ASEAN-IPR – ERIA Joint Research Project on
Women Peace and Security (WPS) and Women in the Digital Economy (WDE):
Women Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Peace

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PHASE II - FIELD RESEARCH

Background

ERIA (Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia) and the ASEAN-IPR (ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation) are undertaking a joint study to investigate and better understand the linkages between Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and the participation of Women in the Digital Economy (WDE) in the Southeast Asian region. The result of the study will be widely disseminated as a form of evidence-based research, public symposium, and policy brief to feed into policy planning by streamlining gender and peacebuilding into economic policies and further integrating the WPS Agenda into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint. The study may also provide tangible recommendations for ASEAN and its bodies to strengthen digital-enabled women's economic empowerment in post-conflict communities.

This study aims to contribute to the fulfillment of the Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on WPS, particularly within the **<u>Protection Pillar</u>** outlined in **Output 1.2.** emphasising the need for *increased capacity of ASEAN and AMS to promote the protection and safeguarding of women's and girls' rights, and women's economic empowerment, in conflict-affected contexts as well as during times of emergency, humanitarian response and insecurity.* Segmented into several key initiatives, the study serves as part of **Priority Action 1.2.1.** *Integrate economic perspective within the WPS agenda; Ensure the protection and support of women's livelihoods, particularly in the context of disasters, conflicts and crises, and explore opportunities for the private sector to effectively promote WPS objectives.* Placing a focus on post-conflict communities, the research also strives to advance **Priority Action 5.3.3.** under the **<u>Relief and Recovery Pillar</u>**, aspiring to *promote initiatives that are evidence-based and focused on responding to changing needs as identified by data and evidence gathered through community and other partnerships building on women's experiences and priorities during relief and recovery.*

Phase I of the project took the form of desk research with the objective of developing a conceptual framework on the relationship between WPS and WDE. With the conclusion of the desk research in January 2025, the respective experts have presented a dual WPS-WDE Conceptual Framework along with a Fieldwork Guidebook intended to align the next phase of the research with the established scope of the project.

As the project arrives at Phase II where data collection and analysis are imperative to provide evidence-based insights and tangible recommendations, findings of the desk

research reaffirmed the need for thorough case selection and field research in post-conflict Southeast Asian communities. Further elaboration of the WPS-WDE Conceptual Framework and Fieldwork Guidebook can be found below.

Research Objectives

The overall aim of the research are as follows:

i) Investigate and better understand the linkages between WPS and the participation of WDE in the ASEAN region.

ii) Identify gaps and collate good practices or success stories of women empowerment that correlate with peace and prosperity, based on case studies across ASEAN.

iii) Examine enabling factors brought by digital technologies, as well as challenges such as misinformation, disinformation, and cyber violence against women and girls.

iv) Provide an analysis of women's economic empowerment (including in the digital economy) and its direct contribution to sustainable peace and prosperity, focusing on the experiences of (selected) ASEAN Member States.

Brief Overview of the WPS-WDE Conceptual Framework & Research Questions

The exploratory nature of the desk research employed a methodology of Thematic Analysis in developing a conceptual framework that provides conceptual linkage between WPS and WDE, while situating their study within the context of post-conflict communities.

As ASEAN recognises the transformative power of digital technology along with the existing digital gender gap, the study finds that women's digital inclusion and WDE are not merely supportive themes but are cross-cutting and integral to WPS efforts, if not acting as enablers of the WPS Agenda.

Within a *crisis* context, the framework argues that a resilient society equipped with inclusive WDE capacities and competencies would be more agile and adaptable in responding to the shorter-term and urgent needs compelled by crises. While there needs to be a consistent, proactive, and longer-term approach in building resilience, digital capacities and competencies within a *stable* context.

In the case where the rapidly changing nature of our world is understood as a *Polycrisis* within a constant period of *Post-Normal Times* (PNT), women's participation in the digital economy is argued to serve as a mechanism for advancing peace and security. Such causal pathway would be contingent upon the notions of digital rights and digital inclusion as enablers of women's participation in digital economy, which would then present the expected outcomes to be (1) financial well-being as direct

outcome, (2) community resilience as intermediary outcome, and (3) peace and security as ultimate outcome.

Following the conceptual findings on the linkage between WPS and WDE, ERIA and ASEAN-IPR proposes the following research questions to be explored in Phase II (Field Research). The research questions are outlined with the aim of providing evidence in a deductive manner to the established conceptual framework. It is, however, important to note that more sub-questions might emerge as the field research is conducted.

i.   Main Research Question

In post-normal times, how does Women in Digital Economy (WDE) strengthen community resilience and promote sustainable peace?

(The analysis should take into account the need to address the digital gender gap and improve Women's Digital Inclusion (WDI) as a pre-requisite to achieve WDE.)

ii.   Sub-Research Questions

How and to what extent have women participation in digital economy been actualised in Southeast Asian countries?

(This sub-research question is advised to be answered prior to the main research question as it is necessary to initially outline existing practices of women's participation in digital economy in order to analyse its implications to peace and security)

What are the remaining gaps and challenges in women's digital economic empowerment and how does that relate to peace?

(This sub-research question is advised to be answered following the main research question to assess realities on the ground and generate evidence-based recommendations)

Fieldwork Guide & Research Parameters

Following the conceptual framework, the fieldwork guidebook offers guidance for case selection, mapping of stakeholders, and data collection, to strengthen the robustness of the case analysis by ensuring that selected cases effectively address the research objectives/questions.

The preliminary findings have identified several potential Southeast Asian states to begin with in the endeavour of case selection at the community level, *i.e.* Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, The Philippines, and Timor-Leste. Particularly, it is important to note that the subject of the research focuses on post-conflict communities as outlined

by the conceptual framework. **ERIA and ASEAN-IPR jointly propose Phase II to undertake field researches of two (2) countries, <u>Cambodia and The Philippines</u>** due to the emergence of substantial findings in the desk research. Further field study shall be conducted where necessary at the continuing phase.

Qualifications/Competencies

For the purposes of Phase II (Field Research), ERIA and ASEAN-IPR are currently seeking **a short-term researcher/research team (up to 3 persons)** with the following qualifications/competencies:

- Relevant academic background with minimum of **five (5) years professional experience**.
- Proven track-record on designing and conducting national/regional level research on issues related to **women, gender, post-conflict recovery, economic empowerment, and/or peacebuilding**.
- Proficiency in qualitative research methods and methodologies.
- Experience in designing, executing, and analysing field-based data collection and in-depth interviews.
- Demonstrated ability to plan and implement field research activities while ensuring cost-effective resource utilisation.
- Excellent command of English and strong writing abilities.
- Knowledge of the following is considered an asset: Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda; Strategies of Inclusive Economic Empowerment; Strategies of Inclusive Digital Technology Development.
- Knowledge of local Cambodian (Khmer or other) and Filipino (Tagalog or other) languages to be able to conduct field work without intermediations will be an advantage but not a main requirement (*research teams may allocate resources to engage a local partner/assistant*)
- Previous working experience with ASEAN and/or other International Organisations is considered an asset.

Key Deliverables/Outcome

The position of researcher/research team of Phase II (Field Research) entails the responsibilities below:

- Design a research implementation plan in alignment with the WPS-WDE Conceptual Framework and scope of the project.
- Provide a budget proposal in accordance with the research implementation plan and financial allocation.
- Field research at the Community level in two (2) selected Southeast Asian countries.
- Drafting a *field research report* of approximately 75 pages to be finalised in **October 2025**.

- Submit a financial report in accordance with the budget proposal.
- Regular meeting/communication with ERIA and ASEAN-IPR for periodic updates regarding the progress of the field research.

Project Timeline

Date	Milestones and/or activities
May 23, 2025	Proposal selection completed
June 6, 2025	Research contract issued, commencement of research activities
June 12, 2025	Project inception meeting (virtual)
June – September 2025	Fieldwork period
September 8, 2025	Submission of progress report
September 15, 2025	Update meeting with ERIA and ASEAN-IPR
October 6, 2025	Final submission of the field research report
October 20, 2025	Final meeting with ERIA and ASEAN-IPR

*The timeline is tentative and subject to change depending on project needs

Research Budget and Remuneration

The selected research team will have a research budget allocation of up to **USD 15,000 per case study country**, disbursed in installments as specified in the contractual agreement with ERIA.

Given that **two countries** will be covered under the study, the total research budget available for this assignment will **amount to USD 30,000**.

All payments will be made in **United States Dollars (USD)**. For proposal and reporting purposes, any items quoted or incurred in non-USD currencies must be converted using the exchange rates published by **CUEX Currency Converter** as of the transaction date.

If you are interested in this position, please send your _Curriculum Vitae(s) (CVs), a Brief Research Proposal with fieldwork plan along with field research schedule (maximum 3 pages), and a Budget Proposal_ to the following email _recruitment@asean-aipr.org_ with the email subject **"Application_Field Research_ASEAN-IPR ERIA Joint Research"** by **Friday, 9 May 2025 – 17:00 hours (GMT+7)** at the latest.

Please be informed that only shortlisted candidates will be notified for an interview.

Necessary Documents to Apply

- Curriculum Vitaes (CVs) of all members of Research Team
- The Brief Research Proposal should include at least the following, *but not limited to*:
  - Introduction & Objectives
  - Fieldwork Plan: potential area of focus, logistics for site visits and interview, instruments and tools for data collection
  - Field Research Schedule/Timeline: expected completion of data collection, analysis, and reporting in accordance with the above general timeline
- Budget Proposal of each case study *(please refer to the template provided)*