



Southeast Asia Regional Program

Context

Until mid-1997, Southeast Asia was booming — it had the most dynamic economic growth rates in the world and had made impressive gains in social development. Although each of the ten countries in this region — Brunei, **Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam*** — is at varying stages of development, many had moved beyond the need for basic aid. In some cases, such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, traditional aid relationships had evolved into mutually beneficial economic partnerships.

Before 1997, the seven members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had experienced average economic growth rates of 8% per year for the previous five years. The life expectancy of the average Southeast Asian had increased from about 50 years in 1970 to almost 65 years in 1995, a remarkable achievement in such a short time. The average adult literacy rate rose from 64% in 1970 to 83% in 1990 — higher than the world average. And Southeast Asians also increased their per capita calorie supply by 23% during this time period.

Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand were dubbed “the Asian Tigers” and held up as models for other developing countries. They had achieved high savings rates, attracted foreign investments into their export industries, developed lucrative tourist industries, created a skilled and industrious work force, and increased access to education and health care.

These countries had also made immense strides in regional cooperation — most significantly with the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 in the midst of poverty and conflict. This new association had three goals:



CIDA PHOTO: CINDY ANDREW

- to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the region through cooperative programs;
- to safeguard the political and economic stability of the region; and
- to serve as a forum for the resolution of intra-regional differences.

The five founding ASEAN members were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Several were involved in disputes with each other and many had violent ongoing civil conflicts. In 1976, the ASEAN member countries signed a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation — the first formal binding agreement eventually signed by all 10 countries in Southeast Asia. The treaty provides both a dispute-settlement mechanism and a legal framework for governing relations among the countries. Although tensions between ASEAN countries may still surface, no conflict has erupted between member countries since 1967. This long period of peace and stability is unprecedented in the region.

Since 1967, five more countries have joined ASEAN, including Brunei Darussalam in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar (Burma) in 1997, and most recently Cambodia in 1999. Several

* All countries in bold are eligible for Official Development Assistance from Canada.



CIDA PHOTO: VIRGINIA BOYD

of the “Tigers” are now beginning to help some of the newer ASEAN members (which have a markedly lower development status) deal with key development problems and integrate into regional and international organizations.

However, the social costs of the recent Asian economic crisis have been high for the region’s approximately half a billion people. In July 1997, local currencies were dramatically and suddenly devalued. For example, the Indonesian rupiah fell by 80%, while the Thai baht and Malaysian ringgit fell by about 40% each. This triggered an increase in the value of foreign debts, a slump in the domestic stock markets, a collapse of the manufacturing sector and eroded confidence in the financial and banking sector — all of which led to decreased output and domestic demand. The Southeast Asian economies slowed down, and people were laid off from their jobs. In Indonesia, millions of people who thought they had left poverty behind twenty years ago now found themselves unemployed and their savings eroded while the cost of food quadrupled.

Soon after, forest and peat fires in Indonesia spiralled out of control and affected some of the region’s health and tourism prospects. The World Wildlife Federation and the CIDA-supported Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA) estimate that Indonesia alone lost more than US\$2 billion worth of timber, agricultural products and non-timber forest products to the fires of 1998.

Today, ASEAN members are working together on these issues at a regional level — accelerating the establishment of an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA); promoting the region as a single tourism destination; improving regional transportation links;

and monitoring and fighting forest fires. In December 1997, ASEAN heads of government developed a landmark document — ASEAN Vision 2020 — which will lead the way for Southeast Asian nations to live in peace, stability and prosperity. A series of action plans will make this vision a reality. The first — the Hanoi Plan of Action, released in December 1998 — covers the years 1999 to 2004.

Although it now appears that the worst of the economic crisis is over — Asia’s stock markets are bouncing back and forecasts indicate positive economic

growth beginning in 1999 — it will likely be a slow recovery. Major financial and economic reforms are still required. It is clear, however, that countries such as Thailand — where non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups have been strengthened over the last two decades — are better able to mitigate the social consequences of the crisis and ensure that reforms are carried out equitably.

Nature of Canada’s Commitment

Canada has a long history of development cooperation with individual countries in Southeast Asia, beginning in the 1960s. Today, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has major bilateral aid programs with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam and more modest bilateral programs with Cambodia and Laos. Singapore, formerly a recipient of development assistance, is now a CIDA partner in providing assistance to the less-developed members of ASEAN.

CIDA also provides assistance through multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM and the Asian Development Bank; and through Canadian partnership programs with business, universities, colleges and other institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

CIDA’s Southeast Asia Regional Program, which began in the early 1970s, is designed to complement the Agency’s country-level programs. It focuses on strengthening regional organizations and institutions, dealing with development issues that may be considered sensitive or difficult on a national basis such as the promotion of human rights and the rule

of law. It also focuses on exploring trans-border issues such as migration, pollution and illegal trafficking in women and children and cooperative security issues which may be difficult to address on a bilateral basis.

The program disburses on average \$16 million per year and provides support in three priority areas of common concern to countries in the region:

- gender equality — enhancing the capacity of institutions, governments and organizations in partner countries to formulate, implement and promote policies and programs that lead to gender equality;
- governance, democratic development and human rights — enhancing the role of civil society in decision-making; increasing accountability and transparency in public and private sector institutions; increasing partner countries' capacities to protect and promote human rights and respect for law;
- environment — improving urban environmental management; increasing abilities to address global environmental issues such as biodiversity, desertification and climate change; enhancing regional cooperation on environmental issues (including trans-boundary issues).

The Regional Program also supports private sector development in Southeast Asia which leads to expanded and viable business linkages between Canadian and Asian private sector companies in important areas such as information technology and natural resource management.

Through the creation of regional funds, such as the Southeast Asia Gender Equity Program and the Southeast Asia Fund for Institutional and Legal Development, CIDA is able to respond rapidly to requests from the region. The recent crisis has emphasized the importance of quick action and has confirmed that capacity building — in economic and environmental management as well as in the public sector and civil society — is critical to the region's future growth and successful development.

CIDA was one of the first development agencies to undertake "regional programming" in Southeast Asia. Today, this approach has been lauded and



CIDA PHOTO: GERARD DOLAN

adopted by other international development organizations including the United Nations Development Programme.

Highlights

Environment

The **Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA)** has helped to introduce the concepts and tools of environmental economics to ten countries in Asia. According to Maurice Strong, Chairman of the Earth Council, "The battle for sustainable development will be won or lost in Asia. EEPSEA's network of researchers, and the information they produce, are a tremendous resource for those engaged in that battle."

With funding from a number of donors, including the Ottawa-based International Development Research Centre and CIDA, EEPSEA helps researchers from regional and national institutions conduct studies and make recommendations to senior policy-makers on economic measures to address key environmental issues. Working with the World Wildlife Federation, EEPSEA was one of the first organizations to estimate the costs of Asia's 1997 fires. Their report noted that "the value of the resources lost to Indonesia would have been enough to provide all of the country's 120 million rural poor with basic sanitation, water and sewerage services. Put differently, Indonesia's losses were more than double the total foreign aid received by the country every year." These figures were picked up by the



media around the world and the report's findings began to influence government thinking almost immediately.

Another project, managed by a consortium of Canadian universities including the University of British Columbia, the University of Calgary, Université de Montréal, the University of Waterloo and York University, is establishing a regional program in **Urban Environmental Management** at the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand. The program helps Southeast Asian legislators, academics and private sector organizations to develop environmental policies, procedures and technologies. It also involves Canadian environmental companies. One of the early results is a Self-Contained Housing Delivery System — a low-cost, small-scale industry that can be set up locally to produce all the elements required to build a house. It uses concrete building components instead of wood, so as to preserve local forests, and does not require any special lifting equipment. The system has already been used in over 100 housing and school construction projects in 13 Asian countries.

The **International Centre for Sustainable Cities** in Vancouver is working with key stakeholders in six cities in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to improve their solid waste disposal systems. Many landfill sites are overloaded and the seepage contaminates drinking water systems. Canadian experts from private sector firms are helping local communities plan and implement environmentally-sound waste management practices that will improve the lives of the urban poor.

The **Tree Link** project connects Southeast Asian forestry research institutions and helps them work together to share information, train forestry special-

ists, and provide practical policy advice to governments, the private sector and civil society to ensure that indigenous forests and their resources are conserved. Managed by Salasan Associates, of Sydney, British Columbia, the project is also examining ways in which the network can become self-sustaining.

Governance, democratic development and human rights

Through the **Southeast Asia Fund for Institutional and Legal Development** (SEAFILD), CIDA is supporting a variety

of projects to help develop the capacity of regional and national organizations to promote human rights and democratic development. The program works with key Asian partners who are already champions for human rights and governance issues and links them with Canadians working in these areas. SEAFILD support has helped to establish Human Rights Commissions in Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines.

In Vietnam, new laws and regulations have been developed at an extraordinary rate since 1990. But little information about these new laws is available outside of the larger cities. This means that many of Vietnam's 70 million people do not know what their legal rights are or how to bring their cases to court. With SEAFILD funding, the Centre for Asian Legal Studies at the University of British Columbia is working with the Centre for Legal Research and Services in Vietnam to develop accessible, user-friendly information about legal rights and processes and to create free legal clinics in towns and villages. These clinics will help disseminate information at the grassroots level, raise public awareness about legal rights and help people obtain legal aid. The project is led by a group of Vietnamese lawyers, one of whom studied legal drafting in Canada.

The South China Sea has been a "hot" spot for many years as countries vie for its limited and possibly valuable resources. Stretching from China to Indonesia to the Philippines, this 3.63 million square kilometre body of water carries more than a third of the world's shipping and may harbour billions of dollars in underwater oil deposits. Pollution, overfishing and jurisdictional disputes have led to armed conflict in several instances. The **Asia Pacific Ocean Cooperation Project** includes a South China

Sea Informal Working Group which brings together senior government officials and researchers in a personal, not official, capacity to explore the benefits and possibilities for regional cooperation especially in areas such as biodiversity protection, fisheries stock assessment and navigational safety. This careful crafting of a process of collaboration and confidence-building is helping to reduce the possibility of conflict in the region. Canada, the only non-ASEAN country involved in the discussions, is viewed as a trusted, neutral expert in ocean governance policy.



Another project supports the outreach and dialogue activities of the **ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS)**, often viewed as a bridge between government policy-makers and civil society groups. The ASEAN-ISIS initiative brings together a network of government officials, academics, business people, journalists and representatives of non-governmental organizations in roundtables and workshops to discuss critical issues and influence government policy in creative and productive ways. Often these recommendations are forwarded to national governments. ASEAN-ISIS examines broad issues of human security, exposes young leaders to regional issues and works to make the connection between development and security across the region. Results include wider acceptance of an expanded concept of cooperative security across the region and its importance beyond strictly national boundaries; increased capacity of newer market economies such as Cambodia to undertake policy analysis; and a wider range of young Canadians with skills, knowledge and connections to Southeast Asia.

The **Development and Security in Southeast Asia (DSSEA)** project, which brings together York University's Centre for International and Security Studies with partners in Indonesia and the Philippines, complements and supports the ASEAN-ISIS initiative. Through comparative analysis and applied research, culminating in practical policy recommendations to governments and concerned individuals and groups, this project helps to manage pressures in cooperative ways that reinforce human security and sustainable development.

In 1991, with support from CIDA, the University of Toronto established an ASEAN Chair. Six eminent **Visiting Professors in ASEAN Studies** have taught, conducted research and built significant academic networks in Canada. The most recent, Professor Johan Saravanamuttu from Malaysia, also received support from CIDA to organize a conference in Penang, Malaysia on APEC and civil society in September 1998 prior to the APEC Leaders' Meeting hosted by the government of Malaysia in November 1998.

Gender Equality

The **Southeast Asia Gender Equity Program (SEAGEP)** helps gender networks, organizations, institutions and governments working at the regional level to put into place the United Nations Platform for Action endorsed at the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995. It also facilitates links around gender issues between Southeast Asian and Canadian organizations. Like security, gender issues transcend national borders and may be more effectively dealt with at the regional level where political and cultural sensitivities are not as high as they can be at the national level. By providing training, materials and expertise in gender equality, SEAGEP helps local organizations increase their capacities to raise awareness of gender issues, establish gender-equitable policies and legislation throughout the region, and address other critical gender issues.



CIDA PHOTO: ROGER LEMOYNE

In 1989/90, CIDA, through the Philippines Canada Fund, contributed \$9,000 to a group of 25 Filipino women in San Miguel Bulacan so they could establish a program to breed and fatten pigs for market. After five days of training, the women formed support groups. Each time they sold a pig, half the money went to a “piggy” bank of cooperative savings. Within four years, they had repaid their initial loans, built better houses for their families, and for the first time, sent their children to university. Next, they started a knitting cooperative and sub-contracted 800 village women to produce clothing. Eventually, they began exporting stuffed toys to North America and established a fruit-growing cooperative. From 100 women, the group grew to 100,000 members in almost 50 villages. With help from the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP), many women received training in leadership, public speaking and running for public office. In 1992, 80 women candidates contested elections and 38 won. This small initial investment by CIDA changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people — and demonstrated that women can play a fundamental role in economic and political development. Today, with support from SEAGEP, CAPWIP has created a network of training centres throughout Southeast Asia based on the

San Miguel model, which will help women become part of decision-making processes locally, nationally and across the region.

At the other end of the policy spectrum, SEAGEP also supports the Women Leaders Network (WLN) which met for the fourth time in New Zealand in June 1999, after annual meetings in the Philippines, Canada and Malaysia. WLN consists of women leaders from 21 member countries of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum who want to ensure that women’s contributions to their economies are recognized and supported within APEC policy structures and agendas. WLN successfully lobbied APEC to hold its first Ministerial Meeting on Women which led to the establishment of an official Task Force to Integrate Women into APEC. It has also drafted and presented recommendations to Ministerial Meetings including placing a high priority on collecting sex-disaggregated data to better understand the contribution of women to APEC economies and recognizing the significant contribution of indigenous women in APEC economies. Key objectives for the future include ensuring that APEC takes measures to mitigate the disproportionately negative impact of the Asian crisis on women and women entrepreneurs in the region, and integrates the economic interests of women into regional and national strategies for economic recovery and future prosperity.

The **CanAsian Businesswomen’s Network** was established in 1993 to support and promote the participation of women entrepreneurs and business professionals in the evolving Canada-ASEAN relationship. Recognizing that women are becoming more active and visible in business, it helped women-led companies increase the amount of trade between Canada and Southeast Asia. However, the harsh economic conditions and the closing or retrenchment of many women’s businesses throughout Southeast Asia as a result of the economic crisis, has meant the Network has also changed direction. It is now focusing on building the capacity of women entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia to help them overcome the barriers erected by the crisis such as lack of credit or training; strengthening businesswomen’s associations in the region and facilitating linkages between non-governmental organizations and micro-entrepreneurs working in the handicraft sector. This project is managed by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

Other Activities

Three Canadian universities are working with the **Association of Deans of Southeast Asian Graduate Schools of Management (ADSGM)** to establish the region's first doctoral programs in business administration. The goal is to produce competent managers with cutting-edge knowledge and research skills to contribute both to developing economic policy and international business relationships.

More than 80 students from all over Southeast Asia have benefited from this program, and almost half of them currently hold teaching positions at universities in the region. Extensive academic and business relationships have been established between Southeast Asia and Canada as a result of the program. Canadian professors from McGill University, University of Ottawa and York University teach and provide research advice at two regional centres in Bangkok and Manila. Student exchanges are flourishing and the University of Ottawa's Executive MBA program students have travelled to Asia as part of their course work. Many former students are now doing business in Asia. In Thailand, one of the program's first graduates completed his thesis on a topic relevant to the recent crisis and is now a senior advisor to the Thai Minister of Finance.

The **Canada-ASEAN Centre** builds new linkages between Canada and ASEAN countries in science and technology and the environment. By creating and fostering networks, the Centre stimulates the flow of information and collaboration required for long-term mutually beneficial relationships. It matches Canadian scientific and technological excellence with ASEAN's market needs and has led to several long-term partnerships between Canadian and Asian institutions, organizations and governments.

The Southeast Asia Regional Program also cooperates with the Government of Singapore in extending development assistance to developing countries in Southeast Asia. Canada and Singapore are cooperating and sharing costs for a highly regarded **English Language Training (ELT)** program for government officials from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam which enables officials to participate more fully in regional and global affairs. Over 300 people have been trained to date. Canada and Singapore have



CIDA PHOTO: DAVID BARBOUR

also co-financed training related to the economic and social crisis, including banking and financial sector training and public sector governance.

CIDA and International Cooperation

CIDA is the federal government agency responsible for most of Canada's international cooperation program. It provides Official Development Assistance to developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas, where its purpose is to support sustainable development to reduce poverty and help create a more secure, equitable and prosperous world. CIDA programming in developing countries focuses on six priorities:

- basic human needs, which accounts for 25 percent of Official Development Assistance;
- women in development;
- infrastructure services;
- human rights, democracy and good governance;
- private-sector development; and
- the environment.

CIDA's programs are implemented by a wide range of partners in Canada and overseas, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, universities and colleges, cooperatives, international organizations and local and national governments. Their expertise and knowledge are essential to providing effective, high-quality assistance.

Canada also provides assistance through CIDA to countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. That assistance has three broad objectives:

- supporting the transition to market-based economies;
- increasing Canadian trade and investment links with the region; and
- promoting democratic development.

This fact sheet is part of a series profiling countries and regions in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. For more information on CIDA programs in particular countries in Southeast Asia, please see the specific country profiles. The series is available on the Internet (see address below).

The following information is also available on request:

- a list of current bilateral projects in the Southeast Asia region;
- an account of disbursements in Southeast Asia as part of public aid for development; and
- a list of CIDA's partners in providing assistance, including non-governmental organizations, institutions and Canadian private-sector organizations.

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The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a stylized green font with a small red maple leaf above the letter 'a'.

BASIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS, SOUTHEAST ASIA COUNTRIES

Official name	Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Malaysia
Capital	Bandar Seria Begawan	Phnom Penh	Jakarta	Vientiane	Kuala Lumpur
Area (km²)	5,765	181,035	1,904,000	236,800	329,750
Estimated population (total population in 1995)	300,000	10,273,000	200,453,000	5,035,000	20,581,000
(under 18 years of age)	n.a.	4,822,000	77,807,000	2,574,000	8,916,000
Population density (per km ²)	52	56	105	21	62
Gross National Product (GNP)¹ per capita in US\$ in 1995	\$25,160	\$270	\$980	\$350	\$3,890
Production system (distribution of GDP ² % in 1995)					
Agriculture	n.a.	51	17	52	13
Industrial	n.a.	14	42	18	43
Tertiary	n.a.	34	41	30	44
% of labour force (1990)					
Agriculture	2	74	55	78	27
Industrial	24	8	14	6	23
Tertiary	74	19	31	16	50
Human Development Index (HDI)³ , 1995	0.889	0.422	0.679	0.465	0.834
HDI Ranking (1995)	35	140	96	136	60
Gender-related Development Index (GDI)⁴	0.834	0.415	0.651	0.451	0.785

(continued)

Official name	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Malaysia
Life expectancy at birth				
in 1960				
62.2	42.2	41.2	40.4	53.9
in 1995				
75.1	52.9	64	52.2	71.4
Mortality rate under 5 years of age (per 1000 live births, 1996)				
11	170	71	128	13
Adult literacy rate % (1995)				
Total				
89	66.5	85	57	85
Men				
92.6	80	89.6	69.4	89.1
Women				
83.4	53	78	44.4	78.1
Access to safe water % (1990-1996)				
Total				
n.a.	36	62	44	78
Urban				
n.a.	65	78	n.a.	96
Rural				
n.a.	33	54	n.a.	66
Member of Commonwealth (C) and/or Francophonie (F)				
C	F		F	C

Sources

Human Development Report 1998, United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF Statistics

1. Gross National Product (GNP) comprises gross domestic product (GDP) plus net factor income from abroad, which is the income residents receive from abroad for factor services (labour and capital), less similar payments made to non-residents who contribute to the domestic economy.

2. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total output of goods and services for final use produced by an economy, by both residents and non-residents, regardless of the allocation to domestic and foreign claims. It does not include deductions for depreciation of physical capital or depletion and degradation of natural resources.

3. Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of human development containing indicators representing three equally weighted dimensions of human development – longevity (life expectancy at birth), knowledge (adult literacy and mean years of schooling), and income (purchasing power parity dollars per capita).

4. Gender-related Development Index (GDI) uses the same variables as the HDI, and notes the sociological inequalities (life expectancy, education and adjusted real income) between men and women in 130 countries. A value of 1.0 reflects a maximum achievement in basic capabilities. The average GDI for the 130 countries covered is 0.6.

BASIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS, SOUTHEAST ASIA COUNTRIES

Official name	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Myanmar				
Capital				
Yangon	Manila	Singapore	Bangkok	Hanoi
Area (km²)				
680,000	299,000	646	517,000	329,560
Estimated population				
total population in 1995				
45,922,000	69,282,000	3,384,000	58,703,000	75,181,000
under 18 years of age				
19,055,000	30,923,000	888,000	19,529,000	32,318,000
Population density (per km²)				
66	232	5238	114	228
Gross National Product¹ (GNP) per capita in US\$ in 1995				
n.a.	\$1,050	\$26,730	\$2,740	\$240
Production system (distribution of GDP% in 1995)²				
Agriculture				
n.a.	22	0	11	28
Industrial				
n.a.	32	36	40	30
Tertiary				
n.a.	46	64	49	42
% of labour force (1990)				
Agriculture				
73	46	0	64	71
Industrial				
10	15	36	14	14
Tertiary				
17	39	64	22	15
Human Development Index (HDI), 1995³				
0.481	0.677	0.896	0.838	0.560
HDI Ranking (1995)				
131	98	28	59	122
Gender-related Development Index (GDI)⁴				
0.478	0.661	0.848	0.812	0.559

(continued)

Official name	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Myanmar				
Life expectancy at birth				
in 1960				
43.7	52.8	64.5	52.3	44.2
in 1995				
58.9	67.4	77.1	69.5	66.4
Mortality rate under 5 years of age (per 1000 live births), 1996				
150	38	4	38	44
Adult literacy rate % (1995)				
Total				
84	94.6	91.1	93.8	93.7
Men				
88.7	95	95.9	96	96.5
Women				
77.7	94.3	86.3	91.6	91.2
Access to safe water % (1990-1996)				
Total				
60	84	100	89	43
Urban				
78	93	100	94	47
Rural				
50	80	n.a.	88	42
Member of Commonwealth (C) and/or Francophonie (F)				
		C		F

Sources

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