

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONSULTANCY
FOR A RESEARCH ON UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN ARMED FORCES IN ASEAN**

FOCUS TOPIC: THE JOURNEY OF WOMEN LEADER IN ARMED FORCES

Duration	June – October 2024 (with up to 2 days of presentations in later 2024)
Level of Effort	25 days (8 hours equals 1 day) (Number of total days is negotiable).
Place of Work	Home-based

BACKGROUND

In January 2023, the Governing Council of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) approved a program of cooperation between the ASEAN-Australia Political Security Partnership (APSP) and ASEAN-IPR with a focus on Women, Peace and Security. The goal of the program of cooperation is to *advance WPS knowledge production and engagement in ASEAN through support to institutional capacity strengthening for the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry and ASEAN-IPR.*

APSP is an investment of the Australian Government to support ASEAN's ability to lead a more coordinated, cohesive and inclusive response to transnational political security. It is implemented by The Asia Foundation.

Under the program of cooperation between ASEAN-IPR and APSP, The Asia Foundation is seeking a researcher/s to conduct research into 'Understanding the Challenges and Opportunities of Women's Leadership in the Armed Forces in ASEAN'.

RATIONALE

ASEAN IPR has consistently prioritised the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda at the forefront of initiatives, especially since the adoption of the Joint Statement on Promoting WPS in ASEAN in 2017. The WPS Agenda received considerable momentum with the completion of the Regional Study on WPS in ASEAN in 2021, and later on, the completion and launch of the Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on WPS in 2022.

Based on the ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security, having women in the defence and security sector as leaders is one of the ways to achieve sustainable peace. This goal is further translated into the RPA WPS under Participation pillar, particularly on the **Strategic Outcome 2**, "*Women's full, meaningful and equal participation in institutions, organisations and decision-making processes related to peace and security, including in leadership positions*" and **Output 2.4.**, "*Women can participate meaningfully and fully in the security sector institutions of the ASEAN member states, such as the armed forces and police, including in positions of leadership, and there is increased capacity to deploy women peacekeepers at all ranks and in leadership positions in particular.*"

Despite ASEAN's success in increasing women's participation in security sector, studies find that increasing the number of females, while critical, is only one component of a larger objective to promote the meaningful participation of women in armed forces. Researchers have identified possible barriers to women's meaningful participation, such as problematic gender norms and biases, sexual exploitation and abuse, the exclusion of women from certain military functions and tasks, gender discrimination in promotion opportunities, lack of family or community support, unpaid care work, and a small eligible pool of women available for deployment. Unfortunately, these problems are not immune to women leaders in armed forces. Although having higher roles, the opportunities and challenges are multiplied and present differing complications for women leaders.

For example, in Sweden, gender inequality practices still persist, including in the recruitment of women leaders in the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF). According to Alvinus, Krekula, and Larsson (2016), since the SAF is traditionally a male-dominated organisation, there are forces that have a negative impact on the development of women as leaders, which can be described as differentiating and making women invisible. These strategies exist on an individual and organisational level and counteract positive measures, thus holding women back and preserving the traditional male-dominated system. These dynamics are present across a diverse range of countries globally. In India, the composition of the Indian armed forces is also at odds considering the gender makeup of the society they represent, showing the silence of women's voices. Gaikwad and Pandey (2022) conclude in their study that Indian women leaders face unique challenges in their leadership trajectory due to the social structure of Indian society and the orthodox patriarchal mindset. Drawing from these examples, it is argued that "although owing to their position and power, women leaders are privileged yet, they experience marginalisation," (Poltera & Schreiner, 2019)".

There has been increasing focus in ASEAN and among ASEAN Member States (AMS) on recruiting more women to the armed forces. Indonesia is the top-ranking ASEAN country in the deployment of female peacekeepers,¹ and in December 2023 Cambodia announced a commitment to increase its percentage of deployed female peacekeepers from the current 14% to 20%. While these developments are encouraging, there is less attention on those women who have achieved a higher rank within the armed forces, and the enabling and constraining factors to women's capacity to become leaders in the army, navy and air force.

While ASEAN is working on amplifying and increasing women's meaningful participation, especially as leaders in armed forces as a part of their commitment to the RPA WPS, there is still a lack of research on women as leaders in armed forces in ASEAN. Based on that and with reference to the RPA WPS **Priority Action 2.4.5**. "*Assess current networks utilised by women in the security sector (police, military, defence, peacekeeping, etc.) and identify additional networks and mentoring opportunities that may be needed, and opportunities for promoting women's leadership and participation in the security sector, further tapping into the expertise of these networks, and identifying ways men can further support female leadership and success in the security sector*", ASEAN-IPR with the support of the ASEAN-Australia Political-Security Partnership (APSP), implemented by The Asia Foundation (TAF), is making a concerted effort to undertake a research project particularly focused on the journey of women leaders in armed forces.

¹ https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/vn/Women-and-Peacekeeping-in-ASEAN_EN.pdf

OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The overall objective of this project is to enhance the understanding and development of effective strategies to promote women's meaningful participation and leadership in the armed forces across ASEAN member states. This will be achieved by identifying current barriers, assessing existing support networks, and highlighting successful practices that can be adapted and implemented regionally. The project aims to contribute to the broader goals of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda as articulated in the Regional Plan of Action (RPA), fostering a more inclusive and equitable security sector.

OBJECTIVE OF THE CONSULTANCY

This TOR will guide the hiring and engagement of a consultant who will support APSP in the implementation of the research under the project by answering.

The consultant will:

- a. Develop and finalise the scope of the review, methodology, design and outline of the report, incorporating feedback from TAF;
- b. Conduct an appropriate number of Key Informant Interviews as agreed with TAF to inform the analysis;
- c. Collect and analyze data obtained from secondary sources, such as academic papers, reports, research articles, working papers, and statistical databases, and document promising practices;
- d. Develop a draft report;
- e. Revise and finalise the report, incorporating inputs from TAF;
- f. Present the findings at one or more meetings/dialogues as identified by TAF; and
- g. Perform any other related tasks as requested by and agreed with TAF.

METHODOLOGY GUIDELINES

The research will combine desk review with select interviews and profiles of women leaders in armed forces from some AMS. The informants of this study will be women leaders in armed forces of member states in ASEAN. It is anticipated to engage select high-ranking women based on the realities of each AMS, recognising that the prevalence of women at high-levels in the armed forces differs across AMS. Armed forces shall include army, navy and air force. Theories, literature review, desk-based research, interview and data collection methods as well as other details of the object research shall be discussed by the researchers contracted to conduct the study, with the continuous supervision and review by ASEAN-IPR and APSP. Other ASEAN-related bodies or entities will be engaged in the review process.

As a base guideline, the research shall seek out the answers of these questions:

1. Background information (based on consent)
2. What has been the pathway to leadership for these armed forces women?
3. What are the gendered challenges faced in their leadership role in the armed forces?
How do these women address those challenges?
4. What types of support exist or are lacking to enable them to act as mentors to other armed forces women seeking to achieve higher roles?
5. What types of support do they need in their role as leaders to combat gender barriers or discrimination?

6. What is the connection between women leadership in the armed forces and WPS Agenda? How is the influence of women leadership in the armed forces in effectively implementing WPS Agenda?

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES, INDICATIVE TIMELINE AND LEVEL OF EFFORTS

The following deliverables are expected from the consultant within the maximum 25 days².

Indicative timeline	Activity	Deliverable	Level of Efforts (Maximum input days)
June 2024	Submission of research methodology	Document outlining research methodology, design and outline, identified Key Informants	2 days
July 2024	Key informant interviews	Draft report	20 days
	Analysis		
	Write-up of the draft report		
	Submission of the draft report		
August – September 2024	Revision and finalisation of the report with inputs received from TAF and ASEAN-IPR	Final research	3 days

All deliverables will be produced and delivered in English.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CONSULTANT

The consultant is required to have the following qualifications:

- **Proven Research Experience:** Strong record of research in the field of Gender Studies, Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), or related fields. Samples of written work will be required as a basis for consideration.
- **Policy Analysis Skills:** Demonstrated ability to develop comprehensive and evidence-based analysis to inform policymakers, particularly in contexts related to women's leadership and participation in security sectors.
- **ASEAN Expertise:** Knowledge of, and experience with, ASEAN, especially in the context of the WPS agenda and security sector reforms.
- **Collaborative Skills:** Ability to work cooperatively and respond constructively to requests and inputs from various stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- **Educational Background:** Postgraduate degree in Gender Studies, International Relations, Security Studies, or a closely related field and/or at least 7 years of proven experience in a field relevant to the WPS agenda.
- **Timeliness and Quality of Deliverables:** Ability to deliver high-quality outputs within the stipulated timeframe.

² 8 hours equal 1 day.

- **Communication Skills:** Excellent English writing, communication, and presentation skills are essential for effective dissemination and advocacy of research findings.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENT

The project will be implemented through APSP, with TAF as the implementing agency. ASEAN-IPR will provide technical guidance throughout the process.

TAF will be responsible for overseeing the consultant, the consultant's contract, and tasks and deliverables. APSP will explore opportunities for feedback on the report from ASEAN-IPR Governing Council, for the consultant to reflect in the work.

HOW TO APPLY

Please send a cover letter specifying the position to which you are applying with your resume by email to: Sittitat Rujichok sittitat.ujichok@asiafoundation.org by May 29, 2024 (Only short-listed candidates will be notified).

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