

## foreword

from Canada, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam stressed the need to value cultures while at the same time emphasized that culture, customary rules, religion and traditional practices should not be invoked as justification for violations of the rights and freedoms of women.

In an effort to better understand the functioning of plural legal systems, as part of the Regional Programme on Improving Women's Human Rights in Southeast Asia, - UN Women commissioned a preparatory paper to provide guidance as part of its Regional Research on Women's Access to Justice in the Plural Legal Systems in Southeast Asia. This was aimed at evaluating women's access to justice in the plural legal systems of Southeast Asia and determining how women's access to justice can be enhanced according to the standards of international human rights law.

This publication is intended to share an analytical framework for investigating plural legal systems from the gender perspective. It focuses on the broad spectrum of the legal orders, including those that are informal, not formally recognized, or not State sanctioned covering customary, indigenous, traditional and religious orders. UN Women hopes that this publication will be useful for states and non-governmental organizations working at the forefront of cases, making positive impacts on women's lives with useful working tools; and provide guidance for the regional research and to identify contentious issues within the region. This paper aims to feed into the bigger outcome of the research in enhancing Southeast Asia's regional processes that facilitates CEDAW implementation while surfacing the richness of Southeast Asia's legal plurality, and becoming a knowledge product for global advocacy. Moreover, the research aims to provide suggestions for practical interventions for the short term as well as recommendations to overlap the gap, for long term cooperation to improve access to legal aid and policy changes to advance the situation of women in the justice system.



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Bangkok, Thailand  
June 2014