

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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Winnie Zhao

Vice Chairs:
Sybelle VanAntwerp
Jamie Lim
Natalie Chow



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United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – also known as UNESCAP! My name is Winnie Zhao and I am honoured to be your Chair during SSUNS 2016. I am in my fourth and final year at McGill University studying Kinesiology. Last semester, I studied as an exchange student in Brisbane, Australia and was able to experience life on the other side of the world, in the Asia-Pacific region. My Model UN experience began in high school and since then I have served as a chair, dais, and Secretariat member, even participating as a delegate at SSUNS 2013. I am so excited to meet you all and experience your insightful and enthusiastic debate! Allow me to introduce the remaining members of your dais: Natalie Chow and Jamie Lim, and Sybelle VanAntwerp.

Natalie is a third year student pursing a degree in Economics, with a minor in Political Science. Raised in Hong Kong, Natalie has a particularly strong interest in economic, social, and political issues related to the Asia-Pacific region. She has been participating in Model UN since her freshman year of high school and is looking forward to her first SSUNS experience this fall!

Jamie is also a third year student, pursuing a joint honours degree in Political Science and International Development Studies. She has been involved in Model UN in various roles for the past five years, and this will be her second time as a Vice-Chair for SSUNS. Prior to studying in Montreal, Jamie has also lived in Singapore, Shanghai, and Hong Kong and has a deep interest in affairs around the region.

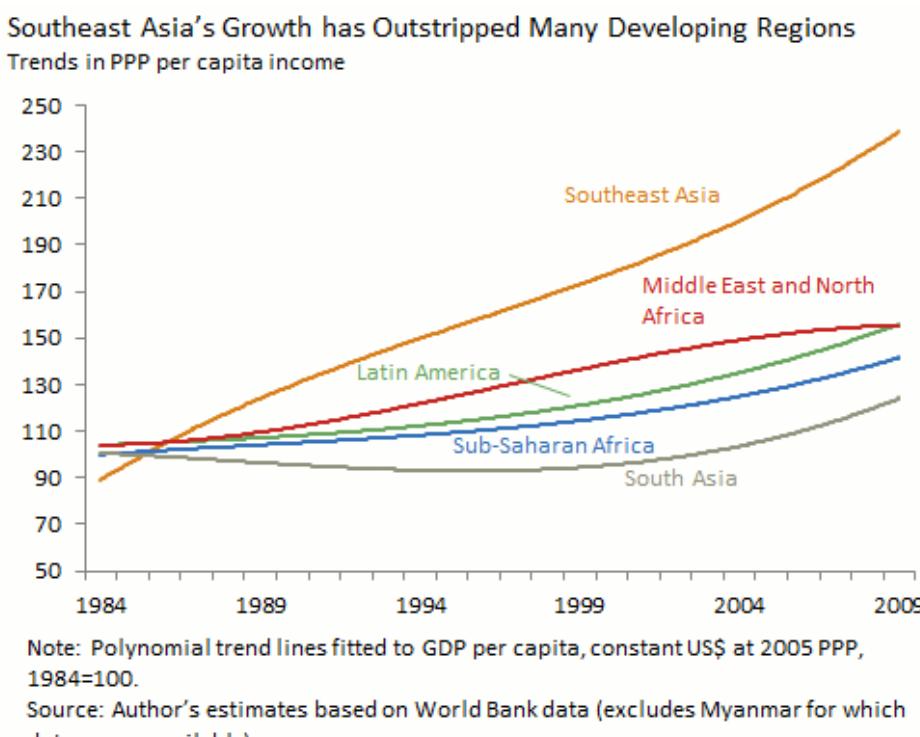
Sybelle is in her final year of university and studies agricultural economics with a specialization in agribusiness. She participated in Model UN throughout high school in Boston and Norway. She has participated in several conferences at McGill, with this being her second time as a Vice-Chair. Sybelle's interest in international development began during an internship in Pune, India, and the Asia and the Pacific region holds a special place in her heart. Challenges related to malnutrition and, in particular, food systems and agriculture are her main interests. This past summer, she completed agriculture and food security work in Washington, D.C. In the future, Sybelle hopes to participate in fieldwork, potentially through programs such as the Peace Corps.

During this four-day conference, we will be discussing three important issues of concern in Asia and the Pacific: sustainable agriculture, human migration, and infrastructure and economic development in South East Asia. All of these matters have a major impact on the people of the Asia-Pacific and are deserving of thoughtful, well-researched and comprehensive resolutions from delegates. Our dais has worked tirelessly to ensure that your SSUNS experience is unforgettable, whether you are a MUN veteran or a first-time delegate. We hope you are as excited as we are to tackle these problems and we look forward to a weekend of fun, new friendships, and exhilarating debate!

Cheers,
Winnie Zhao

Topic 1: The Role of Infrastructure in the Development of South East Asia

The South East Asia region has been characterized as an area of strong economic potential with emphasis being placed on its prospect for development. This area is composed of eleven countries (Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei and East Timor) which represent a diversity of culture, language, history and development¹. In recent years, these countries have experienced tremendous growth through increasing regional trade networks, transforming agricultural economies into manufacturing ones and capitalizing on their abundant labour supplies and natural resources.



Source: Nehru Vikram, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2011,
<http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/07/06/southeast-asia-crouching-tiger-or-hidden-dragon-pub-44964>

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) forecasts a continued moderate regional growth level of approximately 6.5%². However, a strong variation exists in the level of development achieved and predicted across the region. While larger economies such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have already achieved higher levels of development than other nations in the area and have since, experienced a slowdown in economic growth, rapid transformation continues in lesser developed

¹ "South East Asian Countries," *World Health Organization*, last modified 2016, <http://www.searo.who.int/countries/en/>.

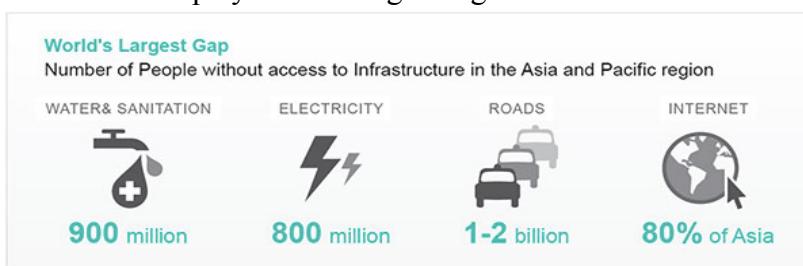
² "Economic Outlook for South East Asia, China and India 2016" (OECD Publishing, Paris, 2016), 26.



economies such as Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar³. The large economic differences between these countries pose a challenge for prescribing effective policies and agendas for the region as a whole. Despite these varying stages of development, one unifying priority for the South East Asia region is the necessity of developing stronger infrastructure throughout. This is reflected in the OECD's proposed development plans for 2016 and the emphasis placed on enhancing regional integration through effective structural policy⁴.

The importance of a continued trajectory of economic growth is clear. A strong economy has meaningful implications for improving standards of living, increasing capabilities in combatting environmental issues, and the alleviation of poverty⁵. Thus, in the context of weak global demand, a declining Chinese economy and uncertain economic conditions in the West, it is critical that the South East Asia region takes measures to ensure increased development. As these countries continue to grow economically, different obstacles have emerged, including declining birth rates, shrinking workforces, and an increased necessity for technological advancement⁶. In addressing the challenging path towards continued success, it is important to recognize the persistent underdeveloped infrastructure that plagues the region and the significant role that improved structural facilities can play in ensuring that growth continues in the long term. It is predicted that

deteriorations and uneven or insufficient provisions of energy, transportation, housing, communications and water facilities have caused economic growth to be restricted by 3 to 4%, in terms of GDP across the region⁷.



Source: "Regional Perspectives on Developing a PPP Pipeline," *World Economic Forum*, 2015

Section 1: Growing Demands for Improved Infrastructure

The importance of increased infrastructure is evident. It is forecasted that by 2025, the Asian market will represent almost 60% of global infrastructure spending, highlighting the importance of creating an effective economic, social and political environment that will enable this level of investment⁸. Further, it is estimated that the Southeast Asia

³ "Economic Outlook", 27.

⁴ Ibid., 25

⁵ "Why Do We Need Economic Growth," *BBC News*, last modified October 16 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/7674841.stm.

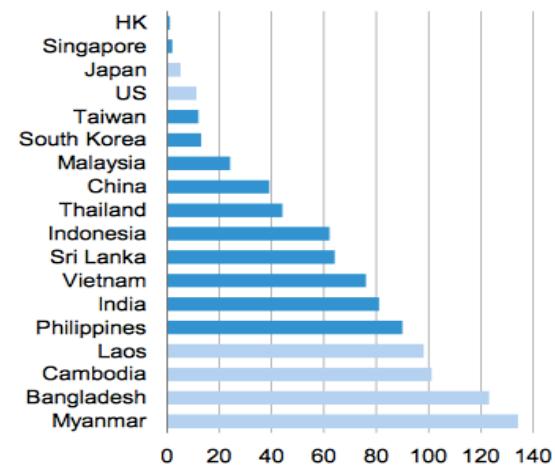
⁶ "South East Asian Economies, Okay for Now," *The Economist*, last modified April 16, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21697032-region-looking-perkier-most-its-growth-potential-waning-okay-now?zid=306&ah=1b164dbd43b0cb27ba0d4c3b12a5e227>

⁷ Naveen Tahilyani, "Asia's \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Opportunity," *McKinsey & Company*, last modified March 2011, <http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/private-equity-and-principal-investors/our-insights/asias-1-trillion-infrastructure-opportunity>

⁸ "A Summary of South East Asian Infrastructure Spending: Outlook to 2025" (PwC, 2014), 2.

region will be spending \$8 trillion USD over the next 15 years upgrading existing and implementing new infrastructure⁹. Based on current patterns of growth with regard to increasing urbanization and growing manufacturing sectors, infrastructure spending should be focused on transportation and the distribution of both consumer goods as well as raw materials.¹⁰ The estimated spending will likely be allocated such that 51% is put towards electricity facilities, 29% towards roads and 13% for telecommunication infrastructure¹¹. As the Asian Development Bank (ADB) proposes, improving infrastructure within the region is crucial for moving towards achieving the vision of a “Seamless Asia,” built around the idea of regional interconnectedness and promoting strong regional demand capable of sustaining long-term economic growth¹². Through addressing deficiencies in infrastructure, trade, which is crucial to the region’s development, will be improved greatly by lowering costs and enabling increased volumes of exchange, which is crucial to the region’s development. McKinsey & Company forecasts that based on current projects aimed at increasing the level of integration and expanding free-trade agreements within ASEAN countries alone, opportunities profiting \$280 billion to \$625 billion per year could be realized by 2030¹³. Further, this trade and increased access to resources across the South East Asia region will help narrow the gap among Asian economies, develop inclusive and sustainable growth and help to achieve a singular Asian market capable of greater economic efficiency and productivity¹⁴. The present lack of infrastructure in the South East Asia region has arguably contributed to uneven and clustered development in the area. Strong economic success in the region has been concentrated along the coastline in proximity to international ports and in areas with access to air transport as well as connectivity through fibre optic linkages¹⁵. However, deficiencies in infrastructure, especially in landlocked and remote areas, have resulted in significant untapped economic potential as a result of both economic and geographic isolation. It is therefore important that physical connectivity (hard infrastructure), complemented by policy coordination (soft infrastructure) within the region is achieved.

Global infrastructure ranking 2015-16,
from 1 = best to 140 = worst



Section 2: The Current State of Infrastructure in South East Asia

While there has been significant improvement in the quality and quantity of infrastructure in the South East Asia region, this improvement has not been sufficient nor has it

⁹ “Infrastructure Fails to Bridge Growth Gap in Southeast Asia,” *South China Morning Post*, last modified December 5, 2015, <http://www.scmp.com/business/economy/article/1655893/infrastructure-fails-bridge-growth-gap-southeast-asia>.

¹⁰ “A Summary of South East Asian Infrastructure Spending,” 2.

¹¹ “The Infrastructure Gap,” *The Economist*, last modified March 21, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/node/1655893/the-infrastructure-gap> Source: Syetam Hansakul, “Global Infrastructure development-finance-helps-china-win-friends-and-influence-american-allies-in”

Rankings 2015-2016,” Deutsche Bank, 2016

¹² “Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia” (Asian Development Bank Institute, 200

¹³ Jonathan Woetzel, “Three Paths to Sustained Economic Growth in South East Asia,” *McKinsey & Company*, last updated November 2014, <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/asia-pacific/three-paths-to-sustained-economic-growth-in-southeast-asia>.

¹⁴ “Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia,” 22.

¹⁵ “Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia,” 15

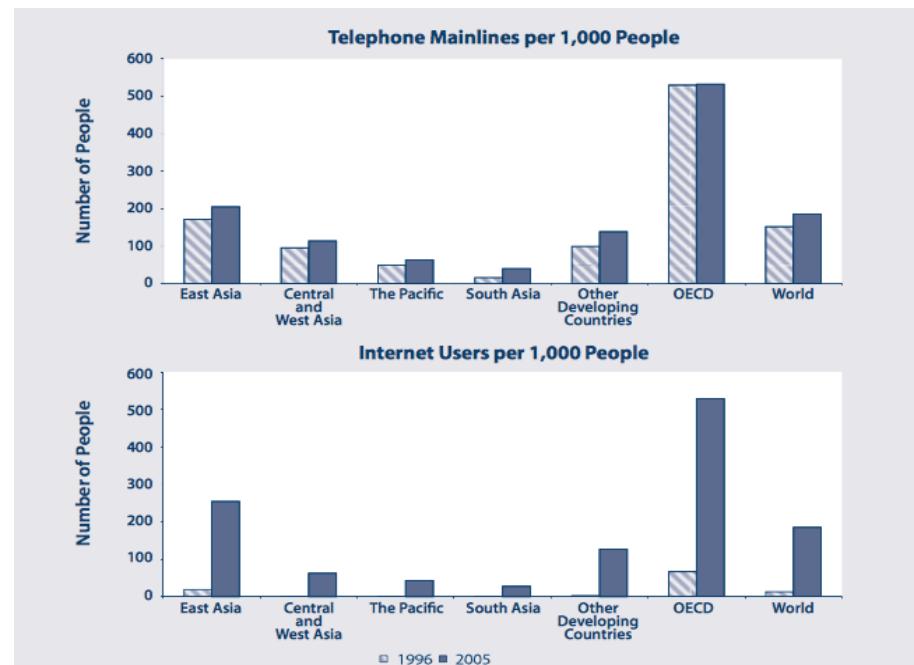
occurred equally across all of the countries. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report from 2008, Asia's infrastructure lags behind the world average. However, upon closer inspection of the sub-regions, it appears that East Asian countries rank significantly higher in terms of the quality of infrastructure as compared to the South East Asian countries. There is a substantial amount of variability in the current state and level of structural efficiency and sophistication available in the region¹⁶.

Transport

As addressed previously, the greatest gap in transport infrastructure exists between the coastline countries and landlocked countries. While those along the coast are more oriented towards major ports, inland transport systems are not necessarily linked to these coastal networks. This is a result of insufficient policies that fail to link different modes of transport and networks together. Furthermore, there is significant contrast in the capabilities and facilities available in South East Asian countries compared to those in East Asia as places in the East such as China (including Hong Kong) and Taiwan serve as ports for 28% of the world's cargo¹⁷. Thus, it is clear that a significant emphasis must be placed on increasing transport infrastructure in this region to enable South East Asian countries to catch up economically.

Communication

Telephone services in South East Asia remain to be some of the lowest in terms of density, as compared to other areas of the world. This is also true of Internet access, which severely lags behind both neighbouring and distant regions. This deficiency is highlighted in the figure below.



¹⁶ Syetam Hansakul, "Asia Infrastructure Financing," *Deutsche Bank*, last updated January 8, 2016, https://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD/PROD0000000000380319/Asia_infrastructure_financing%3A_Getting_it_right_wo.pdf.

¹⁷ "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," 45.



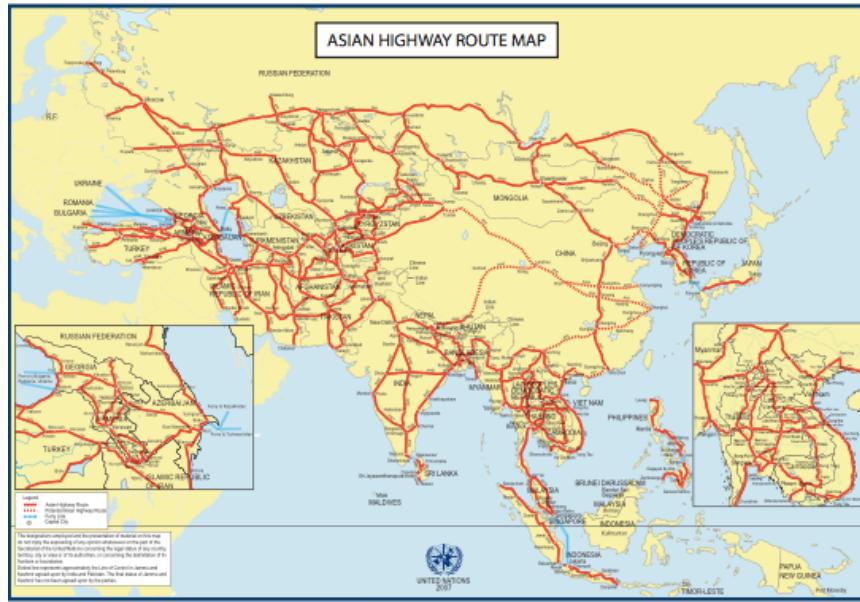
Source: "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," *Asian Development Bank Institute*, 2009

Section 3: Existing Regional Infrastructure Projects

It is most common for these emerging countries to invest in national infrastructure.

While this is an important component for development and economic growth, this alone cannot sustain the type of economic prosperity that the South East Asia region desires.

As addressed



previously, the core issue that needs to be addressed is developing regional economic demand. Thus, the ADB highlights that regional infrastructure projects, which are developed and implemented by

Source: "Proposed Asian Highway Route Map," *UNESCAP*, 2014

several countries and seek to connect regional networks or create third-party effects on neighbouring areas, are of critical importance. This type of project necessitates immense coordination and cooperation among countries in carrying out the construction processes and in establishing complementary policy¹⁸.

There are already a variety of regional infrastructure initiatives in place, some of which were started more than two decades ago. One of the most wide-spanning and inclusive projects to date is that of the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development initiative started by UNESCAP in 1992.¹⁹ This project focuses on three main pillars: envisioning an Asian Highway, developing a Trans-Asia Railway, and facilitating land transport through establishing dry and inland ports²⁰.

¹⁸ "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," 20.

¹⁹ "Asian Highway," *United Nations ESCAP*, last updated 2016, <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/asian-highway/about>.

²⁰ "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," 28.



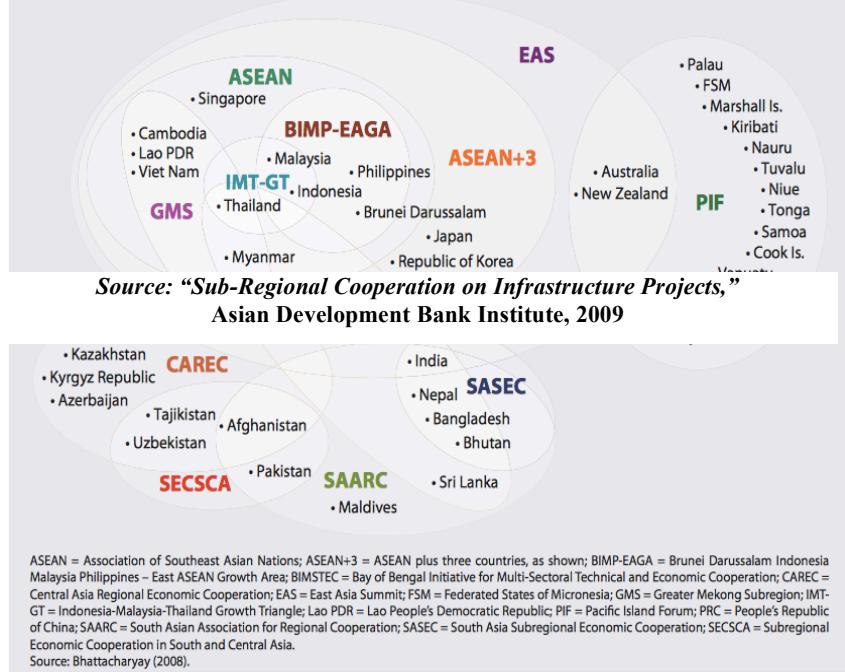
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The aim of the Asian Highway is to create a network of 141,271 kilometers of highway across thirty-two Asian countries, as shown in the figure above, while the Trans-Asia Railway network intends link 28 countries through 141,000 kilometers of railway that also provides access to the pan-European rail network²¹. This project also seeks to address the issue of landlocked and isolated inland regions through the establishment of 700 dry land ports. The proposed trans-Asian energy system is aimed at enhancing regional energy security, which integrates energy systems through “linking and synergizing” systems across the area²².

The existence of these projects is significant as acknowledges the need to pursue infrastructure projects and promote an ideal type of interconnectedness. However, the limited progress that has been made towards fulfilling the aims of these initiatives is problematic. Notably, it was not until April 2016 that inter-governmental agreements on dry ports came into force, with only seven Asia-Pacific countries signing on, including only two countries (Thailand and Vietnam) located in the South East Asia region²³. This perhaps points to difficulties in achieving the necessary level of coordination required for such wide-spanning tasks where diverse political, cultural, and social conditions exist. There is room for addressing the delays, coordination problems, and feasibility of such a regional project.

There are also a number of sub-regional projects being undertaken in the medium term on a sub-regional level. In Singapore, a significant initiative is the development of a rail link will connect it to Malaysia’ capital of Kula Lumpur. The nation is also pushing for an expansion of its public transport capabilities and revamping of the airports. As a high-income ASEAN country, its needs and demands differ from medium income ASEAN countries, including Thailand and Malaysia, where investments remain concentrated on rail and public transport systems. Additionally, low-income ASEAN countries still face

Figure 4.2. Architecture of Subregional Infrastructure Cooperation in Asia



ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations; ASEAN+3 = ASEAN plus three countries, as shown; BIMP-EAGA = Brunei Darussalam Indonesia Malaysia Philippines – East ASEAN Growth Area; EAS = East Asia Summit; GMS = Greater Mekong Subregion; IMT-GT = Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle; Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic; PIF = Pacific Island Forum; PRC = People's Republic of China; SAARC = South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; SASEC = South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation; SECSA = Subregional Economic Cooperation in South and Central Asia.
Source: Bhattacharyay (2008).

²¹ “Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia,” 29.

²² Ibid., 22.

²³ “Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports Come Into Force,” UN ESCAP, last modified April 25, 2016, <http://www.unescap.org/news/intergovernmental-agreement-dry-ports-comes-force>.



deficiencies in the quantity and quality of rail and road density, and must still address the persistent under-accessible nature of electricity supply²⁴.

Section 4: Constraints on the Financing of Infrastructure Projects

Presently, government financing serves as the primary means by which infrastructure projects are funded in Asia. This poses problems for the execution of proposed projects and solutions as government financing typically involves prolonged incubation periods before any action is taken. Furthermore, these investments face significant risk of political intervention and strict regulatory requirements, which limit the scope and capabilities of the investment²⁵. Typically, investments in infrastructure are funded through direct fiscal support in combination with aid provided by developmental banks. As a result, clear bottlenecks have emerged in the pursuit of this type of investment. For example, in Indonesia infrastructure spending has persistently been crowded out, accounting for only 10% of its annual budget as compared to the 19% put towards energy subsidies²⁶. In 2015, the Indonesian government pledged to double the budget allocated for infrastructure spending. The limited effectiveness of public funding both historically and presently has created an increased focus on creating desirable and conducive environments for private, as well as foreign sources of investment. Through opening up the Asian infrastructure market, there has been a significant rise in the value of available funds. In 2013, \$22 billion USD was committed by unlisted infrastructure funds²⁷. Countries should therefore be placing a focus on implementing institutions and regulation to achieve a level of stability that is attractive for investors, while still addressing the need to better allocate budgets to account for growing infrastructure demands.

Challenges to Addressing the Infrastructure Gap

Informal Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements and policies are currently weak. With the exception of ASEAN, which is not an institution primarily focused on infrastructure investment, all others are currently characterized as being informal in nature. This in itself creates a number of issues with regard to weak legal and regulatory frameworks, reduced institutional capacity, high levels of inefficiency and a diminished capacity to enforce complex regional coordination²⁸. The lack of formalized institutions serves to deter private sector capital and experts from participating in infrastructure projects that are public in nature. It is important that potential investors feel that they are equitably involved, investments are secure, and intellectual property is safeguarded²⁹. Investor confidence is important to rebuild especially in when looking back on the negative fallout of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. Furthermore, there must be institutions and

²⁴ Syetam Hansakul, 2.

²⁵ Syetam Hansakul, 3.

²⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁷ Susan Hillard, "Opportunities and Challenges for Infrastructure Investment In Asia," *King & Wood Mallesons*, <http://www.kwm.com/en/knowledge/insights/opportunities-and-challenges-for-infrastructure-investment-in-asia-20150527>.

²⁸ "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," 146.

²⁹ "A Summary of South East Asian Infrastructure Spending," 11.



processes in place to handle the migration, displacement, and urbanization pressures that are likely to emerge from the execution of such infrastructure projects³⁰.

Necessity of Preparation

Despite the pressing demand for infrastructure, projects cannot simply be drafted and implemented easily and quickly. There must be a distinct, transparent, and thorough procedure that establishes the economic and technical viability in order to attract investors. Measures of how successful the project will be, its realistic outcomes and any potential risks that may be encountered need to be accounted for³¹. This type of process needs to be consistent and established throughout the South East Asia region in order to ensure successful collaboration. This requires the process to respect the diverse needs and capabilities of varying countries, while still emphasizing the importance of coordinated policy. Further, thorough documentation enhances the confidence of potential investors, increases their willingness to participate in projects, and sets clearly defined goals.

Limited Capacity

Public sector officials need to have experience and expertise in the area of infrastructure to deal with the complexities and nuances of such a project. Where there is a lack of experience or lack of technical, legal, or financial capabilities, the necessary processes may fail to be carried out properly³². It is important for leaders of emerging economies to not only seek expertise and local advice, but to utilize international organizations, developmental banks, and forums to bridge information gaps and maximize the success of the projects undertaken. Additionally, accountability and the eradication of corruption in governments will further attract investment through increasing economic confidence and ensuring long-term development.

Environmental Concerns

There are sometimes trade-offs between economic growth and environmental problems. It is therefore important that sustainable, yet effective, solutions continue to be the end-goal that these emerging countries are working towards. This also speaks to the quality and durability of the infrastructure that is being invested in.

Section 5: Addressing Challenges to Infrastructure Projects

Moving forward, there are several important considerations for both South East Asian countries and potential foreign investors/providers of foreign aid. The ADB notes that while regional infrastructure projects are a major goal, it is important to firstly focus on developing upon sub-regional relationships and existing alliances, given regulatory issues, coordination failures, and bottlenecks that can emerge in such negotiations. This is to ensure that projects are not only signed onto, but are actually put into action. An example of this type of delay and slow progress is the Asian Highway which was originally signed and enforced in 2004, but yet still remains incomplete with almost 10%

³⁰ "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," 157.

³¹ "A Summary of South East Asian Infrastructure Spending," 12.

³² "A Summary of South East Asian Infrastructure Spending," 13



of the network falling below the minimum standard³³. Through focusing primarily on a smaller group of partnerships, demands for infrastructure can more effectively and efficiently be met. Furthermore, to address the challenges and obstacles in the pursuit of complex infrastructure projects at a regional level, it is worth considering the development of formalized institutions that focus specifically on infrastructure needs. The ADB advocates for a Pan-Asian Coordination Infrastructure Fund (PAIF) which would help to bring together regional leaders, sub-regional program organizers, and representatives from local and international institutions such as the World Bank, the ADB, ASEAN, and UNESCAP to further the discussion and continue to push for the vision of a seamless Asia³⁴. Brining such a fund or institution into fruition is something that should definitely be considered.

More emphasis should be placed on liberalizing and harmonizing institutions across the region, creating compatibility and strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks. Through eliminating barriers and streamlining regulation and processes, transparency is increased, while costs and inefficiencies are minimized. When standard rules and specifications are in place, projects can be systematically and uniformly implemented across the region without having to make adjustments to operate across different borders. The focus must be on taking collective action to increase the scope, capability, and reliability of the regulatory systems to foster an environment of confidence and trust that would benefit infrastructure projects.

Addressing effective governance is another difficult obstacle that must be overcome. Accountability, transparency, and strong leadership are all important considerations, which may be strengthened through the involvement of independent anti-corruption commissions, as well as international ties that necessitate greater credibility.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is establishing a flourishing, welcoming and stable environment for engagement with the private sector. Such incentives could follow the example of the European Union and its policies to protect cross-border investments and to provide equal treatment to all investors in the area. Additionally, working with regional and international institutions again can play a significant role by helping to serve as financiers, advisors, and forums for communication and cooperation.

Conclusion

This section of the background guide serves to highlight a significant obstacle to continued economic development and growth in the South East Asia region: the existence of a persisting infrastructure gap. It is evident that while the South East Asia countries have strong potential for long-term prosperity, there are significant infrastructure demands that must be met in order to guarantee such success. The complexity of such projects, in terms of existing in multiple stages, necessitating immense coordination and being inhibited my numerous regulatory, governmental and environmental considerations highlights the fact that there is room for further action to be taken. The goal of the

³³ "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," 150

³⁴ "Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia," 150



committee is to address the obstacles to infrastructure development in the region and develop solutions or strategies to overcome these barriers and work towards achieving stronger economic integration. Collaboration among South East Asian countries, regional institutions and the larger international community is necessary to ensure that these emerging economies continue on their trajectory of growth and secure the necessary infrastructure that will enable them to prosper in the present and future.

Questions to Consider

1. Can regional integration be achieved when there are such a wide variety of levels of development and infrastructure demands in the region? Can these individual demands and regional needs be met simultaneously, or should they occur in a more step-wise manner?
2. What are the implications of poor governance for infrastructure projects? What can be done to improve the accountability, transparency and trust in governing bodies?
3. How do we increase the level of cooperation among South East Asian countries and create an environment that fosters increasing integration?

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Topic 2: Future of Food

Section 1: Introduction

Seaweed (A Close-up)

Internationally, the demand for seaweed grows. Meat and dairy products, pharmaceuticals, alcoholic beverages, and beauty products all make use of it. For producers, this is good news.

In Baragay Salog, the Philippines, smallholder farmers grow seaweed seedlings as a source of supplemental income. For a typical crop, they first seek out the perfect site, placing floats between islands, where the flow of the current is moderate. Then, they space their units and tie young plants to the lines. Under the seaweed, fish flourish in both number and diversity.

An especially notable component of this method is that it does not require land preparation or fertilizer. Additionally, the seaweeds are resilient to both drought and heavy rain.

45 days later, the seaweeds dry out in the sun before being placed in rice sacks. The smallholder farmers ultimately sell these sacks to middlemen. They also keep some for themselves, as seaweeds are nutritious and make an excellent supplement to a household's regular diet³⁵.

Seaweed farming provides a key source of additional income; a typical farmer can earn approximately 1,050 CAD per year from three such crops. This improves local livelihoods in the community of Baragay Salog, and it also involves women in the process³⁶. It is a relatively equal-opportunity occupation in an industry riddled with gender inequality.

Community benefits are not all that seaweed farming bring. The farms are able to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, making it a low-carbon activity. It is a type of agriculture that is resilient to climate change³⁷.



Figure 1: Site selection (Image source: FAO Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook)

³⁵FAO Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook

³⁶FAO Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook

³⁷FAO Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook

Why Seaweed?



Figure 2: Seaweed farming (Image source: FAO Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook)

This example of seaweed farming in the Philippines is an important case study in the discussion about climate smart agriculture (CSA). Other examples of CSA in Asia and the Pacific include innovative systems for raising black tiger shrimp and mud crablets in Viet Nam, growing vegetables on floating garden mats made of weeds and bamboo in Bangladesh, and cultivating plant life within skyscraper greenhouses, called vertical farms, in Singapore. These CSA practices hold significant promise in alleviating poverty, diversifying income sources, and achieving food security³⁸.

CSA

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is agriculture that, “sustainably increases productivity, resilience (adaptation), reduces/removes greenhouse gases (mitigation), and enhances the achievement of national food security and development goals.” It is an approach that

does not explicitly advocate for one specific technology or practice; CSA requires site-specific assessments in which relevant stakeholders determine the most appropriate agricultural production technologies and practices³⁹.

A Bird’s-Eye View

In order to understand the potential of CSA, as well as the role of smallholder farmers in this activity, it is first necessary to understand why organizations advocate for this practice in the first place.

By 2050, the world population is expected to increase by about 2 billion. Most people will live in developing countries, and concurrently, more people will be living in cities. Agricultural production must increase by 60% to meet greater demand and provide a basis for economic growth and poverty reduction. At the same time, due to global warming, agriculture must transform itself from a resource-intensive, greenhouse-gas emitting paradigm to a sustainable, “climate-smart” system³.

³⁸<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4904e.pdf>

³⁹<http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3325e/i3325e.pdf>

Section 2: An Overview of Major Themes Connected to Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Security

The food system is intrinsically linked to the socioeconomic and nutritional status of its participants. This is why income generation and business development are often the focus of programming for food and nutrition security.

“Food and nutrition security” is the term most recently adopted as a UN standard. By definition, food and nutrition security exists when “all people at all times have physical, social, and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, and is supported by an environment of adequate sanitation, health services and care, allowing for a healthy and active life”⁴⁰. Evidently, being food and nutrition secure is much more than simply having enough food in a country. Food must be available, but citizens also need to have economic and social access to this food. They must utilize it in a way that ensures dietary diversity and avoid potentially harmful elements, such as waterborne illness. Citizens must also have access to available food consistently over time.

As the tiers of food security are developed, the links between nutrition and other aspects of life become evident as well. Questions such as, “What role does transportation infrastructure play? How important are childcare practices? Why is it necessary to ensure that there is a stable political climate?” become important to consider. Figure 3 outlines the relationship between nutritional status, access to food, and many other factors –it is useful to note the role of land, water, and environment as well as stability/vulnerability factors (including climate)⁴¹.

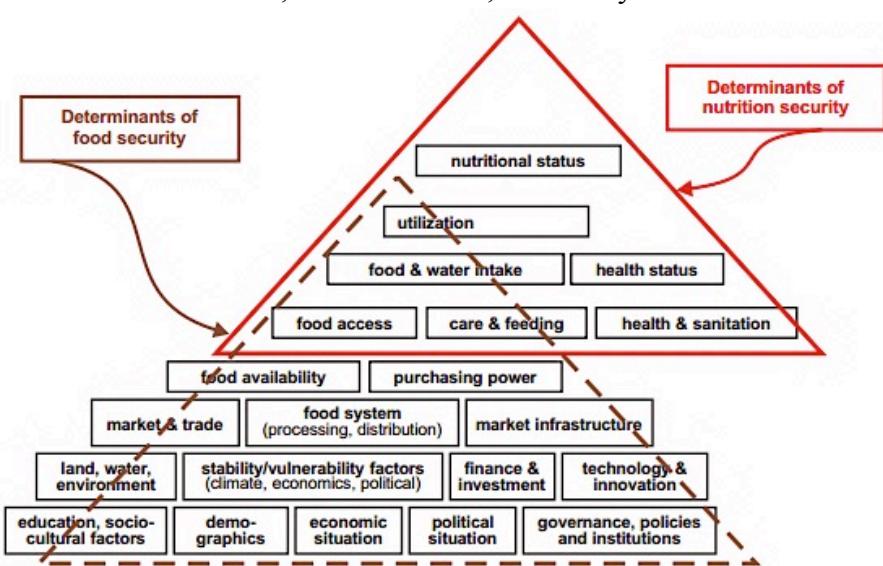


Figure 3: Determinants of food and nutrition security (Image source: FAO)

⁴⁰<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/026/MD776E.pdf>

⁴¹http://www.fao.org/elearning/course/FA/en/pdf/P-01_RG_Concept.pdf



Climate Change

It is no secret that agricultural production methods contribute significantly to anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Agriculture, forestry, and other land use (AFOLU) represent 20-24% of world anthropogenic emissions. Globally, AFOLU is the largest emitting sector after the energy sector⁴². Crop and livestock agriculture is now the dominant source of AFOLU emissions⁴³.

Farmers are among the hardest hit by global warming. The unique relationship between agricultural activities and climate change is outlined in the table below.

Impacts of climate change on agriculture	Increase of mean temperature
	Changes in rain patterns
	Increased variability, both in temperature and rain patterns
	Changes in water availability
	Changes in the frequency and intensity of “extreme events”
	Sea level rise and salinization
	Perturbations in ecosystems
Agriculture's impact on climate change	Nitrous oxide emissions due to soils and the application of fertilizers
	Methane emissions due to livestock and rice cultivation
	Carbon capture and storage in biomass and soil (carbon “sinks”) if managed effectively

Figure 4: The relationship between climate change and agriculture (Source: CSA Sourcebook)

Overall, climate change is a major source of vulnerability and uncertainty for the future of agriculture. Large changes in growing conditions for different crops, as indicated in the table, are expected; high acidity of rainfall could affect soil conditions and the forestry and fisheries sectors. Likewise, an increase in seawater levels may result in a reduction of agricultural lands in some countries. Adaptation will be costly, yet crucial.

Climate change is also expected to increase the frequency of natural disasters, such as typhoons, floods, and droughts. Not only do these events cause damage to infrastructure and farms, but also they increase the vulnerability of affected regions to food insecurity⁴⁴.

Economically vulnerable countries that are already food insecure are among the most affected by climate change, and some of these nations are important food exporters. Thus, impacts of climate change may include significant changes in trade, impacting world prices and the situation of countries reliant on food imports. Climate change is expected to increase the gap between developed and developing countries; in developing regions

⁴²https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/unfccc/sbsta40/AR5WGIII_Tubiello_140606.pdf

⁴³https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/unfccc/sbsta40/AR5WGIII_Tubiello_140606.pdf

⁴⁴https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E-ESCAP-CMP3-4E_0.pdf



that are already vulnerable, impacts of climate change will be felt more severely not only because of country dependence on the agriculture industry, but also because such nations have a relatively lower technical and economical capacity to respond to new threats. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, climate change will cause an increase of between 8.5 and 10.3 percent in the number of malnourished children in all developing countries, relative to scenarios without climate change.

The question is how and to what extent agriculture and food systems can contribute to climate change mitigation without compromising food and nutrition security. The large variety of stakeholders calls for a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach and integrated solutions.

Section 3: The Need for an Integrated Approach

It is vital to approach development programs in a multi-faceted, connected way so that each action in the agriculture sector leads to progress in other areas as well.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in September 2015. Agriculture can play a role in achieving many of the SDGs, and is included in the second goal. The goal is entitled “Zero Hunger”, with an aim to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”⁴⁵. Taken directly from the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, the goal and targets are to:

- 2.1** By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round
- 2.2** By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons
- 2.3** By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment
- 2.4** By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality
- 2.5** By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed
- 2.a** Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries
- 2.b** Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round

⁴⁵<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>



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2.c Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility⁴⁶.

The other SDGs strongly linked to agriculture are summarized in the following graphic⁴⁷:

Goal 1 - Poverty alleviation	• Rural people represent the largest segment of the world's extreme poor by far - more than 70% of the total. Growth in agriculture is at least twice as effective in reducing poverty than from any other sector.
Goal 4 - Education	• Agricultural extension enables farmers to access the skills, tools, inputs and knowledge they need to thrive.
Goal 5 - Gender equality	• Women farmers produce 20-30% less than their male counterparts, mostly due to differences in their access and use of resources. Women produce over half the food worldwide, so bridging this gap could reduce global hunger by as much as 17%.
Goal 6 - Water use	• By 2030, global water demand will increase more than 50%, with agriculture alone requiring more than what can be sustained to feed the world even before domestic and industrial needs are met.
Goal 7 - Energy use	• By 2030, energy demand is expected to increase as much as 50%, driven mostly by developing world demand. More crops are likely to be diverted for use as biofuels, doubling or even tripling as a proportion of total use.
Goal 8 - Economic growth and employment	• Agriculture is an engine of pro-poor economic growth in rural areas. Entrepreneurship across the rural and food sectors can generate employment and growth.
Goal 12 - Sustainable consumption and production	• Average per capita consumption is expected to grow through 2030, despite population increases. At the same time, around one third of food produced is wasted.
Goal 13 - Climate change	• By 2030, agriculture's carbon mitigation potential could reach as much as 7.5% of total global emissions, depending on the price of carbon and adoption of agricultural productivity measures.
Goal 15 - Ecosystem management	• Improving the efficiency of farmland can help meet the world's growing consumption demand while minimizing the loss of natural habitats and forests for additional cultivation.

⁴⁶<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

⁴⁷http://www.farmingfirst.org/sdg-toolkit#section_2



Section 4: The Current Situation in Asia and the Pacific

Bearing in mind the major themes connected to agriculture, as well as the SDGs, the question of how to apply this information in the context of Asia and the Pacific is ultimately the focus of this guide.

To give context, smallholder farmers in the Asia and the Pacific region constitute an estimated 74 percent of the world's 570 million farms⁴⁸. China and India alone account for 35 percent and 24 percent of farms, respectively. Three other Asian countries with a large number of small farms are Indonesia (17 million), Bangladesh (17 million) and Viet Nam (10 million)⁴⁹.

Climate change impacts these farmers in various ways. Himalayan glaciers in Bhutan and Nepal are melting; sea levels are rising in Bangladesh and small-island developing States in the Pacific. Extreme weather events are increasing in intensity and frequency, including heat waves, typhoons, tornadoes, intense rainfall, droughts and dust storms in many countries. All of these impacts contribute to greater volatility in farming conditions⁵⁰.

The most vulnerable to these impacts are the people with low socioeconomic capacity. They are disproportionately affected by the climate change impacts, and they lack the means and ability to respond to them. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognizes the vulnerability of least developed countries to these impacts⁵¹. For the inclusive and sustainable development of the region, it is critical that appropriate measures be taken.

The 2016 edition of the ESCAP *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* highlights the importance of increasing productivity to enhance economic growth and encourage sustainable development. In particular, the report emphasizes the importance of greater labour productivity in agriculture. The idea is that a modest increase in agricultural productivity between 2016 and 2030 could lift an additional 110 million people from poverty⁵². This argument is built in the report in part through the following:

Tackling poverty in rural areas is particularly important as more than half the population in the developing economies of Asia and the Pacific live in rural areas, and this population represents a significant proportion of the 1.4 billion poor people living on less than \$3.10 per day. Indeed, about 40% of the workers in Asia-Pacific developing economies are employed in the agricultural sector. Moreover, while the prevalence of undernourishment has declined significantly in

⁴⁸<http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3729e/i3729e.pdf>

⁴⁹<https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/1055d470-65d1-48d0-815e-02d62ea87d86>

⁵⁰<http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Economic%20and%20Social%20Survey%20of%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%202015.pdf>

⁵¹http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/items/6036.php

⁵²<http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Economic%20and%20Social%20Survey%20of%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%202015.pdf>



the Asia-Pacific region, having fallen from 23% from the early 1990s to less than 14% today, about 500 million people remain undernourished. The great bulk of the remaining poor and food-insecure people live on agriculture and inhabit rural areas. As such, significant challenges remain to end hunger and attain Goal 2.

...Studies have also shown that agricultural income growth is more effective in reducing poverty than growth in other sectors; that the welfare effects of non-agricultural growth are smaller among poorer households; that agricultural growth reduces poverty many times more than identical growth in the non-agricultural sector; and that, in different sets of developing countries in Asia and Africa, an increase in agricultural GDP could be effective in reducing poverty, with the impact being greater in low-income countries than in resource-rich countries...

It is critical that countries increase their growth of agricultural productivity in order to make a meaningful impact on the alleviation of poverty, especially as sectoral productivity gaps appear to have widened in recent years because of slow growth and, in some cases, stagnation...

The large number of additional people that could be lifted out of poverty in the region if agricultural productivity is increased indicates that interlinkages between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors are still highly relevant in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, greater agricultural productivity would not only generate additional income to be used for non-tradable and tradable goods, but would also contribute to lower food prices. This outcome would in turn increase food security, which would contribute towards attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 2, and would lead to an increase in real consumption, which would be particularly beneficial to poor households.

However, the occurrence of these positive externalities would also depend on other factors, such as the labour participation rate of people identified as poor in the process, the size of farms, and access to and adoption by farmers of adequate technologies, including information and communications technologies. For instance, small farms may not be able to fully benefit from such an agricultural strategy if they are unable to access credit or if they lack access to appropriate machines to increase their productivity. In cases where levels of productivity are low, consolidating farms may in some circumstances enable a critical move forward. Yet, it should be recognized that small farms are efficient in some environments but large farms are efficient in others under different conditions. For instance, in Uzbekistan a shift from large-scale collective farming to small-scale individual farming contributed to a productivity surge between 1998 and 2012, during which labour productivity in agriculture grew by 2.8 times and crop yields of basic agricultural products increased significantly.

The agricultural productivity gap in the Asia-Pacific region [indicates] a misallocation of labour in many countries. The income level of workers in the agricultural sector is likely to be low because relatively inefficient production methods are being used or because the actual number of workers in this sector is



high. In fact, about 36% of the labour force is employed in the agricultural sector, which contributes to less than 10% of the total output of ESCAP developing economies.

Importantly, this situation needs to be analyzed, taking into account expanding populations and uncertainty related to the consequences of climate change. Thus, the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity will differ depending on a country's latitude and longitude, the altitude of the field and crops being planted, among other such factors. Farmers need to be ready to cope with such changes. Increasing agricultural productivity and concomitantly the level of income of people engaged in agricultural activities therefore represents a major challenge over the next several decades.

To increase agricultural productivity (measured as the value added per unit of cropland), farmers can, for instance: (a) make better use of available inputs and access innovative knowledge represented by an increase in total factor productivity; (b) increase mechanization of agriculture in those countries that are lagging behind in terms of usage of these assets and inputs; and (c) increase usage of fertilizers which are assumed to have a lower environmental footprint⁵³.

Section 5: Agriculture, Climate Change, and Smallholder Farmers - a Nexus for Change

To better target agricultural productivity in Asia and the Pacific, policies that focus on smallholder farmers are important in the implementation of CSA. Although smallholder agriculture is often recognized as a key area for intervention, it has seldom received the policy and institutional support necessary to improve the livelihoods of the smallholders in question.

For example, at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in December 2015, international stakeholders signed a global agreement to combat climate change and unleash actions and investments toward a low-carbon, resilient, and sustainable future. However, agriculture was only indirectly recognized in the final agreement as a key component to combat climate change. Against that backdrop, it is critical to ensure that agriculture is integrated in on-going and follow-up efforts to COP21 and that smallholders are recognized for their potential to contribute to climate action⁵⁴.

The question that follows is exactly how smallholders can contribute to the SDGs – and at what level ESCAP can encourage change on this level. The table below is from the International Food Policy Research Institute, titled, “How smallholders can contribute to the SDGs”⁵⁵:

⁵³<http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Economic%20and%20Social%20Survey%20of%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%202015.pdf>

⁵⁴International Food Policy Research Institute

⁵⁵<http://dx.doi.org/10.2499/9780896295827>



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Issues/challenges faced by smallholders	Gains from supporting smallholders	Key interventions/investments needed	Sustainable Development Goals
Smallholders account for most of the world's poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Increased productivity improves smallholders' income and helps them contribute to greater agricultural growth➤ Agricultural growth is at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as other sectors – however, resource costs must be considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Investing in agricultural research and development (R&D) and extension➤ Scaling-up productive social safety nets➤ Promoting land rights and efficient land markets➤ Supporting efficient and inclusive food value chains	1 No poverty
Smallholders account for most of world's hungry and many are malnourished	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Increases ability of smallholders to produce and purchase more nutritious foods by lowering food prices for poor consumers, and by raising demand for rural labour➤ Improves food security and nutrition for smallholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Supporting nutrition-sensitive agricultural production	2 Zero hunger
Many smallholders lack access to high-quality education and technical know-how	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Smallholder-friendly agricultural extension services help farmers to access skills, inputs, and technologies➤ Well-designed extension services can offer high returns on investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Creating extension services that provide knowledge and skills for use of new technologies➤ Strengthening capacity to improve human, organizational, and institutional capacities and knowledge systems for providing in-country solutions	4 Quality education
Smallholder women have less access to resources than men	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Empowering women in agriculture will contribute to reduction of global hunger➤ Increased participation in flexible, efficient, and fair rural labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Increase equality in access to and control of land➤ Improving women's access to inputs and credit➤ Expanding women's	5 Gender equality



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	<p>markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Women mediate pathways from agriculture to nutrition	<p>access to education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Supporting gender-driven agricultural policies for improved nutrition	
Smallholders face declining water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Better water-use efficiency in agriculture can help to meet future food and nutrition requirements➤ Adoption of modern irrigation technologies can lead to better irrigation efficiencies and water savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Eliminating inefficient subsidies that promote overuse of water➤ Establishing efficient water management systems➤ Investing in efficient irrigation technologies	6 Clean water and sanitation
Smallholders lack access to energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Improved access to energy can improve living standards and reduce hunger➤ Greater energy efficiency is needed, as demand is expected to increase, especially in the developing world	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Improving energy efficiency in production, processing, and retail sectors➤ Eliminating inefficient subsidies to non-food crops for biofuels➤ Promoting rural renewable energy use	7 Affordable and clean energy
Smallholders are not always seen as entrepreneurs who contribute to the local and global economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Spurs economic growth—income multipliers are linked to agricultural growth➤ Attracts youth to profitable business opportunities and leverages “youth dividend”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Supporting smallholders with profit potential to move up to more commercial activities through various means, such as improved access to land, markets, infrastructure, and trade➤ Tailoring agriculture employment interventions to specific needs of young people	8 Decent work and economic growth
Smallholders lack access to high-value markets that could improve profitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Rural–urban linkages can help to address both rural and urban hunger and poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Connecting smallholders in rural and peri-urban areas to high value urban markets➤ Promoting pro-smallholder value chains through increased access to information and communication	11 Sustainable cities and communities



		technologies	
Smallholders lack infrastructure to process and store postharvest yields, leading to food loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Food loss reduction measures can improve food availability and access, and reduce hunger and malnutrition➢ Increases resource-use efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Investing in infrastructure and transportation➢ Promoting research and training on food loss prevention in the packing and processing industries	12 Responsible consumption and production
Smallholders are vulnerable to climate change threats, such as land degradation and drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Climate-smart agriculture leads to multiple wins:➢ Increased productivity and profitability➢ Climate change mitigation and adaptation➢ Climate readiness and efficiency of farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Promoting climate-smart agriculture technologies and practices➢ Improving access to climate-related risk management➢ Expanding agricultural R&D to produce more nutritious foods with fewer resources and reduced GHG emissions	13 Climate action
Smallholders respond to changing conditions by increasing pressure on ecosystems, such as overextension of water and use of agrochemicals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Sustainable intensification can help to meet rising food demand, reduce negative environmental effects, and preserve ecosystems		15 Life on land

Source: *Global Food Policy Report 2016*²²

Section 6: The Way Forward

ESCAP has a subsidiary body, the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA). The objective of CAPSA is to, "...promote a more supportive policy environment in member countries to enhance the living conditions of rural poor populations in disadvantaged areas and to promote research and development related to sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture to alleviate poverty and improve food security in the Asian and Pacific region"⁵⁶.

The functions of CAPSA include the coordination of socioeconomics and policy research on sustainable agriculture and food security, networking and partnership with other international organizations and key stakeholders, and research and analysis of trends and

⁵⁶http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/E72_RES1E.pdf

opportunities with regard to improving the economic status of rural populations. CAPSA is also engaged with research and analysis of trends and opportunities with regard to improving the economic status of rural populations, the production, packaging, and dissemination of information and successful practices on poverty reduction, and the dissemination of information and good practices on poverty reduction measures⁵⁷. Finally, the training of national personnel, particularly national scientists and policy analysts, and advisory services fall within CAPSA's jurisdiction. It is located in Bogor, Indonesia.

CAPSA recently organized a workshop, in partnership with the Network Activities Group and the Department of Rural Development of the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development of Myanmar, which discussed themes of agricultural innovation processes, CSA, and farmer-led initiatives. It is part of a larger project titled, "An Integrated Rural Economic and Social Development Programme for Livelihoods Improvement in the Dry Zone of Myanmar" which makes for an excellent case study of CAPSA's interventions⁵⁸.

The organizations most closely linked to goal 2 are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the World Food Programme (WFP). The World Bank Group, ASEAN-German Programme on Response to Climate Change (GAP-CC), and International Rice Research Institute are also doing important work.

Additionally, the Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP) is a program launched by IFAD in 2012 to channel climate and environmental finance to smallholder farmers so that they can increase their resilience⁵⁹. ASAP, a multi-year and multi-donor program, received substantial financial support from the Governments of Belgium, Canada, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden,

Switzerland, and United Kingdom. Other donor countries are appraising a contribution. The objective of ASAP is to improve the climate resilience of large-scale rural

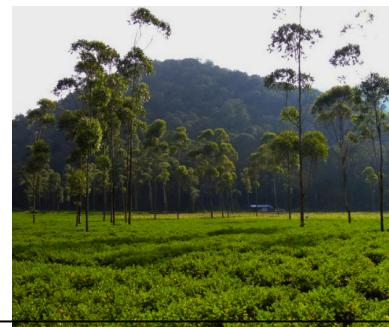


Figure 3. In this social media post from the FAO, the caption read, "In Bandung, Indonesia, a forest and an agricultural field coexist in a sustainable harmony. Forests are more than trees and are fundamental for food security and improved livelihoods. Forests are an essential solution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Integrated approaches to land use provide a way forward for improving policies and practices to: address the drivers of deforestation; address conflicts over land use; capitalize on the full range of economic, social and environmental benefits from integrating forests with agriculture; and maintain multiple forest services in the landscape context. New partnerships among the forest, agriculture, finance, energy, water and other sectors, and engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities are required." ©FAO

⁵⁷<http://www.uncapsa.org/content/about-capsa>

⁵⁸<http://www.uncapsa.org/content/theme-1-understanding-rural-poverty-and-food-insecurity#lift-project>

⁵⁹<https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/ab3054ad-d9f4-4c64-bd75-2dc7f9d4f97b>



development program and improve the capacity of at least 8 million smallholder farmers to expand their options in a rapidly changing environment⁶⁰. Through ASAP, IFAD is driving a major scaling-up of successful "multiple-benefit" approaches to increase agricultural output while simultaneously reducing vulnerability to climate-related risks and diversifying livelihoods⁶¹.

Section 7: Word of Caution

While this topic covers an expansive area for change, its broadness might invite confusion, vague policies, and poor communication. For this reason, it is important to select interventions with specificity. At the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop in June 2015, which took place in Bangkok and was titled "Climate-Smart Agriculture: A call for action", the FAO brought panelists together to discuss what is needed to mainstream CSA in the Asia-Pacific region. In conclusion, the panel discussion pinpointed five requirements, including the following:

1. Awareness of CSA in the general public is at the rather low to medium level, and public education and strengthening of extension services could enhance public awareness;
2. Countries have developed and implemented location-specific measures based on climate, geography, and socio-economic and cultural conditions;
3. In order to enhance sustainability, public awareness of the benefits of CSA must be enhanced by disseminating information through simple technology and easy-to-understand messages. Inclusion of information and communication technology has been adopted in many countries and is proven to be successful.
4. In most cases, the key barriers to adoption of CSA practices are farmers' preference for short-term economic return and lack of incentives for switching behaviors. Adequate incentives, knowledge and information, and removal of adverse subsidies are keys to enhance adoption rates.
5. Mainstreaming CSA at a national scale requires higher-level commitment and policy directions favorable on agricultural development that are compatible with climate change seem to facilitate the implementation of CSA practices more broadly and comprehensively.

While CSA is not the only possible approach to using agriculture in the achievement of the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, the recommendations above and this particular focus provide an excellent starting point.

⁶⁰<https://www.ifad.org/topic/asap/overview>

⁶¹<https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/ab3054ad-d9f4-4c64-bd75-2dc7f9d4f97b>



Questions to Consider

1. What type(s) of controversy might a system such as climate-smart agriculture invite? What is the reason for this? What alternative approaches exist?
2. What other organizations are working on agricultural development? How are their projects constructed? What are their goals, and who are their partners?
3. While many specific recommendations have been made, what role can ESCAP appropriately play in encouraging such actions? What more might its subsidiary body, CAPSA, do to encourage sustainable agriculture and the achievement of the agenda for sustainable development?
4. In what way might sectors come together to address agriculture and climate change in a multi-dimensional, integrated way? Why is this important?
5. Could climate change have a positive impact for smallholder farmers in some regions? Where? How might farmers adapt and benefit?

Further Research

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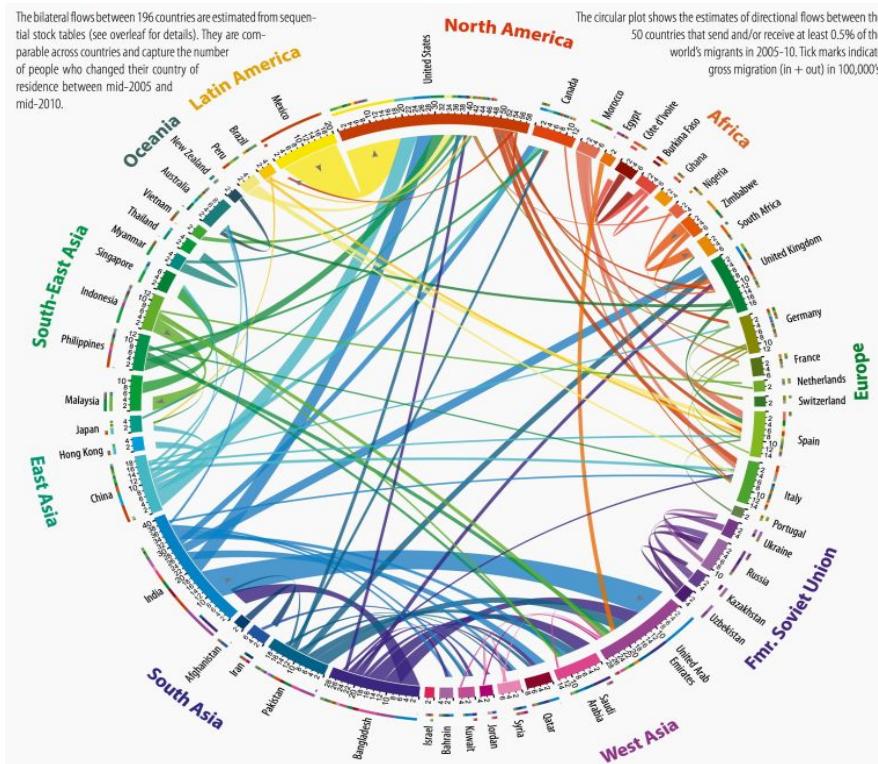
Tubiello, Francesco N. "Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU)." Working Group III Contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Web.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015 – Part I*. Bangkok: United Nations, 2016.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016*. Bangkok: United Nations, 2016.

Topic 3: Labour Migration & Illegal Trafficking in the Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region hosts one of the fastest-growing labour migration flows in the world. Of the estimated 231.5 million migrants worldwide in 2013, the region experienced an increase to 59 million migrants, up from 52 million in 1990⁶². The region is an important source for both skilled and less skilled labour. Hosting several temporary migration regimes for less skilled work, 17.2% of labour migration takes place in the Asia-Pacific region⁶³. UNESCAP encompasses countries that are major labour-export countries, as well as labour-receiving countries.



Source: Abel and Sander, "Quantifying Global International Migration Flows," *Science* 34 (6178), 2014, p. 1522.

There is a strong South-South tendency in the region, with labour migrants moving frequently between developing countries⁶⁴. The Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan experience the largest migrant departures in the region, with the

⁶² "Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2015: Migrants' Contributions to Development," *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*, February 2015, 9

⁶³ "Labour Migration in Asia and the Pacific," *International Labour Organization*, <http://www.ilo.org/asia/areas/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>

⁶⁴ Ibid.



Philippines experiencing as many as two million departures annually⁶⁵. Labour migration is popular in the region particularly because it may bring about many favourable social and economic impacts. Migrants from the aforementioned countries may choose to migrate to higher-income countries such as Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Russia, and Singapore. Just as labour migrants are dependent on their host countries for work, these host countries have become increasingly reliant on labour migrants as a crucial source of less skilled labour. However, such migration is not just limited to within the Asia-Pacific region. It also spills over into other areas of the world, such as the Arab States, North America, and Europe.

Labour migration, however, is both voluntary and involuntary. While many decide to move counties to seek better social and economic opportunities, human trafficking is yet another major issue that the region faces. Consequently, human trafficking is an important sub-topic that should be addressed when tackling the problems arising out of labour migration in the Asia-Pacific.

Section 1: Causes of the Labour Migration

While the type of labour migration in the Asia-Pacific ranges drastically, the dominant force of migration flows is temporary labour migration. Both women and men migrate, but the type of work that they are involved in varies greatly. Female migrants typically produce domestic work, whereas male migrants typically dominate sectors of construction work⁶⁶. There are many economic and social-cultural drivers behind labour migration in the region.

Economically, the main driving force of labour migration is the lack of domestic job opportunities and the economic advantages of migrating⁶⁷. Migrants from countries like Philippines and Indonesia see greater economic and lifestyle advantages in migrating to more developed economies in the region. As of 2015, India remains the largest recipient of remittances from abroad⁶⁸. These advantages include remittances, as well as return migration of diaspora knowledge networks and skills transfers⁶⁹. From 2011-2015, the total number of remittances received in Nepal made up 29.2% of its national GDP, which is approximately at USD\$19.77 billion⁷⁰. The labour migration of many, mainly women, have in turn created a culture of migration, based on the perceived benefits of accessing

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2015: Migrants’ Contributions to Development,” *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*, February 2015, 9

⁶⁷ Sijapati, “Women’s Labour Migration from Asia and the Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges,” *Migration Policy Institute*, March 2015, 4.

⁶⁸ Business Standard, “India World’s Largest Recipient of Remittances in 2015: World Bank,” 15 April 2016, http://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/india-world-s-largest-recipient-of-remittances-in-2015-world-bank-116041400737_1.html

⁶⁹ Wickramasekara, “Circular Migration in Asia: Approaches and Practices,” *Global and Asian Perspectives on International Migration* (Switzerland, Springer International Publishing), 2014, 69.

⁷⁰ The World Bank, “Nepal,” 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/nepal>



opportunities for migration. On the “pull” end of the spectrum, there has also been an increasing demand for domestic workers in East and Southeast Asia as more women in these areas begin entering into the workforce. An estimated one out of every five households in Singapore alone employs domestic workers⁷¹.

Socio-culturally, the Asia-Pacific has a rooted colonial history of labour migration. From the late 1870s onwards, the region of Southeast Asia experienced substantial waves of labour immigration primarily from China and India. The number of immigrants further increased in the 1970s and 1980s, with sovereign states in Southeast Asia further embracing labour-intensive industrialization⁷². To this day, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has even pushed for greater regional mobility. The regional body has made it easier to obtain visas for cross-border movement, although typically allowing for freer movement for high skilled labour. Regardless, these laidback regulations are hard to implement when considering how 87% of intra-ASEAN migration involves low-skilled workers⁷³. Overall, the region is also highly conducive to labour migration geographically as many countries are closely linked to one another, either through land or through waterways.

Section 2: Consequences of Labour Migration

However, while labour migration itself is not a problem, stigmatization of labour migration and the lack of adequate protection offered to migrants in labour-receiving countries is a very large issue. There are many myths surrounding the work of migrant workers, such as the presumption that labour migration only benefits the labour-sending country, disrupts the socio-cultural homogeneity of labour-receiving countries, and steals jobs from the local population⁷⁴. However, host countries benefit from labour migration as well.

Host countries gain by raising labour force participation, especially of women, which is made possible by the engagement of foreign domestic workers at lower-than-market wages. Governments, like those of Malaysia and Singapore, even receive revenues by employing levies on firms that employ foreign workers⁷⁵. Furthermore, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 proved that many migrant workers had filled positions in jobs considered unfavourable by many local members of the population. When the crisis hit, the number of actual deportations were less than expected in heavily impacted countries

⁷¹ Sijapati, “Women’s Labour Migration from Asia and the Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges,” Migration Policy Institute, March 2015, 4.

⁷² Kaur, “Understanding Historical and Contemporary Labour Migration Patterns and Processes in Southeast Asia,” *Global South Studies Center Cologne* (University of Cologne), <http://gssc.uni-koeln.de/node/802>

⁷³ Sugiyarto and Agunias, “A ‘Freer’ Flow of Skilled Labour within ASEAN: Aspirations, Opportunities and Challenges in 2015 and Beyond,” *International Organization for Migration and Migration Policy Institute*, December 2014, 4.

⁷⁴ Wickramasekara, “Asian Labour Migration: Issues and Challenges in an Era of Globalization,” *International Migration Programme: International Labour Office* (Geneva), 2002, 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid.



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such as Malaysia and Thailand⁷⁶. Conversely, labour migration actually reduces unemployment, as migrants are more likely to enter into lower-wage occupations that are less attractive to such local populations.

The commodification of migrant workers under the Temporary Labour Migration Program proves particularly perplexing. Despite aiming to provide opportunities for work abroad through legal contracts, the creation of fixed-term labour that does not permit direct permanent settlement in a host country also lessens the social protection afforded to workers⁷⁷. To an extreme (albeit relatively common) extent, this may even result in grave human rights violations and abuses. The protection of migrant workers becomes challenging when governments of labour-sending countries regard labour migration policy as separate from rights-based development plans and goals⁷⁸. On the labour-receiving countries' end, the migration policies that they implement may not prioritize migrants' interests either. This will be expanded upon more in the upcoming section.

Case of Abused Domestic Worker in Hong Kong Compared to Slavery



Source: Felix Wong, "Documentary Takes Plight of Abused Domestic Worker Erwiana Sulistyaningsih from Hong Kong to the World," *South China Morning Post*, 27 March 2016.

Furthermore, the combination of rampant migration in the region and the stigmatization of these workers lead to restrictive migrant policies in host countries. These may often result in irregular and undocumented migration, which strips such migrants of any protection at all. Consequently this leaves space for illegal recruitment, excessive placement fees, and even the trafficking of persons⁷⁹. As such, the consequences of labour migration – both at will and forced, legal and illegal, will need to be addressed under this committee topic.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁸ Laipson and Pandya, "Labour Migration in Southeast Asia," *The Henry L. Stimson Center* (Washington), 2010, 57

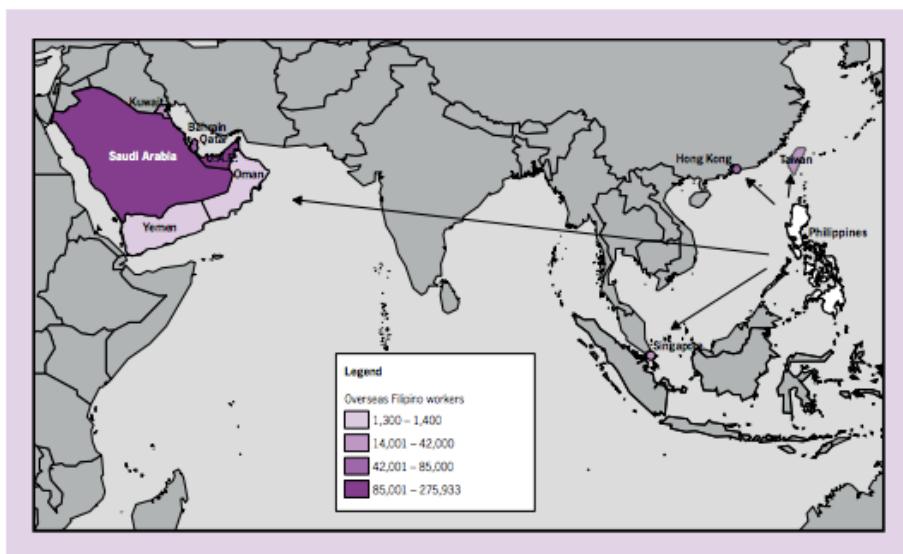
⁷⁹ Ibid.

Section 3: Past Actions

Prior to evaluating what policies should be enacted, we need to understand the current policies in place to address labour migration in the Asia-Pacific. This will be done on three levels; first by addressing the domestic policies of labour-sending and labour-receiving countries, followed by the actions of international organizations and non-governmental organizations respectively. Within the region, with South Korea being an exception, migration of workers is not typically subsidized on a government-to-government basis⁸⁰. The absence of present state bodies and the privatization of labour migration in the region have contributed to its commercialization, which is relatively absent amongst labour migrants from regions of the world.

Policies: Labour-Sending Countries

In East and Southeast Asia, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam are heavy labour-sending countries. The Philippines, for example, relies heavily on migrant deployment for its economical and political survival. Many jobless and underemployed go overseas to work. The Filipino government, however, falls short on reaping the benefits and remains heavily reliant on foreign direct investment, remittances, and its service sector⁸¹.



Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 2008 figures.

Note: Due to scale restrictions, Bahrain and Singapore are difficult to view. There are 13,079 Filipino workers in Bahrain and 41,678 Filipino workers in Singapore. Canada and Italy also have significant Filipino laborer populations, but these could not be included on this map; they host 17,399 and 22,623 workers, respectively.

⁸⁰ Abella, "Challenges to Governance of Labour Migration in Asia Pacific," *International Labour Organization*, 2008, 10

⁸¹ Laipson and Pandya, "Labour Migration in Southeast Asia," *The Henry L. Stimson Center* (Washington), 2010, 59



Following the global financial crisis, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration was instructed to refocus its efforts from regulation to “full blast market development efforts” for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)⁸². Despite being a major labour sending country, the Philippines Commission on audit only indicates 88 offices protecting foreign worker abroad as of 2010⁸³. This is a small number of staff overseeing protection considering the millions of emigrants hailing from the Philippines alone.

In the Pacific, emigration is high overall. Emigration in the Pacific spurs from the Polynesian and Micronesian countries, in contrast to migration from Melanesian countries, which are relatively low⁸⁴. Instead, inter-pacific urban to rural migration is quite common in areas such as the Melanesian countries of the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu⁸⁵. While labour migration remains relatively low when compared to the East, existing policies for labour protection are scarce due to the broad spectrum of reasons for migration in the region. This spectrum especially concerns climate change, which is substantially more pressing in the Pacific areas. Consequently, policies such as the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement and PACER Plus are two major free trade agreements that address labour migration in the region, albeit with limited detail on how to effectively execute their policy objectives⁸⁶.

Policies: Labour-Receiving Countries

Among Central Asia, Russia attracts the second largest flow of international migrants in the world, with majority of labour migrants emigrating from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The biggest issue in this sub-region is dangerous dependencies, whereby remittances cannot be considered as a stable source of development due to instability in their host country’s (Russia’s) economy, especially with its latest political developments⁸⁷. Many Central Asian countries face problems such as lower tax revenue and a lack of funds which limit their state’s social insurance system, and from 2011 onwards, the Russian Federation has made it mandatory that the employer will be responsible for making pension contributions for the foreign worker⁸⁸. Conversely, many migrants that work without a permit or license tend to be stripped of such benefits. More recently in 2015, under the Labour Code, the Russian Federation will also require the

⁸² Abella, “Challenges to Governance of Labour Migration in Asia Pacific,” *International Labour Organization*, 2008, 10

⁸³ Sana and Abano, “Labour Migration in Southeast Asia,” *The Henry L. Stimson Center* (Washington), 2010, 62

⁸⁴ International Labour Organization, “A Guide for Policymakers and Statistics Organizations in the Pacific,” *International Labour Migration Statistics*, 2015, 13

⁸⁵ Ibid., 12

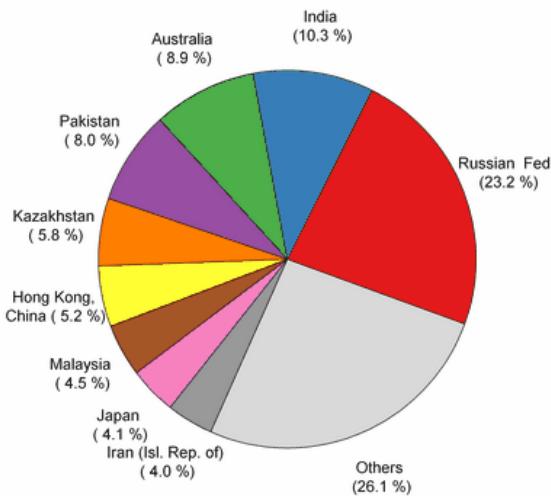
⁸⁶ “Enhancing the Capacity of Pacific Island Countries to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Migration,” *International Labour Organizaiton*, 1996 – 2016, http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/projects/WCMS_226212/lang--en/index.htm

⁸⁷ Malyuchenko, “Labour Migration from Central Asia to Russia: Economic and Social Impact on the Societies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan,” *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and OSCE Academy* (Bishkek), February 2015, 3

⁸⁸ Ibid., 8

policy of voluntary medical insurance in order for migrant workers to obtain a working license⁸⁹.

Labour-Receiving Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2010



Source: "Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2012," *UNESCAP*, 2013,
<http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2013/A.3-International-migration.asp>

In East and Southeast Asia, the Republic of Korea, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan have also adopted variations of "guest worker" programs. These programs are based on a rotational system that does not allow unskilled or low-skilled foreign workers direct access to a right to permanent stay in these host locations⁹⁰. This may be particularly problematic as it may be out-of-sync with employer-worker relations, where it proves ineffective for the former to have to retrain another worker, and for the latter to have to re-prove their capacity in a new job after having adapted to their work environment. Additionally, even when policies benefitting labour migrants are implemented, they are often done so incoherently. The use of "trainee schemes" for unskilled foreign labour in the Republic of Korea, which pays through allowances rather than regular wages, has brought about the unintended consequence of irregular migration⁹¹. Once labour migrants realized that they were able to gain regular wages through other establishments, the "trainees" would drop out of the program, resulting in yet another gateway for labour migrant exploitation through its low pay.

Certain Pacific Island Countries, such as New Zealand and Australia, offer special immigration concessions in specific destination countries as noted in the above graph. This is largely due to the fact they are former colonial countries. However, many countries in the Melanesian area are excluded from these benefits. Consequently, this

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Abella, "Challenges to Governance of Labour Migration in Asia Pacific," *International Labour Organization*, 2008, 10

⁹¹ Ibid., 7.



makes labour migration and protection of migrants much harder to balance in the region, depending on both the labour-receiving country and the migrant's country of origin.

Policies: Labour Sending and Receiving Countries

It is important to note that countries such as India, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Thailand are both labour sending and labour receiving countries⁹². While their policies evidently differ from each other, these countries typically have more flexible policies. Countries like Malaysia and Thailand have policies that respond to the demand for labour in the country. This is in contrast to predominantly labour-receiving countries like Singapore, which tends to hold a bias towards professionals and high-skilled workers⁹³.

Section 4: The Role of International Organizations

UNESCAP

On June 29th, 2015, UNESCAP signed onto an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization (ILO). The terms of the MoU will hold until 31 December 2020, inclusive of annual reviews and a joint-term review in 2017, where it will be subject to further revision. It reaffirms ESCAP-ILO Cooperation and joint activity initiatives that address issues of youth employment, social protection, and statistics gathering and analyses⁹⁴. With regards to macroeconomic, labour market, and labour migration policies, their language remains vague. The MoU asserts a joint commitment to achieving and sustaining high levels of inclusive growth through a joint research and policy discussion⁹⁵. However, it demonstrates minimal direction in terms of concrete ways to materialize the outcomes of discussion.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

In addition to the numerous agreements put forward by the ILO, the body also organizes regional meetings. These Asia and the Pacific Regional Meetings began after the Asian Financial Crisis. The goal of these meetings is to bring together all member states, the ILO's government, employer, and worker constituents to discuss issues of social protection, rights at work and job creation, and decent work⁹⁶. The ILO is a key policymaker around the protection of migrant workers, commissioning a plethora of joint studies in with UNESCAP and other regional entities to collect and analyze data.

⁹² Wickramasekara, "Asian Labour Migration: Issues and Challenges in an Era of Globalization," *International Migration Programme: International Labour Office* (Geneva), 2002, 13

⁹³ Sana and Abano, "Labour Migration in Southeast Asia," *The Henry L. Stimson Center* (Washington), 2010, 63

⁹⁴ International Labour Organization, "Memorandum of Understanding Between the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the International Labour Organization," 29 June 2015, 3

⁹⁵ Ibid., 4

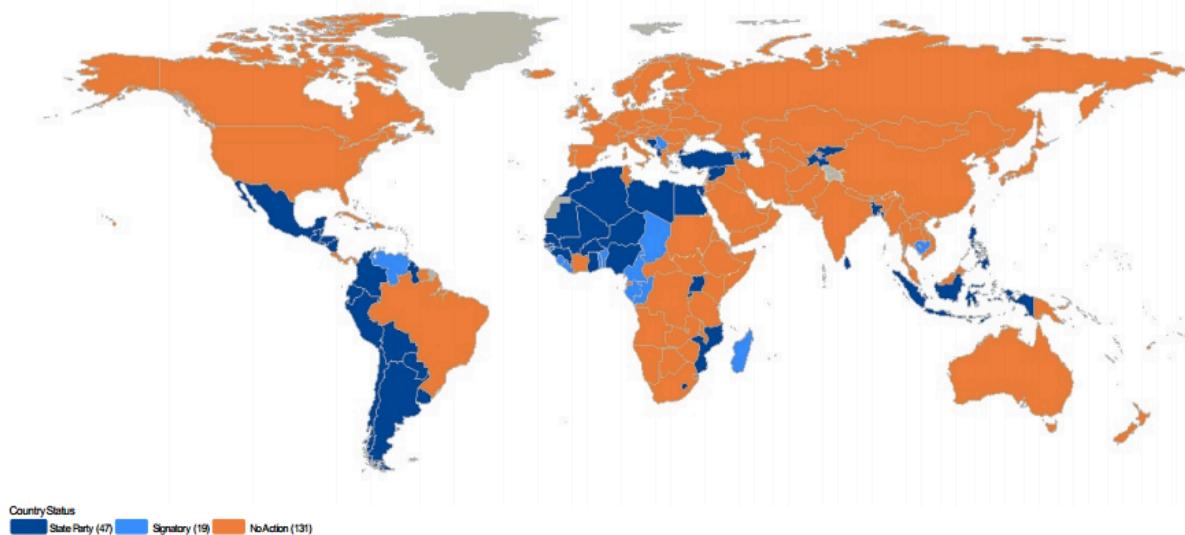
⁹⁶ International Labour Organization, "Thirteenth Asian Regional Meeting," 1996 – 2016, http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/regional-meetings/WCMS_071284/lang--en/index.htm



The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

More generally, the UN has a Committee on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families under its Human Rights office. It held its first session in 2004, and consists of independent experts that monitor the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It lays out the basic principles and standards in regards to migration for employment; reaffirming the Convention concerning Migration for Employment (No. 97), the Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers (No.143), the Recommendation concerning Migration for Employment (No. 86), the Recommendation concerning Migrant Workers (No.151), the Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (No. 29) and the Convention concerning Abolition of Forced Labour (No. 105)⁹⁷.

Progress on the Ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families



Source: Database of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, 2016, [http://treaties.un.org](https://treaties.un.org)

This treaty remains largely ignored however. As of 30 March 2015, only 47 states are parties to the treaty, 19 states have signed onto it, and the majority of 131 states have taken no action. Excluding Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkey, several UNESCAP members have yet to ratify the convention.

⁹⁷ “International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,” *International Labour Organization*, 18 December 1990, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CMW.aspx>



The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

While labour migration is commonplace around the Asia-Pacific region, the amount of NGOs addressing the protection of migrant workers is limited. Most NGOs that exist are small-scale and lack international cooperation with other NGOs, resulting in less influential power when effecting policy change.

Most notably, the *Asian Migrant Centre* (AMC) is a key regional NGO based in Hong Kong with Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council. In addition to providing research on migration issues, the AMC also works on policy and media advocacy, as well as capacity building for the empowerment and promotion of migrants' rights in Asia⁹⁸. Their work covers both documented and undocumented migrant workers, including those workers whose work is left unprotected by national labour laws and work under marginalized, vulnerable, and oppressive conditions⁹⁹. However, the states that they cover - presumably due to lack of capacity - only span ten out of the 61 members of UNESCAP.

Additionally, a plethora of smaller, more inwardly focused NGOs regarding the protection of migrant workers in the region exist in states with either major labour-receiving or labour-sending populations. Despite their significant potential for mobilization, these NGOs have less ability to reinforce protection over labour migrants in the Asia-Pacific. It seems that many of these NGOs are underutilized or lack the ability and/or resources to directly access many labour migrants around the Asia-Pacific. Instead, much of the protection work is left either to governments or international organizations.

Section 5: Possible Solutions

As UNESCAP covers a large array of member states that are geographically and culturally different, it is important that bloc positions be covered. There have been few attempts to open up dialogues on the issues that arise with labour migration in the region, with regional bodies such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) restricting discussion to human resources, productivity, training, and education¹⁰⁰. Possible solutions may require harmonization amongst bloc positions prior to discussion at UNESCAP, so that talks may revolve around issues that are integral to all sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific and can be better addressed at an intra-governmental level to a larger degree of success.

First and foremost, a key regional step to improving the protective space for labour migrants in the Asia-Pacific is to encourage all UNESCAP members to sign onto the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. In addition to ensuring that all member states are committed

⁹⁸ "About Us," *Asian Migrant Centre*, 2016, <http://www.asianmigrantcentre.org/#!about-us/cchl>

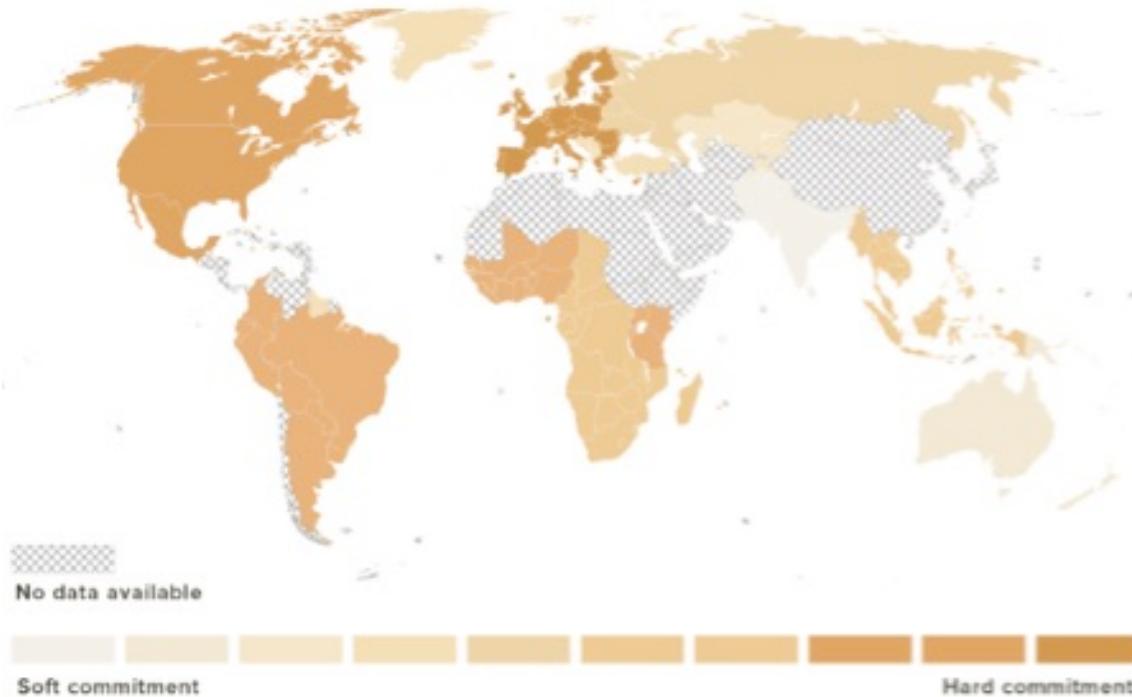
⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ De Lombaerde et al, "Reinforcing Regional Rights: Labour and Migration," *United Nations University*, 23 August 2011, <http://unu.edu/publications/articles/reinforcing-regional-rights-labour-and-migration.html>



to addressing this issue of labour migrant protection, it also sets a standard for UNESCAP that is cohesive with international law.

Summary of labour rights and migrant worker rights provisions in selected world regions



Source: De Lombaerde et al, “Reinforcing Regional Rights: Labour and Migration,” *United Nations University*, 23 August 2011, <http://unu.edu/publications/articles/reinforcing-regional-rights-labour-and-migration.html>

National Solutions

At the national level, the commodification of workers may be tackled by improving Government-to-Government (G2G) schemes. This is because the recruitment of migrant labourers in the region usually take one of the following forms: (i) direct government to government schemes; (ii) private or legal agencies; (iii) illegal channels often involving unlicensed recruiters, sponsors, or brokers; (iv) direct employment or through internet employment; (v) government-led programs promoting the recruitment of foreign students¹⁰¹. By promoting the G2G system, intermediaries are cut out of the recruitment process, reducing the likelihood of illegal recruitments and its presumably harsher work conditions. For example, under Korea’s Employment Permit System (EPS) which began in 2004, the number of illegal stays dropped from 80% in 2003 to 16% in 2014¹⁰².

¹⁰¹ “ADBI Policy Brief No. 2015-1,” *Asian Development Bank Institute*, 2015, 2

¹⁰² Government of the Republic of Korea, 2015; and “ADBI Policy Brief No. 2015-1,” *Asian Development Bank Institute*, 2015, 2



The maltreatment of workers can take place in various forms, from trafficking to hard labour to domestic abuse. A common issue is the withholding of legal documents, such as passports, by one's employer¹⁰³. It eliminates risk of the employees stealing from their employers and running off, but also poses the risk of long-term abuse if the employee is maltreated and unable to flee to seek help. Other mistreatments include: excessive working hours, unfair wages (some even below minimum wage), verbal and physical abuse, and little-to-no trade union rights¹⁰⁴. These issues are hard to reinforce because many of them occur within households, despite the fact they may be legally addressed under domestic labour laws.

Remaining cognizant of the fact that they will need to be tailored to be compatible with each individual member state, and although not an exhaustive list, some possible policy solutions include¹⁰⁵:

- *Pre-Departure Preparation*: labour-sending countries may want to screen employment contracts and consider hosting information sessions conducted by the government or private entities to inform workers of their rights and educate them on how to seek assistance if they encounter difficulties in their host countries.
- *Improving Bilateral Agreements*: labour-sending countries may wish to reinforce labour law by negotiation and agreeing upon Memorandums of Understanding, or even Bilateral Labour Agreements. The Philippines, for example, requires a BLA prior to sending its workers off to another country for employment. As of 2015, it has 107 agreements in place with 79 countries¹⁰⁶.
- *Labour Attaches*: if there is a significant migrant population, governments may wish to consider assigning labour attaches to embassies or consulates in certain countries. These attaches may act as a point of contact for information and advisory on migrant labour rights and help evaluate the potential options for recourse.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while some of these policies might already be in place, they are often not properly reinforced.

Southeast Asia

Labour rights are not particularly prominent among ASEAN member countries, and are addressed at a surface-level when done so due to the wide range of priorities amongst members. On 13 January 2007, the regional body put forward an ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers¹⁰⁷. The declaration outlines the obligations of labour-sending and -receiving states, promotes fair and appropriate employment protection, including fair wages and adequate access to decent work and living conditions. It also resulted in the establishment of an implementation committee (ACMW), as well as the annual ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML),

¹⁰³ Ibid., 5

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 6

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 13 January 2007.



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where government representatives, employers, workers, civil society organizations, international organizations, and other relevant stakeholders are invited to review the implementation of past outcomes, and craft future recommendations. The first ACMW meeting established four top priorities¹⁰⁸:

1. Step up the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers against exploitation and abuse
2. Strengthen this aforementioned protection and promotion by enhancing labour migration governance in ASEAN countries
3. Regional cooperation to fight human trafficking in the ASEAN region
4. Development of an ASEAN Instrument on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers

The chart below showcases the Convention ratification of ASEAN countries in relation to migration. While most members have signed onto the conventions against the harsher conditions of migrant labourers, such as the forced labour and freedom of association, conventions protecting against smaller scale yet more commonplace abuses have not been ratified for the most part. These include the conventions on domestic workers, labour inspection, and private employment agencies.

Conventions		Brunei	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao PDR	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
ILO C 87	Freedom of association		1999	1998			1955	1953			
ILO C 98			1999	1957		1961		1953	1965		
ILO C 29			1969	1950	1964	1957	1955	2005	1965	1969	2007
P029											
ILO C 105	Forced labour		1999	1999		1958 (d)		1960	1965 (d)	1969	
ILO C 138		2011	1999	1999	8005	1997		1998	2005	2004	2003
ILO C 182		2008	2006	2000	2005	2000		2000	2001	2001	2000
ILO C 100	Discrimination		1999	1958	2008	1997		1953	2002	1999	1997
ILO C 111			1999	1999	2008			1960			1997
ILO C 19	Equal treatment			1950		1957	1927	1994	1965	1968	
ILO C 118								1994			
ILO C 183	Maternal protection										
ILO C 95	Protection of wages							1953			
ILO C 97	Migration employment					1964*		2009			
ILO C 181	Private employment agencies										
ILO C 189	Domestic workers							2012			
ILO C 145	Migrant Workers Convention (Supplementary revisions)							2006			
UN MWC	Migrant Workers Convention		2004 (s)	2012 (s)				1995			
CED AW	Discrimination against women	2006 (a)	1999 (a)	1984	1981	1995 (a)	1997 (a)	1981	1995 (a)	1985 (a)	1982
CRC	Rights of the child	1995 (a)	1992 (a)	1990	1991 (a)	1995 (a)	1991 (a)	1990	1995 (a)	1992 (a)	1990
ILO C 81	Labour inspection										

Source: Gois, "Labour Migration in the ASEAN Region," *The Green Political Foundation*, 23 Nov 2015, <https://www.boell.de/en/2015/11/23/labour-migration-asean-region>

¹⁰⁸ Gois, "Labour Migration in the ASEAN Region," *The Green Political Foundation*, 23 Nov 2015, <https://www.boell.de/en/2015/11/23/labour-migration-asean-region>



Central Asia

As labour migration has become a main source of income for many Central Asian families, the labour-sending governments such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan should initiate discussions and host regional forums with the Russian Federation in order to consistently address issues of social insurance, healthcare, pension provision, and citizenship of their migrant labour workers¹⁰⁹. Furthermore, governments may want to consider creating sub-governmental bodies responsible for supporting migrant workers, and offering greater social protection to typically more vulnerable groups¹¹⁰.

East Asia

In East Asia, many employment protection, minimum wage rates, unemployment insurance guarantees, and healthcare provisions have already been addressed by states. However, these policies lack reinforcement and remain under-implemented. The most restrictive policies in the sub-region tend to be “toothless,” implying the limited ability of governments to monitor compliance¹¹¹. Consequently, improving enforcement also requires a bottom-up approach. NGOs may play an intermediary role in the process of informing households of the need to support these human rights.

The Pacific

The pacific region currently lacks any inter-ministerial labour migration policy group. There is no single body made up of labour experts and statisticians responsible for gathering labour migration statistics to assess the impacts of certain policies. Creating an inter-ministerial body could allow for better guidance on what areas require data collection, and further improve the coordination and harmonization of labour migration policies¹¹². Under this sub-regional body, a recent ILO report also recommends streamlining definitions pertaining to migration, such as adopting the UN definition for international migration.

However, in all of these cases, a multidimensional approach is required to effect real policy change. While it is important to reconsider the current national structures of both remittance-receiving and remittance-sending states, non-governmental organizations can also play a large role in bottom-up social mobilization to truly address the problems being faced at the local level. Furthermore, participation in international organizations such as the ILO can also help improve cooperation among states. These international organizations act as a space for open discussion and negotiation over commonly understood standards and expectations over the protection and treatment of migrant

¹⁰⁹ Malyuchenko, “Labour Migration from Central Asia to Russia: Economic and Social Impact on the Societies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan,” *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and OSCE Academy* (Bishkek), February 2015, 13

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 14

¹¹¹ Packard, “East Asia and Pacific Countries Can Do Better in Labour Regulation and Social Protection,” *the World Bank*, 5 Aug 2014, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/east-asia-and-pacific-countries-can-do-better-labour-regulation-and-social-protection>

¹¹² “Enhancing the Capacity of Pacific Island Countries to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Migration,” *International Labour Organizaiton*, 1996 – 2016, viii



workers. Consequently, there are many by which this topic may be approached, but in order to effect genuine policy change, stakeholders at all levels must be taken into consideration.

Further Research

Questions to Consider

1. Is your country a predominantly labour-exporting or labour-receiving country?
2. How does your country facilitate conditions for safe and effective labour migration, if at all?
3. Where are some areas for collaboration and/or cooperation with other countries?
4. Would a top-down or bottom-up approach make your policies more effective?
5. How will your local populations react to proposed changes in policies? If you anticipate no backlash, why haven't these policies already been enacted?

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