

"There is inadequate knowledge of the rights of women under the Convention, its concept of substantive gender equality and the Committee's general recommendations, in society in general, including among all branches of the Government and the judiciary at all levels, as indicated by the absence of information on any court decisions that refer to the Convention. It is further concerned that women themselves, especially those in rural and remote areas, are not aware of their rights under the Convention and thus lack the capacity to claim them."

The Committee urged the State party to "take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Convention is sufficiently known and applied by all branches of Government as a framework for all laws, court verdicts and policies on gender equality and the advancement of women."<sup>103</sup>

The concerns expressed to Lao PDR are applicable to all SEA parties to CEDAW. The legal framework to mandate and demand such a coherent, holistic and consistent application of CEDAW is not available in these countries with any level of certainty.

This section will not examine the status of CEDAW implementation comprehensively, but will look generally at adherence of the law at the domestic level in ensuring a legal framework for substantive equality. The questions that will be raised are to what extent CEDAW is applicable in the domestic legal order so that CEDAW standards should apply in courts. In the event that CEDAW has not been integrated into the national legal system, the question is whether an understanding of substantive equality is embodied in the Constitution or in other legislation such as a gender equality law, so there is a constitutional or statutory guarantee for substantive equality. A related issue is whether there is a legal definition of 'discrimination' as per Article 1 of CEDAW in the national legislation. This section will also examine whether there is a legal basis for the redistribution of resources, opportunities and political decision making positions in these countries favoring women, as required under Article 4.1. of CEDAW. Lastly, it will examine the fulfillment of the obligation to eliminate stereotyping or to modify or abolish cultural patterns of conduct that are premised on the inferiority of women as required under Article 5.1. This assessment will rely on Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) in relation to the following countries: Cambodia (2006 and 2013); Indonesia (2102); Lao PDR (2006 and 2009); Malaysia (2006); Myanmar (2008); Philippines (2006); Singapore (2011); Thailand (2006); Timor-Leste (2009); and Viet Nam (2007).

103. Concluding observations: Lao PDR, CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/7, 2009, para11