

First Annual Southeast Asia Regional Gender and Diversity Network Forum

[Gender and Diversity](#) / [Manila](#) / November 2014

Background

Within Southeast Asia, as in many parts of the world, inequalities based on gender, sexuality, disability, age and ethnicity remain a great challenge. Discrimination and variable levels of access to resources continue to negatively impact human development, health, economic growth and individuals' and communities' ability to prepare for, and respond to, disasters. To address these issues, Southeast Asia's National Societies have been actively working to ensure their initiatives promote gender equality, respect for diversity and are non-discriminatory towards women, girls, boys and men. In the spirit of collaboration, IFRC and National Societies have been working together to increase co-ordination and to align their strategic direction. Together, they have been building their collective knowledge and capacity and integrating gender and diversity considerations into their programs, policies and tools.



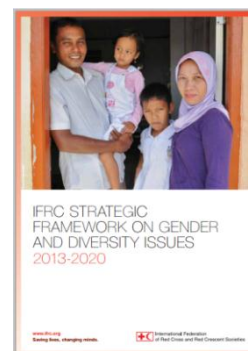
Group photo of all the participants after the successful completion of the First Annual SEA Regional Gender and Diversity Network Forum

In order to facilitate the National Societies coming together, the IFRC, with co-sponsorship from the Philippine Red Cross, hosted the first annual Southeast Asia Regional Gender and Diversity Network Forum. The event took place in Manila from 26-27 November 2014.

Event overview

Running over one-and-a-half days, the forum was attended by Gender and Diversity focal points from seven National Societies: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Participants had backgrounds in disaster management and health, as well as from organisational development, human resources and planning units. The forum provided an opportunity for representatives to enhance their knowledge, capacity and coordination on gender and diversity integration across their society's programming.

The first day examined a standard and harmonized understanding of gender and diversity within the Southeast Asia region. Participants discussed terms, definitions and available tools such as the [IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity 2013-2020](#). On the second day, participants identified regional issues relating to gender and diversity inequalities, challenges in addressing those issues, potential solutions and finally



examples of inspirational and effective initiatives. Participants worked in groups, encouraging them to develop a broader regional – rather than country-specific – approach.

Regional issues identified



Outcomes

The forum identified two key areas for future work by National Societies:

- ✓ **Shared regional level concerns** such as the issues in the matrix above
- ✓ **Specific organizational & institutional concerns** including:
 - funding constraints related with the implementation of gender and diversity programs
 - the difficulty of coordinating between departments within National Societies; and
 - the varying levels of knowledge and understanding of issues and approaches related with gender and diversity



Participants discuss a number of issues during the workshop, including the concepts of gender and diversity

The group agreed to form a Southeast Asia Regional Gender and Diversity Network, pending formal sign off on the terms of reference. The Network will meet quarterly via teleconference and annually in a face-to-face forum.

The SEA Regional Gender and Diversity Network agreed that the following activities should be its priorities in 2015:

- Reporting the results of the first annual general meeting to the Red Cross Red Crescent Leadership meeting in February 2015
- Endorsement of the Network's terms of reference and identification of focal persons by National Societies leadership
- Mapping of gender and diversity resources in every National Society and of other agencies in each country
- Capacity-building: Training for members of the Network on integrating gender and diversity considerations throughout Red Cross and Red Crescent programming; implementing and building on the [IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity 2013-2020](#); development of toolkits and checklists/minimum standards as well as integrated training linked with 'Youths as Agents of Behavioural Change.'

Each National Society developed 'next steps' for increasing the integration of gender and diversity equality. Some excellent initiatives were proposed, including:

- The identification of a gender and diversity focal point in each National Society;
- Conducting a review of existing gender and diversity-sensitive tools and frameworks;
- Carrying out gender and diversity equality assessments;
- Conducting research to identify gender and diversity needs within vulnerable communities
- Increased advocacy on the importance of taking a gender and diversity approach within and outside the National Society;
- Developing National Society-specific gender and diversity policies;
- Increasing regional peer-to-peer learning.



...when gender equality is actively promoted, it can positively transform and enhance individual lives as well as societies as a whole

- *IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues 2013-2020*

Contact information

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Participants during their field visit to a Philippine Red Cross livelihoods program, which engages local women to increase their income generation activities