportunity for ASEAN Member States to spearhead projects that encourage greater engagement among our people. In particular, the SOMRI welcomes the priority placed on fostering ASEAN's sense of community and identity by Viet Nam, the 2020 ASEAN Chair.

## SOMRI's Role

SOMRI has a key role in building a sense of ASEAN Identity, since effective communication is essential to raising awareness and promoting our regional sense of self. Our [ASEAN Communication Master Plan 2018–2025 \(ACMP II\)](#) highlights the importance of harnessing information and communication



technologies to connect with regional communities. This is especially critical today, when communication increasingly occurs on digital platforms, and how we communicate the message of ASEAN must evolve in tandem.

Given the diverse audiences in ASEAN, the communication strategies laid out in the ACMP II are flexible enough for each ASEAN Member State to adapt to its local context and priorities. SOMRI members invite and encourage other sectoral bodies to coordinate with their national SOMRI focal points, to coordinate the messages they wish to convey on ASEAN.

Besides the ACMP-II, SOMRI and the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information have also long promoted exchange of news and radio programmes among broadcasters. We will continue to leverage these key platforms to form and nurture a sense of ASEAN Identity.

### Building Relationships and Trust

SOMRI's work takes place against a larger strategic backdrop. ASEAN as a whole is currently working on long-term projects laid out in the ASEAN Community Vision 2020, including the promotion of the Digital Economy, which can connect people across countries, push intra-regional trade, and lift citizens of ASEAN Member States out of the poverty cycle. While the economic structures and profile of ASEAN Member States may differ, the unity in this diversity comes from the potential benefits each can gain from digital transformation of business models and supply chains.

There are also simple steps that we can take to accelerate the establishment of a people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN, including more inter-country programmes and people-to-people exchanges that convey a sense of our unity in diversity. For this purpose, Singapore initiated the **Singapore-ASEAN Youth Fund** in 2007 to support ground-up initiatives in areas such as leadership development, community, service and entrepreneurship by ASEAN youth. These projects have helped to foster unity and forge friendship among ASEAN youth, as well as an increased awareness and understanding of ASEAN culture.



#### Top

*AYF Fellows at Closing Ceremony of AYF 2019*

#### Bottom

*Learning journey to Orang Asli Village in Kuala Lumpur as part of AYF 2019 Programme*

In addition, Singapore inaugurated the **ASEAN Youth Fellowship (AYF)** programme in 2018 to develop a network of emerging ASEAN young leaders who are keen to make a positive difference in the region. Since its inception, the AYF has engaged 79 young leaders across the 3P (public, private and people) sectors over two runs in 2018 and 2019. The 3rd AYF is scheduled for November 2020, to be hosted in Singapore and Indonesia.

Another example is the biennial **ASEAN Regional Quiz**, of which the ninth edition will take place in Singapore in December 2020. This is an interactive platform, bringing together ASEAN youth to test their knowledge on all things ASEAN—including the cultural, political, economic, and social sectors—all in the spirit of friendly competition. In addition, opportunities abound to promote travel

and media content showcasing the attractions, history, and cultures of ASEAN countries—each a unique thread in a larger tapestry, the whole of which is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Singapore also believes in starting people-to-people exchanges early. Our schools provide students with opportunities to go on educational trips to ASEAN countries, where they interact with people from different cultures and gain cross-cultural skills, as well as deepen their understanding of the region.

### Conclusion

I have been feeling a particularly strong sense of ASEAN's unity in diversity in the past year. At various multi-stakeholder meetings, ASEAN's representatives hailed from a range of sectors—politicians, policymakers, business people, activists, and community builders, among others. I had the privilege to speak at a recent gathering of young leaders from across the Asia Pacific, where ASEAN had a particularly strong showing: our region's representatives included an investigative journalist, design thinkers, youth leadership trainers, sustainability advocates, and mental health activists. This sectoral range, compounding our ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and other diversities, is especially important as technology pervades all aspects of our lives. It provides the foundation for a deeply resilient identity that can both withstand and respond positively to the forces of change. It gives me great optimism for the durability of a diverse and united ASEAN in the coming years. ■

# ASEAN: *Your Identity*

Poll on ASEAN Awareness  
2018: Key findings on  
ASEAN Identity

9 out of 10 respondents identify themselves  
as an "ASEAN citizen" at some level.

I identify  
myself...

...by my nationality **98%**

...as an Asian **96%**

...as an ASEAN citizen **94%**



## HOW WELL DO PEOPLE KNOW ASEAN?

Across the 10 ASEAN Member States,  
**96%** of respondents are  
aware of ASEAN

But **fewer than one-third**  
claim to have knowledge of the  
**ASEAN Community**  
and its three pillars



## HOW DOES ASEAN BENEFIT COMMUNITIES?



Economic growth  
**72%**



Peace and security  
**64%**



Preservation and promotion of ASEAN culture and heritage  
**51%**



Better quality of life  
**51%**



Access to jobs  
**40%**



## WHAT UNITES ASEAN CITIZENS?

**2 out of 3 respondents** believe that a shared identity is essential in creating a stronger region

Top factors contributing to shared identity are:



Economy  
**77%**



Tradition and values  
**55%**



Common vision  
**54%**



## WHAT ASEAN DEVELOPMENTS ARE KNOWN TO ASEAN CITIZENS?



Free trade  
**47%**



Regional tourism  
**43%**



Regional stability and peace  
**40%**



ASEAN identity, heritage, and cultural awareness  
**40%**



Cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief  
**39%**





## Viewpoint:

### Interview with Indonesia's Foreign Minister **Retno Marsudi on ASEAN Identity**



Photo Credit: © Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Indonesia

**The word “identity” was stated for the first time in the document of Bali Concord II in 2003. It has become a commonly-used term, but has yet to be defined. Indonesia has taken the initiative to formulate the Narrative of ASEAN Identity. The Definition of ASEAN Identity will be adopted by the ASEAN Leaders during the 37th ASEAN Summit in November 2020 in Viet Nam.**

**Indonesia’s Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi shares how shaping this identity, from the grassroots, can make ASEAN more relevant to its people.**

**The ASEAN: Please share with us Indonesia’s initiatives in promoting ASEAN Identity in Indonesia and in ASEAN?**

**Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi:** At the Foreign Minister Annual Press Statement in 2018, I conveyed my concern regarding the biggest challenge that ASEAN will face in the future, *“Will ASEAN still be able to maintain its relevance in our community for the next 50 years?” “Is our community in general aware of ASEAN? Do they have the understanding and the need for ASEAN?”*

ASEAN’s relevance can only be achieved and maintained when our community has deep understanding and awareness of ASEAN. Apart from bringing the benefit to the people, the relevance of ASEAN should bring benefit to the region and the world. By having one solid Narrative on ASEAN Identity, it will help us actualise ourselves more.

I also have suspicion that ASEAN has not yet reached a community that inspires the “we-feeling” and “sense of belonging.”

Based on the survey conducted by the Indonesian Research Institute (LIPI) in 2015, ASEAN awareness among grassroots society in Indonesia was only 25.90 per cent. To enhance this, we need to define an identity that represents similar values and traditions within the region of ASEAN, to serve as common denominators.

Regionally, Indonesia is active in promoting regional interests by leading various initiatives in the three pillars of ASEAN. To further establish ownership among all pillars, Indonesia is in preparation to lead a Cross Pillar Consultation on the Narrative of ASEAN Identity which will take place at the ASEAN Secretariat in August 2020.

Nationally, Indonesia has also been continuously promoting ASEAN Identity through, among others, ASEAN Youth Ambassadors and ASEAN Study Centres in 68 universities across Indonesia.

**Q: How do you think fostering ASEAN Identity can contribute to inclusive and sustainable development in the region?**

A: The ASEAN Identity shall serve as a self-reminder to ASEAN Member States regarding who we are, where we come from and where we are heading towards, both as an organization and a community.

ASEAN Identity shall navigate ASEAN to progress as one, and only through cooperation, ASEAN would promote inclusivity and sustainable development.

At this point, I would like to highlight how we, as ASEAN, could also shift the way we see the larger Indo-Pacific region—a region that will be the future of global economic growth.

**Q: What are the values or elements that you think could be celebrated and co-opted as we develop the Narrative on ASEAN Identity?**

A: The establishment of ASEAN in 1967 is a product of a common denominator that was derived from constructed political values. As time goes by, such a constructed value proves incapable to further enhance understanding and awareness of ASEAN in the community as we hoped for.

A more common denominator that contains traditional and historical socio-economic and cultural values, that truly reflects the basic characteristics within the ASEAN region should



**The ASEAN Identity shall serve as a self-reminder to ASEAN Member States regarding who we are, where we come from and where we are heading towards, both as an organization and a community.**

become the fundamental unifying factors in our identity.

I do believe that this common denominator will endure and persist in our community.

**Q: What do you think should ASEAN do more to foster and strengthen ASEAN Identity?**

A: The future of ASEAN is in the hands of the youth that comprises 30 per cent of ASEAN population. I believe that our effort to strengthen and foster ASEAN Identity should focus on the ASEAN youth.

I introduced the programme of ASEAN Youth Ambassador of Indonesia during the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Retreat in Chiang Mai, Thailand in January 2019 as an example of the role of youth in promoting ASEAN awareness and identity in Indonesia. Hopefully during Indonesia’s chairmanship in 2023, my initiative to establish the network of ASEAN Youth Ambassador could be realised, and in due time will strengthen ASEAN Identity.

**Q: How should ASEAN strike a balance between national and regional interests?**

A: Every individual has their own interests, but when it comes to the interest of the family, we have to also be ready to contribute. Without contribution of individuals of ASEAN, ASEAN will be meaningless and that is not the purpose of ASEAN where all are equals. The sense of being one region is one of the important parts of the narrative of ASEAN.

Nowadays, in the midst of the outbreak of COVID-19, ASEAN presence should also be felt by all ASEAN nationals. We should join hands in preventing, addressing the outbreak, and assisting ASEAN nationals. This, I think is a powerful example that an ASEAN Identity, the “we feeling”, the “sense of belonging” that ASEAN should develop. ■

# Fostering ASEAN Identity

through collaborative efforts  
in cultural ecosystem

**BY HILMAR FARID**

CHAIR, SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING ON CULTURE AND ARTS (SOMCA)  
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CULTURE  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

**Identity is not inscribed in stone and fixed for all eternity. It is an ongoing process of being and becoming, never truly reaching a standstill.**

### Imagined ASEAN Community

Identity and the ways we define it are constantly shaped by history. The old worldview that anchors identity on racial or religious grounds has been proven obsolete, and has given way to a new and more inclusive worldview that anchors identity on common goals and practices.

Socio-cultural exchanges in the region have helped mould a sense of a Southeast Asian identity. These exchanges date back to the early centuries, in the era of ancient kingdoms. People in Southeast Asia began learning and integrating each other's culture through constant interaction, trade, intermarriages, and alliances. These processes have led to a common set of values and even traditions, such as music, dances, rituals, literature, and culinary practices.

We harnessed our common identity and shared values to build one community—the ASEAN community. Established in 1967, ASEAN was envisioned to lead to economic growth, social progress, and cultural development. It was likewise envisioned to contribute to regional peace, security, and stability by encouraging cooperation between and among ASEAN Member States.

Through ASEAN, we constructed a set of values, which builds upon our historically shared values. These values are reflected in Article 2 of the ASEAN

Charter as follows: respect, peace and security, prosperity, non-interference, consultation/dialogue, adherence to international law and rules of trade, democracy, freedom, promotion and protection of human rights, unity in diversity, inclusivity, and ASEAN centrality in conducting external relations.

Our shared and constructed values provide the foundation of our imagined "ASEAN Identity." By adhering to these values, we affirm and reinforce who we are and what our common purposes are as ASEAN people.

### Fostering Regional Identity through Arts and Culture

In shaping ASEAN Identity, arts and culture have a significant role to play. Artistic and cultural exchanges between Southeast Asian nations expose people to different worldviews and ways of life. They allow ASEAN people to become aware of cultural similarities as well as differences.

Discussions and symposia alone cannot promote cultural understanding. What we need is to continuously take part in artistic and cultural activities and exchanges to become appreciative of each other's society and culture.

The art community has been leading such exchanges for many decades. In visual arts, the countless festivals, biennales, and other collaborative activities have brought together artists from different parts of Southeast Asian countries. These efforts have taken artistic practices into a whole new level and resulted in an array of artistic works that stretches from one corner of Southeast Asia to the other. I believe that it is our role as government bodies, within the ambit of ASEAN, to strengthen these kinds of initiatives. Governments should play a facilitating role in this bottom-up process of regional identity-making.

### Enriching Diversity through Creative and Cultural Industries

We begin with an awareness that each culture has been influenced by and have similarities with other cultures. Hybridisation, resulting from borrowing and adoption of cultural elements of other societies, is a historical fact. Having said these, ASEAN Member States are still very much culturally diverse. We should pay serious attention to each other's cultural differences and specific cultural contexts to preserve national identities while building regional harmony.

We believe that such cultural diversity is not an obstacle to development. In fact, we believe that cultural diversity is the foundation of sustainable development. ASEAN Member States' distinct cultural



## We need a regional cultural initiative platform that will match national governments with artists or cultural workers who may require assistance for key projects, such as festivals and other similar collaborative activities.

practices allow each state to respond to complex sustainable development challenges—such as climate change, migration, rapid population growth, food insecurity, land degradation, war and conflict—in different ways. But our efforts can be complementary and can have spaces for collaboration.

Our diverse cultural expressions can be channeled to create cultural and creative industries. Everywhere in the world today, cultural economy is on the rise. We need to invest in culture not only to improve people's economic welfare, but also to create a more tolerant and diverse society.

The challenge today is reducing inequality of access to and benefits from cultural and creative industries. We need a regional cultural initiative platform that will match national governments with artists or cultural workers who may require assistance for key projects, such as festivals and other similar collaborative activities.

This regional platform can also serve as a site for new cultural activism. We must realise that the arts and culture are now increasingly used, not just for personal expression and fulfilment, but also as calls to action and social change. We should encourage the formation of cross-border cultural activism networks.

### Threats to Identity-making

The fourth industrial revolution poses both new possibilities and challenges to cultivating respect and appreciation for other cultures. New information and communication technologies can serve as tools of misinformation and deliberate

*An under-the-sea tableau is displayed at the Jogja National Museum during ArtJog 2018. ArtJog is an annual fair that brings together top artists from Indonesia and Southeast Asia.*

disinformation. We observe, for example, the spread of all sorts of ethno-religious prejudices all over the internet. Of late, the internet has become a tool of intolerance and social disintegration. This must be countered by encouraging the production of content that deepens understanding of and fosters appreciative atmosphere for Member States' cultures.

### Regional Cultural Ecosystem for ASEAN Identity

The world is facing intra and inter nation-states conflicts, the threat of terrorism and extremism, the responsibility of managing streams of refugees, and natural disasters. These challenges are indeed serious and demand our attention and energy. But, the world is also facing another fundamental challenge—the rise of racism and prejudice against people, groups, beliefs, and different cultures. An inclusive ASEAN Identity is the antidote to this global pandemic. By close collaboration, we at Southeast Asia are already aware of this curative power of culture.

To foster ASEAN identity, we need to make an effort to strengthen our regional cultural ecosystem. Each nation in Southeast Asia has its own cultural ecosystem which ranges from creation, production, dissemination and exhibition, to consumption of cultural goods and services. Each subsystem is not an isolated phenomenon but a node in a regional network of cultural ecosystems. Creation of cultural goods, for example, presupposes consumption of those same goods in other countries. The way we consume cultural goods determines the way we create it and vice versa.

Realising this, we must link our cultural ecosystems at the regional level. We must encourage the sharing of resources, knowledge, and technology.

Our regional identity depends on the preservation of the cultural identities of each ASEAN Member State. Hence, each state must work to nurture its unique cultural expressions while collaborating with other nations to expand cultural exchanges and link our cultural and creative industries. ■

# ASEAN GOING DIGITAL

to preserve the region's cultural heritage

BY NOVIA D. RULISTIA  
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

**Take a virtual journey to  
Southeast Asia's museums,  
galleries, and libraries.**



Through the ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive (ACHDA) website, now visitors can take a virtual tour of the digitised objects, which are on display in museums, galleries, and libraries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The three are the participating countries in the project's first phase which began in 2018.

ASEAN launched the digital archive on 27 February 2020 at the ASEAN Secretariat, in Jakarta.

At the launch, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Kung Phোক, highlighted that the project is an important step for ASEAN, as it works to preserve the region's cultural heritage for future generations.

"I hope ASEAN citizens using the website will better appreciate the shared cultural heritage and instill in them a greater regional sense of belonging as we work towards fostering ASEAN Identity," DSG Kung said in his opening remarks.

There are 161 cultural relics that have been meticulously documented in three-dimensional (3D) images, audio recordings, and videos. Tokyo-based NTT Data Asia Pacific assisted ASEAN with the process of digitisation.

The La Galigo script, an epic written in the 14th century, is one of the digitised documents from Indonesia. The script was inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World registry in 2011.

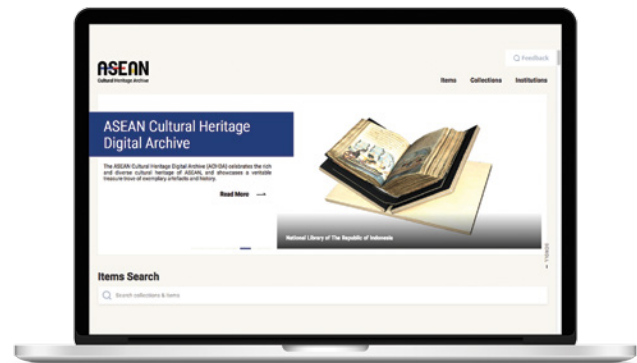
The website also gives a glimpse of Mak Yong, an ancient theatre form from Malaysia that combines ritual elements with acting, dancing, music, song, story, and spontaneous dialogues. The show is also performed in some parts of the ASEAN region.

Thailand presents a collection of gilded manuscript cabinets in 3D, which allows viewers to look at the intricately crafted stories involving mythical creatures in greater detail.

The ACHDA website also features a wide and rich collection of palm leaf manuscripts, modern and contemporary art, stone inscriptions, sculptures and statues, weapons, and golden jewels.

Japan Ambassador to ASEAN Akira Chiba said the ACHDA project was in line with Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy which also aimed to protect and nurture Asia's diverse cultural heritage and traditions.

"This is an innovative project benefitting not only ASEAN but the whole world. Anyone can access



## The ACHDA website also features a wide and rich collection of palm leaf manuscripts, modern and contemporary art, stone inscriptions, sculptures and statues, weapons, and golden jewels.

### From the top, clockwise

*The look of ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Website*

*Secret Toys Series— a collection of National Art Gallery Malaysia*

*Crown of the Sultan Siak Sri Indrapura— a collection of National Museum of Indonesia*

cultural heritage easily through this ACHDA website anytime and anywhere," Chiba said.

The second phase of the project is scheduled to start in mid-2020 and will digitise collections from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. All ASEAN Member States will be covered by the project in succeeding years.

The launch was capped by a tour of Indonesia's National Museum and National Library to show attendees some of the cultural objects that were included in the digital archive. ■



The website can be accessed through <https://heritage.asean.org>

# Strangers in Our Own Neighbourhood:

## Why Southeast Asians need to learn about Southeast Asia

**BY DR. FARISH A. NOOR**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
AND THE SCHOOL OF HISTORY, NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY  
SINGAPORE

**Allow me to begin with an anecdote that I believe sums up my concern in this article: Several years ago, while filming a documentary series about our common Southeast Asian history and identity, I persuaded the TV crew to indulge me in a social experiment of sorts.**



Filming in three different capital cities of three ASEAN countries, I walked up and down the main streets of the cities with a cardboard poster that bore the image of ASEAN on it. Randomly, I would stop people in the street—mostly youngsters—and asked them if they recognised the ASEAN symbol and knew what it meant. The answers I got from passers-by were random and mostly wrong. Some said “McDonalds,” some said “Nike or some sportswear,” some said “UN” and one even said “the Union Jack.”

I was staggered by the findings of this simple person-to-person street survey, but at the same time was not that surprised. After being in existence for more than half a century, it seems that many Southeast Asians do not know about the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or even recognise its symbol. What does that tell us about who we are, and the state of Southeast Asian studies today?

Photo Credit: © babayuka/Shutterstock;  
© nelzajamal/Shutterstock

I raise these concerns as an academic whose work focuses on the history and socio-political-cultural development of the countries of Southeast Asia, and more importantly as an academic whose work on the countries of the region begins with the premise that every state in Southeast Asia today owes its identity and existence to the region that gave birth to it.

I wish to address what I think are the reasons for this curious form of mass amnesia—the forgetting of our common Southeast Asian roots—and why this is problematic for Southeast Asians today. My argument is that Southeast Asians are the ones who need to learn about Southeast Asia the most, and the absence of this basic knowledge at the ground level will leave our societies hobbled in the future, unable to cope with the pressures and challenges of globalisation at this stage of late post-industrial capitalism.

Let us begin with this question: How, and when, did we Southeast Asians forget our common history and identity?

The answer lies somewhere during the 18th to 19th centuries when colonial encounter created a historical-cultural rupture and when Southeast Asia was divided by the different Western colonial powers that descended upon the region and began to carve it up into separate chunks that fit into their respective imperial maps.

That Southeast Asia's political borders today are colonial borders is obvious to anyone with a rudimentary grasp of history. Peninsula Malaysia was once intimately connected with Sumatra, and the Straits of Malacca was the corridor that connected

the two halves of this common Malay-speaking world. But the Anglo-Dutch Treaty ended that by effectively splitting the two parts of this world into two separate halves, Sumatra being drawn into the orbit of the Dutch colonial East Indies and the Malay Peninsula later governed as British Malaya.

Centuries of long-established people-to-people contact came to a gradual end, thanks to the imposition of restrictions on movement, migration and settlement, and with the end of Empire the two halves of this Malay-speaking world would evolve into two separate countries: Malaysia and Indonesia.

The same can be said about the fluid world that once existed around the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas, that connected Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan (in present-day Philippines) with Brunei and North Borneo along with Sulawesi. The once free-flowing movement and trade were cut off as the three areas came under British, Spanish and Dutch colonial rule.

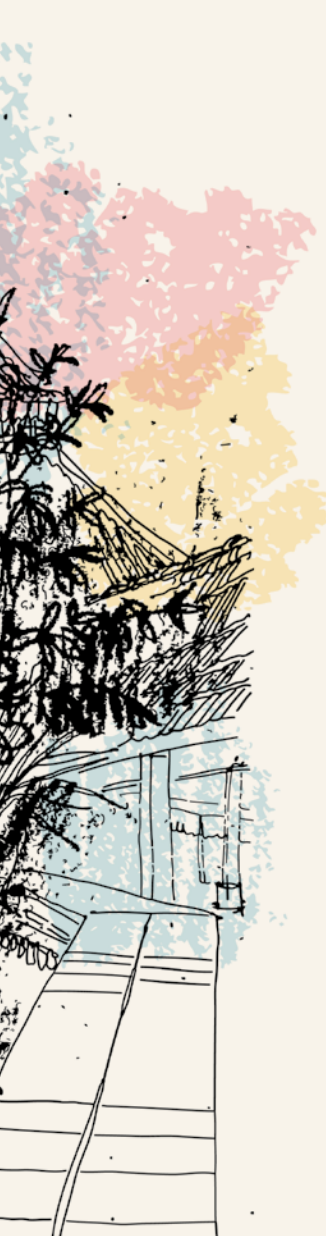
In the wake of decolonisation, these areas have not reconnected in any significant way, and the present-day borders (both terrestrial and maritime) between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines still bear the marks of the colonial encounter.

The related question therefore arises: Why hasn't Southeast Asia reconnected with its past in the wake of decolonisation? For all our talk of Asian values and a common Asian identity, we remain trapped in the compartmentalising logic of the static, fixed nation-state—which, in fact, is merely an extension of the colonial state of the past.

The answer to that question lies in the histories we have written since the end of colonial rule, and in particular, in the manner in which all the official historical narratives of postcolonial Southeast Asia have been in fact official state narratives that begin and end with the nation state as the starting point as well as the main purpose of history.

That almost all of the official histories of the states of Southeast Asia have been state-centric should not come as a surprise to any, for this merely reflects the very real concerns of the first generation of postcolonial historians of Southeast Asia.

From the 19th century onwards, the rise of anti-colonialism in and across the region gave birth to a whole generation of nationalists who saw state as the ultimate end-goal of the nationalist anti-colonial project. Having seen the end of Empire, the first generation of native historians began writing their respective national histories with a number of goals in mind: To rewrite the history of Empire which casts



the colonial power as the conqueror and aggressor; to overturn the violent hierarchies that place native identity and agency at an inferior, subjugated level; to state in the most positive terms the value of native identity and agency while highlighting the injustices of imperialism and colonialism from the point of the view of the (formerly) colonised subject, etc.

Having won the state, the first generation of nationalist historians sought to place the state above all else, but in the course of doing so, they also inadvertently repeated the fundamental error of Empire by perpetuating the divisive politics of imperialism.

This is why when we look at the national histories of our part of the world, they are precisely that: National histories that recount primarily the histories of specific individual nations, and not the region that was their common cradle. So the official history of Singapore is a history that focuses on Singapore; the official history of Indonesia privileges Indonesia above all else; the official history of Malaysia foregrounds Malaysia before others, etc.

As a result of this, the first generation of postcolonial Southeast Asian students across the region learned more about their respective countries but were not taught or reminded of the common heritage and long history of cultural-economic-social interaction across the region prior to the colonial encounter. In short, we are taught about the histories of our particular countries, but we fail to understand where our countries are located and how that longer, older and wider history of Southeast Asia had set the stage for the development of our national cultures and identities as we know them today.

The net result of this state-centric approach to history-writing is two-fold: On the one hand it accounts for the amnesia about our common regional past, and on the other, it also accounts for the somewhat narrow cultural perspectives that we see and read off the pages of our history books at school. But perhaps more worrying still is how such nationalist historical narratives have become the grand narrative that dictates our idea of nationalism—which can be sometimes particular, exclusive and bellicose—and contributes to misunderstandings when it comes to sensitive claims to cultural patrimony and identity politics.

Living as we do in an age where identity politics has become normalised and popular, we see its variants everywhere including here in our own region too. At times, some Southeast Asian states have been adamant in making their culturally exclusive claims,



*“At times, some Southeast Asian states have been adamant in making their culturally exclusive claims, and these instances of contestation can degenerate to the level of the absurd and comical.”*

and these instances of contestation can degenerate to the level of the absurd and comical.

For all our talk of modernity and progress, Southeast Asian states can still wage a war of words when contesting the origins and patrimony of things like chicken rice and fried noodles, forms of music and forms of material culture such as Batik cloth, etc. Yet the statesmen of the region—themselves the products of that earlier generation of state-centric historical education—have failed to note that for centuries Southeast Asians were in constant conversation with one another, exchanging and sharing vocabularies, languages, idioms, geographies, and epistemologies.

Things such as Batik or forms of music developed long before the coming of colonial rule and they were developed by Southeast Asians in a Southeast Asia that was borderless and more fluid. It would be outlandish to suggest that whoever invented Batik for the first time centuries ago did so with the enhanced historical foresight that one day in the distant future it would be the exclusive cultural patrimony of a particular Southeast Asian state, particularly when the name-concepts of the “Republic of Indonesia” or “Republic of the Philippines” or “Federation of Malaysia” did not even exist then!

The forms of narrow ethno-nationalism that we see in some parts of Southeast Asia today is the result of the manner in which we—Southeast Asians—have become disconnected from one another thanks to the way in which we understand and write our own histories, which have omitted the longer period of pan-Southeast Asian fluid movement and cultural sharing that gave birth to the cultures and languages we designate as “national” today.

If this is not remedied soon, I would argue that we would not only be making a serious mistake in our understanding of our own history but worse still would be guilty of perpetuating that “colonial divorce” that separated us from one another when our region was cut up and broken into separate colonies in the recent past. It is therefore incumbent upon this present generation of Southeast Asian academics, historians in particular, to reconnect our countries and societies to our shared regional past and identity, and this ought to be done sooner than later through a serious and sustained attempt to correct the state-centric bias found in our official histories.

Related to this is the need to create a new generation of young ASEAN citizens who see and feel themselves to be Southeast Asians. I raise this

as my closing concern as I happen to be a Southeast Asian academic based in a Southeast Asian university teaching Southeast Asian students, almost all of whom share the concerns of their millennial generation.

Southeast Asia has embraced globalization with almost no inhibitions whatsoever and with this has come not only innovation and development but also social-cultural shock and to some extent trauma for many. In the decades to come, we are likely to see further high-end high-tech innovation that will pose considerable challenges for all forms of labour-intensive manufacturing, a radical restricting of our export-oriented economies, the further dehumanisation of production as IT and AI take over, and a possible shrinking of the middle classes.

All of this is happening in a region with more than 600 million citizens and where many of those millennials we speak about have middle-class aspirations that may not materialise if our economies are not restructured in time and if the education system does not adapt to the realities to come. In the midst of this mobility—social mobility, professional mobility and geographical mobility—will be increasingly important. Simply put, in order to survive the next generation of Southeast Asians must be able to move all the time—moving between jobs, moving between companies, moving between countries. But how is this to happen if we do not even know much about the region we live in, and understand the common features of the world we inhabit?

It is my contention that in the future there will be two types of ASEAN citizens: On one side will be the pan-ASEAN Southeast Asians who know the region, are comfortable in the region and who regard the region as a whole as their extended homeland. Then, on the other hand, there will be those who are static and professionally and occupationally immobile (or worse still, regressing), who see ASEAN as a threat and who see all forms of inter-ASEAN cooperation as a detriment to their well-being.

To build an ASEAN that is cohesive and relevant in the future, we need to expand the numbers of the first constituency while reducing the numbers of the latter. Failure to do that would mean that our region may well see the rise of even more exclusive and parochial forms of populism and nationalism that in turn will hinder our efforts to share the prosperity of ASEAN with all who live here. It is for these reasons that I have always argued that more than anyone else in the world, it is Southeast Asians who need to learn more about Southeast Asia. ■

#### Right

Youth participate in a Malaysian National Day parade

#### Below

Students, dressed in their national costumes, do the ASEAN-way handshake





Photo Credit: © ASEAN Foundation

# Empowering ASEAN Youth, one initiative at a time

**BY DR. YANG MEE ENG**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASEAN FOUNDATION

**The ASEAN Foundation understands the importance of developing the youth as leaders of tomorrow.**

It is an entity established to build greater ASEAN awareness, as well as to cultivate an ASEAN Identity among 230 million youth in the region.

Our programmes, such as ASEAN Data Science Explorers, ASEAN Digital Innovation Programme, eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN, and ASEAN Foundation Model ASEAN Meeting, combine various engaging activities. These range from regional competitions to leadership training, capacity building workshops, and interactive forums, all dealing with topics that are relevant to the youth and aligned with the priorities of ASEAN.

*ASEAN youth in the ASEAN Digital Innovation Programme*

The approaches are diverse but all these initiatives have one overarching goal: to create a generation of future leaders who are well-versed in ASEAN issues, and who identify themselves as citizens of ASEAN.

## **Opening Doors to Youth with Special Needs**

Their smiles were infectious, as they posed for photos in front of the ASEAN Foundation logo and 10 ASEAN country flags.

Muhammad Rifqi Adiono, Muhammad Abidzar Alghivari, Jonathan Kenneth Nangoi, and Reychando Rintar Siregar are all students with special needs, from Indonesia's London School Beyond Academy.

The four had just completed a ten-week-long internship with the ASEAN Foundation. They proudly held up their

well-deserved certificates, and could not contain their joy.

"I am beyond happy to receive this internship certificate," said Muhammad Rifqi Adiono, one of the students who interned under the communication unit.

He added that his internship was not easy. Rifqi was given challenging tasks, such as monitoring and coming up with new ideas for social media content. "However, from these difficult assignments, I learned a lot about ASEAN and its rich culture," Rifqi added.

For Muhammad Abijdzar Alghivari, the internship meant so much more than just an opportunity to learn. "As a young person with special needs, I (am) often perceived as someone who cannot do much," Alghivari said. "This is why I am grateful to be given a chance to take part in ASEAN Foundation's internship programme as it allowed me to contribute my skills and knowledge to the ASEAN Community building efforts."

Through the ASEAN Foundation's internship programme, we aim to provide an immersive learning environment that allows young people to not only develop their skills and knowledge, but also to build a stronger sense of ownership towards ASEAN. We believe that everyone will excel if given the opportunity, and this is why ASEAN Foundation is a strong advocate of equal and inclusive opportunity for all.

We open doors for students with special needs and aim to become one of the pioneering organisations that provide equal opportunities for our younger generations.

### Equipping ASEAN Youth with Future Skills

Mai Than Tung and his teammate, Nguyen Van Thuan, looked ready when their names were called by the MC.

It was the **ASEAN Data Science Explorers (ADSE)** 2018 Regional Finals—a data analytics competition organised by the ASEAN Foundation in partnership with SAP, a software and technology solutions company—held in Singapore.



Top

*Kevin speaks at the ASEAN Data Science Explorers*

Bottom

*Muhammad Rifqi Adiono interned under the communication unit of ASEAN Foundation*

The pair effortlessly presented their storyboard on maritime trade in ASEAN and its economic potentials. Using the SAP Analytics Cloud software, they came up with data-driven solutions that can help identify and address the current flaws of maritime trade in the region.

The team's hard work paid off. They were chosen as the national winners of Viet Nam and the second runner-up of the regional finals.

Two years ago, Mai Than Tung (who is also known as Kevin) would not have thought that he could be chosen to represent his country, and win a place at a regional data analytics competition.

Kevin admits that before to joining the competition, he only had rudimentary knowledge in data statistics and basic competency in Microsoft Excel.

His participation in ADSE provided him a rare opportunity to advance his data analytics skill, and create solutions for an actual problem in the region.

"My experience in ADSE has been incredibly transformative," said Kevin, who is currently working as a Management Associate in charge of studying consumer behaviours at Lazada Viet Nam. "Now, I have been immersed in data analytics so much that 95% of my day is dedicated to it."

The journey of Kevin, from being barely literate in data analytics to pursuing a career in it, shows the kind of impact that we strive to bring through our ADSE initiative.

### Training the Trainers: Underserved Youth Learn Computer Science

As a math teacher at the Setapak Special Education Vocational School in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Siti Suhaila is always eager to explore new, interactive ways to make the learning experience of her visually impaired students better.

For this reason, she jumped at the opportunity to join the Future Ready ASEAN's Training of Trainer, organised as part of the **ASEAN Digital Innovation Programme or ADIP** by the ASEAN Foundation, with support from Microsoft and Empire Code.

"I am really interested to join this training to learn new things and find a good learning resource for my students," said Siti, who has now become one of 538 Future Ready ASEAN's master trainers.

"What I loved about this training is that it provides a platform for me to learn about computer science, which is an important skill and knowledge to have in this digital era," she said.

Siti has made it her mission to provide her visually impaired students with knowledge and learning methods that will benefit them in the long term. "I am glad to know that the Future Ready ASEAN programme was made to target underserved youth," she explained. "I am confident that our underserved youth can overcome whatever challenges lie in front of them if they were given the opportunity to improve themselves."



*Participants of the eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN (EYAA) programme*

**The ASEAN Foundation Model ASEAN Meeting (AFMAM)** is a platform where they can experience it first-hand. Through carefully-crafted methods, delegates play the role of regional decision-makers and even simulate an ASEAN Summit.

The objective is for the youth delegates to have a better understanding of the individual Member States, to appreciate the purpose of ASEAN, and to foster a sense of belonging to the ASEAN community.

“AFMAM provides a unique platform for youth in ASEAN to experience how decision-makers of ASEAN Member States address regional issues at the ASEAN Summit and other regional ASEAN meetings,” said Elaine Tan, former Executive Director of the ASEAN Foundation who finished her six-year tenure in January 2020.

“This exercise is no empty role play; it aims to provide comprehensive information on ASEAN, in-depth analysis on the topics to be negotiated, and learning about tactics for negotiation,” she added.

AFMAM also applies a combination of expert-led coaching sessions and insightful talk shows that can further hone their leadership abilities.

“I learned a lot from the programme, especially about leadership skills,” said Siriphone Siriphongphanh, a former AFMAM delegate from Lao PDR. “This is the kind of programme that we need to work hard to be in, but the combined unique knowledge and experience that you will gain from this programme will make it worth your while.”

#### **Effective Public-Private Partnership**

As a multicultural region, we need one commonality that can bring us together as a community, and that is ASEAN Identity.

The goal of ADIP supports our commitment to promote inclusive education and provide equal opportunities for youth across the region. Recruitment and training for a pool of educators, so they are able to teach computer science to those who are underserved.

Since the programme began in 2019, these trainers have tutored over 25,000 underserved youth in Southeast Asia.

#### **Rousing the ASEAN Youth Volunteerism Spirit**

For Nikko Elnar, the **eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN (EYAA)** programme—the outcome of a partnership between the ASEAN Foundation and Maybank Group—presented a rare opportunity for him to make a meaningful change in the community. “I first knew about the programme from social media,” Nikko said.

“I was immediately hooked after knowing that the programme involves youth volunteerism and social innovation to achieve its goal.”

Based on his achievements in the Philippines, Nikko was chosen to participate in a regional capacity building workshop in Thailand.

There, he was grouped with nine other ASEAN youth to implement a community project that could tackle the food waste issue in Gombak, Malaysia. “Food waste constitutes 60% of the total waste in Malaysia,” Nikko said. “This problem stems from poorly executed waste segregation and ineffective waste collection.”

With a grant of 20,000 US dollars and support from EcoKnight Malaysia, he and his team carried out a project called Integrated Organic Farming Project. The aim was to change the community’s perception towards organic farming and sustainable food waste management.

In a span of two weeks, the team managed to collect a total of 9,200 kilograms of food waste, and produced an educational outreach module about food waste, using the Black Soldier Fly method for composting.

For Nikko, working with a culturally diverse group was one of most valuable experiences he gained from EYAA. From it, he learned to be a better team player. “It was not easy, but it taught me how to interact professionally with people of different beliefs, perspectives, and walks of life,” he said.

Since it launched in August 2018, the programme has accepted 200 participants out of 6,000 applications received from ten ASEAN Member States.

The biggest attraction to the programme is that it allows the participants to immediately apply what they learn, and take ownership of issues that prevail in the community.

#### **Building Greater ASEAN Awareness through Role Playing**

Few young Southeast Asians understand how ASEAN works. How are decisions made within the halls of this regional association?





There are many historical and philosophical analyses on what ASEAN Identity is, but to make it easier to digest, it is better to see ASEAN Identity as wearing a uniform. A strong ASEAN Identity means that everyone is wearing the same uniform and is proud of wearing it. The fact that we are proudly wearing the same uniform will make us easily recognisable and stand out as a community. In the long term, having a strong identity means that we have unified our goal and collectively identified the milestones to achieve that goal: to transform this region into a prosperous and peaceful one.

As an entity with limited resources, it would be impossible for us to reach out to all of ASEAN's people. The heart of our work has always been about engagement and collaboration.

We are heartened to see that our collaborations with our private sector partners such as Maybank Group, SAP, and Microsoft have brought tangible impact on our youth—helping transform them into future leaders, entrepreneurs, advocates for the environment and social change.

#### *Participants of ASEAN Data Science Explorer*

#### **Moving Forward—Creating a Harmonious ASEAN Community and an ASEAN Identity**

The way forward is to build greater awareness of an ASEAN Identity, by getting all 10 ASEAN countries to endorse it, through their Ministries of Tourism, Education and Youth. We could start small by flying the ASEAN flag alongside national flags at important events and outside government buildings, and placing a stronger focus on ASEAN in primary or elementary school syllabus. This would increase the presence of ASEAN in the lives of more citizens across the region.

In the long run, the goal is, of course, to foster a true sense of community within the people in ASEAN. More importantly, a strong sense of collaboration and mutual support should be encouraged both at the state and individual levels through facilitation of cross-cultural initiatives that are accessible for the majority of ASEAN people.

To consider ourselves ASEAN citizens, we believe in putting in place a stronger focus on inclusivity and extending cross-country collaboration to all citizens without exception, and to place a stronger emphasis on the role of social ties and community-building of our future generation.

An ASEAN Identity may be difficult to envision today, in our culturally diverse region. Ultimately, identity is about building ideal communities. A more radical imagining of ASEAN can and should be the way forward to make Southeast Asia matter to its 600 million people. ■

**A strong ASEAN Identity means that everyone is wearing the same uniform and is proud of wearing it.**

# Celebrating ASEAN Identity: Now and beyond

**BY JONATHAN TAN**

HEAD, CULTURE AND INFORMATION DIVISION  
ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT  
ASEAN SECRETARIAT

## **ASEAN is taking concrete steps to create meaningful conversations on ASEAN Identity, in both official and public discourse.**



*A man reads the ASEAN Awareness Poll 2018*

The ASEAN Awareness Poll commissioned by the ASEAN Secretariat in 2018 shows that 96% of over 4,400 respondents in the 10 Member States are aware of ASEAN. Two out of three respondents believe that a shared identity is essential in creating a stronger region, and the top factors identified are economy, traditions, and values as well as a common vision. Yet, fewer than one-third claim to have knowledge of the ASEAN Community and its three pillars. Also, it is worthwhile to note that nine out of 10 respondents identified themselves firstly by nationality (98%), then as an Asian (96%) and as an ASEAN Citizen (94%).

When the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (ASEAN-COCI) was established in October 1978, people-to-people and cultural exchanges became part of the efforts to promote a regional sense of belonging and awareness of ASEAN. Activities ranged from policy discussions, cultural showcases, museums, libraries to performing and contemporary arts, creative industries, exhibitions, and food festivals.

To foster a greater sense of community, ASEAN has earmarked 2020 as the Year of ASEAN Identity. It was launched on 21 January, along with a logo design competition. The ASEAN Identity Symposium will be convened in August, where policy makers, historians, academics, journalists, artists, and creatives can openly share views on what constitutes an ASEAN Identity.

### **ASEAN Stories**

For ASEAN identity to flourish, citizens must stay invested in appreciating and understanding ASEAN and its developments. To achieve this, ASEAN needs to enhance its storytelling: *What is ASEAN Identity? What does ASEAN stand for? What can we celebrate together as one region, one community, one people?*

ASEAN Identity is not derived from geographical proximity, of being in Southeast Asia, or sharing historical ties. While these aspects may serve as conditions that could contribute to the development of ASEAN Identity, ASEAN recognises the importance of articulating and developing the narrative of ASEAN Identity. The senior officials of the culture and arts are currently spearheading discussions on the Narrative of ASEAN Identity, with the aim of inculcating ASEAN Identity as an inseparable part of daily lives by empowering communities to contribute to the ASEAN process, enhancing mutual understanding through people-to-people exchanges, and elevating understanding and awareness of ASEAN through greater information sharing. The proposed Narrative of ASEAN Identity will be extensively consulted with other bodies of ASEAN, academics, and civil society organisations. The Narrative of ASEAN outlines two key elements.

Firstly, the development of ASEAN Identity would emanate from shared common values and principles guiding ASEAN, namely, respect, peace and security, prosperity, non-interference, abiding by rules of trade and international laws, consultation/dialogue, unity in diversity, inclusiveness, and ASEAN Centrality in the conduct of external relations—which are invariably known as the ASEAN Way. These key elements lent itself to ASEAN as a uniquely distinct entity, positioning ASEAN as second to none.



## ASEAN is looking into the past as much as it does into the future to develop the narrative of ASEAN Identity.

inform netizens on ASEAN developments. We have also put in place a cultural and heritage digital archive to ignite our people's interest in and appreciation for the rich cultural vibrancy and dynamism in the region. These efforts are incremental but important steps to capture the hearts and excite the minds especially the youth who are the next generation to take forward what the forefathers had built more than 50 years ago.

Coordinated efforts will be ramped up to use the social media to tell ASEAN stories that matter to our people so as to create the emotional connections, and to lend voices to the youth and ordinary people to share their views and concerns. While people in the region may generally feel a common bond, more could be done to foster a stronger regional sense of belonging and ownership to the Community that ASEAN is developing. ASEAN is also exploring various platforms including digital apps, social media forums, among others, to create a more enabling and participatory environment for ASEAN citizens to share their views, and to proactively support ASEAN initiatives.

ASEAN is looking into the past as much as it does into the future to develop the narrative of ASEAN Identity. The pursuit of identity-building is a multi-stakeholder initiative that requires the efforts of people and communities at all levels to contribute to the process. While an erstwhile socially and politically constructed identity is important in and of itself, ASEAN is aware of the need to broaden the conversation by taking into consideration of the fast changing landscape, especially the aspirations of our youth who make up more than a third of the 642 million people in the region.

Moving forward, officials working in ASEAN, including staff of the ASEAN Secretariat, are cognisant of our need to foster ASEAN Identity as much in name, as in actions. The key is to make the ASEAN's presence felt on the everyday lives of the people in the region, and a shared identity that can resonate with all. Only by doing so can our people see the value of ASEAN in their lives, and for ASEAN to build and foster a shared Identity that could flourish and prevail over time. ■



*Performances at the Celebration of 52nd ASEAN Day at the ASEAN Secretariat*

Secondly, ASEAN Identity is brewed by its rich flavours of diverse but shared historical, heritage and cultural characteristics, many of which existed long before the establishment of ASEAN. What would be these cultural characteristics and values that bring out ASEAN Identity to fore? Also, where history matters, we could more proactively promote and celebrate our shared narrative of the extensive and interconnected histories of the region, as opposed to the experiences of decolonisation, which had been the mainstay of the national narratives of many countries in the region.

With the prevalence of popular digital culture, work is also underway to produce human interest stories that cast a spotlight on the benefits of ASEAN Community for individuals and communities through podcasts, webtoons, vlogs, e-booklet that

# THE YEAR — of — ASEAN IDENTITY \*\*\* BEGINS \*\*\*

**The 2020 ASEAN Year of Identity campaign kicked off with the unveiling of the winning logo of the Logo Design Competition for ASEAN Youth at the ASEAN Secretariat on 21 January.**

“The official launch of the 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity marks a year of great significance as we take another step towards realizing ASEAN as ‘A Community of Opportunities for All’; Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Kung Phoak, said in his opening remarks.

DSG Kung highlighted that the designation was timely as ASEAN seeks to generate more discussions among the public on identity-building.

The logo competition attracted more than 1,300 submissions from youths across the region.

It was supported by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Ambassador of Germany to Indonesia, Timor Leste and ASEAN, Peter Schoof, said in his remarks that a shared identity is an important factor in a regional organisation, and that its citizens should be always at its core.

“Germany is committed to helping ASEAN in various important areas for the organisation and its citizens [and] I look forward to an excellent and friendly relationship in the coming years and beyond,” Ambassador Schoof said.

A panel discussion was also conducted on identity-building, where Ambassador Schoof shared some

insights on the European Union experience. The other panelists were Director of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riaz Saehu; GIZ Country Director, Martin Hansen; and the Executive Director of ASEAN Foundation, Yang Mee Eng.

A number of events have been lined up this year to celebrate the Year of ASEAN Identity, including a Symposium on ASEAN Identity, and a High-Level Regional Cultural Forum on Promoting a Creative Community of Peace, Tolerance, and Greater Understanding.

*The winning logo, designed by Joemari Manguiat, represents the unity of ASEAN*



## ASEAN Identity Logo Design Winners

BY NOVIA D. RULISTIA

Three young graphic designers from the Philippines, Myanmar, and Malaysia showcased their creative interpretations of what ASEAN means to them, at a week-long ASEAN Identity logo exhibition recently held at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.

The three beat hundreds of other submissions from across Southeast Asia, in the ASEAN Identity Logo Design Competition that concluded at the launching ceremony of 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity on 21 January.

In addition to originality, adaptability, relevance to the theme, and aesthetics, their designs were chosen based on how well their works reflected youth's aspirations.

The winning logo, designed by Joemari Manguiat, depicts a blooming flower with red, blue, and yellow to represent colours found in ASEAN Member State flags.

"The blooming flower represents the unity of ASEAN, and the shape of a flower portrays the cultural diversity and economic prosperity of each country," the 26-year-old Manguiat said at the opening of the exhibition, which also marked the launch of the 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity.

The winning logo will be featured in various ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community materials and high profile events throughout the year.



In second place was 24-year-old Swumm Htet Naing from Myanmar, who designed a bouquet of flowers which represents ASEAN community and reflects the beauty of each ASEAN country. A graduate of Forestry studies, Swumm also took inspiration from flowers and tree leaves.

In third place, a colorful diamond-shaped logo, was designed by Mohd Firdaus Abd Hamid from Malaysia. It symbolises the diversity of Southeast Asian people, who come from various walks of life but are united under ASEAN.

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN Socio-Cultural

Community Kung Phoak said that the logo competition was a way to foster greater public awareness among ASEAN citizens, especially the youth, on ASEAN and its activities and developments.

The winners shared that their participation in the competition gave them an opportunity to understand ASEAN better. They all had to learn everything they could about ASEAN before translating their ideas onto the design table.

"I know ASEAN is an association, but I don't really know what it does. After doing

some research for my design and listening to the discussion here, I know that ASEAN has a lot of programs that contribute to the development of its people," Firdaus said, referring to a discussion on ASEAN Identity held during the launch.

Swumm shared a similar view, saying that the competition was like a gateway for him to learn more about ASEAN. He hoped that he could contribute his skills to future activities that will promote ASEAN in his home country, Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Manguiat wished for ASEAN to continuously reach out to young people in many ways, especially through a platform that is so attached to them nowadays—social media.

"Social media is huge—most young people are on it. ASEAN should create interesting content to reach out wider to youth and spread it through social media," he said. ■

# Shifting Currents

## COVID-19: A Collective Response in ASEAN

BY DR. FERDINAL M. FERNANDO, HEAD, HEALTH DIVISION  
JENNIFER FRANCES E. DE LA ROSA, SENIOR OFFICER, HEALTH DIVISION  
MARY KATHLEEN QUIANO-CASTRO AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

**The ASEAN Health Sector immediately responded to the threat of a growing outbreak, as soon as it received the report from China, in early January, of unexplained pneumonia clusters in Wuhan. Existing national and regional mechanisms were activated to detect, prevent, and respond to the new coronavirus disease.**

ASEAN, as a regional body, stepped up national responses and regional cooperation, complementing the World Health Organization (WHO) declaration of a COVID-19 pandemic on 11 March.

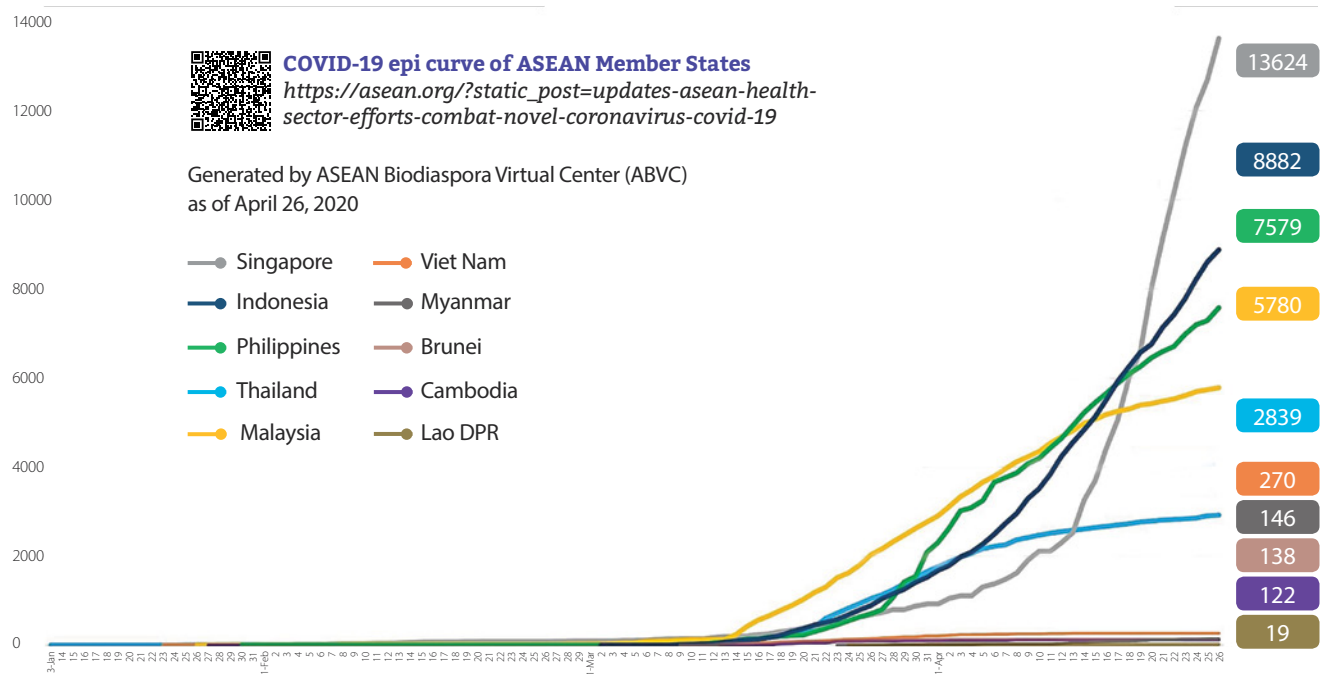
Globally, the numbers of cases are still increasing, with more than 210 countries affected, over 3 million confirmed cases, including about 216,000 deaths. Apart from China, countries in Europe and the Americas

including other nations with weaker health systems are among the hardest hit by COVID-19.

WHO addressed the growing outbreak affecting China and nearby countries and first declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020. Prior to this declaration, six ASEAN Member States had already confirmed their first cases. By late March, all 10 Member States of ASEAN had been affected by the pandemic, as declared by WHO on 11 March 2020.

The epidemic curve produced by the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Center below shows the increasing number of confirmed cases in the 10 ASEAN Member States since the outbreak began. The latest figures shown are as of 26 April 2020.

As each ASEAN Member State confirmed its first case, national prevention and control strategies were launched to initially contain the outbreak. These included public health measures on preparedness, prevention, control, detection, and response including



public health advisories such as the promotion of frequent hand washing, appropriate use of masks, proper way of coughing and sneezing, and other ways of personal hygiene and sanitation.

To help flatten the curve, various non-health measures were strictly implemented and ranged from travel restrictions, strict social distancing, community quarantines to lockdowns. Other counter health measures revolved around strengthening testing, contact tracing, diagnostics, and treatment.

As measures were being implemented, challenges to the response became apparent. The surge of infections began overwhelming health systems, hospitals, and frontline healthcare workers, many of whom also contracted the disease. Nations have been grappling with insufficient medical supplies, testing kits and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Given the nature of the new coronavirus, innumerable data and information gaps were identified. Most critical were on how to appropriately and effectively prevent, detect, and respond to the spread of the disease; and how cases should be managed both in public health and clinical-health settings.

Regional health mechanisms were activated promptly to support national measures and to respond to the gaps as well as promote knowledge and information exchange in a timely manner.

The region and the world are now reeling from the pandemic's negative impact, on economies and people's livelihoods. This has necessitated a whole-of-government and multi-sectoral approach for each nation affected by COVID-19. In ASEAN, the pandemic has forged stronger regional cooperation and coordination among its Member States and partners.

### The Initial Response to COVID-19: A Timeline of Regional Interventions

There has been a sense of urgency in addressing the growing crisis by showing the early and sustained regional response of the ASEAN Health Sector and Dialogue Partners, with the support of ASEAN Secretariat, as well as the interventions of non-health sectors, to address COVID-19.



## Timeline of First Confirmed Cases in ASEAN Member States, Japan and Republic of Korea

Thailand	13 January
Japan	16 January
Republic of Korea	20 January
Viet Nam	23 January
Singapore	23 January
Malaysia	25 January
Cambodia	27 January
Philippines	30 January
Indonesia	02 March
Brunei Darussalam	10 March
Myanmar	23 March
Lao PDR	24 March



This timeline presents an overview of the events that occurred in reaction to the initial disease outbreaks in China, Japan, Republic of Korea and ASEAN Member States.

The ASEAN Health Sector has put emphasis on understanding the technical nature of the new coronavirus and how to adequately address this based on the experiences of the ASEAN Plus Three Countries: China, Republic of Korea, and Japan.

### ASEAN Health Sector Mechanisms to Address COVID-19 and Public Health Emergencies

Responding to all hazards and emerging public health threats has always been a top priority of the ASEAN Health Sector. At the 14th ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) in August 2019, the 10 Member States declared their commitment to cooperate and implement activities that will help the region prepare and respond to public health emergencies.

In the **Joint Statement of the 14th AHMM**, the ASEAN Health Ministers reiterated their commitment to the effective cooperation and implementation of ongoing activities for the preparedness, prevention, detection and response to communicable, emerging and re-emerging diseases including pandemics and neglected tropical diseases, and other public health emergencies or health impact of disasters, and health security threats.



## SARS-CoV-2

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (**SARS-CoV-2**) is the virus that causes the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Previously termed as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) acute respiratory disease, this was initially identified in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China where an emerging cluster of people with cases of pneumonia with no clear cause was linked to the Huanan Seafood Market. These unknown cases were first reported to WHO Country Office in China on 31 December 2019, and subsequently shared with ASEAN on 3 January 2020. The outbreak became more widespread, suggesting person-to-person transmission. Soon, COVID-19 spread to distant city centres and other countries, as people moved primarily by air travel.

## Timeline of Regional Interventions



**Sources:** ASSC Health Division, ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre, WHO



This thrust is elaborated in the **ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda (APHDA)**. Under the APHDA Governance Implementation Mechanism, four ASEAN Health Clusters were created in 2016 to address a wide range of health-related

issues in the region. One of them is **ASEAN Health Cluster 2 on Responding to All Hazards and Emerging Threats**. With funding support from the Global Affairs Canada, significant progress has been made by ASEAN Health Cluster 2, through its work

programme initiatives and mechanisms, to strengthen regional cooperation in disease surveillance, biosafety, biosecurity and laboratory preparedness, risk assessment and risk communication, and public health emergency preparedness. The regional mechanisms which support these areas were activated, tested and are continuously improved to support national and regional measures that address the pandemic.

In providing support to the overall ASEAN Health Sector response to COVID-19, regional mechanisms' operating ambit of the ASEAN Health Sector play vital and complementary roles.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, Member States and their partners have been receiving daily updates and technical exchanges on COVID-19 from the **ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre Network for public health emergencies (ASEAN EOC Network)** as hosted by Malaysia and supported by the ASEAN Secretariat. The ASEAN EOC Network provides regional surveillance, early warning and sharing of information, and facilitates timely and accurate exchange among SOMHD focal points and partners engaged within the ASEAN Health Sector Cooperation on COVID-19 and response. This is complemented by the rapid sharing of real-time information through appropriate and widely-used mobile application. To inform the public, the ASEAN EOC Network also produced a compilation of national/ local hotline/call centres in ASEAN Member States for COVID-19 which was uploaded in the ASEAN website and posted through ASEAN social media platforms. A compilation of dedicated COVID-19 webpages of Ministries of Health was also produced and uploaded onto the ASEAN website.

**ASEAN Mechanism**

**Mandates and Responsibilities**

<p><b>ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre Network for public health emergencies (ASEAN EOC Network)</b></p>	<p>Facilitate timely and accurate exchanges of information and technical inputs; including the circulation of daily situational updates and information on prevention, detection and response measures, complemented by real-time information sharing through mobile instant messaging.</p>
<p><b>ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre (ABVC)</b></p>	<p>Produce and circulate reports of Risk Assessment for International Dissemination of COVID-19 ASEAN Region.</p>
<p><b>Regional Public Health Laboratories Network (RPHL)</b></p>	<p>Exchange on laboratory readiness and response actions; this Network, under the GSHA, also offers support to specific AMS national public health laboratories requiring technical or material support .</p>
<p><b>ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre (ARARC)</b></p>	<p>Disseminate preventive and control measures, including those that combat false news and misinformation circulated in the social media.</p>
<p><b>ASEAN Health Sector Cooperation Platforms and Mechanisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASEAN SOMHD</li> <li>• ASEAN APT SOMHD</li> <li>• ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three Corresponding Health Minister Platforms</li> <li>• ASEAN Health Cluster on Responding to all Hazards and Emerging Threats</li> </ul>	<p>Support the conduct of special video conferences to further exchange situation updates and critical information and discuss in-depth specific issues, within the ASEAN Health Sector, with non-health ASEAN Sectors, and with Dialogue and Development Partners.</p>



**The APHDA’s Vision is a Healthy, Caring and Sustainable ASEAN Community. This vision is achieved through the promotion of a healthy and caring ASEAN Community, where people achieve maximal health potential through healthy lifestyle, have universal access to quality health care and financial risk protection; have safe food and healthy diets, live in a healthy environment with sustainable inclusive development where health is incorporated in all policies.**



*ASEAN Health Ministers hold a special video conference on 7 April*

**The ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre (ABVC)**, which is hosted by Philippines, uses big data analytics to produce risk assessment and disease surveillance reports on COVID-19. Its first report was released on 20 January 2020 and has since been published online thrice a week. The ASEAN BioDiaspora programme is real-time and a web-based risk assessment tool that is able to link multiple datasets to show the potential spread of disease and how to manage the risk of importing and exporting the disease. The objective is to build regional capacity in data analytics, visualisation, and communication to strengthen ASEAN's epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response capabilities that are either naturally occurring or man-made biological threats.

Explorer and Insights are two of the real-time and web-based tools used by the ABVC. Explorer illustrates how diseases move around the world using information on air travel, demographics, human population density, and other relevant datasets. The tool can help public health agencies detect local transmissions and determine factors that drive the disease around. The Insights tool provides healthcare organisations additional insights

on how to manage the risk of disease importation and exportation. This information was vital in the early stages of the outbreak, as ABVC tracked how the virus was exported from ground zero in Wuhan, China to the ASEAN region.

Through the **Regional Public Health Laboratories Network (RPHL)**, under the Global Health Security Agenda led by Thailand, ASEAN Member States are able to access exchanges on laboratory readiness, technical and material support, as well as experience in laboratory surveillance.

As measures against the outbreak intensified, so did the public's fear and uncertainty about COVID-19. Information

and misinformation about COVID-19, its mode of transmission and virulence, flooded both traditional and social media. The **ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre (ARARC)** contributes to addressing these as it recognises that risk communication is essential in managing public health emergencies. National governments have also benefitted from programmes of ARARC, as ASEAN officials are continuously addressing the challenges of disputing fake news and hoaxes related to COVID-19, and finding ways to effectively reach and provide the public with credible and timely information.

To support these mechanisms and provide visibility to the sector, the ASEAN Secretariat has created a dedicated webpage on the ASEAN website to keep the public abreast on the ASEAN Health Sector efforts related to the prevention, detection, and response to COVID-19. It is an information hub for regional health interventions on the pandemic which contains press releases, risk assessment reports, and relevant links and references. Information including the compilation of national/local hotline/call centres in ASEAN Member States for COVID-19 and compilation of dedicated COVID-19 webpages of Ministries of Health by the ASEAN EOC Network and the risk assessment and disease surveillance reports of the ABVC can be accessed through [https://asean.org/?static\\_post=updates-asean-health-sector-efforts-combat-novel-coronavirus-covid-19](https://asean.org/?static_post=updates-asean-health-sector-efforts-combat-novel-coronavirus-covid-19)

**To support these mechanisms and provide visibility to the sector, the ASEAN Secretariat has created a dedicated webpage in the ASEAN website to keep the public abreast on the ASEAN Health Sector efforts related to the prevention, detection, and response to COVID-19.**

### To Move as One: The Fight Ahead

Southeast Asia has always been a hotspot for the emergence of new infectious diseases. The region was hit hard by previous epidemics like SARS, Avian Flu, and the H1N1 Influenza virus. COVID-19, as WHO declared, is the first pandemic caused by a coronavirus. The ASEAN Health Sector's response to COVID-19 is staunchly supported by ASEAN Secretariat through the Health Division. In moving as one, the Health Division will continue to be a reliable partner of the ASEAN Health Sector together with the Dialogue and the Development partners in addressing COVID-19; and a stable liaison to the WHO as technical partner of the ASEAN Health Sector at the national and regional levels.

ASEAN political commitments have been made to substantially support and enhance the existing regional organisations, platforms, and mechanisms to adequately address the current pandemic and to prevent further damage to the socio-economic development of countries, while at the same time, adopt a pro-active stance to markedly prepare for the future outbreaks and pandemics based on the lessons being learned from COVID-19. The whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches are essential to these interventions.

Though knowledge and information exchanges are nonstop, more needs to be understood about this new coronavirus. It calls for, among others, more immediate collaboration and coordination on the conduct of research and clinical trials on interventions, pharmaceuticals, and antiviral vaccine. In the near future and moving towards more structural and concrete approaches to capacitating the region in preventing and controlling future emerging and infectious diseases, an ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Pandemic Preparedness and Response Framework and the feasibility of establishing a Centre to address emerging and infectious diseases (EIDs) in the region are proposed.

The fight against this new contagion is still ongoing but this will be won with the forward-looking, integrated, inclusive, and resolute approach to action, coordination, and collaboration of ASEAN and its partners. ■

**On 7 April, ASEAN Health Ministers held a Special Video Conference to discuss enhanced regional cooperation in their COVID-19 response.** The Ministers later held another conference with their counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea, in an ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting.



### These are the key commitments and recommendations made by the region's Health Ministers and their Plus Three Partners.

- Enhance the timely transparent sharing of information on COVID-19, including prevention, detection and response measures
- Continue exchanging data on epidemiologic surveillance, risk assessment, clinical studies, treatment experience, and technical guidelines through existing ASEAN Health Sector Cooperation mechanisms
- Provide assistance to affected national health systems in the region; improve readiness and revitalize health systems in their transition to recovery
- Strengthen regional cooperation in risk communication and avert misinformation
- Utilise digital technology, including artificial intelligence, for efficient information exchange and timely public health responses
- Coordinate cross-border public health responses, such as contact tracing and outbreak investigation
- Collaborate with regional and global partners, like the WHO, and the private sector on research and development on COVID-19
- Bolster and institutionalize regional preparedness, prevention, detection and response mechanisms for public health emergencies



### The ASEAN Health Ministers pledged to ensure access to health care services for all persons infected by COVID-19, including migrants and vulnerable groups.

At the ASEAN Plus Three conference, the Health Ministers also committed to 1) share information on rapid research and development of diagnostics, antiviral

medicines and vaccines, and ensuring their efficacy, safety, and accessibility; 2) ensure the adequacy of essential medicines, vaccines, and medical devices in each country and in the region; and 3) enhance bilateral and multisectoral cooperation, and provide technical assistance to medical personnel and relief supplies to medical facilities to mitigate the outbreak's negative impact.



Link 1



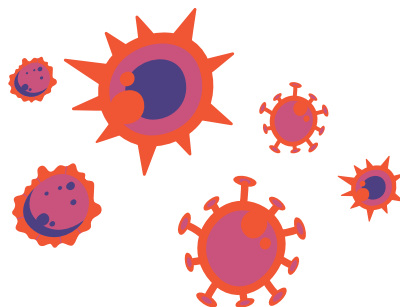
Link 2

The full statements are available on the official ASEAN website:  
[https://asean.org/storage/2020/04/Adopted-Joint-Statement\\_SVCAHMM\\_COVID-19\\_20.04.07.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2020/04/Adopted-Joint-Statement_SVCAHMM_COVID-19_20.04.07.pdf)  
[https://asean.org/storage/2020/04/Adopted-Joint-Statement\\_SVC.APHMM\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2020/04/Adopted-Joint-Statement_SVC.APHMM_COVID-19.pdf)



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# Stop the prejudice, a virus has no race



**BY KUNG PHOAK**

DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN  
FOR ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

## **On February 2, 2020, a video of a blindfolded and masked man standing in a plaza in Firenze, Italy, was posted on social media.**

Next to the man, who was identified as a Chinese-Italian, was a sign written in English, Italian and Chinese: “I’m not a virus. I’m a human. Eradicate the prejudice.”

In late January, Asians in France created the *#Jenesuispasunvirus* (“I am not a virus”) Twitter hashtag to protest numerous reports of racist slurs and racial discrimination against Asians of Chinese descent. It has become a battle cry of sorts among those targeted by the discrimination.

The fear and anxiety created by the COVID-19 viral outbreak has fueled xenophobia, from Europe to America and to Asia. Reactions of panic and uncertainty were expected at the early onset of the disease, when not much had been made evident, but fear of a probable future was apparent.

Threats to global health—which include new species of viruses such as the COVID-19 virus, sudden outbreaks,

reemerging infections and even the HIV epidemic—have been met with much anxiety around the world and, sadly, xenophobia, stigma, and discrimination. Over the past few weeks, social media has been flooded with daily news, evidence-based information, and technical updates about COVID-19.

Timely and critical information, the novel coronavirus’s genome sequence and technical exchanges and updates to relevant information on prevention, detection, and response are regularly shared with the World Health Organization and disseminated among other countries.

The information is meant to assuage fears and questions about the outbreak that has affected 210 countries and territories around the world.

Various health advisories are continuously given to the public so people can protect themselves from the risk of infection

during their daily routines at home, at school and the workplace, as well as during travel. There are regular updates about confirmed cases, cases under investigation, suspected cases, and number of deaths.

Still, there seems to be no stopping the slurs and discrimination against Asians, particularly those of Chinese ethnicity. Posted alongside the information and updates released through the media — especially from technical agencies such as the WHO—are multiple memes, posts, reposts, and messages from individuals on various social media platforms.

Many posts refer to more than personal uncertainties about the epidemic, and also include taunts, ugly comments, and unfounded views targeting those people who have been affected by the virus. Fake news and conspiracy theories about the origin and spread of the virus are also being shared widely.



*Mother and child don masks as protection from COVID-19*

**Isn't it valid then, to ask the question: Why are we equating the virus and its spread to a specific race? Unfortunately, this is not a first.**

Isn't it valid then, to ask the question: Why are we equating the virus and its spread to a specific race? Unfortunately, this is not a first.

This question can be considered against the backdrop of past experiences in the social dimensions of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Ebola, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and even HIV/AIDS epidemics.

Evidence-based information about the COVID-19 outbreak has been shared nonstop, with public health advice provided to local communities and travelers in the affected countries.

Panic and fear have been addressed at the highest levels of governments around the world. Public dissemination has been constant regarding preventive measures, which are essentially basic personal hygiene and sanitation that we have all been taught at home and at school.

How much more information needs to be shared to help stop the spread of both the virus and the racial discrimination?

We must eradicate prejudice in our own backyard.

In Southeast Asia, 10 ASEAN Member States have confirmed cases of COVID-19. Health officials in all Member States are continuously supporting each other through constant coordination, technical and information exchanges and communication, and have mobilised resources to address the threat of COVID-19. All are being done with the support and cooperation of health officials from China and other East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea.

Much more research is needed on the infectious period of the virus, contact rate, and modes of transmission. Despite these gaps, ASEAN leaders and health officials are working together continuously to utilise objective and evidence-based measures.

ASEAN strongly advocates its policy of "one community" with "one vision". That community includes the wider Asian region. The ills of racial discrimination should not spread as quickly and widely as the COVID-19 infection.

There have been expressions of prejudice in the region and beyond. These sentiments should not take root amid the ongoing efforts to contain the further spread of this deadly disease. The situation should not feed into racial hatred. ASEAN should work together to help eradicate prejudice in our own backyards.

Disease does not discriminate. Everyone can be at risk. This vulnerability may indeed cause fear, but fear should not be used to justify blaming and ostracising others, especially those who are already suffering gravely from illness and isolation. The virus is the enemy, not the person it has infected. ■

# Fighting fear and fake news in a pandemic

BY NOVIA D. RULISTIA AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

## Seeking information in the digital era is as easy as clicking a link on our mobile phone. But during the current health crisis, clicking one might lead to misinformation.

The World Health Organization in February announced that the COVID-19 outbreak has been accompanied by an “infodemic” or an over-abundance of information—some accurate but mostly not—that makes it hard for us to winnow out ones that come from trustworthy sources and can be relied on for guidance.

There has been a proliferation of hoaxes and fake news on social media about the disease, including claims of preventive remedies and unproven cures that are potentially harmful to the public, from conspiracy theories to end of days. Deliberate misinformation meant to downplay the risks of the disease also circulate on social media.

In the Declaration of Special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19 issued on 14 April, ASEAN Leaders committed to enhancing effective and transparent public communication on issues related to the pandemic, and encouraged ASEAN information sector “to strengthen cooperation in countering misinformation and fake news.”

Some Member States have taken strict measures to prevent the spread of fear and false information related to the pandemic.

ASEAN has always promoted a culture of supporting the values of moderation, by promoting media and information literacy through guiding users to navigate cyberspace responsibly and safely, as guided by the ASEAN Culture of Prevention (CoP).

The ASEAN Secretariat’s Culture and Information Division has launched a social media campaign, using the CoP guidelines, that encourages netizens to be digitally responsible and to always fact-check before sharing any information online.

A quick survey of some ASEAN citizens shows that when it comes to fake news, “social media distancing” is the way to go. Airin Rachma, a resident of Jakarta, said that when she received information on COVID-19, mostly through WhatsApp, she always verified it first.

“On medical-related information, I will check with a medical expert. For other kinds of information, I would check with reliable news platforms,” she said.

She once read an information about road closures in Jakarta but managed to identify that it was a hoax.

“The message was made to look like it was coming from an official account of an Indonesian ministry, but I was suspicious as there were many typos in the message. I checked with reliable news platforms and my friend who works at the ministry. It turned out to be a hoax,” Airin said.

Wilma Jeannette de Lara, administration officer and Quezon City resident in the Philippines, said she read about COVID-19 and related news through social media and news outlets.

“I usually check with official websites if the news really came from them. I also check the veracity of the information reported

or shared from fact-checking sites, such as Vera Files, to make sure that the news I share with others is not hearsay,” she said.

She recently read a news item on Facebook showing a photo of a group of people participating in a Holy Week procession in Valenzuela city in Metro Manila. Since the Philippines government has prohibited mass gatherings, netizens quickly criticised the Valenzuela mayor for not enforcing the regulation.

“The mayor later disowned the photo and pointed out that it was not taken in Valenzuela, but actually depicts a procession in Venezuela. I informed my friend that it was fake news,” de Lara said.

Another netizen, Tommy Des Mulianta, a graduate student of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore, said that he seldom received hoaxes because people in Singapore were more careful when sharing information with others, especially those related to COVID-19.

“I would refer to government websites or reliable news source to cross-check all information on COVID-19. The government has also been active in providing clarification for unverified information or posts by their citizen,” he said.

Governments play a key role in providing the public with accurate, detailed, and transparent information. It is also our role to be vigilant and fact-check what we receive and read online, and correct any misinformation. ■



### ASEAN Culture of Prevention

- A Culture of Peace and Intercultural Understanding
- A Culture of Respect for All
- A Culture of Good Governance at All Levels
- A Culture of Resilience & Care for the Environment
- A Culture of Healthy Lifestyle
- A Culture Supporting the Values of Moderation

# Women

on the frontlines of  
peace and security

BY DR. SITA SUMRIT, HEAD, POVERTY ERADICATION AND GENDER DIVISION  
JOANNE B. AGBISIT AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM



Women in uniform have received widespread media attention for their contributions to peace and order. In post-conflict rehabilitation and recovery efforts in Marawi City, Philippines, local and foreign media extensively covered the activities of hijab-clad female soldiers and police officers tapped to render psychosocial services to internally displaced persons. In Cambodia, the deployment of a large contingent of Cambodian female troops, including doctors, for UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and the Middle East is well documented.

These examples show positive presentations of women's work in peace and security, but they only offer a glimpse of women's real and potential contributions in a field that has been largely male-dominated.

As early as 2000s, the UN Security Council, through several resolutions, recognised that women's increased participation in all stages of the peace process and decision-making, from deterrence to post-conflict reconstruction efforts, is key to attaining long-lasting peace and security.

ASEAN Member States, holding the same view, collectively issued a **Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in ASEAN** in 2017.

"The joint statement is crucial as it is the region's first affirmation of support for the women, peace and security agenda," said Secretary-General (SG) of ASEAN, Dato Lim Jock Hoi. "Further, the joint statement promotes cross-sectoral and cross-pillar approach in the realisation of the WPS agenda as it refers to the importance of women's participation in the political, security, and justice sectors."

ASEAN has since considered WPS a *priority* that requires the recognition of the different experiences and needs of women and girls; *advocacy* for the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, transition, and peace processes; and *action* to ensure women's full and meaningful participation and leadership in all efforts to maintain peace and security, including responding to new or nontraditional security threats.

ASEAN has made significant progress in the implementation of WPS agenda since the

adoption of the joint statement, based on the assessment by the Poverty Eradication and Gender Division, ASEAN Secretariat. Since Member States have different histories, political systems, and security challenges, ASEAN initiatives on WPS are reflective of these nuances.

#### ASEAN Regional Initiatives

The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and the ASEAN Committee on Women developed a multi-year programme on WPS. The multi-year programme captures ASEAN's three priority areas which include women's contributions to preventing violent extremism, women in disaster risk reduction and resilience, and transformative roles and participation of women in peace processes.

The expected outputs of this programme are an enhanced awareness, understanding, and visibility of WPS agenda at the policy and programme levels in ASEAN; established network of WPS experts and practitioners in the region; established research and systematic knowledge on WPS agenda and its appreciation in ASEAN; and working WPS modules at policy, practitioners, and community levels.

One of the first activities implemented under the programme was the **Regional Symposium on Implementing Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in ASEAN**.

Held in August 2019, the symposium took stock of how Member States define and implement various facets of the WPS agenda, discussed road blocks to its implementation, and engaged other stakeholders within and outside the region.

The symposium yielded a set of recommendations which affirms the objectives of the multi-year programme. These include the conduct of a regional study on WPS; establishment of a network of WPS experts, advocates, and practitioners; and the incorporation of WPS agenda into policies and programmes of ASEAN's socio-cultural, economic, and political and security pillars.

A separate but aligned initiative was launched by the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation in December



#### IN A NUTSHELL

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was a landmark global framework that mandates women's participation in peace and development.

It has four pillars as follows: (1) full and equal participation and representation of women at all levels of peacebuilding; (2) incorporation of gender perspective and participation of women in preventing the emergence, spread, and re-emergence of violent conflict; (3) protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings; and (4) relief and recovery measures that ensure access to services and support after conflicts and disasters.





*The Cahaya Kencana Women's Group creates decoupage crafts to be sold at the festival of Gemblegan Village, Central Java*

### 2018—the ASEAN Women Peace Registry.

The peace registry is a roster of women peace experts and practitioners in the region who can be tapped as resource persons for matters pertaining to peace and reconciliation.

SG Dato Lim Jock Hoi, at the launch of the peace registry, said that the initiative is an important WPS milestone as it adds to “an infrastructure that is sufficiently resourced and committed, where stakeholders work together to share resources, lessons learnt, expertise, and experiences in order to clearly align implementation strategy.”

### Partnership between ASEAN Member States and UN Women

Individual ASEAN Member States also work with UN Women to fulfil their WPS commitments. Within the UN system, UN Women takes the lead in translating the WPS agenda into concrete actions.

The Philippines and Indonesia tapped UN Women to lend technical support in the preparation of their respective National Action Plans to meet their WPS obligations with UN.

**Women’s increased participation in all stages of the peace process and decision-making, from deterrence to post-conflict reconstruction efforts, is key to attaining long-lasting peace and security.**

In the areas of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, UN Women partnered with local government units and civil society groups to build the capacity of Bangsamoro women and organisations to participate as leaders and advocates in the new Bangsamoro political entity in Southern Philippines. UN Women also aided efforts to increase Burmese women’s participation and leadership in Myanmar peace dialogues and processes.

UN Women’s most recent and major initiative in Asia involves preventing violent extremism. In 2017, it launched Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities: Preventing Violent Extremism in Asia, a Japan-supported programme that seeks to assist countries gain understanding on “women’s diverse roles in violent extremism, including as promoters and preventers.”

The programme, according to Ruangkhao Ryce Chanchai, the gender and governance specialist of UN Women in Asia-Pacific and focal point for the ASEAN-UN Women Joint Programme, aims to gather evidence and undertake research in view of the “dire lack of gender analysis on various dimensions of

the prevention of violent extremism specific to the context of this region.” Additionally, said Chanchai, the programme aims to support and engage women leaders and organisations that work with communities on finding community-based solutions or approaches to conflict prevention and resolution.

### WPS in Action: Stories of Success

Indonesia’s Peace Villages (Kampung Damai), conceived by the Wahid Foundation and UN Women, have been hailed as exemplars of WPS at work. The Peace Villages are communities that have pledged to cultivate a culture of peace and tolerance within their communities.

“The Peace Village initiative is an effort to create community resilience that can prevent conflicts and places women as the main actors in building peace in the family, community, and governance system,” said Visna Vulovik, assistant director of the Wahid Foundation. “Women are expected... to be economically independent and actively participate in decision-making at the community level and in the development of peace narratives.”

The Wahid Foundation employs a holistic approach to attain its objectives in the Peace Villages, according to Vulovik. It supports economic empowerment, peacebuilding mechanisms, and women empowerment.

On the economic front, the Wahid Foundation conducts training on managing finances, developing businesses, and producing marketable goods and services. Vulovik shared that the Wahid Foundation has so far helped 2,121 women and 80,000 households, turned 1,500 into women entrepreneurs, and generated an income of 820 million Indonesian rupiah for the Peace Villages.

## Indonesia's Peace Villages are communities that have pledged to cultivate a culture of peace and tolerance within their communities.



### IN A NUTSHELL

The Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN acknowledges that in times of conflict, women suffer the most and bear the brunt of sexual and gender-based violence. It includes the Member States' commitment to:

- apply gender lens in all conflict prevention initiatives and strategies;
- support the full involvement of women in peace processes;
- address the root causes of conflict including gender inequality;
- end gender-based and sexual violence;
- integrate the women, peace, and security agenda in government policies and programmes; and
- build the capacity of women as peace builders, either as mediators, negotiators, and/ or first responders.

It has also given assistance to previously radicalised individuals who are now productive members of the community. One is a young returnee from Syria who is now actively involved in the antiradicalism campaign. Another, the widow of a known terrorist, currently has a thriving massage business—through the help of the women's group in the Peace Village—that allows her to support her children.

In terms of peacebuilding, Wahid Foundation assists women through values formation and by honing their skills in communicating, advocacy, and developing narratives for peace. It has, for example, set up a women's center, called Peace Working Space, which serves as a venue for education, reporting, system response, and community dialogue, and involves women's groups, village officials, and public/religious figures.

In the area of women empowerment, Wahid Foundation encourages the formation of women's groups and mobilisation of inter-faith women scholars and leaders to serve as agents of peace in their communities. It also gives women opportunities for creative expression.

The early successes of the Peace Village initiative have gained the interest of other communities in Indonesia that experienced sectarian and political conflict in the past. "More than 10 villages, such as the post-conflict areas in Poso, Ambon, and West Nusa Tenggara, have asked to join the Peace Village programme," said Vulovik. She added that initial talks are underway between the Afghanistan and Indonesian governments for the possible replication of the peace village concept in Afghanistan.

On a much smaller scale, the work being done by the all-female organisation, Women's Organization of Rajah Malmu Descendants (WORMD), in the Teduray indigenous community in Maguindanao, Philippines is another case of WPS at work. WORMD is composed of Teduray indigenous women whose founding members were recipients of various gender and development, anti-violence against women and children, and prevention of violent extremism trainings of UN Women and partner organisations.

*Women from Depok, West Java prepare cookie products to be sold under the label, One Cookies. One Cookies is a small enterprise run by the Peace Loving Cooperative composed of women from various Peace Villages.*



Operating on a shoestring budget, the organisation conducts monthly community outreach activities among the Tedurays, such as feeding programmes and distribution of hygiene kits, schools supplies, and other needs. According to Aileen Marie Hualde, executive director of WORMD, these community outreach activities are occasions for getting members of the indigenous community to sit down and discuss issues, such as potential external threats to peace and order. Hualde said that these informal gatherings, along with regular dialogues with the community's elders and leaders, are necessary and akin to an early warning system as the indigenous community has been targeted by a radical group operating in the area as a ripe recruitment ground.

Apart from its monthly outreach, WORMD also conducts information drives in Teduray villages and schools on women's rights, violence against women and children, and violent extremism. On several occasions, WORMD partnered with the Philippine army to give a talk among high school students on the pitfalls of taking up arms and falling prey to insurgent groups. "The Philippine army has complete materials on violent extremism so what we did was translate these in a way that would be understood by the indigenous youth," Hualde said.

All too aware that poverty and deprivation can entice community members to join radical movements, WORMD assists the members of the community to secure sustainable livelihood. Hualde said that the organisation has tapped government agencies to provide skills training for men and women in the community, found private donors to supply the raw materials for basket and bead production, and linked the community to agencies that donate seeds for gardening and farming.

In Myanmar, WPS is also visible in the work of the Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS). The organisation has partnered with USAID to initiate the Women Empowerment Program for internally displaced persons (IDP). MIGS is an organisation that is active in seven Myanmar states and whose main goal is to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." Its programme is aimed



*Aileen Marie Hualde of WORMD dialogues with Teduray women on violence against women and children, and violent extremism*

at educating women in IDP camps in conflict-affected areas about community peacebuilding initiatives, community conflict resolution, community leadership, and community-based advocacy.

According to Khin Ma Ma Myo, executive director of MIGS, women beneficiaries have organised community forums and communicated their needs and desired resettlement conditions to the local authorities in a very peaceful manner. These conditions, she said, included economic empowerment and financial inclusion, access to credit opportunities, and entrepreneurship and vocational training. At present, MIGS is working towards fulfilling the appeal of internally displaced women to be more economically empowered.

### The Work Ahead

ASEAN's WPS programme is still nascent and much work needs to be done to realise its daunting objectives. This 2020, ASEAN expects the completion of the regional study on the state of WPS implementation, which is being undertaken by the ASEAN-USAID Partnership for Regional Optimization within the Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (PROSPECT), ASEAN Committee on Women, ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, in cooperation with UN Women and the ASEAN Secretariat.

In a recent meeting of the WPS advisory body, which is composed of representatives of Cambodia, Malaysia, and Viet Nam, PROSPECT presented the initial findings of its literature review on the topic. The advisory body and the project team also finalised the study's overall objectives, strategic direction, indicative outline and content, and timeline. ASEAN's next steps will be guided by the outcome of the study.

The assumption of Viet Nam as chair of ASEAN in 2020 and its election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2020-2021 solidify ASEAN leadership's commitment to the WPS agenda and create a forward momentum for its implementation. "Viet Nam wants to bring to the Security Council its experience in building the country after war time, and more importantly, Viet Nam will also promote the role and rights of women and children and their role in preventing war and building peace all around the world," said Deputy Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung after Viet Nam's election to the UN Security Council. ■

**The assumption of Viet Nam as chair of ASEAN in 2020 and its election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2020-2021 solidify ASEAN leadership's commitment to the WPS agenda and create a forward momentum for its implementation.**

# ASEAN

## HERITAGE PARKS CONFERENCE

highlights sustainability and innovation

**ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) are Southeast Asia's natural treasures. To date, there are 49 AHPs, each embodying the rich and diverse species and ecosystems of the ASEAN region.**

**BY NOVIA D. RULISTIA  
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM**



*ASEAN Heritage Parks are given the highest recognition because of their importance as conservation areas*

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**THE CONFERENCE ALSO RECOGNISED THAT PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESS, HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS TO NATURAL CAPITAL.**

However, the AHPs continue to face threats from various drivers of biodiversity loss, such as encroachment, overexploitation, illegal logging, and uncontrolled tourism.

As the Secretariat of the AHP programme, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity organises the AHP Conference every three years to gather policymakers, protected area managers, experts, partners, and stakeholders to discuss challenges and issues in managing AHPs, and to highlight national and regional efforts in protected area management.

The **6th AHP Conference** was held in Pakse, Lao PDR in 2019. With the theme, “Sustainability and Innovation for Parks and People,” the four-day conference discussed a wide range of issues, including:

**● The Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 for protected landscapes and waterscapes.**

Various multi-country partnerships, including the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security were recognised to have contributed to the spatial expansion and effective management of marine protected areas.



**● Wildlife conservation and protection.**

Wildlife trade is one of the causes of species extinction and the region is vulnerable due to the high endemism of species. In addition, snaring trends in the forests have led to the decline of vertebrate species.

The conference also recommended the increased collaboration among regional and national agencies to address wildlife and forest crimes, and enhance the use of technology for monitoring and enforcement.

**From the top left, clockwise**  
*Bidoup Nui-Ba National Park, Viet Nam*

*Inlay Lake, Myanmar*

*Orangutans of Gunung Leuser National Park, Indonesia*

Another recommendation was to increase funding for biodiversity conservation. Experts estimate the total value of natural assets at 24 trillion US dollars. While biodiversity conservation requires funding of 150-440 billion US dollars, actual expenditure is only about 52 billion US dollars a year.

The conference also recognised that protecting biodiversity is the responsibility of business, highlighting the impacts of economic interventions to natural capital. One session tackled



### IN A NUTSHELL

ASEAN Heritage Parks are selected protected areas in the ASEAN region which are known for their unique biodiversity and ecosystems, wilderness, and outstanding values. AHPs were given the highest recognition because of their importance as conservation areas.

Through the ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks and Reserves, the ASEAN Member States agreed to effectively manage these AHPs so as to maintain ecological processes and life support systems; preserve genetic diversity; ensure sustainable utilisations of species and ecosystems; and maintain wilderness that have scenic, cultural, educational, research, recreational, and tourism values. (Source: *chm. aseanbiodiversity.org*)

several opportunities that would allow business to contribute to the sustainable use of biodiversity, including through organic agriculture, ecotourism, and herbal production.

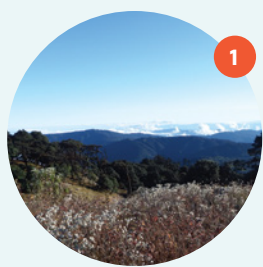
Other conference sessions covered discussions on women, youth, and indigenous people and local communities, sustainable livelihoods

and biodiversity-based products, and protected areas as nature-based solutions to climate change.

Significantly, the recommendations from the conference contributed to the discussions in the Third ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity that was held on 16-19 March 2020 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. ■

# THE ASEAN HERITAGE PARKS PROGRAMME

was created through the **ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks and Reserves on 29 November 1984**. Eleven protected areas were listed under the programme then.



**Myanmar**  
Natmataung National Park



**Cambodia**  
Virachey National Park



**Lao PDR**  
Nam Ha National Protected Area



**Thailand**  
Khao Yai National Park



**Viet Nam**  
Hoang Lien Sa Pa National Park



**Singapore**  
Bukit Timah Nature Reserve



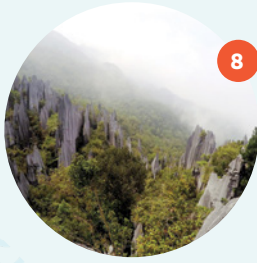
Photo Credit: © ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity



Photo Credit: © ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity



**Brunei Darussalam**  
Tasek Merimbun Heritage Park



**Malaysia**  
Gunung Mulu National Park



**Philippines**  
Mt Malindang Range Natural Park



**Indonesia**  
Lorentz National Park



## IN A NUTSHELL



### Declared Asian Heritage Parks in 2019

1 located in Brunei Darussalam;  
2 in Cambodia; 7 in Indonesia;  
1 in Lao PDR; 3 in Malaysia; 8 in  
Myanmar; 9 in the Philippines;  
2 in Singapore; 6 in Thailand;  
and 10 in Viet Nam.

Source:  
[chm.aseanbiodiversity.org](http://chm.aseanbiodiversity.org)

## ASEAN MEMBER STATES SEEK GROWTH OF THEIR

# CREATIVE ECONOMIES

BY JOANNE B. AGBISIT  
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

**How can ASEAN Member States expand their creative economies? This was the central question that 30 participants mulled over at the regional workshop on creative economy held in Bali, Indonesia on 4-5 September 2019.**

Workshop participants included officials of government agencies in-charge of the creative sector, creative industry players, and representatives of international organisations.

ASEAN is keen on growing the region's collective creative economy since it produces businesses and jobs, leads to cultural appreciation and preservation, and is powered by an endless resource—human imagination and creativity.

In recent years, Member States have established national bodies and partnered with the private sector to launch ambitious plans and programmes for promoting their visual arts, performing arts, traditional cultural expressions, heritage sites, publishing and printed media, film and video, new media, design, and creative services. They aspire to

leverage their rich cultural heritage and their citizens' design skills and technological know-how to gain a foothold in the global creative market.

The government of Indonesia, for example, formed the Creative Economy Agency or Bekraf in 2015 to synchronise policies and coordinate programmes related to the country's creative enterprises and boost their contribution to the national economy.

The government of Thailand similarly set up its own Creative Economy Agency in 2018 to support the application of innovation and creativity in Thai products and services with an eye towards the international market.

In the Philippines, the Creative Economy Council of the Philippines, a private





**ASEAN IS KEEN ON GROWING THE REGION'S COLLECTIVE CREATIVE ECONOMY SINCE IT PRODUCES BUSINESSES AND JOBS, LEADS TO CULTURAL APPRECIATION AND PRESERVATION, AND IS POWERED BY AN ENDLESS RESOURCE—HUMAN IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY.**



organisation of creative entrepreneurs, has partnered with the government to develop a roadmap to raise the demand for the country's creative talent and content and increase the size and value of its creative industries.

The workshop gave the participants a platform to take stock of the countries' accomplishments and best practices, identify common challenges, and assess the next steps.

Among the laudable initiatives presented by Indonesia and the Philippines was the establishment of centres of excellence and creative hubs.

Denpasar is one such hub, having been declared as a Creative City by the Indonesian government in 2019. The city's Bali Creative Industry Centre has received funding from the



government for infrastructure and capacity building programmes in support of creative enterprises in the area. The Centre offers training and competency certification to prepare individuals for internship and employment in the industry, implements a business incubator programme, and runs a gallery to showcase products.



### **CREATIVE ECONOMY**

is the sum of all the parts of the creative industries, including trade, labour, and production. Creative industries cover advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, design, fashion, TV, film, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, software, and computer games.

Source: <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DITC/CreativeEconomy/Creative-Economy-Programme.aspx>

At the regional level, ASEAN has launched projects that shore up the digital creative economy. One of these is the **ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive Project**, which aims to digitise Member States' cultural heritage collections and make them publicly available online. Another is the **Development of Digital Heritage Contents with UNESCO World Heritage of ASEAN**, which aims to undertake 3D-scanning and ultra-high resolution filming of declared heritage sites in the region, which will then be showcased at the ASEAN Cultural House in South Korea, the ASEAN Cultural Centre in Bangkok, and the ASEAN Secretariat office based in Jakarta.

But the creative sector is faced with tough challenges according to workshop participants. They said that the expansion of creative industries can be stymied by limited access to financing, information, technology, and market; poor understanding of intellectual property rights; and weak domestic policies to attract investment.

The workshop concluded on an optimistic note, with participants agreeing to bring up creative economy issues and concerns at relevant ASEAN meetings, and carrying out a comprehensive study on the scope of creative economy in the region. The UN Conference on Trade and Development, which has been compiling country profiles on creative goods and services, also invited Member States to continue cooperating on data collection. ■

## ASPIRING JOURNALISTS PARTICIPATE IN BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

# TRAINING WORKSHOP on SOCIAL JOURNALISM

BY JOANNE B. AGBISIT  
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

**Twenty aspiring journalists from 10 ASEAN Member States returned to their home countries armed with newfound knowledge and skills in social journalism, thanks to a training workshop held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam on 16-19 September 2019.**

The workshop was dedicated to teaching a new generation of young and promising journalists on the use of traditional and new media platforms to educate the public on pressing societal concerns and galvanise them into action. They were also taught the value of accurate and credible reporting.

The participants, most of whom are college students and recent graduates, were selected from among 300 applicants in the region.

The training included lectures on content production where participants learned how to capture media and public attention, do research, identify reliable sources, conduct interviews, and promote social media content.

“Before I joined this workshop, I only knew how to write,” said Camille Joyce M. Lisay, an economics student from the University of the Philippines. “Through the workshop, I was able to learn how to properly frame what to publish online and how to analyse the audience who read and consume online content.”

Vichny Chanchem, an international relations and political science student in Cambodia’s Paragon International



University, agrees. With this workshop, Chanchem said she learned “how to do research, how to track down fake news, and how to make an impact to society.”

The participants were given a chance to apply multimedia and audio-visual techniques in a hands-on portion of the training workshop.

“What I learned from this workshop was that there are many different media and platforms to get the word out,” said Wira

Gregory, a student at Pusat Tingkatan Enam Meragang in Brunei Darussalam. He reflects that his generation is very privileged to have the Internet and digital technologies at their fingertips which enable them to reach out directly to the public.

In addition to sharing practical knowledge, the training workshop also offered the participants an opportunity to learn more about ASEAN as an organisation. The ASEAN Secretariat presented the work of

ASEAN, highlighting, in particular, its work plan for the youth sector for the 2016-2020 period. The ASEAN Foundation, meanwhile, presented its flagship youth development programmes.

Through interaction within and outside the training workshop, the participants also discovered more about their ASEAN neighbours, building a sense of camaraderie and laying the foundation for peace.

“We always want to travel and go far way, but when it comes to regional issues, we may not know so much, so I was grateful for the opportunity to learn things first-hand from other participants, how things are in their countries, and how we can learn from them” said Ariel Tee, a communications executive at Singapore’s Keppel Corporation.

To showcase the skills they gained from the training workshop and make social journalism come to life, the participants were grouped into country teams and asked to pitch an awareness raising campaign that they could implement in their respective countries after the training workshop. The campaign must revolve around the theme “transparent and responsive governance.”

The country teams chose different topics for their campaigns.

The Malaysian team launched a petition to end child marriages and call for stronger policies to protect children’s rights. “It is a prevalent issue that no one really speaks about,” said Kiirtaara Aravindhana, a freelance writer and master’s student in neuroscience at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Raising awareness on open data and, in particular, the government’s information portal, Satu Data Indonesia, was the advocacy of the Indonesian team. The team solicited feedback from the public to improve the interactivity and usefulness of the portal.

The Thailand team’s goal was to help stop rampant piracy in Thailand. According to Tanyaluk Prasomtong, a Chulalongkorn University student, the team intended to



*Participants brainstorm ideas for their culminating project for the workshop*

deliver the message that “buying pirated products should not be a social norm.”

The other campaigns focused on youth voices (Brunei), vocational training (Cambodia), volunteerism (Lao PDR), financial transparency (Myanmar), poverty alleviation programme (Philippines), data privacy protection (Singapore), and youth policy (Viet Nam).

The country teams had a month to produce and carry out their campaigns. The three best campaigns were then chosen by a panel of experts on the basis of impact and attainment of objectives. The winning campaigns were from the Philippines (1st place), Malaysia (2nd place), and Indonesia (3rd place).

The training workshop was the product of collaboration among the ASEAN-USAID Partnership for Regional Optimisation with the Political Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (PROSPECT) Project, ASEAN Foundation, The Scoop Brunei Darussalam, and the ASEAN Secretariat. ■



## THE PARTICIPANTS



**Training workshop participants include the following: Nur Alyssa Madihah binti Sopian and Wira Gregory (Brunei Darussalam); Vichny Chanchem and Visal Chourn (Cambodia); Yasmine Anisa Nuha and Indiana Salsabila (Indonesia); Deuanphachanh Sisongkhame and Panalath Lathouly (Lao PDR); Yunn Shwe Yee Khaing and Thinn Nay Chi Sun (Myanmar); Aaliyah Hasna Binti Abdullah and Kiirtaara Aravindhana (Malaysia); Camille Joyce M. Lisay and Joaquin Victor Tacla (Philippines); Ariel Tee and Madhumitha Ayyappan (Singapore); Sahatas Chindakul and Tanyaluk Prasomtong (Thailand); and Nguyen Dang Dao and Ho Vu Minh Dien (Viet Nam).**

# What is the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)?



Photo Credit: © ASEAN Secretariat

**In 2003, ASEAN Leaders adopted the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (also known as the Bali Concord II), which established an ASEAN Community consisting of three pillars.**

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) is one of these three pillars, and works together with the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), to create an open, dynamic, and resilient ASEAN.

The ASCC, also known as the People's Pillar, works towards enhancing human development, resiliency and sustainable development in the region. Fifteen



sectoral bodies under the ASCC pillar focus on implementing projects and activities which are people-oriented, people-centred, and environmentally friendly. These projects serve to address the present needs of the people of ASEAN, and also address new and emerging issues affecting the region. The work plans and cooperation frameworks of these sectoral bodies are strongly guided by decisions

taken by ASEAN Leaders in the form of declarations and various policy instruments. Cooperation between sectoral bodies within the ASCC and also with sectoral bodies in the APSC and AEC pillars are conducted through various cross-sectoral collaboration mechanisms, that serve to address multi-dimensional issues related to particular areas of concern.

Consultative platforms, such as forums, meetings and workshops, enables the ASCC to reach out to a broad range of stakeholders in government, civil society organisations, multilateral institutions, the private sector, and think tanks. In addition to the sectoral bodies, the ASCC also includes various centres and networks, which focus on specific issues addressed by the pillar. Through comprehensive mechanisms and strong partnerships, the ASCC is working on achieving its vision of creating an inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic community which engages and benefits the people of ASEAN. ■



● Ministerial Bodies   
 ● Sectoral Bodies   
 \* takes guidance from and reports to both AMCA and AMRI

**AMRI**-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information  
**AMCA**-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts  
**AMMY**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth  
**ASED**-ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting  
**AMMS**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports  
**AMRDPE**-ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication  
**AMMSWD**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development  
**AMMW**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women  
**ALMM**-ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting  
**ACCSM**-The Heads of Civil Service Meeting for ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters  
**AHMM**-ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting

**AMMDM**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management  
**COP-AADMER**-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response  
**AMME**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment  
**COP to AATHP**-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution  
**SOMCA**-Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts  
**COCI\***-The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information  
**SOMRI**-Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information  
**SOMY**-Senior Officials Meeting on Youth  
**SOMED**-Senior Officials Meeting on Education  
**SOMS**-Senior Officials Meeting on Sports

**SOMRDPE**-Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication  
**SOMSWD**-Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development  
**ACWC**-ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children  
**ACW**-ASEAN Committee on Women  
**SLOM**-Senior Labour Officials Meeting  
**SOM-ACCSM**-Senior Officials Meeting on ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters  
**SOMHD**-Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development  
**ACDM**-ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management  
**ASOEN**-ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment  
**COM to AATHP**-Committee under the Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

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