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FACULTY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**Analysis of the level of women's empowerment
in Southeast Asia and suggestions for further improvement**

Diploma thesis

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In Brno, May 18, 2017

Nikola Pauschková

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Abstract

The diploma thesis proceeds from the well-established theoretical assumption that the empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality is not only moral goal in itself but also the only way towards development of a nation as it, in the end, benefits the entire society. Case study, tracking the progress of women's empowerment in ten countries of Southeast Asia over the last 25 years was used to provide for clear comparison. Further examination of the five selected indicators of women's empowerment - adolescent fertility, contraceptive prevalence, total fertility, employment and political representation - revealed both the strongest and the weakest parts of each country. These findings were later used to propose tailored measures and policies, implementation of which could lead to further empowerment of women in Southeast Asia.

Key words: Women's empowerment, gender equality, emancipation, women's rights, economic development, Southeast Asia

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce vychází z dnes již obecně přijímaných teoretických přístupů, podle nichž posílení pozice žen a dosažení genderové rovnosti není pouze jakýmsi morálním cílem, nýbrž také jedinou možnou cestou, jak dosáhnout rozvoje celé společnosti, která bude v konečném důsledku procesu obohacena stejným dílem jako ženy samotné. Případová studie zkoumá změny úrovně ženské emancipace v deseti zemích jihovýchodní Asie za posledních 25 let a poskytuje možnost základního srovnání. Analýza vybraných ukazatelů ženské emancipace - adolescentní plodnost, míra rozšíření antikoncepce, celková plodnost, zaměstnanost a zastoupení v politice - poskytly možnost identifikovat slabá a silná místa zkoumaných zemí. Díky těmto závěrům bylo možné navrhnout taková opatření, jejich přijetí jednotlivými zeměmi by mohlo vést k dalšímu posílení žen v jihovýchodní Asii.

Klíčová slova: Posílení pozice žen, genderová rovnost, emancipace, práva žen, ekonomický rozvoj, jihovýchodní Asie

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Introduction

Although the topics of emancipation of women or gender equality are not new, recently they have grown into a brand new dimension, far beyond the common sense. In some countries in the world, a hot topic is the possibility of introduction of unisex toilets so that men, women and people without specific gender (the transgender community) are not discriminated as where to do their business on the basis of their gender. The British Medical Association recently recommended that the term "pregnant mother" be replaced by gender neutral "pregnant person."

Few weeks ago, the absurd interpretation of gender neutrality arrived in the Czech Republic as well. In the media, the issue of gender biased textbooks for pupils of elementary schools was presented as a serious problem to be addressed.

With respect to the course of current events, it seemed appropriate to examine such part of the world where efforts to establish gender equality still have a real foundation. Many Asian countries are openly patriarchal, explicitly favouring men in many areas of life, which is perfectly expressed in the ancient "Book of Songs":

*"When a son is born,
Let him sleep on the bed,
Clothe him with fine clothes,
And give him jade to play...
When a daughter is born,
Let her sleep on the ground,
Wrap her in common wrappings,
And give broken tiles to play..."*

Supporting evidence shall be the male to female population imbalance (in favour of men) in countries where the government implemented a family planning policy. The perception of women as liabilities and men as assets still persists, especially among rural population.

Although the countries of Southeast Asia have ratified many international treaties on promoting gender equality and against discrimination of women (such as CEDAW), the reality, as apparent from the analysis further on, unfortunately doesn't yet mirror the official commitments.

Goal and methodology

Goal of the thesis: The goal of the diploma thesis is to analyse the current level of women's empowerment in Southeast Asia, and, using the examples of existing policies, successfully implemented in other countries, and theories of regional development with respect to feminism, to suggest measures and policies, implementation of which would possibly lead to further promotion of gender equality in the region.

Methodology: The theoretical part is written using a method of research literature review. This theoretical methods is used to identify, evaluate and synthesize the current state of knowledge in the area of women's empowerment and gender equality, and to produce a descriptive review of the principal theoretical approaches stressing the importance of women's emancipation in the overall development of a nation.

As the analytical part deals with concrete data, the empirical approach was used, proceeding mainly from two methods of measurement: composite indicator creation and computation of mean coefficient of growth. Composite indicator is a method of dimensionality reduction, therefore it was used to describe 5 different areas of women's empowerment in one value to enable the comparison. The mean coefficient of growth was then used to identify the average pace at which states were undergoing the change in concrete areas over the period of time.

The proposal part applies the method of induction and historical-comparative approach to choose from the elsewhere already implemented measures the most appropriate ones with respect to the cultural specifics of Southeast Asia.

Limitation of the thesis: Due to insufficient data coverage, the country of Brunei Darussalam, little prosperous state in Southeast Asia, needed to be excluded from the analysis. The difficulty with data coverage also made it impossible to examine all the factors relevant to the concept of women's empowerment such as HIV prevalence among women or female secondary educational attainment. As it is explained in the analytical part, these two indicators were excluded in exchange for assigning greater

weight to the adolescent fertility rate in the composite indicator, which, to some extent, includes the relevant information.

1. Theoretical approaches towards gender equality and women's empowerment

1.1 Gender equality

According to the International Labour Organisation, "gender equality refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment by men and women and by boys and girls in all spheres of life. It asserts that people's rights, responsibilities, social status and access to resources do not depend on whether they are born male or female. (...) Gender equality implies that all men and women are free to develop their personal abilities and make life choices without the limitations set by stereotypes or prejudices about gender roles or the characteristics of men and women."¹

From the United Nations perspective, "gender equality is a fundamental human right, a building block for social justice and an economic necessity; it is a critical factor for the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals as well as a goal in and of itself."²

Despite the long-term global effort to introduce equal treatment of men and women, there has always been gender inequality in the world. While the situation of European and North American women has improved dramatically since the feminist movement started to systematically question the rooted male dominance over women, in other parts of the world great gender inequalities persist. "Women continue to face discrimination in access to work, economic assets and participation in private and public decision-making. Women are also more likely to live in poverty than men. (...) Women remain at a disadvantage in the labour market. Globally, about three quarters of working-age men participate in the labour force, compared to only half of working-age women. Women earn 24 per cent less than men globally."³

¹ ILO: *ABC of women workers' rights and gender equality*. 2nd edition. Geneva: International Labour Office, 2000, p. 91-92. ISBN 978-92-2-119622-8.

² *Unesco: Building peace in the minds of men and women* [online]. [cit. 2017-01-05]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/gender-equality/>

³ United Nations: *The millenium development goals report 2015*. New York: United Nations, 2015, p. 8. ISBN 978-92-1-101320-7.

1.1.1 Strategies towards gender equality

Generally, we distinguish three types of strategies how to promote gender equality: rhetoric strategies, equal opportunities and affirmative action. "Rhetoric strategies" refer to the official proclamation or ratification of various international treaties promising promotion of gender equality. "Equal opportunities" cover number of active measures such as organizing trainings to improve women's skills in disadvantaged areas, financing their political campaign, launching and / or financing childcare facilities, and organizing campaigns to raise awareness of gender inequality. Positive discrimination or "affirmative action" is defined as action causing a temporary breach of equal rights in favour of women (the disadvantaged group) for the sake of achieving gender equality in the long run. Among measures of affirmative action belong quotas which can be either formal or informal. Formal quotas are defined in legal system of a country and their breach is often connected to negative sanctions. Informal quotas are those voluntarily accepted by individual firms or political parties, and create part of a firm's or organization's inner culture. The informal quotas are believed to be the most effective strategy towards gender equality.⁴

1.2 Feminist theory to regional development

At first, the motivation behind efforts to empower women was purely psychological and ethical, and as such not very feasible in countries where the cultural ambiance dictates woman a naturally inferior position compared to that of men. But later, it was suggested that there is a strong connection between the empowerment of women and the development of a country which moved the issue on a new level. In the 20th century a new theory called feminism of regional development was introduced claiming that "the development of regions depends on the level of women's engagement in economy and politics."⁵ According to this approach, the government ought to take various measures to help women successfully participate in the economy of a state to fasten its progress. In the market sphere women are disadvantaged by pregnancy, maternity leave and childcare, so the policies should be stated and implemented in a way that would ease women balance career and childcare. In practice, the help can be arranged

⁴ RAKUŠANOVÁ, Petra. *Česká politika: Ženy v labyrintu mužů?* Praha: Forum 50 %, 2006, 47 p. ISBN 80-239-7438-6.

⁵ KREJČÍ, Tomáš. *Regionální rozvoj: teorie, aplikace, regionalizace*. 2nd edition. Brno: Mendel University in Brno, 2013, p. 114. ISBN 978-80-7375-914-8.

via introduction of part-time jobs, flexible working hours or home office or establishment of kindergartens near business centres.⁶

1.3 Women's empowerment

According to Naila Kabeer "empowerment in general refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability."⁷ United Nations extends the previous definition by adding four more dimensions to define the empowerment of women. Apart from (1.) their right to have and to determine choices, the attributes to the women's empowerment are: 2. women's sense of self-worth; 3. their right to have access to opportunities and resources; 4. their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and 5. their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.⁸ The Inter-American Development bank defines the term as "expanding the rights, resources, and capacity of women to make decisions and act independently in social, economic and political spheres."⁹

In the context of gender equality it is not the effort to make women exercise *power over* men but rather gain *power to* "having decision-making authority, solve problems and be creative and enabling". In other words, empowerment of women is not an effort to make women dominant over men, but to discover and make use of women's true potential which will in the end benefit men as much as women themselves.¹⁰

Esther Duflo outlines the two-directional relationship between women's empowerment and economic development: "In one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, empowering women may benefit development."¹¹

⁶ KREJČÍ, Tomáš. *Regionální rozvoj: teorie, aplikace, regionalizace*. 2nd edition. Brno: Mendel University in Brno, 2013, p. 113. ISBN 978-80-7375-914-8.

⁷ KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. Gender and Development, 13 (1), 2005, p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

⁸ *United Nations: Guidelines on women's empowerment*. [online]. [cit. 2017-01-17]. Available at: <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/guide/iatfwemp.gdl.html>

⁹ Inter American Development Bank. *Operational policy on gender equality in development*. Washington: Inter-American Development Bank, 2010, p. 3.

¹⁰ OXALAL, Zoe and Sally BADEN. *Gender and empowerment: definitions, approaches and implications for policy*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 1997, p. 1 ISBN: 1-85864-175-6.

¹¹ DUFLO, Esther. *Women empowerment and economic development*. Journal of economic literature, 50 (4), 2012, p. 1051-1079.

1.4 Theory of demographic transition

The relationship between women's emancipation and economic development is also outlined in the theory of demographic transition. According to this theory, each society undergoes certain reproductive stages within the process of evolution. The order of stages is strictly defined, whereas their duration is not, which explains why some countries have already reached the final stage of the transition while others are yet in the middle of the process.

The first stage of the cycle is typical for a pre-industrial society, where both death rates and birth rates are high due to poor health care, limited sources of food and no existence of contraception. The second stage is characterized by enormous population growth because the society developed ways and techniques how to obtain more food and enhance the hygienic standards and public health, and generally, via number of inventions, improve the quality of life. The death rates decrease, especially due to decrease of child mortality, but the birth rates still remain high. In the third stage the values of society change more than anything else which leads to major social changes. Attitudes towards children and women change dramatically. Children are no longer perceived as a mere labour force and women obtain education and their overall status improves significantly. This, together with the invention of contraceptives results in declining fertility. The last stage is characterized by low death rates as well as birth rates. The fertility further declines, not rarely even below the replacement level, and the population is aging and shrinking.

The decline in fertility throughout the transition is associated with number of phenomena such as industrialization, economic growth, urbanization, increased quality and accessibility of education, the introduction of so-called 'Western' values and government family planning programmes.¹²

1.5 Women's rights

If gender equality is perceived as the ultimate goal and women's empowerment as a process paving a way for achievement of the goal, then women's rights are milestones on the way. With each and every next right exercised, the woman becomes more and

¹² DYSON, Tim. *Population and Development: The Demographic Transition*. London: Zed Books, 2010, 288 p. ISBN 978-1-84813-913-8.

more powerful and thereby closer to enjoying all the benefits resulting from gender equality.

According to the Global Fund for Women, women's rights encompass: "the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage."¹³ Amnesty international adds "sexual and reproductive rights," which, in other words, means the right to be free from rape or forced marriage, and the right to use contraception or have an abortion.¹⁴ Next right stressed by Amnesty International as well as United Nations is access to affordable and relevant health services and to accurate, comprehensive health information, equal to those enjoyed by men.¹⁵ Bert Lockwood completes the women's rights list by adding the right to hold public office and enter into legal contracts.¹⁷ And, of course, the scale of women's rights may be substantially expanded under the currently widespread approach that "women's rights are human rights."¹⁸

1.6 United Nations Millennium Development Goal 3 as a prerequisite to development

To "promote gender equality and empower women" is the third of eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals, an ultimate international development strategy adopted in 2000 to be reached by 2015. The MDG 3 perceives the way to women's empowerment through equal education, employment and representation in the government. With that is strongly connected also MDG 5 to "improve maternal health" which should have been implemented via reducing the maternal mortality and adolescent fertility and increasing the share of contraceptive prevalence. Furthermore, MDG 2 aims at "achieving universal primary education" regardless of the gender. The fact that the idea of gender equality pervades more than third of the overall fifteen year

¹³ *Global Fund for Women: Women's Human Rights*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-10]. Available at: <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/womens-human-rights/#.WItpkcuV-iN>

¹⁴ *Amnesty International: Women's rights are human rights*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-10]. Available at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights>

¹⁵ *Amnesty International: Women's Health Sexual and Reproductive Rights*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-01]. Available at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights/women-s-health-sexual-and-reproductive-rights>

¹⁶ WHO. *Women's health and human rights: Monitoring the implementation of CEDAW*. Geneva: WHO Press, 2007, 79 p. ISBN 978-92-4-159510-0

¹⁷ LOCKWOOD, Bert B. *Women's Rights: A "Human Rights Quarterly" Reader*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, ISBN 978-0-8018-8374

¹⁸ UNITED NATIONS. *Women's rights are human rights* New York and Geneva: United Nations Publication, 2014, 123 p. ISBN 978-92-1-154206-6.

development strategy testifies the contemporary importance of the issue. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan thought of achieving gender equality as a prerequisite to achieving all other MDGs.¹⁹

1.7 Elaboration of the key indicators of women's empowerment

1.7.1 Education

There is no doubt that education is a key to any further development of a person, regardless of the gender, race or geographic location. The latest studies however summarized enough empirical evidence to testify that "the social returns to the years of schooling of females are greater than the return to males."²⁰ There is strong correlation between an economic progress of a state and the degree of successful promotion of equal educational achievements for both genders.²¹

The first aspect that comes along with education to be mentioned is the capacity of an individual to question and reflect on the conditions of one's life and subsequently act in order to change these conditions if found inadequate. Without the ability to think and make decision based on logical reasoning, any empowerment would be unthinkable. Education has a very positive effect on one's self-esteem too, which is another essential component of the empowerment process. Self-confident women who believe they have a right and power to control their lives can also better deal with violent husbands, as a study of households in Bangladesh revealed.²² They can also better advocate their position in the society and exercise a more respectful treatment from their surroundings including the authorities. This assumption was validated for example by a research in Nigeria, where uneducated women refused to deliver in hospitals for the disrespectful behaviour they experienced from the medical staff. Surveyed educated women in the same locality and time however had no such experience.

¹⁹ United Nations. *Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, 1990-2005: Secretary General's Millennium Development Goals Report*. New York and Geneva: United Nations Publications, 2005.

²⁰ SCHULTZ, Paul T. *Why Government Should Invest More to Educate Girls*. *World Development*, 30 (2), 2002, p. 207-225.

²¹ SCHULTZ, Paul T. *Why Government Should Invest More to Educate Girls*. *World Development*, 30 (2), 2002, p. 207-225.

²² KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. *Gender and Development*, 13 (1), 2005, p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

Furthermore, education is the only way to the development of a healthy region.²³ Educated women better understand what to do in order to protect one's health (the depth of such understanding however being given by the maximum reached level of education and individual capabilities, of course). Such knowledge then naturally transfers to their children and later on the overall surrounding of a woman. For example, in India, the reduction of overall child mortality has been associated with rising female literacy.²⁴ A study examining data from 219 countries between years 1970 and 2009 expressed the previous statement in numbers, claiming that every additional year of mother's schooling decreases child's mortality by 9.5 %.²⁵ Generally, "adding to a mother's schooling will have a larger beneficial effect on a child's health, schooling and adult productivity than would adding to a father's schooling."²⁶

To provide a proof of purely economic benefits, Hanushek and Woessman examined relevant data from 50 countries to estimate that "each additional year of schooling boosts long-run growth by 0.58 % per year."²⁷ A World Bank study from 1999 used simulation of data from 100 countries to find out that the increase of secondary education of girls by 1 % would potentially rise the per capita income of a country by 0.3 %.²⁸ The experience from developed, OECD countries is that in the last 50 years increased educational attainment accounted for 50 % of the overall economic growth.²⁹

Some economic losses caused by the disempowerment of girls may be somewhat hidden, but, although indirectly, they too have a huge impact on the economic situation of a country. For example, a study of World Bank in Latin America quantifying the costs of "risky youth behaviour" which comprises e.g. unemployment, early school

²³ United Nations: *The millenium development goals report 2015*. New York: United Nations, 2015, p. 8. ISBN 978-92-1-101320-7.

²⁴ KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. Gender and Development, 13 (1), 2005, p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

²⁵ UN WOMEN: *Facts and figures - Economic empowerment*. [online]. [cit. 2017-01-05]. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

²⁶ SCHULTZ, Paul T. *Why Government Should Invest More to Educate Girls*. World Development, 30 (2), 2002, p. 207-225.

²⁷ HANUSHEK, Erik and Ludger WOESSMANN. *The role of education quality in economic growth*. Policy Research Working Paper 4122. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007.

²⁸ CHAABAN, Jad and Wendy CUNNINGHAM. *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: the girl effect dividend*. Policy Research Working Paper 5753. World Bank, 2011, p. 3.

²⁹ UN WOMEN: *Facts and figures - Economic empowerment*. [online]. [cit. 2017-01-05]. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

dropout or adolescent pregnancy estimated the costs of such behaviour to 2 % of GDP annually.³⁰

Although education is obviously a very important step towards empowerment of women, there are limits to it. In cultures where male dominance and superiority is stipulated in people's minds, the education process may have a somewhat contradictory effect.

Firstly, in many, for example African and Asian countries, the gender inequality results in the absence of female teachers. Hence, it is mostly traditionally raised men who set the tone of curriculum and as such education may even serve as a tool to further promotion of gender inequality. "Gender stereotyping in the curriculum portrays girls as passive, modest and shy while boys are seen as assertive, brave and ambitious."³¹ In strongly patriarchal societies even so rare female teachers may guide boys to feel superior, giving them more time and attention in the class. Both open and subtle messages given off by these teachers educate pupils that "boys need careers and girls need husbands."³²

Even though women may successfully enter and participate in the education process, the education they get and the resulting work they can do again stresses the traditional values where women are assigned the "nonemancipated" caring professions such as nurses or teachers. Therefore, their profession only mirrors the traditional female role where women are born to take care of children, husbands and elderly relatives.

In some Muslim countries, namely Saudi Arabia, even more interesting phenomenon occurs. Women go to schools, they are educated, in the case of tertiary education they even exceed men in enrolment rate, and yet we can hardly call them empowered. They cannot drive a car nor show in public without a family male guardian and they can't even make choices about their own health and life. It is because there the academic

³⁰ CHAABAN, Jad and Wendy CUNNINGHAM. *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: the girl effect dividend*. Policy Research Working Paper 5753. World Bank, 2011, p. 3.

³¹ KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. *Gender and Development*, 13 (1), 2005. p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

³² KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. *Gender and Development*, 13 (1), 2005. p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

title isn't a way to free oneself but good education is a safe way to good marriage, as educated women raise the prestige of their husbands.³³

Despite that, however, education is a base for every other aspect of the empowerment. The fact that some countries, societies or organizations are not yet able to make use of the true potential of education, shouldn't question its fundamental position. Without education, there certainly would be no decent job opportunities or chance to affect the course of the societal decision making.

1.7.2 Sexual and reproductive rights

Women's sexual and reproductive rights encompass wide range of issues from the general ones, which they share with men, to the specific rights connected to the unique needs of women. Among the fundamental sexual and reproductive rights belong: accurate information about HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted diseases access to corresponding healthcare; the ability to choose whether and when to get pregnant; right to live free from torture; and the right to privacy.^{34 35}

In reality, women often face violations of these fundamental rights, such as forced sterilization (due to HIV infection, or undesirable ethnicity), forced abortions, involuntary virginity testing, forced early marriage or genital mutilation.³⁶ "Violations of women's sexual and reproductive health rights are often deeply engrained in societal values pertaining to women's sexuality. Patriarchal concepts of women's roles within the family mean that women are often valued based on their ability to reproduce. Early marriage and pregnancy, or repeated pregnancies spaced too closely together, often as the result of efforts to produce male offspring, because of the preference for sons, all have a devastating impact on women's health with sometimes fatal consequences."³⁷

³³ KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. Gender and Development, 13 (1), 2005. p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

³⁴ *Amnesty International: Women's Health Sexual and Reproductive Rights*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-01]. Available at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights/women-s-health-sexual-and-reproductive-rights>

³⁵ *United Nations Human Rights: Sexual and reproductive health and rights*. [online]. [cit. 2017-01-05]. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/HealthRights.aspx>

³⁶ *Amnesty International: Women's Health Sexual and Reproductive Rights*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-01]. Available at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights/women-s-health-sexual-and-reproductive-rights>

³⁷ *United Nations Human Rights: Sexual and reproductive health and rights*. [online]. [cit. 2017-01-05]. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/HealthRights.aspx>

Early marriage goes hand in hand with early pregnancy and increased fertility which is incompatible with woman's education and employment. It is also associated with higher rates of infant mortality, poor maternal health and higher vulnerability to HIV.³⁸

The response to the aforementioned problems can be the use of contraception. Firstly, it is strongly connected to woman's as well as new-born's health. Family planning helps women avoid too early (ages 15-19), too late or too frequent deliveries and thereby prevent associated health risks for both mother and child. Evidence suggests that having more than 4 children increases risk of maternal mortality; having children without enough spacing increases the chance of infant mortality. Furthermore, the possibility of family planning reduces the need for unsafe abortion.

Secondly, the use of contraception reduces the rate of HIV infected people in the society in two ways: 1. condom usage directly helps prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections including HIV between sex partners, and 2. via family planning it is possible for HIV positive partners to avoid giving birth to infected babies.³⁹

Thirdly, family planning is a reliable tool to slow population growth which, if unguarded, may negatively affect the economy of a state. If there are less children to be taken care of in the population, the ratio of working adults to dependants increases. This extra productivity, when transformed into money, may be then used by the government to invest into health, education and general wellbeing of their citizens, as was the case of Thailand or South Korea.⁴⁰

1.7.3 Employment

A more specific approach under women's empowerment is women's economic empowerment, stressing the importance of the participation of women in the employment. The first institution to articulate the definition was the World Bank, according to which "economic empowerment is about making markets work for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in these markets (at the agency level)."⁴¹

³⁸ OECD. *Gender equality in education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM 2012*. Paris: OECD, 2012, 252 p.

³⁹ *World Health Organization: Family planning/ Contraception*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-10]. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/>

⁴⁰ CARR, Bob et al. *Giving women power to plan their families*. *Lancet*; 380 (9837), 2012, p. 80-82.

⁴¹ World Bank. *Gender equality as smart economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal years 2007–10)*. 2006.

Economic empowerment may be perceived as a component of (or one step towards) the overall women's empowerment, or as a prerequisite to the empowerment in all other aspects. Oxfam perceives women's economic empowerment as "fundamental to women's ability to enjoy all other human rights; to be able to participate in decision-making and development; to enjoy decent work for decent and equal pay; to reduce and share heavy care responsibilities; and to resource and sustain local actions and networks for change."⁴²

In context of women's empowerment, it is important to articulate that it is the paid work that is to be considered because money earned plays the most important role in the process. Firstly, the money gives women independence and economical freedom off their husbands or extended families. If education creates free thinking then employment means free acting and the idea of freedom gets concrete shape. It again helps women to gain more positive perception of themselves and that, together with the actual control over monetary means, results in the ability to negotiate a better position in a family, better treatment from the husband in terms of reduction of domestic violence, and more power in household decision making. Furthermore, the economic independence can help woman leave a dysfunctional marriage or even not enter an unwanted marriage (which women from developing often choose to avoid being a burden for their parents) in the first place. And again, there is a positive spill over at children, as "income controlled by women (...) changes spending in ways that benefit children."⁴³

MDG 3 stresses the work outside agricultural sector. This may be explained by two reasons - 1. agricultural work is very often unpaid (in case of family farms) or very poorly paid, and 2. it takes place near home. On the contrary, the industrial work usually encompasses travelling as the factory is often situated in an industrial zone away from the housing which enables women to get outside the influence of their families and create new social networks. Studies from Turkey and Bangladesh show that "the overwhelming majority (of women) had made their own decision to enter factory work to make use of their skills and be useful outside the home and to work a considerable distance from home in order to escape the control exercised by their

⁴² OXFAM: *Womens economic empowerment*. [online]. [cit. 2017-01-20]. Available at: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/gender-justice/womens-economic-empowerment>

⁴³ UN WOMEN: *Facts and figures- Economic empowerment*. [online]. [cit. 2017-01-05]. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

families and neighbours. They wanted to work somewhere where they could move about freely during their lunch breaks and take the opportunity to meet their friends."⁴⁴

An interesting connection between women's employment and their political participation was discovered by a study examining women working in maquiladoras in Honduras. Female employees of these export oriented manufacturing factories "were more likely to have voted in elections and more likely to feel that they carried some weight with the government."⁴⁵

However, work outside agricultural sector doesn't guarantee good working conditions or fair wages. On the contrary, enough evidence has been gathered about underpayment, long shifts, life-endangering environment, threats, violence against women, and accidents ending in death due to poor or no safety standards, which are common in manufacturing factories (also known as "sweatshops") in developing countries.^{46 47 48 49}

The assumption that the sector of employment doesn't contain the necessary information about true potential for women's empowerment may be further supported by the fact that vulnerable employment and closely related informal sector (which are generally considered as unwelcome phenomena) pervade all the sectors of the economy. Vulnerable employment is, especially by the United Nations, often connected to agriculture and subsistence farming. According to the World Bank definition, defining it as a sum of contributing family workers (previously known as unpaid workers) and own-account workers (self-employed without employees), however, it is fairly applicable to manufacturing homeworkers⁵⁰ as well as self-employed goods and services sellers. Informal economy employees, described as

⁴⁴ KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. Gender and Development, 13 (1), 2005, p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal*. Gender and Development, 13 (1), 2005, p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

⁴⁶ *MailOnline: Appalling conditions of factory workers who make Dell computers who are forced to work seven-day, 74-hour weeks and live in dorms with no hot water*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-12]. Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2492998/Revealed-Appalling-conditions-factory-workers-make-Dell-computers-forced-work-seven-day-74-hour-weeks-live-dorms-hot-water.html>

⁴⁷ Aguilar, Delia D. and Anne E. Lacsamana. *Women and Globalization*. New York: Humanity Books, 2004, p. 130. ISBN 1591021626.

⁴⁸ *The Guardian: Bangladesh garment workers suffer poor conditions two years after reform vows*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-10]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/22/garment-workers-in-bangladesh-still-suffering-two-years-after-factory-collapse>

⁴⁹ *Wiego: Garment Workers*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-18]. Available at: <http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/garment-workers>

⁵⁰ *Wiego: Garment Workers*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-18]. Available at: <http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/garment-workers>

"workers that are not regulated or protected by the state"⁵¹ can also face many risks, such as more frequent accidents due to unregulated workplace environment, no provision of health or social services etc. "Furthermore, it is well established that gender inequality is more prevalent in the informal economy, where women are concentrated in the lower end and earn significantly less than men."⁵² Yet, if there is no better way to obtain monetary means, vulnerable employment or informal sector may provide the only chance for women to achieve at least some sort of economic empowerment, regardless of the costs.

1.7.4 Political participation

Women's political empowerment is defined as "a process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency and participation in the societal decision-making".⁵³ One of the main justifications for greater appointment of women in the government is that women comprise more than half of the world's population, so they should be equally represented in bodies which create the rules the society will actually live by.

"It is assumed that having more women in elected office produces more women-friendly policies. When the number of women to legislature rises beyond token levels it is expected that women politicians will generally place more emphasis on 'women's issues'".⁵⁴ Greater share of women in the decision making process in the country should therefore result in improved quality of women's life, achieving the overall empowerment and fostering of gender equality.

Firstly, government officials are those who decide about allocation of scarce resources, such as income from taxes, which gives them an instrument to support some groups at the expense of others. Secondly, laws passed on by the government directly shape people's behaviour by encouraging some actions and outlawing others via system of positive and negative sanctions. Thirdly, to hold an office in the government means

⁵¹ *Wiego: About the Informal Economy*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-22]. Available at: <http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/about-informal-economy>

⁵² *Wiego: About the Informal Economy*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-22]. http://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/hazardous-work/WCMS_110305/lang-en/index.htm

⁵³ SUNDSTROM, Aksel et al. *Women's political empowerment: a new global index, 1900-2012*. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, V-Dem Institute, 2015, p. 4.

⁵⁴ IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women's political participation and representation in Asia: Obstacles and challenges*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008, 315 p. ISBN 987-87-7694-016-4.

becoming a member of an elite of a society. Government officials hold the position of power and authority which secures them certain respect (the degree of which of course depends on the particular societal ambiance).⁵⁵ "Women should be in favour of policies that will increase their bargaining power within the household, that is policies that improve their situation in case of divorce, and policies that increase their productivity in everyday work or improve their chances to access the labour market."⁵⁶

But the positive effects of women's political empowerment shouldn't apply solely to women themselves. On the contrary, just like the level of mother's education correlates with the development of her children, the share of women in politics should mirror in number of policies improving the situation of children. "Since women are particularly concerned about the child health and nutrition, they should prefer policies that will help them to achieve these objectives."⁵⁷ Grant Miller states that already the introduction of women's suffrage in the United States was associated with a decline in infant mortality.⁵⁸ Moreover, there is evidence from both developed and developing countries (e.g. France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Russian Federation, South Africa or Egypt) that women advocate pro-social, gender-sensitive and family-friendly policies.⁵⁹

United Nations, too, perceive one of the ways towards empowerment of women and gender equality in increasing the proportion of women in decision making bodies. More precisely, they perceive as a key figure the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments which is used to measure progress of Millennium Development Goal 3. And according to Millennium Development Goal Review, a substantial progress has been made in the area, given that the share doubled over the past 20 years, resulting in approximately 20 percent of the parliamentary representatives being women in 2015.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ SUNDSTROM, Aksel et al. *Women's political empowerment: a new global index, 1900-2012*. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, V-Dem Institute, 2015, p. 4.

⁵⁶ DUFLO, Esther. *Women empowerment and economic development*. Journal of economic literature, 50 (4), 2012, p. 1051-1079.

⁵⁷ DUFLO, Esther. *Women empowerment and economic development*. Journal of economic literature, 50 (4), 2012, p. 1051-1079.

⁵⁸ MILLER, Grant. *Women's suffrage, political responsiveness, and child survival in American history*. Quarterly journal of economics, 2008, 123 (3): 128 -1327.

⁵⁹ United Nations: *The state of the world's children 2007 executive summary: Women and children - the double dividend of gender equality*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 2006, 42 p. ISBN 978-92-806-4064-9.

⁶⁰ United Nations: *The millenium development goals report 2015*. New York: United Nations, 2015, p. 28 ISBN 978-92-1-101320-7.

Marilyn Waring however gives number of concrete examples to testify that the proportion of women in parliament doesn't really mirror in the women's position in that country. She puts into contrast an example of Rwanda where the proportion of women in lower house of the parliament accounts for more than 56 percent but the country doesn't reflect any of the female principle (i.e. remains authoritarian, corrupted, unfree, nepotistic and racist), and the case of Ghana with only 9 percent share of women in the parliament, yet having already passed and enforced number of acts on matters important to women such as domestic violence, human trafficking or childcare.⁶¹ Naila Kabeer criticises the fact that women in government at the most advocate the interests of wealthy and educated women such as themselves, and are not focused on or even aware of problems faced by the poor women.⁶²

The indicator is also criticized for being very harsh on women, not taking into account how difficult, dangerous or even altogether impossible it may be for a woman in traditional patriarchal countries to run for election. In Bangladesh women attempting to enter politics face threats, violence or even killing, and Tanzanian women pursuing political career are usually stopped by the lack of money necessary to pay the nomination fee. Waring also questions the assumption that the role of female governmental official would be always met with respect. In Malawi, female political career is associated with loose morals and prostitution. In Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka or Pakistan "rape, misbehaviour and physical abuse are rampant against women, both voters and candidates; many communities also consider woman to be of bad character if she participates in politics."⁶³

It is however questionable whether these few examples and reproaches testify that the effort to make more women join politics is purposeless. On the contrary, it is logical to believe that if women won't be joining politics, they will hardly be able to change the rooted prejudices of the society towards women in politics. It is certainly a long term project, especially in traditional, patriarchal societies where women are ascribed the roles of mothers and wives, and politics is regarded as purely male domain. As

⁶¹ *Australian Government: Women in politics and aid effectiveness: an aid to evaluation of MDG3.* [online]. [cit. 2017-02-22]. Available at: <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/women-politics-aid-effectiveness-marilyn-waring.pdf>

⁶² KABEER, Naila. *Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal.* Gender and Development, 13 (1), 2005, p. 13-24. ISSN 1355-2074.

⁶³ *Australian Government: Women in politics and aid effectiveness: an aid to evaluation of MDG3.* [online]. [cit. 2017-02-22]. Available at: <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/women-politics-aid-effectiveness-marilyn-waring.pdf>

Elisabeth Powley states, "women's ability to make an impact in male-dominated institutions will be limited until such time as they are represented in numbers large enough to have a collective voice, until they reach a 'critical mass'."⁶⁴

1.8 Composite indicator

Composite indicators enable expressing even large amount of variables through one single number. This number may be meaningless when standing alone, but in comparison with results of other observations, it possesses sufficient - yet very concentrated information about the examined topic. The popularity of composite indicators worldwide testifies that is an elegant solution of capturing and simplifying even very wide and complex issues from fields like environment, economy or gender issues.

The first step in creation of the composite indicator is to identify the set of variables based on a profound literature review. Once the indicators are chosen, they must be attributed various levels of importance, in statistical terminology 'assigned weights.' The weight to be assigned to each indicator must again follow from the literature review and there must be a clear logic behind differences in weight. Because data of different variables may be expressed in different units, standardization is usually necessary prior to computation. The last step is to multiply the standardized data by their weight and arrange the results in ascending or descending order.

⁶⁴ *Unicef: Rwanda: The Impact of Women Legislators on Policy Outcomes Affecting Children and Families.* [online]. [cit. 2017-02-10]. Available at: [http://www.capwip.org/readingroom/TopotheShelf.Newsfeeds/2007/Rwanda-%20The%20Impact%20of%20Women%20Legislators%20on%20Policy%20Incomes%20\(2007\).pdf](http://www.capwip.org/readingroom/TopotheShelf.Newsfeeds/2007/Rwanda-%20The%20Impact%20of%20Women%20Legislators%20on%20Policy%20Incomes%20(2007).pdf)

2. Analysis of the level of women's empowerment and gender equality in the region of Southeast Asia

2.1 Index of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality and its components

As the issue of women's empowerment and gender equality is rather complex, a dimensionality reduction method needed to be chosen in order to provide for ordering and comparison of the ten countries of Southeast Asia. The composite indicator, Index of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of women's emancipation in the region. Time analysis of individual components of the index then provides a more detailed insight into the issue, and reveals the long-term trend. The selection of the five components proceeded from the key theoretical assumptions described in the theoretical part, trying to cover all necessary aspects of the problem, with respect to data availability.

2.1.1 Sexual and reproductive rights

Three out of five chosen indicators are connected to women's sexual and reproductive rights: *adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)*, *contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)*, and *fertility rate, total (births per woman)*. It is because they are strongly connected to many other issues of women's empowerment.

Data on adolescent fertility appear to contain the most important and broadest information. Firstly they are strongly negatively correlated to data on secondary educational attainment, so they can partially serve as a substitution for the education variable. Secondly, adolescent fertility is positively correlated to maternal mortality ratio, therefore it contains information about the maternal health which belongs to the basic women's rights. Last but not least, high rates of adolescent fertility are associated with increased vulnerability to HIV infection.

Contraceptive prevalence is crucial for women's and subsequently even men's empowerment. It gives women a tool to postpone childbearing after completion of

desired level of education and space or stop births to the extent that they can successfully engage in employment. Via additional income and less children per family parents can invest more in each child, allowing them for better education, healthcare etc., which contributes to the improved quality of future workforce and positively mirrors in the productivity of a country in the long run.⁶⁵ Use of contraceptives are too, partially, connected to spread of HIV.

The total fertility rate is connected to women's productivity. The more children she gives birth to, the more of her productive age is "wasted" in childcare. An increased amount of children in the population also disturbs the balance between productive and unproductive population. As in the case of aging population, it is increasingly difficult for the working part of population to take care of the dependants. This situation leads to the decline in welfare of the society and inability to create surplus which otherwise could have been used to invest in the development of the society.

2.1.2 Employment

In connection to employment there are many indicators to be examined. In terms of gender equality, much discussed is the issue of fair wages - the belief that women and men should be equally paid for the same or similar work. As this inequality however persists in the most developed countries in the world, it would be naive to anticipate equality in the developing countries of Southeast Asia. Formally, in only three out of the ten examined countries law mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value, and these are Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

From the perspective of the thesis, employment is a way for a woman to obtain monetary means to become more independent and powerful. We are therefore interested in the percentage of women employed out of the available workforce of economically active women (excluding students, unpaid workers and family workers). At the same time, we wanted to avoid the confusion caused by the overall unemployment of the country, because if there are no jobs available, men suffer and are disempowered to the same extent as women. That is why the data *on ratio of female to male labour force participation rate* were chosen to represent the employment

⁶⁵ World Health Organization: *Family planning/ Contraception*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-10]. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/>

related part of women's empowerment in the indicator. (The indicator is calculated by dividing female labour force (economically active population older than 15) participation rate by male labour force participation rate and multiplying by 100.)

2.1.3 Political representation

When thinking about the political empowerment of women, there are two factors to be considered: 1. the right to vote and 2. the right to stand for election and hold an office. In all examined states of Southeast Asia both rights were embodied in the constitution in the last century.⁶⁶ As for international declarations, in 1995 all Southeast Asian UN member states (at the time all but Timor-Leste) unanimously agreed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, committing themselves to ensuring women's equal access to, and full participation in, power structures and decision-making.⁶⁷

For the purpose of analysis the indicator *proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments* was used, which is defined as the number of seats held by women members in single or lower chambers of national parliaments, expressed as a percentage of all occupied seats. Despite criticism of the indicator, it provides the most consistent information due to sufficient data coverage and the intrinsic connection to overall data on share of women in the decision making of the country. "Research suggests that the greater the percentage of women serving in the legislature, the greater the percentage of women represented in executive committees, ministerial positions, and as heads of government and state, and vice versa".⁶⁸

2.1.4 Notes on education

Due to insufficient data coverage of all related indicators, education, despite its enormous importance (discussed in theoretical part), couldn't be included in the composite indicator. According to United Nations Millennium Development Goals review of 2015, it however appears, as if education in Southeast Asia wasn't so affected by gender inequality as other issues. As of 2015, the gender parity index

⁶⁶ *Women Suffrage and Beyond: Asia*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-22]. Available at: http://womensuffrage.org/?page_id=95

⁶⁷ DAVIES, Sharyn G. *Women in politics in Indonesia in the decade post-Beijing*. *International Social Science Journal*, 57 (184), 2005, p. 231-242.

⁶⁸ IRI: *Women's political empowerment, representation and influence in Africa*. Washington: International Republican Institute, 2016, p. 4.

(=ratio of the female gross enrolment ratio to the male gross enrolment ratio) of education in SE Asia oscillates around 1 in case of primary and secondary education. At university level, women even form majority of the students, outweighing men by the same coefficient - 1,05 - as men outweighed women 25 years earlier. Globally, in terms of gender parity index, SE Asia scores better than any other developing region with the exception of "Caucasus and Central Asia".⁶⁹

With respect to women's empowerment, secondary education appears to be the most important for number of reasons. Universal primary education was according to UN achieved from 91 % in 2015, and the 9 % of children out of school were likely to be attributed to the matter of poverty and / or conflict situation in the country rather than gender inequality.⁷⁰ Tertiary education is then quite scarce even in developed countries and it was already stated than women lead in this realm anyway. But secondary education, and especially its completion (which UN do not examine), creates professionals in the field and gives women a chance to escape work in agriculture and other vulnerable employment.

2.1.5 Assigning weights to the components

Once the components of the composite indicator are chosen, it is necessary to decide on their different importance. Here, the weighting method of 5-point rating scale was used which sorts the indicators from the most to the least important and assigns to each one a corresponding weight.

Table 2.1: Components of the composite indicator and assigned weights

Indicator	Importance	Weight
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	5	0.33
Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	4	0.27
Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	2	0.13
Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate (%) (modelled ILO estimate)	3	0.20
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	1	0.07
	15	1.00

⁶⁹ United Nations: *The millenium development goals report 2015*. New York: United Nations, 2015, p. 8. ISBN 978-92-1-101320-7.

⁷⁰ *United Nations: Achieve universal primary education*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-02]. Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml>

The biggest weight is assigned to adolescent fertility rate because it is a problem to be solved first in time. If women enter their reproductive stage already in the adolescence, the prospects of decent education and proper job are approaching zero. They are more likely to have more children than women who are able to delay the beginning of their childbearing. They are also more likely to die during delivery.

The second biggest weight is ascribed to contraceptive prevalence. It is perceived very important because it gives woman a chance to plan children to the time that suits her better with respect to their mental and physical state, education and employment. It prevents unsafe ways of abortion, spread of HIV and investment of resources per each child.

The middle importance is assigned to the ratio of female to male labour force participation ratio because the matter of employment affects women later in their lives, after the first two issues are sold out. It is however incredibly important for a woman to earn money and become economically independent enough to take care of herself. It also improves women's bargaining power in the marriage, which can protect her from violence and gives her a right to have a say in investment of the family income.

As the fourth most important was chosen the fertility rate. Although it is too associated with women's health and productivity and amount of investment of children, it can be argued that in countries of Southeast Asia, where fertility reduction was caused mainly due to government family planning programmes (enforced by system of sanctions), it doesn't so much relate to women's power to influence the situation. In fact, these programmes are often interpreted as violating women's reproductive rights. The economic benefits however remain regardless of the ethical standpoint and that is why it is included in the composite indicator.

Indicator of lowest importance is proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments because it is perceived as the highest level of women's emancipation and its effects occur in the farthest time horizon. We also possess evidence that the share of women in the government may not always correspond to the effect they have on the decision making process.

2.1.6 Computation and results

The following three tables map the process of computation of the composite indicator. In the first step, it must be decided on the min / max type of each indicator. 'Min type' is used for indicators where the low values are desirable (such as total fertility rate) whereas max type is used for indicators where it can be stated that the higher the value, the better.

Table 2.2: Data matrix

Type of indicator		MIN	MAX	MIN	MAX	MAX
Year	Country	Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)
2015	Cambodia	52.17	57.20	2.60	87.10	20.30
	Indonesia	49.25	60.40	2.44	60.68	17.10
	Lao PDR	63.73	54.60	2.92	100.89	25.00
	Malaysia	13.72	52.90	1.93	63.48	10.40
	Myanmar	16.25	51.20	2.18	92.68	12.70
	Philippines	62.65	54.60	2.94	64.09	27.20
	Singapore	3.80	66.10	1.24	76.19	23.90
	Thailand	44.61	79.00	1.50	78.50	6.10
	Timor-Leste	45.48	29.00	5.62	48.23	38.50
	Vietnam	39.15	77.40	1.96	88.71	24.30
	Mean	39.08	58.24	2.53	76.06	20.55
	St. Deviation	20.87	14.24	1.22	16.65	9.41

Sources: World Bank, United Nations, International Labor Organization; own work

Because the data are expressed in different units, standardization needs to be performed prior to the computation. Here, the method of Z scores seemed the most appropriate, as it allows for maximum information to be preserved.

For the min type: $(\text{arithmetic mean} - x) / \text{standard deviation}$

For the max type: $(x - \text{arithmetic mean}) / \text{standard deviation}$

Table 2.3: Standardized data matrix

	MIN	MAX	MIN	MAX	MAX
Country	Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)
Cambodia	-0.63	-0.07	-0.05	0.66	-0.03
Indonesia	-0.49	0.15	0.08	-0.92	-0.37
Lao PDR	-1.18	-0.26	-0.32	1.49	0.47
Malaysia	1.22	-0.37	0.49	-0.76	-1.08
Myanmar	1.09	-0.49	0.29	1.00	-0.83
Philippines	-1.13	-0.26	-0.34	-0.72	0.71
Singapore	1.69	0.55	1.06	0.01	0.36
Thailand	-0.26	1.46	0.85	0.15	-1.54
Timor-Leste	-0.31	-2.05	-2.53	-1.67	1.91
Vietnam	0.00	1.35	0.47	0.76	0.40

The third step is to multiply the standardized data by the value of corresponding weight (Table 2.4). In the end, if there are no missing values, the 5 results for each country are summed up to produce the final value of composite indicator (Table 2.5).

Table 2.4: Weighted standardized data matrix

	MIN	MAX	MIN	MAX	MAX
Country	Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)
Cambodia	-0.21	-0.02	-0.01	0.13	0.00
Indonesia	-0.16	0.04	0.02	-0.18	-0.02
Lao PDR	-0.39	-0.07	-0.06	0.30	0.03
Malaysia	0.41	-0.10	0.10	-0.15	-0.07
Myanmar	0.36	-0.13	0.06	0.20	-0.06
Philippines	-0.38	-0.07	-0.07	-0.14	0.05
Singapore	0.56	0.15	0.21	0.00	0.02
Thailand	-0.09	0.39	0.17	0.03	-0.10
Timor-Leste	-0.10	-0.55	-0.51	-0.33	0.13
Vietnam	0.00	0.36	0.09	0.15	0.03

Table 2.5: Ordered results of the composite indicator

Country	Composite indicator value	Rank
Singapore	0.95	1
Vietnam	0.63	2
Myanmar	0.44	3
Thailand	0.40	4
Malaysia	0.18	5
Cambodia	-0.11	6
Lao PDR	-0.20	7
Indonesia	-0.32	8
Philippines	-0.61	9
Timor-Leste	-1.36	10

Table 2.5 presents a simplified overview of the current level of women's empowerment and gender equality in ten examined states of Southeast Asia. The first and last places are not surprising given the overall level of development of Singapore and Timor-Leste. Some of the middle countries (e.g. Vietnam, Myanmar or Malaysia) may however strike as unexpected in comparison to their rank in Human Development Index. A detailed analysis of individual components and their time trends is needed to understand the results of the composite indicator.

2.2 Time analysis of the individual indicators

The main importance is assigned to the years of the new millennium. of 2000-2015. This period should reveal a considerable improvement in the situation of women's empowerment, as all the examined indicators are included in the UN development strategy known as Millennium Development Goals. It is also the period when the issue of gender equality became discussed internationally. Observations from the 1990 and 1980 (if available) are included to outline the long term trend.

2.2.1 Adolescent fertility

Among the most fertile teenagers belong the girls from Cambodia, Laos and Philippines, while Singaporean and Malaysian girls seem to be avoiding the risky sexual behaviour. The average trend of adolescent fertility has been decreasing in Southeast Asia, in compliance with the theory about demographic transition, since the 1980s. The average figure for the region fell down from 59.92 in 1980 to 39.08 in 2015.

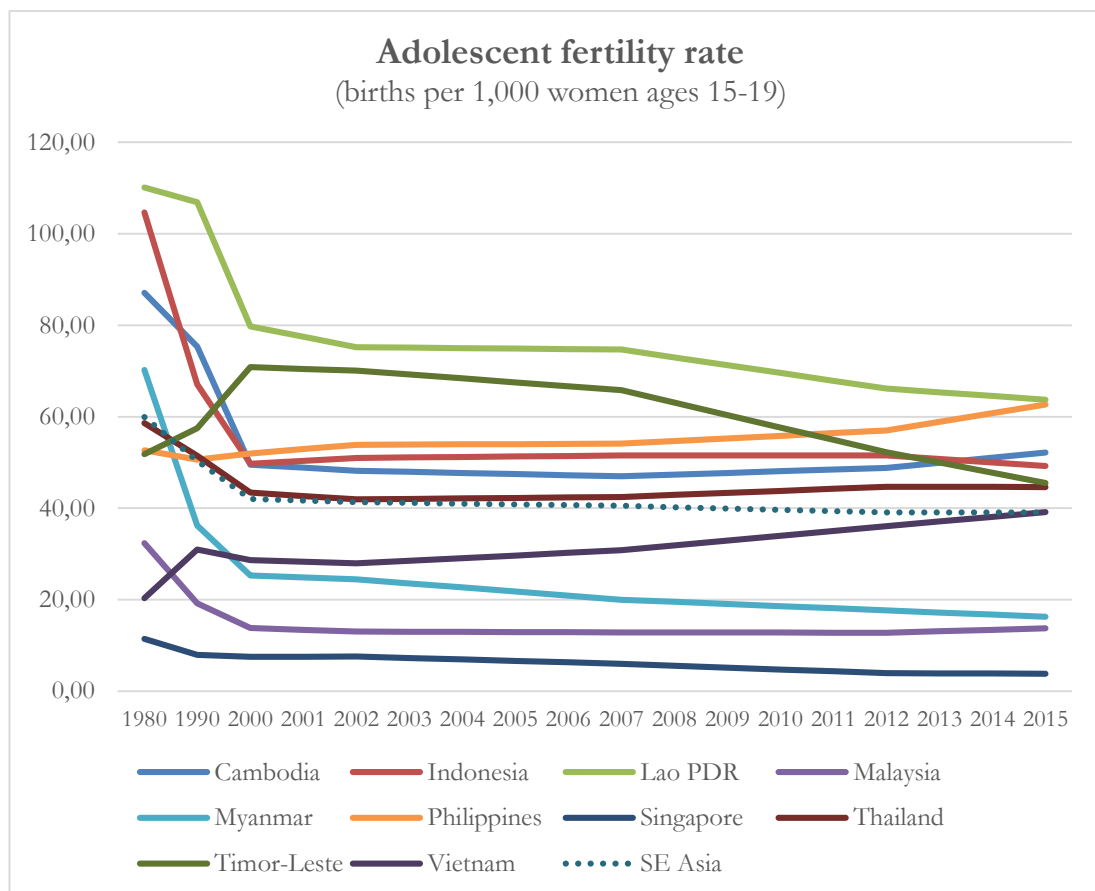


Figure 2.1: Adolescent fertility rate (1980-2015)

Source: World Bank

In the Philippines, the trend is surprisingly completely opposite - more and more teenage mothers give birth to children every year. Usually, it was the poor, uneducated girls from rural areas who were at increased risk of teenage pregnancy, but recent data show that this group has been relatively reducing in favour of high school or college attending urban residents with better level of housing. The trend is not connected to increasing number of early marriages but rather to increasing popularity of premarital

sex connected with poor use of contraception among the adolescents. What can also contribute to increasing prevalence of the phenomenon is the decreasing age of menarche which comes along with development of a healthcare of a state.^{71 72} Such development (though mainly of urban and private healthcare facilities)⁷³ mirrors in the figures of maternal and infant mortality which both oscillate around SE Asian average. The overall fertility however was decreasing over time and in 2015 stopped at 2.98 children per woman. While that figure is above the regional average (2.5), the decrease from 1980 is substantial as the average number of children per woman was 5.18 then. Overall contraceptive prevalence rate also increases due to family planning initiative of the government, but they, as well as the Catholic Church (prominent in the Philippines), appear to have failed in addressing the sexual behaviour of the teenagers.

Laos is a country with highest teenage fertility rate in the region, in 2015 it was 63.73 deliveries per 1 000 women between 15 and 19 years of age with median age for first birth in this group being 16 years.⁷⁴ With that, together with poor healthcare conditions in rural areas, is associated the highest infant mortality rate (50.7 deaths up to one year of age per 1000 births) and second highest maternal mortality ratio (197 deaths per 100 000 births), surpassed only by Timor-Leste. Although engaging in sexual intercourse by a person under 15 years old is officially punishable by law, 11.5 % of women had their first intercourse by the age 15 in 2005. The median age of entering into marriage is 18 for women with no education and 25 for the educated ones which makes the median age for first marriage in the country 19 years.⁷⁵ Earlier marriages and pregnancies are also connected to geographic isolation of rural areas where nearly two thirds of Lao population live. Although marriage is legal since the age of 18 in Laos, with parental consent it is possible from 15 years of age, and parents from villages rarely object.⁷⁶

⁷¹ *Journal of ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies: Teenage pregnancy in the Philippines: Trends, Correlates and Data Sources.* [online]. [cit. 2017-02-22]. Available at: <http://www.asean-endocrinejournal.org/index.php/JAFES/article/view/49/477>

⁷² Philippine Statistics Authority. *Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2013*. Manila: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014, 353 p.

⁷³ ROMUALDEZ, Alberto G. *The Philippines Health System Review*. Health System in Transition, 1 (2), 2011, p. 1-155.

⁷⁴ *World Health Organization: Health of Adolescents in Lao People's Democratic Republic.* [online]. [cit. 2017-03-03]. Available at: http://www.wpro.who.int/topics/adolescent_health/lao_fs.pdf?ua=1

⁷⁵ *World Health Organization: Health of Adolescents in Lao People's Democratic Republic.* [online]. [cit. 2017-03-03]. Available at: http://www.wpro.who.int/topics/adolescent_health/lao_fs.pdf?ua=1

⁷⁶ UNFPA: *Teenage Pregnancy is Way of Life in Remote Laotian Villages.* [online]. [cit. 2017-03-28]. Available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/news/teenage-pregnancy-way-life-remote-laotian-villages>

Pre-wedding sex also has the share in teenage pregnancies and is connected, among others, with occasional poorly protected transactional sex of "service women" selling drinks in shops or nights clubs, 40 % of which compose girls 15 - 19.⁷⁷ Although prostitution in Laos is low compared to Thailand or Cambodia, young girls are reportedly both subject to internal trafficking and trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Thailand.⁷⁸ Tribal customs are also often connected to adolescent or pre-adolescent sex. For example, Akha ethnic group which composes about 1.4 % of the Lao population believe a pre-pubertal sex enable the maturing of bodies into adulthood. The "mature" girls later on engage in a "welcome guest" practices and have sex with male visitors to Akha villages.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *World Health Organization: Health of Adolescents in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-03]. Available at: http://www.wpro.who.int/topics/adolescent_health/lao_fs.pdf?ua=1

⁷⁸ *U.S. Department of State: Country Narratives – Countries H through R*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-18]. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/105388.htm>

⁷⁹ SYCHAREUN, Victor et al. *Customary adolescent sexual practices among the Akha of northern Lao PDR: considerations for public health*. *Cult Health Sex*, 13 (1), 2011; p. 249–262.

2.2.2 Contraceptive prevalence

With compliance of the demographic transition the regional trend in contraception prevalence rate has been increasing in past decades. The data used in a graph below represent median United Nation estimates and combine both modern and traditional methods of contraception.

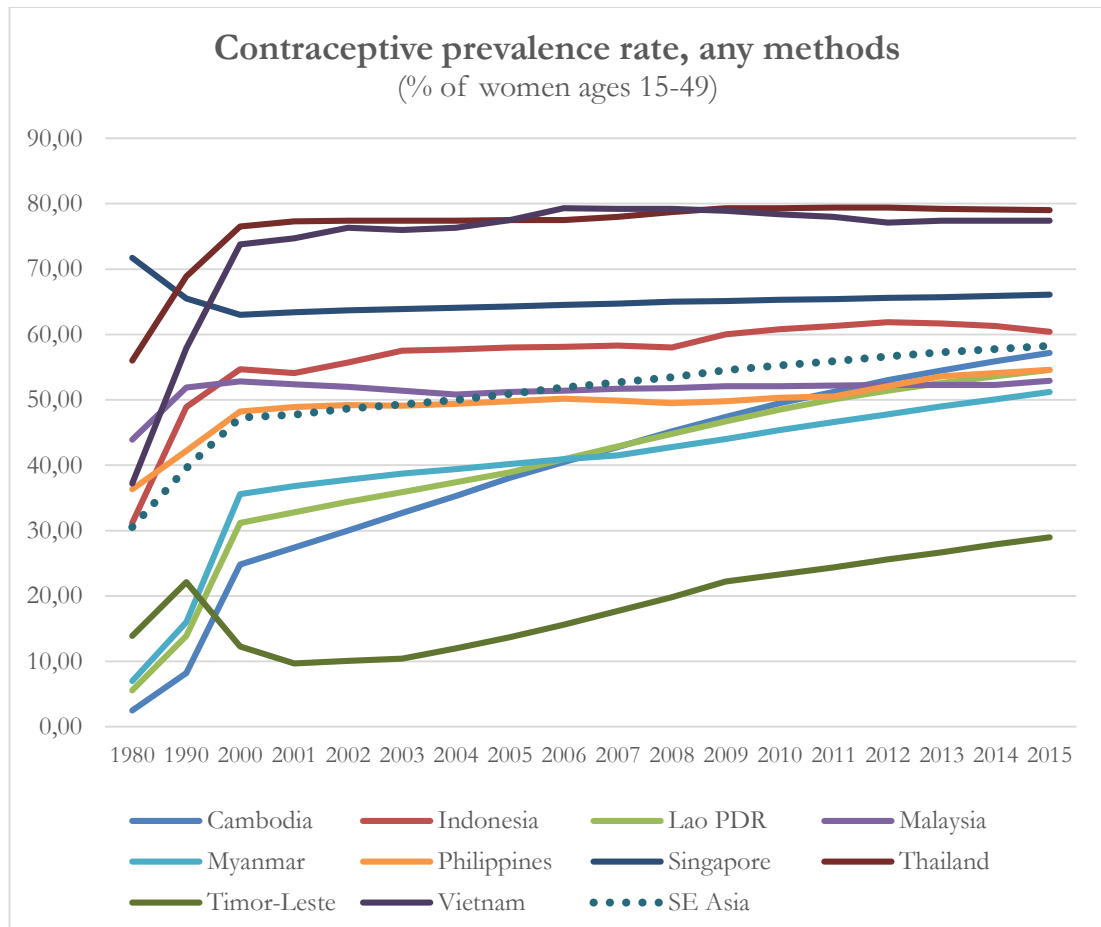


Figure 2.2: Contraceptive prevalence rate (1980-2015)

Source: United Nations

Among the traditional methods belong the two following: 1. calendar or rhythm method which prohibits unprotected intercourse during women’s fertile days, and 2. coitus interruptus method which works on the mechanism of man’s ejaculation being executed outside of woman’s vagina. Both methods are quite risky compared to

modern contraception methods, promising only 73 - 96% reliability, while the upper value is very rare and requires correct and consistent usage.⁸⁰

The modern methods comprise 1. hormonal contraception (in form of pills, injection, patch, vaginal ring, intrauterine device or emergency pills), 2. permanent contraception or sterilisation, 3. emergency contraception or barrier contraception or condoms, and 4. behavioural methods consisting in sexual abstinence during fertile days (which are recognized via bodily functions measurements). The first two methods guarantee 99% reliability when used or performed correctly, the latter two success rate ranges from 75 to 99 percent. Today, in all countries of SE Asia the use of modern contraception methods dominate, making them 2.1 (in case of Malaysia) - 49.2 (Indonesia) times more frequently used than traditional methods. On average, modern methods are 6 times more popular in the region than the traditional ones.

However, there are still approximately 14 million women in the region who would like to postpone or prevent next delivery but are not using any of the family planning methods - this phenomenon is called unmet need for contraception.⁸¹ In SE Asia, around 60 percent of these "potential contraception users" wish to limit the overall number of their children, approximately one third of these women want to use contraception in order to space individual births and 4 percent would like to postpone the birth of the first child.⁸²

There are four main causes of the unmet need for contraception: 1. concerns about health risks or side effects, 2. lack of information about correct use or performance of any of the contraception methods, 3. inability to obtain contraception out of the financial or geographical reasons or due to lack of services, and 4. personal, religious or cultural objections against family planning on the part of a women, her partner or/and their neighbourhood.^{83 84}

From the data in Table 1.2 it is evident that the overall number of SE Asian women who are at need for contraception but are not receiving any was slightly higher in 2015

⁸⁰ World Health Organization: *Family planning/ Contraception*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-10]. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/>

⁸¹ Population Reference Bureau: *Unmet need for Contraception: Fact sheet*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-15]. Available at: <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Media-Guides/2012/unmet-need-factsheet.aspx>

⁸² DARROCH, Jacqueline E. et al. *Contraceptive Technologies: Responding to Women's Needs*. New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2011.

⁸³ Population Reference Bureau: *Unmet need for Contraception: Fact sheet*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-15]. Available at: <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Media-Guides/2012/unmet-need-factsheet.aspx>

⁸⁴ World Health Organization: *Unmet need for family planning*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/family_planning/unmet_need_fp/en/

than in the 1980s. What however must be taken into consideration is the fact that the population of SE Asia has nearly doubled in the past 25 years given the relatively high fertility rate. The mean coefficient of population growth for the period 1980-2015 is 1.0164 while the mean coefficient of growth of the unmet need for contraception is only 1.0026, so the population grew approximately six times faster than the need for contraception. In other words the share of women not allowed to manage family planning has in fact declined since 1980.

Furthermore, if only data from the new millennium were considered, the declining trend would be much more visible. While population grew steadily throughout the examined period, the number of women in need for contraception grew until 2000, next six years oscillated around 14.4 million, in 2008 reached the peak of 14.6 million and since then has declined at the rate of 0.992 annually. One of the reasons for this change may be the fact that in 2007 the 5th millennium development goal - to improve maternal health - was extended by three new indicators to be examined and treated: contraceptive prevalence rate, unmet need for family planning and adolescent birth rate.

There are only two countries in the region that did not copy the outlined scheme - Vietnam and Thailand. The Thailand's population programme, headed by Ministry of Health and supported by various coordinated non-governmental organizations (particularly Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand) begun in the 1970s. Within the first 17 years in force the Thai managed to reduce the population growth from 3.2 % to 1.2 % and increase the contraceptive prevalence nearly five times. The success of the programme was supported mainly by two efforts. Firstly, the government from the very beginning stressed the economic implications of unlimited population growth. Secondly, they made sure to make the family planning services accessible to everybody - all government hospitals have a family planning clinic, and midwives, nurses, and doctors all receive family planning training.⁸⁵ What also supported the success was the Buddhist cultural ambience in Thailand which, unlike Christianity or

⁸⁵ PubMed: *The „anatomy“ of Thailand's successful planning program.* [online]. [cit. 2017-03-15]. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12317181>

Islam, promotes non-violent methods of birth control.⁸⁶ Recently the programme is mostly enhanced by NGOs such as PPAT.⁸⁷

Vietnam is a country where contraception prevalence rate is the second highest in the region; in 2015 more than three quarters of married women used any form of contraception. No religion objecting family planning is practised in the country, so the 'reducing family size' programme could have been strongly advocated by the government since the 1960 in case of North Vietnam and after the reunification the ideology spread throughout the country. The government launched an enormous campaign, persuading the married couples that having less children would lead to a happier life of everybody.⁸⁸ They made contraception available, accessible and for free, distributed abortion centres across the country and penalized couples who refused to comply. In 1993 the one-to-two child policy became mandatory by the law.⁸⁹

Although Vietnam is presented to have one of the most effective family planning programmes, there are certain issues connected to it. First of all, despite abundant use of contraceptives, Vietnam has one of the highest abortion rates in the world, where in 2013 about 40 % of pregnancies were terminated by an abortion.⁹⁰ This surprisingly positive correlation is, for one, result of possibly incorrect use of contraception, as sex and talks about it are still tabooed in Vietnamese society. Secondly, pre wedding sex is tabooed even more, so sexually active unmarried women are not targeted by the national family planning program^{91 92} and are not included in the UN statistics, so their number and contraceptive practices remain unknown. Moreover, the years of avocation of abortion by the government officials have liberated the procedure from prejudices of immorality. Currently, abortions are considered to be simply another

⁸⁶ MAGUIRE, Daniel C. *Sacred Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 304 p. ISBN 978-01-9516-001-7.

⁸⁷ IPPF: *Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-10]. Available at: <http://www.ippf.org/about-us/member-associations/thailand>

⁸⁸ *Harvard T.H. Chan: Vietnam*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-18]. Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/population/policies/VIETNAM2.htm>

⁸⁹ *BBC News: Vietnam's two-child policy*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-19]. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1011799.stm>

⁹⁰ *Aljazeera: Vietnam tackles high abortion rate*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-10]. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/08/vietnam-tackles-high-abortion-rates-2014827131119357230.html>

⁹¹ *Aljazeera: Vietnam tackles high abortion rate*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-10]. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/08/vietnam-tackles-high-abortion-rates-2014827131119357230.html>

⁹² *MSD: Hormonal contraception – understanding women's need and choices*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.msd-vietnam.com/english/newsroom/pages/contraceptionnews.aspx>

form of contraception. With the development of genetics in recent it even gives the parents in this male favoured society the chance to decide whether to keep the baby or not based on the gender of the foetus.^{93 94 95}

2.2.3 Total fertility

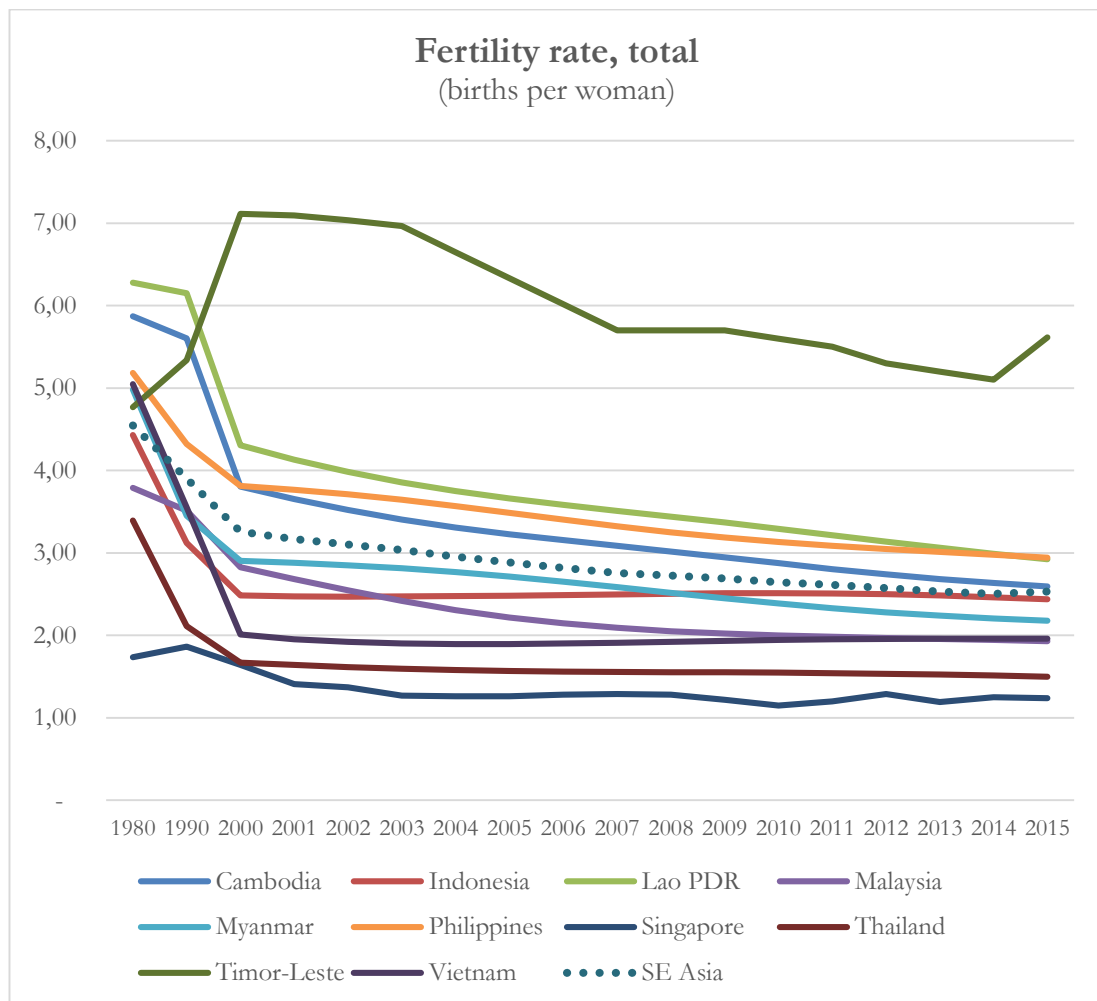


Figure 2.3: Fertility rate, total (1980-2015)

Source: World Bank

⁹³ BBC News: *Vietnam's two-child policy*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-19]. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1011799.stm>

⁹⁴ HAUGHTON, Jonathan and Dominique HAUGHTON. Son Preference in Vietnam. *Studies in Family Planning*, 26 (6), 1995, p. 325-337.

⁹⁵ BAJRACHARYA, Ashish et al. *Abortion and Contraceptive-Use in Northern Province of Vietnam*. San Francisco: Population Council, 2012.

The increasing use of contraception among SE Asian women logically led to decrease in fertility rate. The average fertility declined from 4.55 children per woman in 1980 to 2.5 in 2014. There are however substantial differences between the countries.

There are three countries where the decline of fertility caused that they are currently below the replacement fertility rate. Apart from the already discussed Thailand and Vietnam, it is Singapore. A completely opposite is the lonely case of Christian Timor-Leste, where the population in fact increased from 4.77 children per woman in 1980 to 5.62 in 2015.

Singapore is very different from its neighbours. The most productive Asian Tigre, centre of commerce and finance and one of the most attractive destination for foreign investment, by far surpasses other countries of the region in terms of human development index, GDP per capita (Figure 2.4), education or health care.^{96 97} Singapore therefore faces the problems of developed countries and one of them is extremely low fertility - since 2003 below 1.3 children per woman.

In Singapore we can observe many sociological trends as are present in Europe. Education and carrier building take precedence in time over starting a family - the average age at first marriage in 2010 was 28 for women and 30.4 for men which makes the Singaporeans by far the oldest newly-weds in the region. With late marriages is directly connected late childbearing; the median age of first-time mothers in 2005 was 29.2 years. The status of women in work has been increasing simultaneously with their increasing education and Singaporean women are now expected "to be economically active and contribute to the economy and their family (...), yet at the same time, they are also expected to be traditional wives and mothers." ⁹⁸

In the mid-1980s the government of Singapore, possibly aware of the potential demographic crisis, switched from the anti-natalist policy "Stop at two" (which was introduced 20 years earlier in order to faster the undergoing economic progress) to the pro-natalist approach. Since then a lot of various policies have been implemented in

⁹⁶ STRAUGHAN, Paulin, Angeliqne CHAN and Gavin JONES. *Ultra-Low Fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, Causes and Policy Issues*. Routledge: Oxon, 2009, 240 p. ISBN 978-0-415-46774-8.

⁹⁷ LALL, Sanyaja. *Export performance, technological upgrading and foreign direct investment strategies in the asian Newly industrializing economies with special reference to Singapur*. United Nations: Santiago, 2000, ISBN 92-1-121276-6.

⁹⁸ STRAUGHAN, Paulin, Angeliqne CHAN and Gavin JONES. *Ultra-Low Fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, Causes and Policy Issues*. Routledge: Oxon, 2009, 240 p. ISBN 978-0-415-46774-8.

order to fight the booming trend of "singles" (via creating match-making centres) and increase the family size (via financial and other incentives).

The government wished to have populous and at the same time educated citizens, so at the beginning the incentives such as tax relieves or child preference in primary school registration went only to highly qualified mothers. This was the time of "Eugenics measures" (1983 - 1986) introduced out of fear that the university graduates (mostly of Chinese descend) would choose to have children late and only few of them or not at all, while the uneducated women (of Malayan or Indian descend) would keep on delivering. Therefore, ethnic composition would be distorted and the miracle of economic growth would come to an end.⁹⁹

Because of major critique of this policy from the part of Singaporean public, however, in 1987 the eugenics family planning approach was officially replaced by the "Have three, or more *if you can afford it*" policy - switching to the less objectionable criterion of affordability. Among the policies introduced in the 1980s were: monthly childcare subsidies for women who used a full-time programme at childcare centres, accouchement fees for postponement of sterilization after the birth of second or next child, and full-paid days on sick childcare for the female civil servants.

⁹⁹ WONG, Theresa. *Fertility and the Family: An Overview of Pro-natalist Population Policies in Singapore*. Singapore: Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis, 2003, 28 p. ISBN 9810491115.

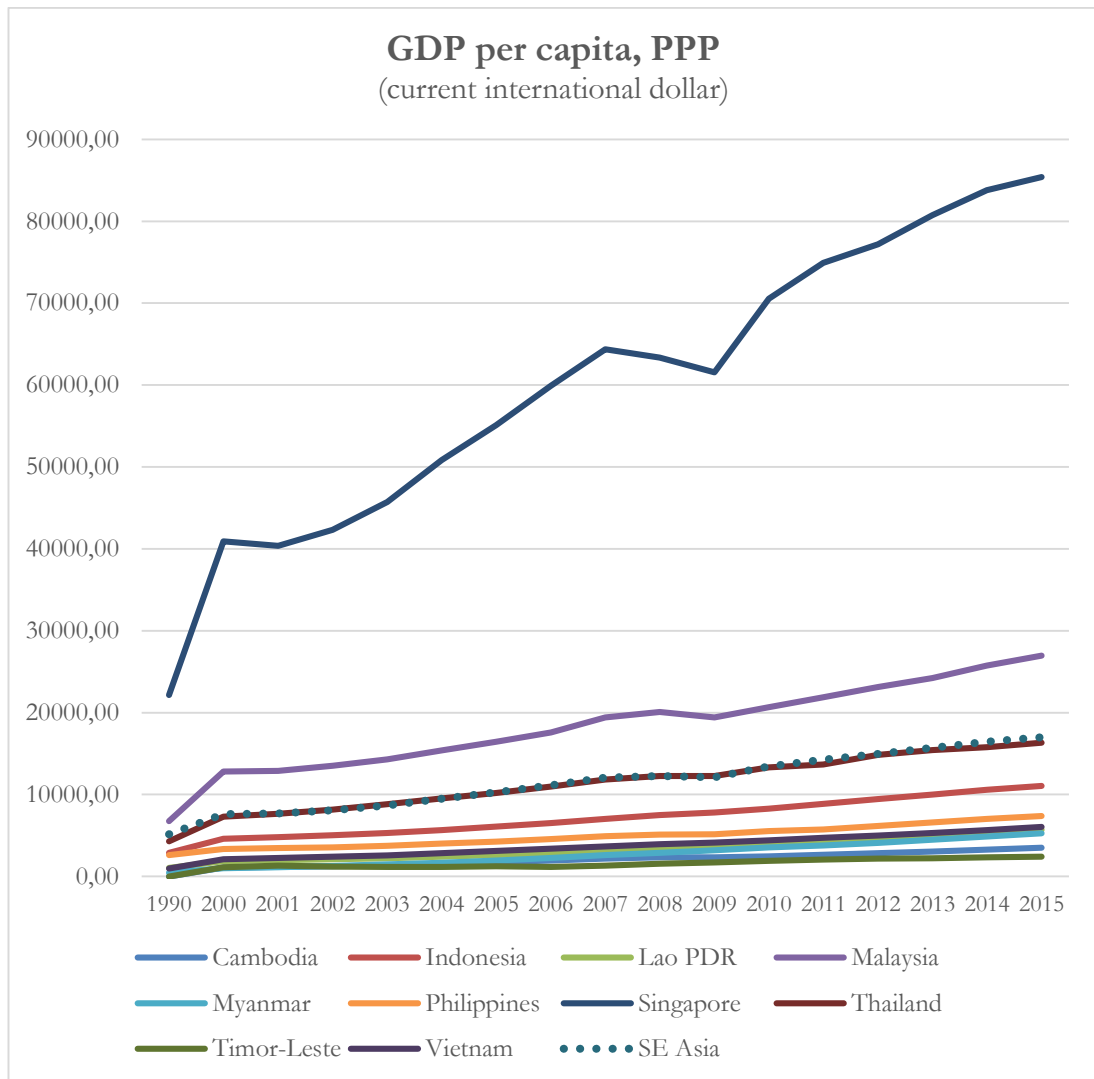


Figure 2.4: GDP per capita, PPP (1990-2015)

Source: World Bank

As none of the measures described above met with success, the government resigned on the original idea and the focus was made solely on the increase in family size, regardless of ethnicity, education or financial situation. In 2000 the greatest financial incentive for having a child was introduced. The so-called "baby bonus" combined direct cash incentive for each child and doubling of parents' money put on a family savings account. The government was for a long time hesitant about implementing this measure for fear that it may be abused. In fact, a complete opposite happened - the baby bonus not only didn't encourage more births, but the declining trend in fertility continued.

The politicians decided to change their tactic and switched from purely monetary incentives to alleviations for parents in the workplace, trying to help them successfully harmonize the family and work life. Among such measures were for example extension of paid maternity leave, introduction of paternity leave or implementation of flexible working hours for mothers employed by the state (hopefully to be followed by private firms).¹⁰⁰

The policy implementation was, just as in case of Vietnam or Thailand, supported by vast marketing campaign advertising that "family togetherness is the key to happiness" and reminding that "abortion is not a method of family planning" (although since its legalization it had been in fact an effective and widely accepted method of birth control). The politicians often warned the citizens in their emotive speeches against the population ageing, reminding that the country might easily be in danger and there would be no young men to defend it; they were also persuading young Singaporeans that there is no point in hesitation with starting a family because "there won't be a better time to do it than now!"¹⁰¹

Despite all the effort, however, no positive change occurred in this area. On the contrary, each year from 1980 the fertility declines at a rate of 0.998. The latest World Bank data available are from year 2015 and the figure on fertility rate remains incredibly low - only 1.24 child per woman.

The reasons for this phenomenon occurrence are not difficult to address. Firstly, it is the natural order of demographic transition coming hand in hand with economic growth, industrialization and increase in wellbeing.¹⁰² Secondly, it may be also because the old regime, persuading people that having 2 children is more than enough, has probably stipulated into people's minds as well as their bodies. Due to the legalization of abortion and widespread use of female sterilization as a method of contraception between 1970 and 1985¹⁰³, many women were biologically excluded from the possibility of having more children when it was needed.

¹⁰⁰ STRAUGHAN, Paulin, Angelique CHAN and Gavin JONES. *Ultra-Low Fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, Causes and Policy Issues*. Routledge: Oxon, 2009, 240 p. ISBN 978-0-415-46774-8.

¹⁰¹ WONG, Theresa. *Fertility and the Family: An Overview of Pro-natalist Population Policies in Singapore*. Singapore: Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis, 2003, 28 p. ISBN 9810491115.

¹⁰² *Nature: Advances in development reverse fertility declines*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-13]. Available at: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v460/n7256/full/nature08230.html>

¹⁰³ SWEE-HOCK, Saw. *Population Policies and Programmes in Singapore*. 2nd edition. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2016, 352 p. ISBN 978-981-47-6219-9.

Timor-Leste, one of the two Christian states in the region, lies on the other side of the fertility spectre, with 5.62 children per woman and by far the lowest contraception prevalence rate in the region (29 % in 2015). Such attitude towards fertility comes from both the low level of development of the country and its traditional settings, and the basic Catholic values.

The Christianity was introduced to the island by the Portuguese colonists in the 18th century¹⁰⁴ but its popularity increased much later - during the Indonesian oppression between 1975 and 1999. When in the 1970s the Indonesian government urged their citizens to choose one of the five prevailing religions in the country, claiming allegiance to Catholic Christianity for the East Timorese meant much more than exercising a religious freedom. For them, it was a way to express their difference from the Muslim Indonesians - an act of nationalism.^{105 106}

Irena Cristalis proposes an interesting theory that Catholicism served East Timorese women as a medium to their empowerment, although in a different way than presented in this paper so far. Firstly, the convents and convent boarding schools were places where women and girls sought protection from the rapes and cruel treatment from the Indonesian military, so thanks to the church, women were able to exercise "the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination". Furthermore, Catholic fundamental reluctance towards artificial birth control paradoxically represented a much more acceptable alternative for East Timorese women than long-lasting contraceptive injections and forced sterilizations performed by the Indonesian government in effort to minimize the number of Timorese population. Women were therefore granted "reproductive rights." Last but not least, the faith in God, supported by the Catholic structures, gave women the strength to overcome the difficult times of Indonesian dominance.

Recently, the monopoly of Catholic Church is slowly vanishing in favour of rise of small Protestant Churches throughout the country and the rising favour of Protestantism may bring about a new stage of women's empowerment.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Jose Ramos-Horta: *History of Timor-Leste*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-16]. Available at: <http://ramoshorta.com/about-timor-leste/>

¹⁰⁵ CRISTALIS, Irena and Catherine SCOTT. *The story of women's activism in East Timor*. London: CIIR, 2005, 198 p. ISBN 1-85287-317-5.

¹⁰⁶ MANUEL, Paul Christopher et al. *The Catholic church and the nation-state: Comparative perspectives*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007, 298 p. ISBN 978-1-58901-115-1.

¹⁰⁷ CRISTALIS, Irena and Catherine SCOTT. *The story of women's activism in East Timor*. London: CIIR, 2005, 198 p. ISBN 1-85287-317-5.

2.2.4 Female labour force participation

The highest female-to-male employment ratio and at the same time the most exhausted female workforce is in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar and Vietnam. At the other end of the spectre lies Timor-Leste which may be attributed to the high fertility of East Timorese women. SE Asian women are predominantly employed in agriculture or services sector but in Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia more and more young women seek work in garment and footwear manufactories.¹⁰⁸

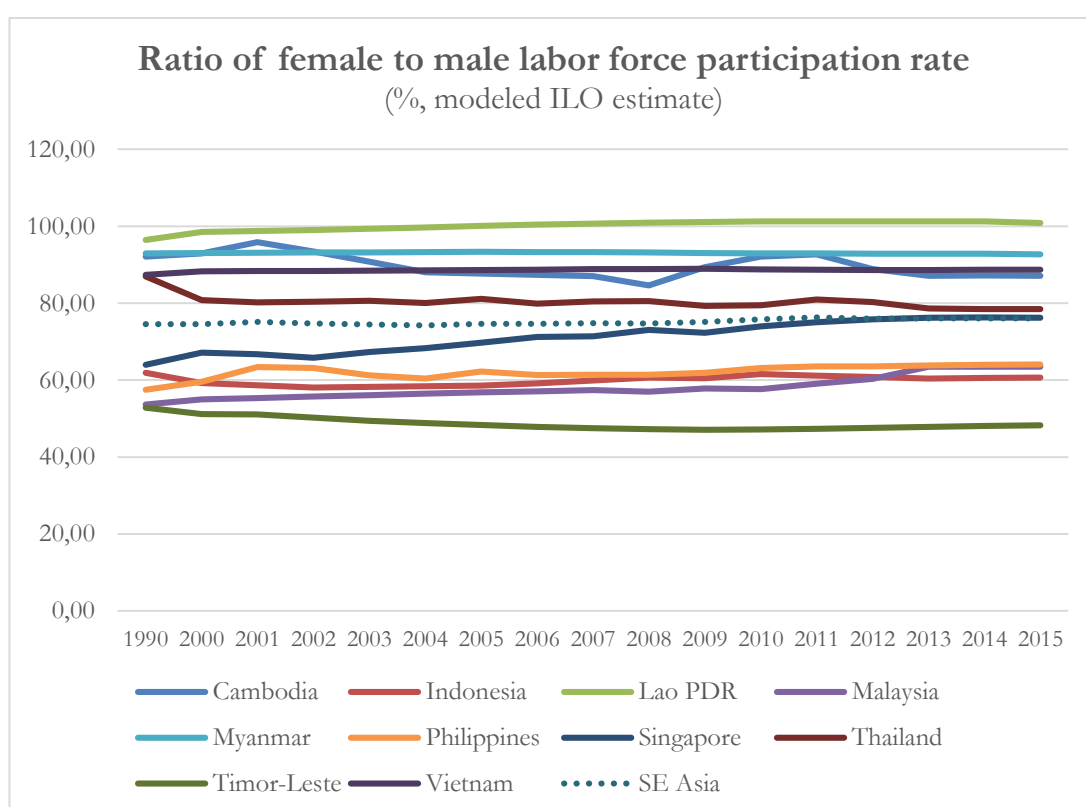


Figure 2.5: Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate (1990-2015)

Source: International Labor Organization

After the Pol Pot's regime fell in Cambodia, women made up for nearly 65 percent of the survivors, and it was up to them to take care of their families as well as reconstruct the state and its economy. Women became the primary breadwinners in the early 1980s, dominating official and black markets. While on the one hand, it helped many

¹⁰⁸ HUYNH, Phu. *Employment, wages and working conditions in Asia's Garment sector: Finding new drivers of competitiveness*. Bangkok: ILO, 2015, 42 p.

women gain self-confidence - enough to start participating in the politics, others feared their dual role as homemakers and independent workers can make them less feminine and jeopardize their marriage prospects already endangered by the scarcity of men.¹⁰⁹ Their high labour force participation rate however remains stable and for the last 25 years nearly 80 percent of Cambodian women have been employed, making them the most hardworking in the region. Their male-to-female employment ratio is very high too - 87 percent.

To support the trend, the constitution of 1993 guaranteed Cambodian female workforce protection and assistance by outlawing the dismissal of female employees on the grounds of pregnancy, implementing maternity leave with full pay and providing them with childcare assistance.¹¹⁰ Despite that, unfortunately, the working standards are not adequate and Cambodian workforce has the greatest share of women in vulnerable employment.

Very similar situation is that of Laos where more women (76 % of the female workforce) have been employed than men since 2005. Their share in vulnerable employment is however the highest in the region (89 % in 2010) and so is their employment in agriculture (73 % in 2010). In Myanmar female-to-male employment ratio is 93 percent, second highest in the region, more than half of women work in agriculture and their earnings are nearly twice as low as that of men for similar kind of job. Many women migrate to neighbouring countries to seek paid work which poses them at higher risk of exploitative working conditions including sexual exploitation.¹¹¹

With the exception of highly developed Singapore, country with lowest share of women in vulnerable employment and highest share of employment in tertiary sector is Malaysia. Their labour workforce participation is however low (44 % and the figure hasn't changed since 1990) as well as female-to-male employment ratio (64 %), and so is the unemployment rate (3.4 %). The dissention in these figure suggests that

¹⁰⁹ IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women's political participation and representation in Asia: Obstacles and challenges*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008, 315 p. ISBN 987-87-7694-016-4.

¹¹⁰ IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women's political participation and representation in Asia: Obstacles and challenges*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008, 315 p. ISBN 987-87-7694-016-4.

¹¹¹ UN *Women: Myanmar*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-23]. Available at: <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/cedaw-human-rights/myanmar>

although there are many women in Malaysia who do not participate in the labour market, only handful of them can't find work despite making an effort. The rest may be explained by Islam as the predominant (61.3 %) religion¹¹² and the tradition of women as housewives.

2.2.5 Female participation in the decision making process

While officially women and men should have equal chances to become politicians as men, in reality they only make up for one fifth of parliamentary politicians, copying the world trend.¹¹³ In case of ministerial positions, the number is even lower - only about 10 percent of ministerial positions is occupied by women. Unfortunately, the real influence of women in politics may actually be even much smaller than their number. Women in Asia face deeply rooted prejudices about "the inferiority of women and their proper place in the home; (...) these beliefs about inferiority of women are shared by both men and women, and become reflected in women's self-worth and self-confidence and in turn men's belief in their own innate superiority."¹¹⁴ Andrea Fleschenberg explains that "although we can find prominent female politicians leading parties in all South and Southeast Asia, female party members have hardly any say when it comes to influencing party policies, initiating agenda issues, or participating in top level decision-making processes."¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, SE Asia has experienced a female success not yet experienced by many western states - female leaders of the state. Concretely these were Presidents Corazon Aquino and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in the Philippines and Megawati Sukarnoputri in Indonesia. Their relationship (as daughter or wife) with famous and respected male politicians however support the words of Georgina Waylen that "among the factors which enable women to reach leadership positions are elite status high levels of female

¹¹² Department of statistics Malaysia: *Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristic Report 2010*. (Updated: 05/08/2011) [online]. [cit. 2017-02-23]. Available at: https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemebByCat&cat=117&bul_id=MDMxdHZjWTk1SjFzTzNkRXYzcVZjdz09&menu_id=L0pheU43NWJwRWVSZklWdzQ4TlhUUT09

¹¹³ United Nations: *The millenium development goals report 2015*. New York: United Nations, 2015, p. 8. ISBN 978-92-1-101320-7.

¹¹⁴ IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women's political participation and representation in Asia: Obstacles and challenges*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008, 315 p. ISBN 987-87-7694-016-4.

¹¹⁵ FLESCHENBERG, Andrea in IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women's political participation and representation in Asia: Obstacles and challenges*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008. 315 p. ISBN 987-87-7694-016-4. p. 47

participation in the movements struggling for independence, and, crucially important, *links to politically prominent male relatives.*"¹¹⁶

There are certain blank spaces in the figure which may imply missing values for Myanmar and Timor-Leste. As it is due to oppression of Burmese and Indonesian military government, where no (Burmese or East Timorese) women's interests were covered, the missing values are counted as zero.

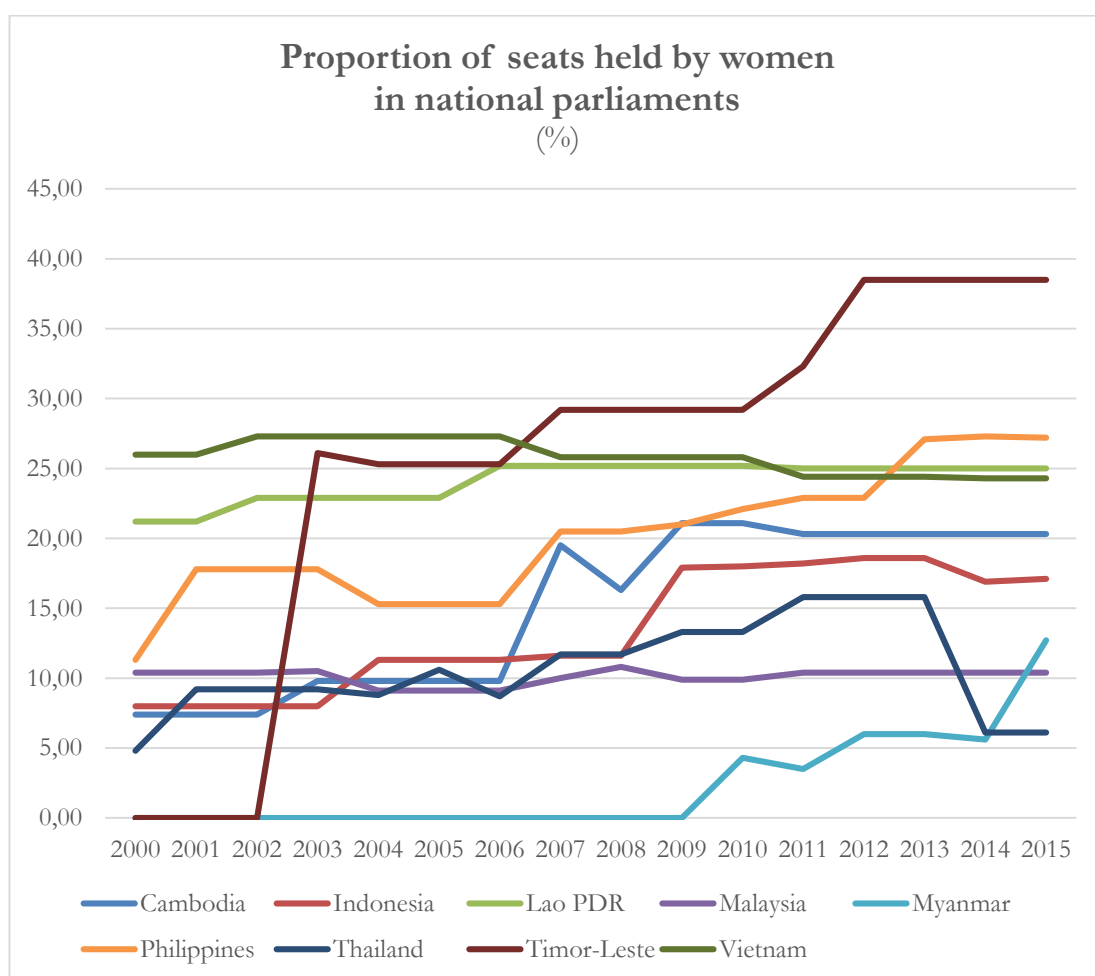


Figure 2.6: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (2000-2015)

Source: World bank

The country with by far the greatest share of female politicians is Timor Leste. In 2001 women from "REDE", network of 16 women's NGOs, tried to take advantage of the political situation when Timor Leste became after years of Indonesian oppression an

¹¹⁶ WAYLEN Georgina in AFSHAR, Haleh. *Women in politics in the Third world*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2005, 224 p. ISBN 0-415-13853-1.

independent country and the whole world was watching the process of first post-conflict government-building. Hoping for international solidarity with gender issues, in March 2001 REDE submitted a proposal to the National council and UN Department of Political Affairs, requesting a 30 percent quota on female candidates on a party list.¹¹⁷ Although the proposal was rejected on both the national and international level, the talks about necessity of great share of women in the politics worked as a catalyst anyway and the quota system was adopted in 2006.¹¹⁸ Since the first free elections in the country in 2001 women have maintained more than one quarter of the seats in the parliament and in the latest government the share is even nearly 40 percent.

Cambodian women's emancipation was a typical bottom-top process. The tragic of socialist experiment of the 1970s and their undeniable importance for the society in years afterwards enabled them to go through an unprecedented evolution. In the 1960s women were expected to conform with the belief that they should be nearly invisible protectors of morality and "by drawing attention to themselves - by loud speech, laughter and movement - were asking for troubles. For fear of gaining too much independence and loose morality, they often weren't even allowed to attend primary schools (only 60 % of them were enrolled at the time). Currently, the girl-boy primary education enrolment ratio is 1 and 90 % of Cambodians believe that "day-to-day life in a commune requires women to participate in the leadership."¹¹⁹

Although Indonesia is the world's biggest Muslim country, female representation in national parliament was 17 percent in 2015 and their share in ministerial positions was with 23 percent the greatest in Southeast Asia. Between 2001 and 2004 Indonesia even had a female president - Megawati Sukarnoputri. How is that possible? Indonesia is an example of quite effective quota system implementation. In 2013, Indonesia made it mandatory for political parties to field at least 30 % women in its list of parliamentary

¹¹⁷ DAHLERUP, Drude. *Women, Quotas and Politics*. Oxon: Routledge, 2006, 312 p. ISBN 978-0-415-37549-8.

¹¹⁸ *The Diplomat: The trouble with Timor-Leste's Gender Quotas*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-23]. Available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/12/the-trouble-with-timor-lestes-gender-quotas/>

¹¹⁹ IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women's political participation and representation in Asia: Obstacles and challenges*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008, 315 p. ISBN 987-87-7694-016-4.

candidates.¹²⁰ It probably wouldn't have been possible without the end of authoritarian rule of former president Suharto which enabled the development of democratic values, evident among others from Islam liberalization or liberalized attitudes towards gender equality across most of political parties. It also wouldn't have happened without an unflagging effort of number of civil society organizations including major Muslim women organizations like Muslimat, Fatayah or Aisyiah.¹²¹

The worst situation for women regarding their political representation appears to be in Thailand, where the share of women in parliaments as well as in ministerial positions in 2015 was the lowest of all SE Asian countries, 6.1 and 4.2 percent respectively. These figure are quite confusing because in other spheres of life Thai women are doing very well; they are well educated, have relatively good health standard (except for the high HIV prevalence rate) and display extraordinary success in business activities - 64 % of firms have female participation in ownership and the same share of firms employ women on top managerial positions. Thai women were also among the first in Asia granted the right to vote and stand for elections (1932).¹²²

Iwanaga Kazuki defines 10 major obstacles and challenges Thai woman (but it is applicable to the whole region) must face prior to and during their involvement in politics which may explain their scarce representation:

- Stereotypes of women as weak, indecisive, emotional, dependent and less productive.
- Culturally prescribed inferiority of women.
- Women's sexuality as an impediment to women's participation in politics. (Accusation of building their political career through sexual relations with male colleagues / superiors)
- Low self-esteem, modesty, humility and lack of confidence. (Both actual and imagined.)
- Political parties' lack of gender awareness and gender sensitivity.

¹²⁰ United Nations Development Programme: *Indonesia: a political ground shift for women*. [online]. [cit. 2017-02-23]. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/ourstories/indonesia-a-political-ground-shift-for-women.html>

¹²¹ BYLESJO, Cecilia in DAHLERUP, Drude. *Women, Quotas and Politics*. Oxon: Routledge, 2006, 312 p. ISBN 978-0-415-37549-8.

¹²² IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women and politics in Thailand*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008, 284 p. ISBN 978-87-91114-35-9.

- Money plays a critical role in political success and women may be reluctant towards investing higher amount of money at expense of their families.
- Lack of balance between work and private life
- Public scrutiny and harshness towards women politicians.
- Envy (supposedly unique for Thai women) and aggressive criticism from their female counterparts.¹²³

In Myanmar the female political representation is also weak and for a long time there wasn't any given the authoritarian nature of the military junta Myanmar was between 1962 and 2011. Only as late as in 2010 elections first few women entered high politics following the new constitution of 2008, which however doesn't request any minimum share of women's participation. Since then there has been a slow democratization process encompassing easing of media censorship, strengthening of civil society and slight increase in share of female politicians, culminating in first free presidential elections in 2016. Interesting is a prominent female figure of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who, although in house arrest for decades, in fact led the whole democratization process of a country as an opposition leader.^{124 125} Despite her importance for Myanmar political scene and her popularity among nation she was denied a chance to become the head of state, due to a clause in constitution which doesn't allow for a president to be a parent to a foreign citizen. Nevertheless, she became the foreign minister and state counsellor,¹²⁶ making her the most powerful woman in the country and promising bright prospects for further empowerment of women in Myanmar.

Currently, women constitute nearly 13 percent of the parliament and occupy 5.3 percent of ministerial positions, among them 5 out of 29 ethnic affairs ministers, which represent interests of ethnic minorities on regional level. Most of these women are members of Suu Kyi's party National League for Democracy. Interestingly enough,

¹²³ IWANAGA, Kazuki. *Women and politics in Thailand*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008, 284 p. ISBN 978-87-91114-35-9.

¹²⁴ *BBC News: Myanmar country profile*. [online]. [cit. 2017-05-08]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563>

¹²⁵ HUANG, Roger L. Re-thinking Myanmar's political regime: Military rule in Myanmar and implications for current reforms. *Contemporary Politics*, 19 (3), 2013, 247-261.

¹²⁶ *BBC News: Profile: Aung San Suu Kyi*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-08]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11685977>

they surpass their male colleagues by both educational achievement and occupational background.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ *The Asia Foundation: Myanmar Elections Usher in Unprecedented Number of Women Parliamentarians*. [online]. [cit. 2017-03-02]. Available at: <http://asiafoundation.org/2016/03/02/myanmar-elections-usher-in-unprecedented-number-of-women-parliamentarians/>

3. Proposed recommendations

The analysis of the composite indicator and its components helped compare the level of women's empowerment across Southeast Asia. The proposal part proceeds from this comparison as well as identification and explanation of extremes provided by the analytical part, and dares to suggest concrete measures and policy implementations which may accelerate the undergoing process of development of gender equality and women's empowerment in Southeast Asia. To achieve the highest levels of acceptance, success and feasibility, all the recommendations are region specific and region relativistic. Individual countries are compared to each other and to the regional (not world or OECD) average, and used examples always come either from neighbouring countries or countries with similar background and conditions, or are at least adjusted to the cultural, religious and demographic specifics of the concrete country.

We can divide the examined countries into 4 different groups according to the most problematic area to be addressed:

- Countries with risky sexual and reproductive behaviour
- Countries with low female labour participation rate
- Countries with low female political participation
- Countries with satisfactory results

3.1 Countries with risky sexual and reproductive behaviour

Table 3.1: Countries with risky sexual and reproductive behaviour

Country	Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	Index of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality rank
Cambodia	52.17	57.20	2.60	87.10	20.30	6
Lao PDR	63.73	54.60	2.92	100.89	25.00	7
Philippines	62.65	54.60	2.94	64.09	27.20	9
Timor-Leste	45.48	2.00	5.62	48.23	38.50	10
Mean	39.08	58.24	2.53	76.06	20.55	-

Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Timor-Leste are countries characterized by above average values of adolescent and total fertility and below average value of contraceptive prevalence. In a simplified way, these countries could be therefore classified as "countries with risky sexual and reproductive behaviour." Interestingly enough, these countries rank very well in female political representation and the results of ratio of female to male participation rate (with exception of Timor-Leste) are also satisfactory.

It was already explained that the adolescent fertility is usually associated with early marriages. "Girls who marry early usually have their first child at a younger age than those who marry later. (...) They are pressured to prove their fertility soon after marrying and they have little access to information on reproductive health, or the ability to influence decision making on family planning."¹²⁸

As of 2015, law in all 4 countries prohibits child or early marriage. The problem however remains because each country has their own specifics as to what is considered an early marriage. In Cambodia, for example, the minimum age for marriage is 18 for women, but the requirement is disregarded once the woman gets pregnant (in order to avoid the social stigma associated with out-of-wedlock pregnancies); in such case the

¹²⁸ *Girls not brides: Young brides in Laos face uncertain future.* [online] [cit. 2017-05-10] Available at: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/girls-voices/young-brides-in-laos-face-uncertain-futures/>

parental consent is enough to allow for a marriage at whatever age.¹²⁹ And indeed, nearly one quarter of Cambodian girls have entered into marriage before their eighteenth birthday.¹³⁰ In Laos, the minimum age for marriage is according to law 18 for both sexes and 15 with parental consent.¹³¹ However, 9 percent of girls were married by the age of 15¹³² and 38 percent of them gave birth by the age of 15.¹³³ In Timor-Leste marriageable age is 17 without and 16 years with parental consent.¹³⁴ Generally, teenage girls living in poverty in rural areas are far more likely to be married than girls living in urban areas.¹³⁵ ¹³⁶ Forced and arranged marriages are still common in the Southeast Asia.¹³⁷ ¹³⁸

Poverty and fear of social stigma are the two main reasons for a girl to marry so soon. While the latter appears to be more difficult to tackle, the financial reasons may be addressed more easily. Opposite to the tradition of South Asian Countries, in South East Asia the dowry is paid by the groom or his family to the bride's family prior to the wedding as a compensation for the costs connected to girl's upbringing. The dowry can reach very high amounts and as such may be very appealing for a poor family. Furthermore, the family loses one member to be taken care of (financially) once the daughter is married and sent off to live in a separate household with her husband.

There is a strong, two-directional relationship between women's education (more precisely mean years of schooling) and their enjoyment of reproductive rights. School is proved to prevent girls from teenage pregnancies and early marriages. If an appropriate measure is taken by the government, it can help young women in both areas - to enjoy a higher level of education as well as postpone marriage and first pregnancy and thereby avoid associated health risks.

¹²⁹ *The Compendium of Cambodian Laws: Law on marriage and family*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-10] Available at: http://www.skpcambodia.com/Laws%20&%20Regulations%20of%20the%20Kingdom%20of%20Cambodia/Family%20Law/Law%20on%20the%20marriage%20and%20family_Eng.pdf

¹³⁰ *Girls not brides: Young brides in Laos face uncertain future*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-10] Available at: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/girls-voices/young-brides-in-laos-face-uncertain-futures/>

¹³¹ *Laos: Definition of youth*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-11] Available at: <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/laos/>

¹³² *Girls not brides: Laos - child marriage rates*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-10] Available at: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/laos/>

¹³³ *Save the children: Laos - Child protection*. <https://laos.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/child-protection>

¹³⁴ *Timor-Leste: Definition of youth*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-12] Available at: <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/timor-leste/>

¹³⁵ *Save the children: Laos - Child protection*. <https://laos.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/child-protection>

¹³⁶ ¹³⁶ *Girls not brides: Young brides in Laos face uncertain future*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-10] Available at: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/girls-voices/young-brides-in-laos-face-uncertain-futures/>

¹³⁷ *UN Women: Timor-Leste*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-13] Available at: <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/cedaw-human-rights/timor-leste>

¹³⁸ *EthnoMed: Cambodian marriage*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-10] Available at: <https://ethnomed.org/culture/cambodian/cambodian-marriage/>

In the 1990s the Bangladeshi government introduced a very successful programme to tackle these issues. They were giving financial incentives to parents who pledged to postpone the marriage of their enrolled daughter until her eighteen birthday. Once the girl married the stipend was terminated. This initiative resulted in rapid increase of female secondary school enrolment which even surpassed that of boys. Although there was a significant attrition rate for girls after finishing the 8th grade, the proportion of never married girls aged 15-19 increased from 49 percent in 1991 to 63 percent in 2001.¹³⁹ In India, similar tool was introduced by the government in the early 1990s to discourage son preference among parents and to encourage investment in daughters' education and health. "Since 1994, eligible parents who gave birth to daughters have been offered an immediate financial grant, coupled with a long-term savings bond redeemable by the unmarried daughter at the age of 18. Additional incentives were further introduced based on increasing educational attainment."¹⁴⁰ Study evaluating the results of the program 15 years after its introduction found out that it had positive effect on girls' health, education, and the status of girls and their treatment in general. Since the notion of women as liabilities and men as assets is similar in Southeast Asia and the stage of development of South and Southeast Asia is also on a similar level, this approach seems very suitable. It would, however, have to be supported by other measures. Concretely, the problems of scarcity of schools in rural areas and lack of professional teachers need to be addressed simultaneously.¹⁴¹

The government expenditure on education are not negligible and oscillate around 10 percent of the budget which is comparable to that of developed countries. Nevertheless, the problem lies in the age composition of the population. The proportion of youth (0-14) as of 2015 ranges from 31.6 % (in Cambodia) to 42.4 % (in Timor-Leste), compared to 15.5 % share of youth in Singapore for example. Logic suggests that the investment into education should therefore be twice or three times as high, just as is the youth base. This investment should be used to finance the programme to postpone the age of marriage, build new schools in the rural areas, professionally train new teachers, and, with regard to the low share of contraceptive

¹³⁹ AMIN, Sajeda and Lopita HUQ. *Marriage considerations in sending girls to school in Bangladesh*. New York: Population Council, 2008, 37 p.

¹⁴⁰ SINHA, Nista and Joanne YOONG. *Long-Term Financial Incentives and Investment in Daughters: Evidence From Conditional Cash Transfers in North India*. Policy Research Working Paper 4860. World Bank, 2009.

¹⁴¹ *Savong's school: Cambodia*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-15] Available at: <http://www.savong.com/SAVONGSCHOOL/EducationFactsandFiguresCambodia/tabid/114/Default.aspx>

prevalence and abundant spread of HIV, add into the basic curriculum the education on sexually responsible behaviour, and advocate the benefits of contraception not only in relation to family planning but also as a prevention against sexually transmitted diseases. The GDP in all countries grew at a rate between 4.3 and 7.4 percent in 2015 so with the decomposition of the budget and help of institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, USAID, or the Asian Development Bank, the introduction of suggested measures may be feasible.

While the aforementioned suggestions should suit the conditions in Laos, Cambodia and Timor-Leste, the situation is fundamentally different in the Philippines where adolescent fertility is not as much associated with early marriage (the minimum age for marriage with parental consent is 18, without 21) as it is with pre-wedding sexual activity of couples "living together".¹⁴² 10 percent of Philippine girls between 15 and 19 are already mothers or pregnant with the first child,¹⁴³ while only 2.1 percent of them are married compared to 7.6 percent of couples sharing a household together.¹⁴⁴ To have a child before wedding is not as tabooed in the Philippines as it is in the other three countries, so the proposed measures may not be justified in the Philippines. The possibility is however to adjust the program used in India and Bangladesh to the needs of the Philippines. A cash incentive of considerable amount could be given to the couples who wait with the first child until woman's 20th birthday for example. The major difference in the two approaches is that in the former three countries the incentive is aimed at parents, because it is customary for a Buddhist and to some extent even Christian culture to obey the parents,¹⁴⁵ while in case of Filipinos, the financial support should be aimed at adolescents themselves given the specifics of the societal values.

A research conducted in South Africa identified the following causes for adolescent pregnancies: reproductive ignorance; the earlier occurrence of menarche; risk-taking

¹⁴² Philippine Statistics Authority. *Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2013*. Manila: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014, 353 p.

¹⁴³ Philippine Statistics Authority: *One in Ten Young Filipino Women Age 15 to 19 Is Already A Mother or Pregnant With First Child*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-15] Available at: <https://psa.gov.ph/content/one-ten-young-filipino-women-age-15-19-already-mother-or-pregnant-first-child-final-results>

¹⁴⁴ Philippine Statistics Authority. *Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2013*. Manila: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014, 353 p.

¹⁴⁵ *EthnoMed: Cambodian marriage*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-10] Available at: <https://ethnomed.org/culture/cambodian/cambodian-marriage/>

behaviour; psychological problems; peer influence; coercive sexual relations; dysfunctional family patterns; poor health services; socio-economic status; and the breakdown of cultural traditions.¹⁴⁶ In the Philippines, it is common for adolescents to leave a household and start living with their partners; the earlier occurrence of menarche was also proved and so was the experience of young girls with coercive sexual intercourse. The problem most easily to be addressed is however the unmet need for contraception which is still greater in the adolescent group than any other age group of the population.¹⁴⁷ The education on responsible sexual behaviour, contraception use and risks associated with teenage pregnancies should be accented in the curriculum early enough (around 12th year of age - prior to the beginning of the adolescent's sexual activity) and contraception should be made available and accessible, especially in the risky areas (Mimaropa, Caraga region) and to the risky socioeconomic group (poor, uneducated village dwellers).¹⁴⁸ Apart from formal education (in schools), interactive workshops should be organized throughout the country so that even girls or women out of school have a chance to learn about the possibility and correct use of contraception.

In fact, this suggestion is nothing new or original and since the 1990s the sexual education has been spread among the adolescents at schools. But the approach in which the message has been delivered may have been chosen inappropriately. In own evaluation of the country's population policies, former chief executive director of the Philippine Commission on Population criticises the "value-free" approach to sex education in schools: "The subtle thrust is to desensitize children and youth to the intimacy and sacredness of sex. The program tends to reduce the youth's appreciation of sex from an expression of love within the context of marriage, to merely a practical understanding of it as a function of the body that can be manipulated and used to accommodate pleasure-seeking."¹⁴⁹ Supposedly, it was the exposure of Filipino youth to the western "values" of free love on TV and in other media that changed the Catholic society valuing marriage and motherhood into a somewhat immoral mass of teenagers

¹⁴⁶ MACLEOD, Cariona. *The 'Causes' of Teenage Pregnancy: Review of South African Research*. South Africa Journal of Psychology, 29 (9), 1999.

¹⁴⁷ NATIVIDAD, Josefina. Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines: Trends, Correlates and Data Sources. Journal of ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies, 28 (1), 2013. ISSN 0857-1074.

¹⁴⁸ Philippine Statistics Authority. *Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2013*. Manila: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014, 353 p.

¹⁴⁹ *Population Research Institute: Coercive Population Ploys in the Philippines*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-15] Available at: <https://www.pop.org/coercive-population-ploys-in-the-philippines/>

seeking pleasure and rebellion.¹⁵⁰ It would be therefore wise to revise the educational programmes at school, and enrich the biological and practical findings and warnings about sex with ethical values of love, trust, loyalty etc. which used to be valued by the Filipinos not a long time ago.

The next problem in the Philippines is to choose the appropriate contraceptive method, though. As the case of Singapore revealed, permanent solutions such as male or female sterilization are quick and reliable but may be problematic in the long run. The Catholic Church then excluded contraception pills or IUDs as abortifacient.¹⁵¹ The barrier contraception therefore again, as in the other three problematic countries, appears as the most suitable family planning method.

The postponement of adolescent fertility is a relevant step towards reduction of the total fertility, and the education of girls on their sexual and reproductive rights already in the adolescent age also has a positive spill-over effect on the rest of their reproductive life. Free and available barrier contraception for everybody together with raising of public awareness via advert campaign (which was proved to be an effective tool for example in Vietnam or Singapore) may change the behavioural patterns of women in the long run. The correct use of barrier contraception is not associated with any health risks (other than allergy on latex)¹⁵² and helps prevent not only pregnancy but also sexually transmitted diseases. The contraception effects are not permanent which may be one of the fears among contraception users. The spread of free condoms, especially to the poor, rural areas, together with public enlightenment program appears to be appropriate strategy for all four countries. Some of them (such as Cambodia and the Philippines) have already started a similar family planning programme, others (Lao PDR and Timor-Leste) have so far acted on the basis of pledge or commitment rather than systematic action.

¹⁵⁰ OGENA, Nimfa B. *A Development Concept of Adolescence: The Case of Adolescents in the Philippines*. Philippine Population Review, 3 (1), 2014; p. 1-18.

¹⁵¹ *Population Research Institute: Coercive Population Ploys in the Philippines*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-15] Available at: <https://www.pop.org/coercive-population-ploys-in-the-philippines/>

¹⁵² *Mayo Clinic: Male Condoms*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-15] Available at: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/condoms/details/risks/cmc-20311850>

3.2 Countries with low female labour force participation rate

Table 3.2: Countries with low female labour participation rate

Country	Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	Index of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality rank
Indonesia	49.25	60.40	2.44	60.68	17.10	8
<i>Mean</i>	<i>39.08</i>	<i>58.24</i>	<i>2.53</i>	<i>76.06</i>	<i>20.55</i>	-

As the greatest problem of Indonesian women was identified the low rate of female labour force participation rate compared to that of men. Ratio of 60.68 is the second lowest of the ten examined countries. The exact rate of employed women is however difficult to specify given the large share of population working in vulnerable employment, especially in informal sector.¹⁵³ The traditional model of men as breadwinners and women as housekeepers however prevails and "57 percent of couples reported that the husband had work and the wife had housekeeping as their primary activity; while only 33 percent of couples reported that both husbands and wives had work as their primary activity."¹⁵⁴ The view changes with university graduates, 66 percent of whom believe that both husband and wife should have work as primary activity. The number of female university graduates has been increasing and recently surpassed the number of tertiary educated men. While the opinion on typical gender roles appears to have been slowly changing with the increasing education of the young population, the traditional obstacles of women at work (discrimination based on gender, low salaries etc.) remain. The Indonesian law doesn't prohibit (as of 2015) discrimination based on gender in hiring, doesn't mandate equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value, and mothers are not guaranteed an equivalent position after maternity leave. The only women or family friendly policy in force is a guarantee of maternity leave compensation equal to 100 % of the average salary. Should the government wish to increase the productivity of a

¹⁵³ *Indonesia Investment: Unemployment in Indonesia*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-16] Available at: <https://www.indonesia-investments.com/finance/macroeconomic-indicators/unemployment/item255>

¹⁵⁴ *Inside Indonesia: A woman's place*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-16] Available at: <http://www.insideindonesia.org/a-woman-s-place-3>

nation by enlarging the female workforce, more measures should be introduced to enable women successfully balance work and family life so the traditional model wasn't disrupted so much.

Very successful and often cited is the family model introduced in Scandinavian countries. The governments of Denmark, Sweden and Norway developed a bulk of social policies which aimed at providing gender equality between spouses. The "dual earner - dual carer model" has been widely spread, and as the name suggests, it aims at equal distribution of both paid and unpaid (housework, childcare) work among the partners. Among the measures was creation of sufficient amount of early childcare facilities, introduction of parental leave, individual tax assessment to support dual earner - dual carer model, joint custody after family breakup and introduction of part-time jobs for mothers. These policies have led to a current extraordinarily high share of female workers who haven't stopped working even after the childbirth.¹⁵⁵

Despite an enormous success of introduction of family-friendly policies in Scandinavian countries, it would be fool to assume that it would have the same effect in Muslim Indonesia. Indonesia is still a country where male polygamy flourishes and women are perceived as caretakers with too many "natural limitations" to have equal position at work as men.¹⁵⁶ It is fair to say that Indonesian society is not yet ready, or committed, to develop a gender equal society. Therefore, the measures to be introduced need to be carefully designed. If men in general don't wish to switch places with women to take care of the children or household, it would be useless to introduce a parental leave. On the other hand, the accessibility of early childcare facilities and introduction of part-time jobs or home office, may be a suitable measure. It would give woman a chance to realize outside the household and at the same time it wouldn't jeopardize her position as loving wife and mother because thanks to half-time job she would be able to cook and take care of the house and children before the husband gets back from a regular work.

The government could for example benefit (in form of tax levy) such firms which would manage to split a full-time job for two part-time jobs designed specifically for women.

¹⁵⁵ ROSTAARG, Tine. *Family Policies in Scandinavia*. Berlin: FES, 2014, 18 p. ISBN 978-3-86498-817-2.

¹⁵⁶ *Inside Indonesia: A woman's place*. [online] [cit. 2017-05-16] Available at: <http://www.insideindonesia.org/a-woman-s-place-3>

3.3 Countries with low female political participation

Table 3.3: Countries with low female political participation

Country	Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	Index of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality rank
Malaysia	13.72	52.90	1.93	63.48	10.40	5
Myanmar	16.25	51.2	2.18	92.68	12.70	3
Thailand	44.61	79	1.50	78.50	6.10	4
<i>Mean</i>	<i>39.08</i>	<i>58.24</i>	<i>2.53</i>	<i>76.06</i>	<i>20.55</i>	-

Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, though scored very well in the composite indicator rank, have the lowest proportion of women in parliament. Here, the solution appears to be the easiest. While it can be argued whether the number of women in the parliament has a corresponding effect on the number of family-friendly policy suggestion or implementation in that country, the successfulness of system of quotas as a method of affirmative action appears to be unarguable.

Since the 1970s when first quotas for female political representation were introduced in Europe, this protective measure has proved its validity in countries across the world. Among the most successful examples in Southeast Asia are Timor-Leste or Indonesia where the law requires political parties to nominate one woman for every group of three or four candidates at national elections. Given the cultural ambience in the society, where "women find politics dirty, and prefer not to expose themselves,"¹⁵⁷ the top-bottom approach must be used and appropriate quota system must be ordered from above. Since female political representation is really rather subnormal at the moment, the quotas should not be overly ambitious in the beginning and may start with 20% share of female candidates in each political party.

¹⁵⁷ *The Asia Foundation: Where are Malaysia's Women Politicians?* [online] [cit. 2017-05-18] Available at: <http://asiafoundation.org/2013/03/13/where-are-malaysias-women-politicians/>

3.4 Countries with satisfactory results

Table 3.4: Countries with satisfactory results

Country	Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of married or in union women ages 15-49)	Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	Index of Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality rank
Singapore	3.80	66.1	1.24	76.19	23.90	1
Vietnam	39.15	77.4	1.96	88.71	24.30	2
<i>Mean</i>	<i>39.08</i>	<i>58.24</i>	<i>2.53</i>	<i>76.06</i>	<i>20.55</i>	-

From the thesis point of view, Singapore and Vietnam, countries that occupy the first two positions in the composite indicator list, ranked average or above average in all set areas of women's empowerment. It can be therefore stated that the reached level of gender equality for the moment is sufficient and extraordinary for the examined region. Both countries managed to decrease fertility, employ women and engage them into decision-making of the country.

Conclusion

The thesis is aimed at providing comprehensive research of the level of women's empowerment and gender equality in Southeast Asia, and suggesting measures that would lead to the development of the two phenomena to the point where women can enjoy all their rights and the discrimination on the basis of gender is a past, because the society has understood that it is foolish - at least from the economic point of view.

Many development theories, such as those introduced in the theoretical part of the thesis, accent the involvement of women as the inevitable step towards both economic and the overall development of a nation. In the last 25 years the notion of gender equality as a desirable goal crossed borders of European continent and to some extent spread over the whole world (although each nation may have a different understanding of what gender equality looks like and to what extent it is justified). The analytical part reveals that women of Southeast Asia, too, are on the right track towards emancipation. Some of the countries moved at a faster pace (e.g. Singapore) and other more slowly (e.g. Timor-Leste); some stressed importance of family planning programmes (e.g. Vietnam) while other concentrated on strengthening women's voice in the decision making of a country (e.g. Indonesia); but since year 2000 all 10 examined countries have made a substantial progress in the area of women's empowerment and gender equality.

In the proposal part, the countries were divided into 4 groups according to the area, where they are lagging behind other countries of the region the most. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Timor Leste and the Philippines were identified to have in common quite unconvincing results of family planning policies introduced by the government. The weakest part of Indonesia is rather low employment rate of women compared to that of men; and Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand face the highest reluctance of women to enter high politics. Singapore and Vietnam ranked so well on a given scale that their problems such as below replacement fertility rate actually result from what can be called "women's over-empowerment" and resemble issues faced by developed European countries.

All eight "problematic" countries were proposed concrete solutions, implementation of which might possibly result (based on successful examples from other countries of South and Southeast Asia) in greater degree of women's emancipation. It would be

however arrogant to think that the suggested ideas are so innovative or groundbreaking that they wouldn't occur to the government officials who know conditions and possibilities of their own country much better than author of this diploma thesis. In fact, mass campaigns have been already introduced, numerous measures taken and millions of dollars invested into the development of women's rights; and the results are visible. Should the current progress naturally continue, there is no reason why in 10 or 20 years women of Southeast Asia shouldn't enjoy all the rights they are entitled to. The danger however lies in the possibility that the concept of gender equality one day reaches the same absurd peak as it is reaching now in the United States or Europe where it is politically incorrect to use the term "pregnant mother" because pregnant transsexuals may feel offended.

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Appendix

Table 1.1: Maternal mortality ratio

Indicator	Country	1990	2000	2005	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births)	Cambodia	1020	484	315	202	178	173	167	161
	Indonesia	446	265	212	165	148	140	133	126
	Lao PDR	905	546	418	294	250	230	213	197
	Malaysia	79	58	52	48	45	43	41	40
	Myanmar	453	308	248	205	195	189	184	178
	Philippines	152	124	127	129	126	121	117	114
	Singapore	12	18	16	11	12	11	10	10
	Thailand	40	25	26	23	22	21	21	20
	Timor-Leste	1080	694	506	317	267	248	231	215
	Vietnam	139	81	61	58	56	55	54	54

Source: World Bank

Table 1.2 Unmet need for family planning

Indicator	Country	1980	1990	2000	2005	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Unmet need for family planning, any method (thousands of women ages 15-49)	Cambodia	340	451	599	554	461	436	416	395	376	357	351
	Indonesia	5 520	5 400	6 250	6 310	6 230	6 060	5 930	5 780	5 900	6 070	6 330
	Lao PDR	146	198	246	251	241	237	235	234	233	232	231
	Malaysia	446	502	650	751	784	794	810	824	840	857	859
	Myanmar	1 310	1 640	1 730	1 700	1 620	1 580	1 540	1 510	1 480	1 450	1 410
	Philippines	1 910	2 530	2 870	2 940	3 100	3 080	3 050	2 940	2 830	2 830	2 830

	Singapore	32	61	83	84	86	86	86	86	85	85	84
	Thailand	1 100	900	690	650	574	571	566	564	562	564	561
	Timor-Leste	22	25	23	31	40	39	38	37	36	35	34
	Vietnam	1 790	1 640	1 200	1 040	970	1 000	1 040	1 120	1 110	1 120	1 130
Sum	SE Asia	12 616	13 347	14 341	14 311	14 105	13 883	13 711	13 490	13 452	13 600	13 820

Source: United Nations

Table 1.3: Population, total

Indicator	Country	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
Population, total	Cambodia	6 718 241	9 008 856	12 197 905	14 363 586	15 577 899
	Indonesia	147 490 366	181 436 821	211 540 428	241 613 126	257 563 815
	Lao PDR	3 252 701	4 247 839	5 342 879	6 260 544	6 802 023
	Malaysia	13 833 739	18 211 097	23 420 751	28 119 500	30 331 007
	Myanmar	34 470 694	42 007 309	47 669 791	51 733 013	53 897 154
	Philippines	47 396 966	61 947 340	77 932 247	93 038 902	101 000 000
	Singapore	2 413 945	3 047 132	4 027 887	5 076 732	5 535 002
	Thailand	47 385 325	56 582 824	62 693 322	66 692 024	67 959 359
	Timor-Leste	577 580	740 231	847 185	1 066 409	1 245 015
	Vietnam	53 700 000	66 016 700	77 630 900	86 932 500	91 703 800
Sum	SE Asia	357 239 557	443 246 149	523 303 295	594 896 336	631 615 074

Source: United Nations

Table 1.4: Unemployment, female

Indicator	Country	2000	2005	2010	2011	2015
Unemployment, female (% of female labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)	Cambodia	1.96	1.36	0.27	0.16	0.14
	Indonesia	6.52	14.11	8.72	8.86	6.67
	Lao PDR	1.60	1.19	1.18	1.17	1.22
	Malaysia	3.12	3.87	3.67	3.32	3.43
	Myanmar	0.95	0.91	0.86	0.85	0.85
	Philippines	11.85	7.79	6.97	6.67	6.21
	Singapore	3.74	6.08	3.40	3.15	1.80
	Thailand	2.34	1.22	1.00	0.68	0.64
	Timor-Leste	8.23	9.57	4.36	4.39	5.09
	Vietnam	2.21	2.30	2.76	2.16	2.00

Source: International Labor Organization

Table 1.5: Vulnerable employment, female

Indicator	Country	2000	2004	2005	2010	2012	2013
Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment)	Cambodia	87.90	..	..	75.30	69.70	..
	Indonesia	..	70.40	67.40	..	..	47.50
	Lao PDR	..	..	91.80	88.90	..	..
	Malaysia	22.70	22.00	20.10	19.90	21.40	23.70
	Myanmar	..	..	..	..	..	..
	Philippines	46.70	46.40	47.60	..	..	42.00
	Singapore	..	7.00	..	6.50	7.00	6.20
	Thailand	59.50	55.40	55.60	55.20	55.80	57.80
	Timor-Leste	..	..	..	78.10	..	..
	Vietnam	83.20	78.50	..	..	69.20	69.00

Source: World Bank

Table 1.6: Proportion of women in ministerial level positions

Indicator	Country	2005	2008	2012	2015
Proportion of women in ministerial level positions (%)	Cambodia	7.10	6.90	4.90	7.00
	Indonesia	10.80	10.80	11.40	22.90
	Lao PDR	0.00	11.10	11.50	10.30
	Malaysia	9.10	9.40	6.50	5.70
	Myanmar	..	0.00	..	5.30
	Philippines	25.00	9.10	18.20	20.00
	Singapore	0,00	0.00	0.00	5.60
	Thailand	7.70	10.00	8.70	4.20
	Timor-Leste	22.20	25.00	23.10	12.50
	Vietnam	11.50	4.20	9.10	9.10
Average	SE Asia	10.38	8.65	10.38	10.26

Source: World Bank

Table 1.7: Law mandates nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring (2015)

Law mandates nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring (1=yes; 0=no)	Cambodia	1
	Indonesia	0
	Lao PDR	0
	Malaysia	0
	Myanmar	0
	Philippines	0
	Singapore	0
	Thailand	0
	Timor-Leste	1
	Vietnam	1

Source: World Bank

Table 1.8: Law Mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value (2015)

Law mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value (1=yes; 0=no)	Cambodia	1
	Indonesia	0
	Lao PDR	0
	Malaysia	0
	Myanmar	0
	Philippines	1
	Singapore	0
	Thailand	0
	Timor-Leste	0
	Vietnam	1

Source: World Bank