Enhancing Women's Participation in Rail Sector in ASEAN Member States



ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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I. BACKGROUND

Gender equality is a growing priority for the global transport sector, particularly in the context of the clean energy transition. As greater diversity brings innovation, more women are needed at the decision-making table to successfully mitigate climate change (Accenture 2019). Given that transport is one of the highest polluting sectors and one of the most complicated to decarbonize, the current male-dominated workforce needs attracting and retaining more women. Indeed, increasing female participation in freight transport is one of the ten principles identified by ESCAP to ensure the sustainability of the sector in Asia and the Pacific (2024). The referenced principle is an important motivator behind the research presented in this report[1].

Among member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), rail has been identified as an important solution for reducing transport emissions. As such, there have been notable investments in recent years in the rail sector, such as the railway line connecting Lao People's Democratic Republic and China. If changes can be made so that women and men both see valuable career opportunities in the rail sector, the applicant pool will nearly double, as will the potential talents and innovations available to Southeast Asian rail companies. Attracting and retaining more women in the rail sector is also necessary to avoid staff shortages in future decades, particularly given the investments being made to grow the sector (Ng and Acker 2020).

Economic growth is strongly correlated to gender equality. Particularly concerning transport, mobility has implications for accessing job opportunities, education, and health care. Studies show that men and women have different travel patterns (Ng and Acker 2018). Women tend to travel shorter distances, with complex trip chaining, at off-peak times. They are more likely to be travelling in charge of dependents, which leads to prioritizing flexible modes of transport, and are more influenced by affordability due to gender gaps in earnings. Safety concerns and sexual harassment are also strong deterrents that continue to limit women's mobility worldwide. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that lack of safe, accessible transport options for women is the biggest barrier preventing women from joining the workforce (WB 2024). Adding women's perspectives and travel needs to the design of rail transport systems directly through their participation in the sector would increase women's access to economic opportunities in the whole population.

Gender equality is good for business. Higher female participation in the rail workforce will improve ridership for rail companies, as it will allow the planning and infrastructure choices to better respond to both women's and men's travel needs (WB 2023b). Increasing female ridership will in turn support the uptake of rail in the coming years and the reduction of emission in the transport sector.

[1] ESCAP Principle 6 for sustainable freight transport in Asia in the Pacific is to enhance inclusiveness of the freight transport sector by promoting women's participation.

Since women's rights are human rights, gender equality is also a human rights issue. In the example of mobility, transport planning can determine girls' and women's access to water, food, communities, childcare, and health care. The Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The global importance placed on this topic is pushing all countries to take responsibility to work toward more equitable societies. In the words of Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF), "Achieving gender equality is obviously necessary for economic reasons. Only those economies who have full access to all their talent will remain competitive and will prosper. But even more importantly, gender equality is a matter of justice. As a humanity, we also have the obligation to ensure a balanced set of values." (WEF 2014).

There is a growing number of initiatives to improve female representation in the rail sector across the world. In a recent survey of the global transport workforce, 65 per cent of workers reported an increase in efforts to recruit and retain more women within their company (SuM4All 2023). In 2021, the *Women in Rail Autonomous Agreement* was signed as the first binding agreement on gender equality established in any sector and was a groundbreaking treaty for European railways. The agreement was signed by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF). It requires CER EU members to define a gender diversity policy fulfilling specified rules within one year and implement the policy the following year (CER/ETF 2020). In 2023, the International Union of Railways (UIC) began the *Train 2B Equal* initiative to connect diverse actors in the rail sector and start a global discussion to understand and address gender gaps in employment and among riders.

This report was designed to guide ASEAN member states in understanding the current gender gaps in the rail sector and the actions needed to close gaps. The first section provides an overview of female participation in the ASEAN rail workforce, including social institutions and legislation that supports gender equality. In preparation for this report, a survey on gender mainstreaming and gender diversity in rail was sent to ASEAN transport ministries. The results are presented in this report and the questionnaire template is included in the annex. The main challenges to increasing female participation in the rail workforce and best practices from other regions are organized by topic, covering all stages from diversity in recruitment to the long-term retention of female staff. The policy recommendations are given in a check-list format under the same topical categories.

II. CURRENT STATE OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE ASEAN RAIL SECTOR

The ASEAN rail sector has a lower female participation rate compared to the rest of the world. According to ILO calculations based on data from the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, women represent 12 per cent of the global rail workforce[2], and 8 per cent of the ASEAN rail workforce (Figure 1). ASEAN rail has less gender diversity compared to the Americas, Europe and Central Asia, and more diversity when comparing to Africa and the Arab States. Estimates for female participation in the full transport workforce are higher than rail, with a regional ASEAN share of 38 per cent (Figure 2). However, transport remains a male-dominated sector in a large majority of countries in Southeast Asia. Among ASEAN member states with data on female participation in the rail sector, shares are notably lower than in the transport sector for all except Viet Nam (Figure 3). There is also a gap by sector within rail, with smaller shares of women working in freight rail compared to passenger rail.

The estimated share of women in the rail sector is 8% for ASEAN countries and 12% globally (2024)

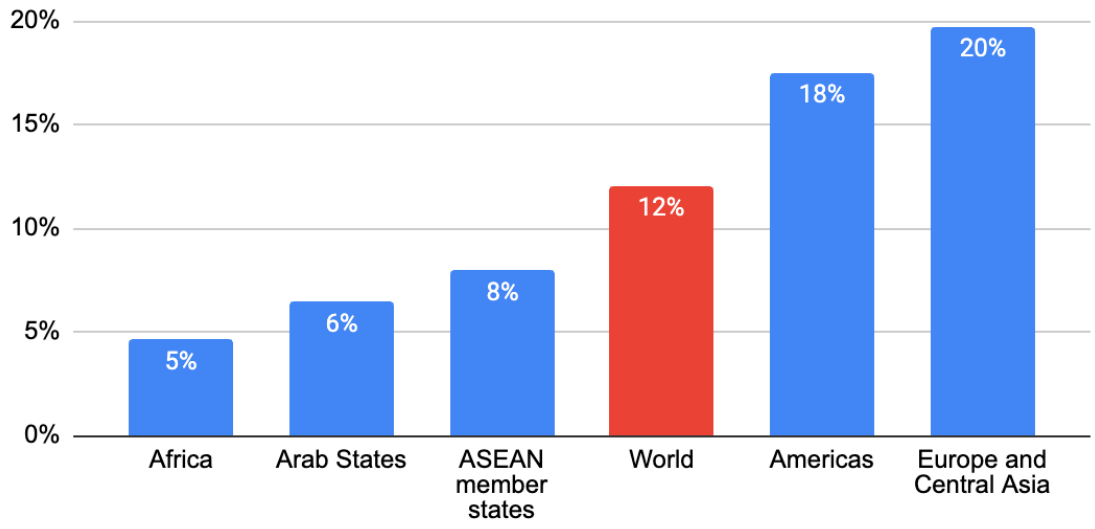


Figure 1. Share of women in the rail workforce by region (2024)

Source: ILO Harmonized Microdata, https://ilostat.ilo.org/.
Notes: The rail sector is defined by the ISIC-Rev. 4 category 491. Given the small size of the sector, data can be subject to high variation. More information is linked here for the ILO methodology on regional estimates and estimation of missing ISIC categories

[2] Estimates include 151 countries.

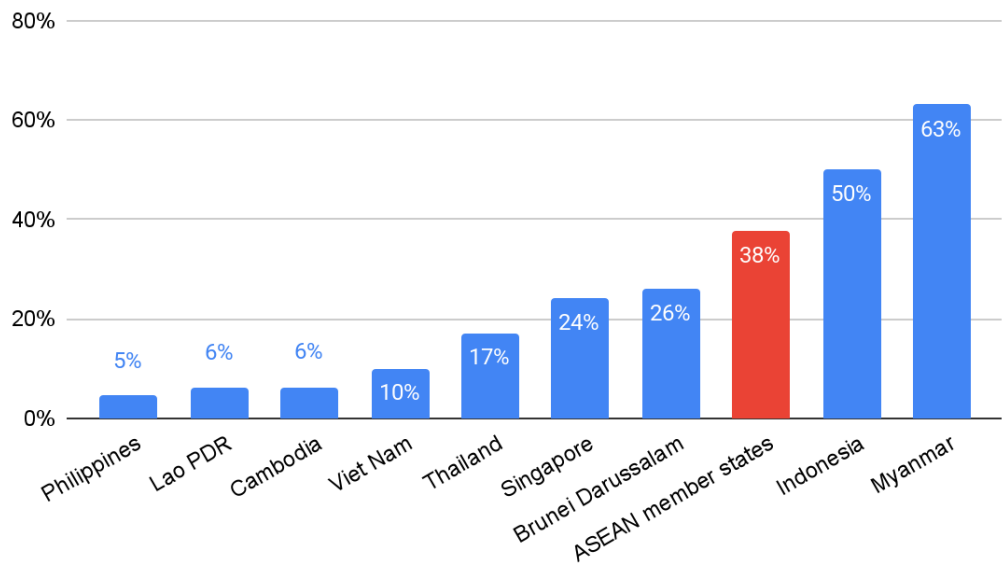


Figure 2. Share of women in the transport workforce for ASEAN member states

Source: https://ilostat.ilo.org/. Accessed October 29, 2024.
Notes: The transport sector is defined by the ISIC-Rev. 4 category (H. Transportation and storage). The latest available year is used for each country; 2020 for Myanmar, 2021 for Cambodia, 2022 for the Philippines and Lao People's Democratic Republic, and 2023 for the remaining countries. Given the small size of the sector, data can be subject to high variation. More information is linked here for the ILO methodology on estimation of missing ISIC categories

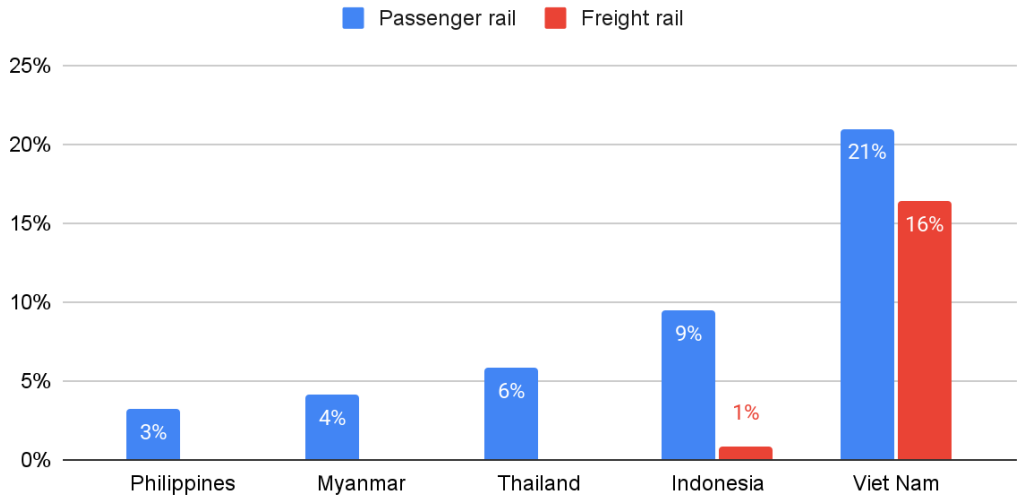


Figure 3. Share of women in the rail workforce for ASEAN member states by sector

Source: ILO Harmonized Microdata, https://ilostat.ilo.org/.
Notes: The rail sector is defined by the ISIC-Rev. 4 categories 4911 (passenger rail) and 4912 (freight rail). The latest available year is used for each country; 2020 for Myanmar, 2022 for the Philippines and 2023 for the remaining countries. Freight data is only available for Indonesia and Viet Nam. Given the small size of the sector, data can be subject to high variation. More information is linked here for the ILO methodology on regional estimates and estimation of missing ISIC categories.

A. Gender discrimination in social institutions in Southeast Asia

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an important indicator for assessing the level of gender discrimination at the country level. The SIGI is built using 25 different measurements covering gender discrimination in the family, restricted physical integrity, access to productive and financial assets, and restricted civil liberties. The index can be used to set targets as well as understand priority issues to address, and ranges from 0 to 100 with 0 representing a lack of discrimination.

ASEAN member states have the highest average SIGI score in the world (39), except for Africa (40), meaning the region has comparatively high levels of gender discrimination regarding its social institutions, laws and gender norms (Figure 4). The region is 10 points above the global average and more than twice the score for Europe. There is notable variation between countries, with the lowest SIGI score found in Cambodia (22) and the highest in Malaysia (61) for 2023 data (Table 1).

Women in Southeast Asia spend 3.1 times more of their day on unpaid care and household chores

Traditional gender norms continue to impact the division of labour within households, leaving women to manage most domestic responsibilities (OECD 2024). Women in Southeast Asia spend on average 3.1 times more of their day on unpaid care and household chores compared to men. Surveys also show that attitudes towards women's education and economic participation have become more traditional over the past decade in Southeast Asia.

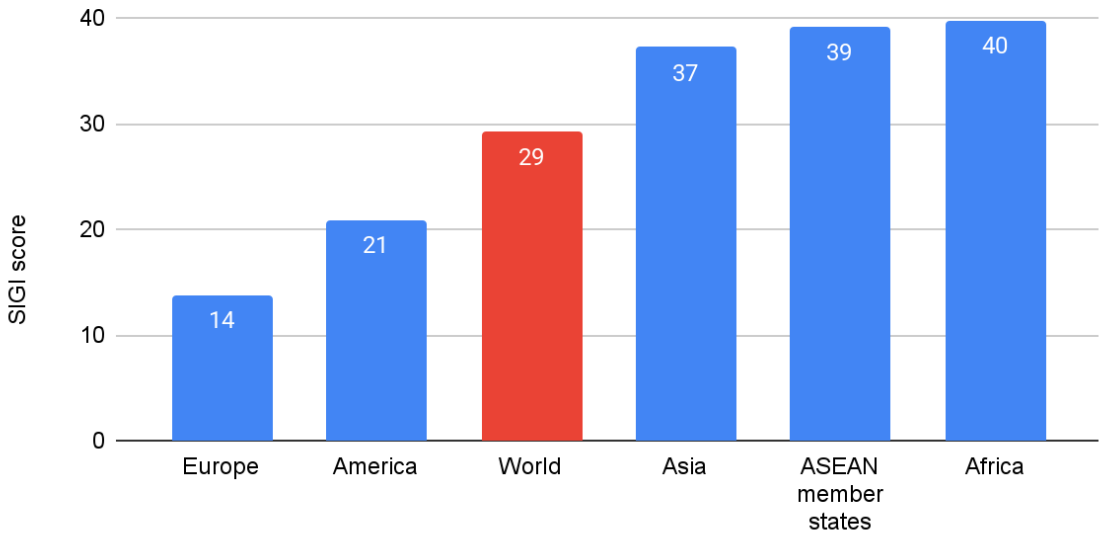


Figure 4. Social Institutions and Gender Index Score by Region (2023)

Source: OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2023. Accessed 3 February 2025 (link).
Notes: The SIGI and its dimensions range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination against women.

Table 1. Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) for Southeast Asia (2023)

	SIGI score	Discrimination in the family	Restricted physical integrity	Access to productive and financial assets	Restricted civil liberties
Cambodia	21.7	21.8	17.8	29.4	17.4
Viet Nam	24.5	38.3	37.6	7.7	10.1
Lao People's Democratic Republic	25.1	24.8	27.6	24.8	23.1
Thailand	33.9	43.7	20.2	21.9	46.8
Indonesia	44.6	80.3	32.3	17.8	36.5
Singapore	45.0	39	46.5	41	52.9
Myanmar	47.0	63	54.9	33.7	33
Philippines	49.7	56.9	49.1	50.4	41.6
Malaysia	60.7	85.9	46.6	43.8	60.8
Brunei Darussalam	..	91.9	..	..	..

Source: OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2023. Accessed 3 February 2025 (link).
Notes: The SIGI and its dimensions range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination against women.

Table 1. Social Institutions and Gender Index Score for Southeast Asia (2023)

B. ASEAN gender equality legislation

Laws provide the framework for greater gender equality in households, communities, and companies. There are still countries in the world with legislation preventing women from performing the same tasks as men in the transport sector (WB 2024). All ASEAN member states have successfully eliminated such laws, but there remain improvements to be made in gender equality legislation related to working conditions, parental leave and childcare.

The first table of gender equality laws covers basic working conditions such as safety, fairness in career development, and salaries (Table 2). Experiences with sexual harassment or limits in women's career development can both deter women from choosing to work in rail and push the

existing female workers to leave the sector. Most ASEAN member states already have legislation on sexual harassment in employment (80%) and more than half have associated laws with criminal penalties (60%). While most ASEAN member states have laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender (60%), less than one-third have laws requiring equal pay for equal work (30%).

Table 2. Workplace discrimination, equal pay, and sexual harassment laws in ASEAN countries (2024)

	Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender?	Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?	Is there legislation on sexual harassment in employment?	Are there criminal penalties or civil remedies for sexual harassment in employment?
Brunei Darussalam	No	No	No	No
Cambodia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Indonesia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Yes	No	Yes	No
Malaysia	No	No	Yes	No
Myanmar	No	No	No	No
Philippines	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Singapore	No	No	Yes	Yes
Thailand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Viet Nam	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ASEAN	60% Yes	30% Yes	80% Yes	60% Yes

Source: World Bank, Women, Business and the Law Data set, accessed October 4 2024.

Table 2. Workplace discrimination, equal pay, and sexual harassment laws in ASEAN countries (2024)

C. Parental leave and childcare

Legislation for parental leave and childcare is critical for allowing women to remain in the rail sector after starting a family, since women are still primarily responsible for caring for dependents. Paternity leave also has important implications for improving gender equality within households, changing gender norms in society and increasing women's participation in the workforce (Kaufman 2019). In over two-thirds of ASEAN countries, women can be fired while pregnant (Table 3). While all countries have maternity leave laws, only 60 per cent allow paid leave of at least 14 weeks, with the longest leave being in Viet Nam (180 days). A large majority of ASEAN countries already have laws for paid paternity leave (70%); the longest leave is in Myanmar (21 days). The World Bank Childcare Legal Framework Indicator summarizes laws related to the availability and quality of childcare services in a country for children aged from zero to two. Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore Thailand and Viet Nam are all above average in the quality of their childcare laws for the region.

For childcare to be impactful in terms of female participation in the rail sector, it needs to be high quality, affordable and accessible in terms of location and hours of service (WB 2022). There are already actions being taken by many countries in the region to improve the affordability of childcare. Financial support is given to help cover childcare costs in Malaysia, Singapore and Viet Nam. Tax incentives also exist in Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam. In Malaysia, childcare costs depend on the family's income and in Viet Nam they are set for each province depending on the socio-economic status of its residents. Viet Nam requires companies to either contribute to the costs of daycare facilities or help pay for the childcare costs of their employees (WB 2022). In Thailand, childcare support is provided to ministry staff through state welfare, including tuition and medical expenses for staff children (ESCAP survey 2024).

There have also been recent efforts to improve the availability and quality of daycare in Southeast Asia. Viet Nam requires regular professional training for educators on early childhood development. The government of Singapore has recently invested in facilities to care for infants and children as well as facilities and infrastructure for senior citizens with the goal of improving women's access to employment (ESCAP 2024). Thailand's Department of Rail Transport (DRT) reported preparations for a nursery dedicated to the children of DRT staff (ESCAP survey 2024). The survey showed that roughly the same share of men and women use their allotted parental leave in the DRT.

Table 3. Parental leave and childcare laws in ASEAN countries (2024)

	Is dismissal of pregnant workers prohibited?	Is paid leave of at least 14 weeks available to mothers?	Length of paid maternity leave (days)	Is there paid leave available to fathers?	Length of paid paternity leave	Childcare Legal Framework Score
Brunei Darussalam	No	No	91	No	NA	25

Cambodia	Yes	No	90	No	NA	0
Indonesia	Yes	No	90	Yes	2	75
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Yes	Yes	105	Yes	3	25
Malaysia	Yes	Yes	98	Yes	7	75
Myanmar	No	Yes	98	Yes	21	25
Philippines	Yes	Yes	105	Yes	7	50
Singapore	No	Yes	84	Yes	14	75
Thailand	Yes	No	90	No *	NA	75
Viet Nam	Yes	Yes	180	Yes	5	100
ASEAN	70% Yes	60% Yes	Avg. 103.1 days	70% Yes	Avg. 8.4 days	Avg. 52.5

Source: World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law* database. Accessed October 4 2024.
Notes: The Childcare Legal Frameworks indicator analyses laws related to availability, public finance, and quality of childcare services for children ages 0-2 years (including 2 years and 11 months).
* In the ESCAP survey (2024), Thailand reported that men employed in the public sector have 15 days of paid paternity leave.

Table 3. Parental leave and childcare laws in ASEAN countries (2024)

D. Results of survey of rail ministries/departments of countries

In preparation for this report, a questionnaire was sent to the rail departments of transport ministries for all ASEAN Member States. The survey included questions on gender mainstreaming within ministries, such as applying a gender lens to policy decisions and budgets. The gender equality priorities of the country and measures being taken by the ministry were also requested. Last, the survey gathered information on legislation and gender-disaggregated data for the rail ministry and the rail sector. As responses were limited to Thailand and Malaysia, the analyses will only cover those countries. Survey responses from Malaysia include Mass Rapid Transit Corporation (MRT) and Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB).

The data provided on gender diversity in the rail workforce gives evidence of potential struggles to hire and retain women as well as potential barriers to women's career development. Women make up almost half of middle management and of the overall staff of Thailand's Department of Rail Transport (40%; 46%), but they have not yet broken the glass ceiling[3] to senior management positions (Figure 5). In Malaysia, the share of female senior managers (17%) is not far behind the share for middle management (22%), but there are limited female staff overall (9%).

Within Malaysian railway companies, the lack of gender-disaggregated data and the need for comprehensive gender-focused training for decision-makers were identified as barriers preventing the consistent application of a gender lens to ministry projects.

Gender-disaggregated rail data is currently limited to data on rail staff (Thailand and Malaysia) and on safety incidents involving female passengers (Malaysia).

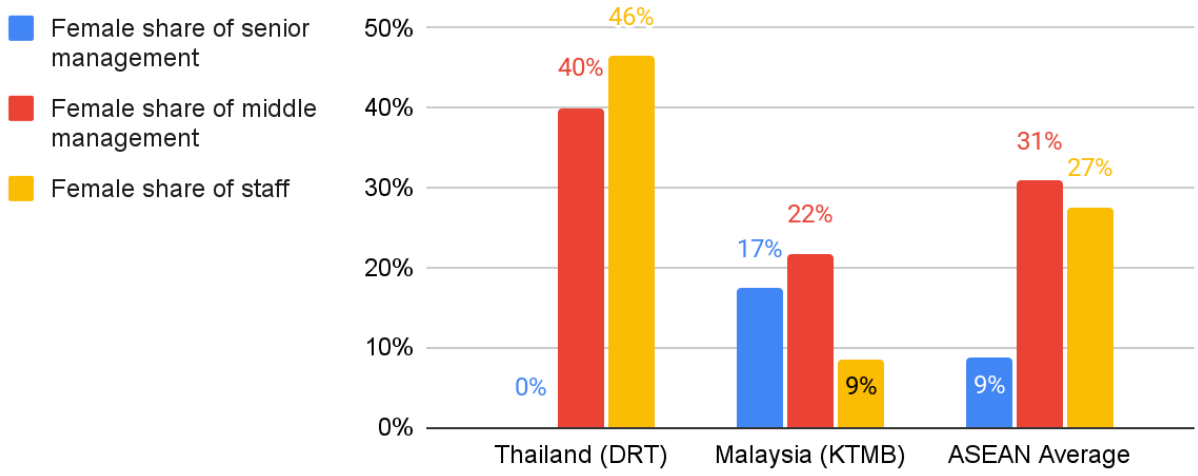


Figure 5. Share of women in rail ministries by position and country

There remains a consistent lack of human and financial resources for gender equality within the surveyed ministries (Table 4), although gender bias training and gender responsive budgeting are being used in some cases. Among important areas to attract and retain female staff are safety and flexibility. All respondents reported the existence of protocols for sexual harassment, but only some offer part-time work options and none allow remote working (Table 5).

In Thailand, there are important steps being taken to ensure the safety of female staff, with regular communication on the ministry's intention to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, including specific guidelines on prevention. In MRT, efforts are being made to improve the representation of women in both operational and managerial roles through targeted recruitment, training, and mentorship programs. Malaysia offers programs under government and ministry initiatives, including vocational and joint-venture initiatives with universities developing

[3] The term *glass ceiling* is a metaphor for the challenges women tend to face when trying to access leadership positions.

professional programs, scholarships and training to increase female participation. The government supports gender-neutral job descriptions, diversity in recruitment panels, and strives for equal participation in decision-making positions. KTMB's initiative to improve workforce performance includes providing more opportunities for women to take on operational and technical positions such as train driver, train operation controller, station master, technician and mechanic. Financial support for childcare is provided by MRT, but not by KTMB.

Table 4. Structural support of gender equality in ASEAN rail ministries

	Gender Responsive Policies and Budgeting	Internal training on gender equality or gender bias	Designated Diversity Office	Gender equality budget
Thailand	No	Yes	No	No
Malaysia	Yes	No	No	No

Notes: Gender Responsive Policies and Budgeting involve systematic analysis of policies and budgets within the ministry in terms of their different impacts on men and women. Modifications are then made accordingly to best benefit both sexes. A Designated Diversity Officer (DDO) is a person or team that is solely dedicated to supporting gender equality within the ministry. Gender equality budget is meant to signal the existence of financial resources available to support efforts to promote gender equality. Hiring a DDO would already be proof of having a gender equality budget.

Table 4. Structural support of gender equality in ASEAN rail ministries

Table 5. Measures to improve female participation in ASEAN rail ministries

	Part-time working allowed and used	Regular remote working allowed	Female targeted training programs	Networking groups or mentoring programs for female staff	Protocols for sexual harassment in the workplace
Thailand	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Malaysia	No	No	Yes	Yes/No*	Yes

Notes: Malaysia includes MRT Corp and KTMB. When responses differ, they are listed in that order.

Table 5. Measures to improve female participation in ASEAN rail ministries

Government support and legislation

In the context of national efforts to promote gender equality, Thailand has a National Action Plan to Prevent and Suppress Violence Against Women, which outlines strategies for prevention, protection, and support for survivors (ESCAP survey 2024). This includes public awareness campaigns designed to educate the public about Gender-Based Violence (GBV), to encourage reporting, and to provide support for survivors. Thailand's Domestic Violence Victims Protection Act (2015) and Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008) provide legislative support for victims.

The Malaysian government has national strategies to promote gender equality framed within broader development agendas, such as the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021–2025). This plan sets specific goals for gender equality, including enhancing women's participation in the economy, improving legal protections, increasing representation in leadership positions, enhancing protections against gender-based violence, and empowering women entrepreneurs. The MRT contributes to these goals within the rail sector by promoting gender equity in employment, safety, and access.

Measures to increase female ridership

Steps taken to improve the share of female riders on trains in Thailand include train compartments reserved for women and children, parking for women at stations, and changing tables for infants in train and metro station bathrooms. In Malaysia, efforts to improve women's safety in rail include enhancing surveillance, lighting, and emergency assistance across stations and trains, as well as conducting regular safety assessments to mitigate risks. Investments are also being made to better adapt infrastructure women's travel needs, including dedicated waiting areas for women and improved restroom facilities.

III. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR GENDER DIVERSITY IN RAIL AND LESSONS FROM OTHER REGIONS

The literature review reveals the main challenges to hiring a diverse workforce in the rail sector, including a lack of girls and women interested in railway jobs, as well as gender biases in recruitment procedures and candidate selection. Other concerns limiting the attraction and retention of women in the sector are safety and security, flexible working conditions, parental leave, childcare support, and fair career development opportunities (SuM4All 2023; CER/ETF 2020; WB 2023b). Each challenge is elaborated in the following section, in addition to a few cross-cutting measures, with references to best practices found in other countries. The topic of gender mainstreaming is also covered, looking at the ways in which rail ministries specifically can work to improve gender equality in the sector.

A. Hiring a diverse workforce

Pipeline

The first obstacle to achieving gender equality is having enough women interested and trained to work in the rail sector. Since the rail sector has a long history of being primarily men, established social norms can prevent women from considering rail as a career option. This commonly termed *pipeline issue* is also linked to the lower shares of women and girls studying STEM[4] subjects (SuM4All 2023). Like much of the transport sector, rail is being transformed with new technologies, which are changing the skills needed for workers. Any training programmes for new skills or new positions are prime opportunities to target women and shift the diversity trends of the workforce. On a larger scale, efforts can be made to show girls and women the meaningful career opportunities open to them in the rail sector, with encouragement for the value of technical positions. Campaigns to increase girls' interest in STEM and rail should cover different age groups and should showcase female representatives of the rail sector.

In a recent CER and ETF survey of 29 European rail companies, 43 per cent of companies had campaigns to get more women working in STEM professions and 29 per cent had training and qualification programs targeting women (CER/ETF 2020). In Sri Lanka, the government incorporated transport and logistics into the curriculum of secondary education to improve girls' awareness of the sector (ESCAP 2024). Since 2021, Türkiye has recruited 70 women within its Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure for a 20-day paid internship. Armenia has a six-month paid internship program specifically for female engineering graduates in the road sector. Similar initiatives are beginning in Albania and Serbia as well, and the feedback is promising. Evaluations of the internship programs show improvements in women's interest in the transport sector as well as their transport knowledge and employability. From the sector perspective, these programmes are already pushing greater diversity of ideas into projects and helping to break gender stereotypes held by current workers (WB 2023).

Awards

Awards and initiatives to showcase exemplary female workers in the rail sector can attract more women to work in the sector. They can also convince more girls to study STEM subjects or complete degrees specific to rail sector jobs. At a societal level, awards help to change gender norms and biases concerning women's ability to work in a traditionally male-dominated field (Bohnet 2016). In 2024, CER created the *Women in Rail Award* to honour European rail companies that have prioritized gender equality. The award also has prizes for women who have been impactful leaders in support of gender equality in the rail sector, and women working in rail who have contributed to important innovations in the field.

[4] STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Recruitment procedures

Despite the limits of pipeline issues, there are already women with STEM degrees or other relevant backgrounds that could be contributing to the rail sector today. The challenge lies in finding diverse candidates and improving recruitment procedures to raise the share of female job applicants. The wording and design of job listings, recruitment campaign content and platform used to recruit (e.g. social media) will all impact the gender diversity of the applicant pool (SuM4All 2023). The recruiters themselves will also influence the share of women applying, and it is widely recommended to use female workers to recruit more women.

The International Transport Forum's Corporate Partnership Board working group on gender equality in the transport sector (ITF-CPB), including 29 companies and over 2 million staff globally, identified inclusive language for job advertisements and target setting for diverse recruitment as priority measures (ITF 2019). Over half of European railways are already actively reviewing recruitment procedures with the goal of attracting more women to the sector (CER/ETF 2020). In Australia, Sydney Trains succeeded in increasing its share of female drivers to 18 per cent by broadening recruitment to seek gender diverse candidates and developing a targeted marketing campaign (SuM4All 2023). In 2018, Haramain railway (Saudi Arabia) launched a campaign to recruit the first female train drivers in the country for its new high-speed railway lines, with women having won the right to drive that same year. They received more than 28,000 applications from women to fill 34 openings. This is perhaps the most successful campaign globally in terms of attracting women to the rail sector and shows the value of targeting women specifically in the recruitment process. The Haramain campaign also showcased the importance and responsibility linked to these positions, which coincided with support and admiration among families and society for the women hired, as opposed to the criticism many women face when breaking gender norms (Arab News 2023).

Candidate selection

A diverse candidate pool will not lead to a diverse workforce without considerations on candidate selection procedures and their impact on the share of female hires. The SuM4All survey showed that less than half of transport workers believe it is easy for a woman with the right qualifications to join the transport sector, and only 46 per cent felt they were able to easily attract and hire women within their organization (2023). One method to improve the diversity of candidates noted in the study was blind CV selection, or selecting CVs without knowledge of age, gender, or other personal details. Other research shows that standardizing interview questions and recruitment procedures can help lessen the influence of unconscious gender bias in hiring by supporting recruiters in more accurately comparing and evaluating candidates (Bohnet 2016). It is also recommended to use a diverse panel for interviews, with at least one woman.

Among European rail companies, the most common measure taken to support the employment of female workers is training human resources and managers on gender biases (61%). Over one third of companies set quotas on female employment to increase motivation and efforts to recruit

and hire a diverse workforce (CER/ETF 2020). The ITF-CPB companies also decided to prioritize training on unconscious gender biases to improve candidate selection and retention (ITF 2019).

B. Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce

Hiring more women in rail companies is a critical first step towards gender equality. Yet there remains the challenge of creating a sector in which women can build their careers and flourish in both their professional and private lives. There is growing evidence in other male dominated sectors, such as technology and energy, that women are more likely than men to leave the sector in favour of another (IEA 2022). Ensuring the safety of all workers, including sexual harassment, is the most critical issue to tackle. Retaining female workers also requires shifting working cultures to allow for greater balance between work and family responsibilities. In the transport sector, harassment and violence were identified by the ILO as the leading causes for low female participation, followed by a lack of flexibility (ILO 2013). Last, it is recommended to create structures of support for women entering the field and those attempting to break glass ceilings as they advance in their career. While the recommendations discussed have the aim of greater gender diversity in the rail sector, the result is a safer working environment for all, with better working conditions and greater talent in the workforce. Indeed, it is well documented that organizations with greater gender diversity also have higher levels of employee satisfaction (WB 2024).

Safety and security

Violence against women in the transport sector is a growing and critical issue. Workplace violence is deterring women from entering the sector but also causing women to leave the sector (ESCAP 2024; ILO 2013). It is common that a woman who suffers an act of harassment or violence will leave her job and even the field of work without reporting the person concerned. The highest-risk cases include workers who deal with customers (e.g. passengers) and those who work in isolation due to the hours of work or location. For this reason, it is important for railways to offer safe transport options home for women working after regular work hours. Other important safety and security issues for women in the rail sector include safe restrooms and changing rooms for women and correctly adapted protective equipment.

In 2019, the ILO adopted the first international framework guiding countries on the laws and policies needed to eliminate violence and harassment in the workplace. Forty-four countries have already ratified the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 (C190). The treaty is seen as an essential first step to ensure safe working environments for all. In addition to clearly defining sexual harassment and violence at work, companies should have a zero-tolerance policy that is communicated to all staff and enforced. A system of confidentiality and clear contact points should be established to ensure staff feel safe bringing forward an issue. Those responsible for enforcing the rules need to be properly trained to handle the diverse situations that can arise. Support from leaders in the company is also important to create a safe working environment for all employees (SuM4All 2023; ILO 2013).

Nearly all European rail companies (90%) have policies on harassment and violence in the workplace (CER/ETF 2020). The applied measures can take the form of a code of conduct, a code of practices and ethics, a bullying and harassment policy, etc. In addition, two-thirds of European rail companies are involved in improving working conditions to better support women's safety and health. In Ghana, the urban transport union (GTPCWU) pushed for redesigning personal protective equipment to be suitable for women. The union also succeeded in creating bathrooms and pumping/nursing rooms for women in terminals (SuM4All 2023).

Flexibility

A lack of flexible working conditions concerning the time and length of work as well as the location have been identified as barriers to women working in the transport sector (Ng and Acker 2020). Job flexibility tends to be a predominant concern for women with children that can influence where they choose to work. Offering flexible working conditions can be a low-cost and effective method to attract and retain more women in the rail sector for certain occupations.

In Europe, over 70 per cent of rail companies surveyed allow flexible working hours, 53 per cent allow staff to work at reduced hours per week, and 40 per cent allow for teleworking[5] (CER/ETF 2020). Among all the initiatives companies are planning to implement to boost female representation, teleworking stands out as the most popular. Specifically, 18 per cent of companies are in the process of setting up the option for staff to work from home, which will raise teleworking availability in European rail companies to nearly 60 per cent. It is also important to note that the study is based on 2018 data, and teleworking practices worldwide have increased since the Covid pandemic.

Among the global transport workforce, flexible working conditions and childcare support were identified as important considerations impacting women's participation in the sector (SuM4All 2023). The study showed that 76 per cent of companies have already implemented this recommendation, making it the most common tactic applied for attracting a diverse workforce. One of the three strongest recommendations for attracting more women to the freight transport sector in ESCAP's study of 45 countries, is improving flexibility through hybrid work models that allow working from home. In Singapore, the government provides a subsidy for companies investing in virtual infrastructure to promote flexible working conditions nationally (ESCAP 2024).

Parental leave

Parenthood has been identified as a key explanation for women leaving the global transport workforce, since the current workplace norms are often not cohesive with balancing family responsibilities (SuM4All 2023). Studies within the private sector on retaining female workers have shown parental leave to be a critical factor. The act of increasing the length of existing maternity and paternity leave was sufficient for some companies to successfully remove the

[5] Teleworking is a synonym to remote working and includes any job performed outside of the office.

gender gap in employee retention after starting a family (Bohnet 2016). Research shows that parental leave, and in particular establishing or prolonging paternity leave, has significant ramifications for gender equality throughout all levels of society (Michael Kaufman 2019). Offering greater job flexibility during pregnancy and the first months of work after maternity leave can improve the retention of female employees and improve their work performance during that time since it helps to reduce the stresses of balancing work and family responsibilities (SuM4All 2023). Half of European rail companies already have reintegration measures in place following maternity leave to ease women's transition back to work (CER/ETF 2020).

Legislation changes should be made with the cultural context of the country in mind. The SuM4All survey showed in regions like India, gender equality policies can be a barrier preventing women's access to jobs in transport (2023). Laws enforcing maternity leave can cause companies to avoid hiring women for financial reasons, or for technical positions that tend to be held by a single person. Funding parental-leave by the government instead of companies or prolonging paternity leave are measures that could help to reduce the mentioned gender bias in hires, but further research is needed to adapt recommendations to a given country.

Childcare

Support for childcare is another foundational building block needed to give women and men the same professional opportunities in rail. This can consist of helping to pay for daycare or offering an on-site facility. In the former case, the government might need to first invest in establishing affordable, high-quality childcare facilities. Similarly, government investment in infrastructure and facilities for senior citizens can impact women's availability to join the workforce (ESCAP 2024).

The ageing population in Southeast Asia means the need for care services will be growing in future decades, which makes this a pivotal moment to invest in a formal, high-quality care sector, with social benefits and affordable rates (OECD 2024). Reinforcing the care industry would allow for stable economic development, improving the quality and working conditions of those already in the care sector and allowing all women the possibility to fully participate in the economy regardless of family duties. However, there remains a strong cultural preference in the region for female family members to care for children and the elderly, which needs to be addressed for a formal care economy to be developed and used.

In addition to shifting cultural expectations that women care for children and the elderly within their family, the three pillars that need to be addressed to improve childcare are: availability, affordability, and quality (WB 2022). Facilities need to have enough room and long enough hours to effectively serve the workforce. The cost needs to be low enough or adjusted by income to allow people in all occupations and income brackets to benefit. Lastly, the facilities must be high quality so that they are contributing to infants' wellbeing and development. Some important quality factors to consider are ensuring a low ratio of educators-to-children and limited group sizes (maximum of 20 children per group). Care facilities should also be required to regularly provide data and information on their functioning to monitor quality.

Nearly one-third of European rail companies support staff in finding childcare facilities, 21 per cent help organize care for family members and 7 per cent offer childcare within the company (CER/ETF 2020). In addition, certain companies offer ad-hoc childcare support during school holidays or circumstances (e.g. ÖBB, Austria; HR Rail – SNCB – Infrabel, Belgium; SNCF, France).

Policies can set the framework for providing flexibility, parental leave and childcare support to the rail workforce, but they need support from within railway companies to be impactful. A large-scale example of this is the generous paternity leave that has existed in Japan for over thirty years, that was used by less than 5 per cent of fathers up until 2017 (Statista 2024). Similarly, if flexible working is allowed but not encouraged by management and not used by staff, it is not likely to retain women working in the sector.

Career development

For women working in the rail sector, a lack of fair career development alongside their male colleagues, including salaries, promotions and assigned tasks, can push women to leave the sector. Restricted career development, including glass ceilings, was identified as a key issue limiting the share of women in the rail workforce (SuM4All 2023). The share of female managers in the transport sector is positively correlated to the share of women working at all levels in the sector (Ng and Acker 2020), which highlights the importance of breaking the glass ceiling and ensuring more women can reach leadership roles in rail. Evidence shows that increasing the share of women in decision making leads to greater innovation and financial performance, in addition to creating safer working environments, which is a key goal for retaining female employees (WB 2023b).

One of the biggest levers to support fair career development for men and women is transparency with regards to salary levels, raises, bonuses, hires, and promotions. Clear procedures and requirements for promotions are particularly important for getting more women into management positions as they reduce the impact of unconscious gender bias on decisions (Bohnet 2016; Ng and Acker 2020). Support needs to be cultivated in leadership and managers to ensure the effectiveness of transparency measures. Initiatives to reduce the gender pay gap are also important for fair career progression and are being developed by two-thirds of European rail companies (CER/ETF 2020).

Changing mindsets among workers in the sector so that everyone understands the benefits of women joining their team is critical for female staff retention. Eliminating gender biases and discrimination among all levels of a company can allow for a healthy working environment for all and fair career progression for women. It should be communicated that a diverse workforce will allow the company and the economy to grow and thrive in the long term, as well as generate innovation and improved productivity within a given team of workers.

Creating networks to connect women in the field and developing mentoring programs for women are common recommendations for all sectors working towards a more inclusive and diverse

workforce. The gender equality working group of the ITF-CPB identified frameworks for mentorship as a priority area to help improve women's career development in transport jobs (ITF 2019). In the United Kingdom, Women in Rail provides networking opportunities and other forms of support to the female rail workforce.

Supporting gender equality measures

For the successful implementation of the measures included in this report, it is strongly advised to hire a designated person or team to coordinate and follow-up on each item. The Designated Diversity Office (DDO), as it is often called, can serve as a safe contact point for staff to approach with any concerns related to discrimination or working conditions. The DDO should meet regularly with senior and middle management to give feedback on creating a more inclusive working environment and retaining a diverse workforce. They can also serve to connect any internal diversity work with national or global working groups on gender diversity in rail, as sharing knowledge will allow countries to more efficiently diversify the rail workforce. In the future, as other diversity issues are potentially prioritized concerning age, race, sexuality, socio-economic status, disabilities, etc., this position can continue to improve the diversity of the rail workforce (SuM4All 2023).

Nearly half of European rail companies already have a person or team responsible for ensuring equal opportunities for men and women within the company (46%; CER/ETF 2020). Concerning the equality officers, examples include a single contact person for all issues of unfair treatment (ÖBB, Austria), representatives in each department (Infrastructure of Serbian Railways JSC, Serbia), or regular discussions with trade unions about gender equality (SNCF, France). In the United States, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) hired a Chief of Equality Diversity and Inclusion in 2020 to reinforce its existing efforts to attract and retain a diverse workforce. The officer was given full support from leadership in COTA and encouraged to question all existing methods and structures to build inclusive practices at all levels of the company, including recruitment, hiring, and career development. Some of the first measures taken were redrafting of company policies using inclusive language and better support for paid parental leave (SuM4All 2023).

Proper support and motivation for gender equality measures requires quantifiable targets and timelines. Creating public rankings of data, such as the share of women in the rail sector, is a proven method to motivate change and accelerate advancements towards gender equality (Bohnet 2016). Over two-thirds of European rail companies publish regular reports about women in the rail workforce with the goal of promoting inclusivity in the sector (CER/ETF 2020). Similarly, creating initiatives for a group of countries or companies to all reach a target by a given time (e.g. 30% women in rail by 2030), can create healthy peer pressure that expedites change.

C. Gender mainstreaming in rail transport ministries

Gender mainstreaming within rail transport ministries involves considering how each policy and project has the potential to impact men and women differently. Using a gender lens in all work of the ministry will determine whether the government is improving or exacerbating gender equality in the rail workforce. Depending on the topic and the gender knowledge of staff, it can be beneficial to seek guidance from external gender experts, gender-specialized civil society organizations (CSOs) or local representatives. One important application of gender mainstreaming in rail ministries is *Gender Responsive Budgeting* (GRB), which is the analysis of how government spending will impact gender equality and women's empowerment. Adjustments should be made accordingly to best use public funds (UN Women 2019).

In the process of supporting diversity in the rail workforce, the speed of progress will depend in part on how well information is shared on successes and failures between organizations, nations, and sectors. To facilitate the sharing of best practices and data, it is advisable to create or join initiatives, networks and/or working groups on gender diversity in the rail sector. Groups can be organized at the national level or international level. Equality initiatives are an excellent opportunity to bring the private sector and public sector together, as well as CSOs, unions, local community actors, and diverse ministries that each play a role in shaping gender norms (e.g. ministries of health, employment, education, etc.). Remarkable Women Who Move the World is a new project that serves to connect women working in the public transport sector to national and international audiences to better communicate the challenges they face and showcase their achievements. The work is led by the International Transport Workers' Federation and Women Mobilize Women, and covers workers in Brazil, India, Indonesia and Uganda.

Data

Understanding gender equality issues and working towards a more inclusive rail sector starts with data. Without measuring the problem, there is no information on what needs to be fixed and what policies are moving the needle in the right direction. The first data gaps to fill should be the share of women working the rail sector, with breakdowns by position and hierarchical level (e.g. manager) in as much detail as possible to capture the horizontal and vertical segregation of the workforce. It is also advisable to survey the population on perceptions of gender norms to benchmark progress and guide interventions from public and civil society organizations promoting gender equality in schools and communities. The following data gap priorities will depend on the selected policy priorities. Collecting data with existing surveys, such as labour force surveys, is an excellent method to reduce collection costs and ensure the continuity of the data in the long term. It is advisable to review existing data sources internationally and within different ministries of the country to reduce the burden of data collection. For example, the ministry of education might be able to provide data on transport-related education program completion by gender. Internal reviews can also reveal potential sources of gender-disaggregated data that is already collected, or a low-cost possibility to collect such data in the future. Both quantitative data and

workforce surveys are instrumental to understanding the key challenges preventing female participation in the rail workforce for a given country.

Legislation

Gender equality laws, such as those shown in Tables 2 and 3, provide the framework needed for women's empowerment through all levels of society. Evidence shows that laws help shift gender norms, since they define what is acceptable (Bohnet 2016). In addition to promoting gender equality through legislation, any laws prohibiting female employment should be repealed. In 2022, Azerbaijan improved women's access to rail transport jobs by repealing 674 legal restrictions preventing women from working in the sector (WB 2023). Each law must be considered in the cultural and economic context of the country and companies concerned. Indeed, for some countries, equity laws have the potential to inadvertently reinforce gender discrimination. For example, requiring all employers to provide paid maternity leave can cause less women to be hired, as was revealed in the SuM4All survey of the global transport workforce (2023).

Box 1. Gender equality among railway users

Although the focus of this report is gender equality in the ASEAN rail workforce, the topic is also connected to gender equality among railway users. The main barriers to women using railways are safety, affordability, infrastructure and first/last-mile connectivity (WB 2023b). This box provides a short summary of some of the most important policy recommendations to improve female ridership.

- **Safety and security** remain the largest roadblocks limiting women's use of rail and public transport. Facilitating the reporting and timely response to sexual harassment and violence in and near railways lines is the most critical step to take. Public awareness campaigns on the topic are also recommended to shift cultural norms and behaviours. Rail staff should be trained to correctly respond to such incidents and measures should be put in place to facilitate communication with law enforcement when needed.
- Subsidies for women can directly remove the barrier of **affordability**, and improve women and girls' access to education, health care and economic opportunities.
- **Infrastructure** is often lacking in consideration for women's travel needs, as well as those for elderly people or people with reduced mobility. For example, there should be ease of movement in train stations (e.g. elevators) and accorded space within trains for strollers, wheelchairs, or groceries. Bathrooms should include a changing area for infants that is accessible to both sexes.
- **First/last-mile connectivity** to rail can largely determine women's ridership. Ensuring safe, affordable and efficient transport connections to rail stations will improve accessibility for women and all users.

IV. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy recommendations for improving gender equality in the rail sector within the pipeline and recruitment, candidate selection, safety and security, work-life balance, and career development. There are also recommendations for gender mainstreaming within rail ministries, including work to improve gender-disaggregated data and gender equality legislation. The measures are based on the literature review in the previous section and the ESCAP survey results on the main challenges to improving the share of women in the rail workforce. Policy actions are derived from countries with similar challenges to ASEAN member states as much as possible. Any international recommendations used are adapted to best fit the cultural and logistical context of Southeast Asia. For a more detailed explanation of a given recommendation, please see the corresponding section above, which is organized under the same titles.

Recruitment

- Encourage women working in rail to speak about career opportunities in the sector and STEM jobs more generally in primary and secondary schools as well as universities.
  Expand recruitment channels to include those that target female candidates.
    - Universities or social media gender advocate groups can be good starting points.
    - Social media can be very cost effective and impactful at raising awareness among girls and women concerning job opportunities in the rail sector.
  - Encourage more representation of women in recruitment teams
    - This can involve sending female workers to external recruiting events or using female staff as guides for visits with potential candidates.
  - Rewrite job listings with gender-neutral language and be transparent about salaries and working conditions.
    - Web-based tools can be used to help identify and correct text to make it more gender-neutral.
    - Information should be provided about job flexibility rules, parental leave and childcare support as early as possible in the recruitment process.
    - Transparent language when speaking about salaries and working conditions is important to attract women and to reduce the gender pay gap. Salary ranges and other conditions that might need to be negotiated will deter women more so than men from applying and have been shown to benefit men more than women among selected candidates (Bohnet 2016).
  - Offer training opportunities specifically for women.
    - The targeted audience for such training might need to be surveyed to understand what time frame and location would allow the highest attendance, since women are more likely to have domestic burdens constraining their availability.
    - If affordability is preventing women from accessing the training, consider subsidizing the cost of training for women.

    - Positions that require new skill sets are prime opportunities to fill the employment gaps with women.
  - Create awards to showcase exemplary female workers in the rail sector.

Selection

- Standardize recruitment and interview procedures, including questions asked candidates, to help remove bias from evaluations.
- Use blind CV selection methods.
    - This involves selecting CVs without having access to the name, gender, ethnicity or age of the applicants.
- Set quotas on the share of female applicants.
    - For example, require 50 per cent of applicants selected to be female in the first iteration of the selection process. Quotas at the first stages of recruitment can push an organization to improve its candidate pool and lead to a more diverse workforce, while avoiding the backlash that can come from quotas on the share of women hired.
- Require gender bias awareness training for HR hiring staff and managers to reduce its impact on candidate selection. Information sessions on the value and benefits of a gender diverse workforce are equally important to shift existing perspectives and motivate change.
    - UN Women has created a free e-learning module on Gender Equality in Transportation, which could be used to improve awareness of gender issues in the rail sector for HR, managers and general staff.
- Use diverse interview panels to reduce bias in candidate assessments and to attract more diverse candidates.

Safety and security

- Establish clear protocols to handle sexual harassment and designate a contact person to support and guide victims.
    - The most effective policies are zero-tolerance sexual harassment policies, which usually entail the termination of anyone who commits a verified act of sexual harassment.
    - It is advisable, particularly when using a zero-tolerance policy, to give clear explanations and trainings to all staff on what sexual harassment is and the forms it can take.
    - At the national level, Prevention and Response Protocols or Codes of Conduct can be developed as a guide to reduce gender-based violence (GBV).
- Create an easy way for all workers to signal for help if they feel in danger, particularly in public areas like trains and stations and in isolated work locations.
    - The danger can come from riders, customers, crew members or other staff.
    - There should be a protocol to quickly contact law enforcement if needed.
    - Mobile applications can be a cost-efficient way to facilitate reporting of GBV, including options for anonymous reporting. However, access to smartphones in

the general population should be considered to ensure staff or riders can all use the application.

- Ensure that all stations are well lit.
- Invest in clean and safe restrooms for both sexes in all areas where railway employees work.
    - Note that this recommendation is an important point to invest in before women are hired in certain male-dominated roles or departments. Lacking infrastructure can prevent managers from choosing women since that would require greater spending and can prevent women from feeling welcome and choosing to apply.
- Prepare correctly adapted uniforms and protective clothing for women before they start working in positions for which they are required.
    - Even if protective clothing and equipment exists for women, sometimes they have been very poorly designed, which limits their use. If equipment exists, it is advisable to survey current female workers to assess whether such items need to be redesigned.
- Build safe and convenient changing rooms for both sexes as needed by occupation.
- Make available private rooms for pumping or nursing as well as refrigerators and establish an agreement allowing time for women to use those facilities during the working day.
- Reinforce the security of parking areas if they are used by staff.

Work-life balance: flexibility, parental leave and childcare support

- Offer teleworking, flexible hours, and/or options to work part-time whenever possible for a given occupation.
    - As innovations and technology are allowing increasingly more jobs to be done remotely, working from home should be allowed whenever possible to attract a more diverse workforce.
    - Any rules or procedures to request teleworking, flexible hours and part-time work should be clearly communicated and transparent to all workers.
- Invest in virtual infrastructure for teleworking.
    - To offer remote working, there might need to be investments in virtual infrastructure and the development of new norms in ways of working.
    - Governments can also establish subsidies for companies that invest in virtual infrastructure with the goal of increasing staff capacity to work remotely.
- Establish or prolong paid maternity and paternity leave.
    - Note that maternity leave has been shown to deter companies from hiring women when the cost falls on the company. This problem can be reduced by government funding of parental leave and/or prolonging paternity leave to reduce the gender gap in parental leave costs.
- Verify sufficient government spending on childcare and senior citizen facilities to ensure they are high-quality and affordable.
    - In the absence of public sector childcare, employers should offer an on-site facility or help pay for care from a private sector provider to all staff.

- Encouragement and support from management for staff to take parental leave and benefit from flexible working arrangements.
    - A simple and effective way for managers to show support is to lead by example and use the flexible working arrangements themselves or take their full parental leave.
    - Verbal support from all levels of the company leadership can also help influence the uptake of work-life balance measures by staff.

Career development

- Make salary levels, raises, promotion requirements and decisions as transparent as possible for all positions.
- Require railway companies to share data on salaries of employees by position and by gender.
- Favour concrete metrics to help managers avoid unconscious gender bias tendencies when evaluating employees' performance.
- Policies or enforce existing laws on equal pay and non-discrimination in the workplace based on gender.
- Establish an equal opportunity plan (EOP).
    - An EOP involves setting targets to improve female representation, particularly in management positions, as well as an action plan to achieve the objective and support fair career progression regardless of gender. EOPs can help to close gender gaps in the rail sector not only by the actions they require, but also by the dedication to gender equality that they signal to potential hires. Women are more likely to seek employment and build their careers in a company that is openly and actively supporting fairness in salaries and promotions. EOPs usually are evaluated and refined at regular intervals, such as biannually.
- Create or join networks to connect and support women working rail.
    - Networks can be at the local, national, regional or global levels, each serving different purposes.
    - Women on the Move Asia are a network and platform working actively to improve women's ridership experience in Asia and support women working in the transport sector.
- Design or join mentor programs that help women advance in the rail sector.
    - Allow all interested female staff access to a mentor.
    - Much like quotas, these programs are important to allow women to break into male-dominated positions or companies in rail and for them to be able to advance in their careers at a similar pace as their male colleagues. The gap will not close overnight, but networking and mentoring can help move the needle.
- Allot time during working hours for team building exercises among employees.
    - Doing these exercises during work hours allows all employees to participate, regardless of their family responsibilities.
    - Opportunities to socialize can facilitate sharing perspectives and ideas and help to break down stereotypes.

    - This can also help to even the playing field with regards to networking and career advancement.

Supporting gender equality measures

- Hire a Designated Diversity Officer (DDO) or team.
    - A DDO is a contact point for staff on all issues related to discrimination and working conditions, as well as a coordinator with HR and management overseeing the successful implementation of gender diversity recommendations.
    - They also serve to facilitate the sharing of best practices through involvement in national and global networks or working groups on gender diversity in rail.
- Establish clear, quantifiable targets for any steps taken to improve gender diversity in rail to motivate change and properly assess progress.
    - Example: increasing the share of female recruits to 30 per cent in one year.
    - The target should be realistic so that it can be possible to attain in the associated time frame.
    - It is important for all staff involved in the given target to understand the value of gender diversity and feel supported by management to push for change.
- Include training on appropriate workplace behaviour and on the organization's dedication to promoting gender equality during onboarding of new staff.
    - Onboarding is also an important moment to provide information on rules about flexible working and the sexual harassment policy.

Gender mainstreaming in rail transport ministries

- Analyze all rail projects and policies with a gender lens to consider the different impacts on men and women.
    - External gender experts, gender-specialized CSOs, or local representatives impacted by the project should be consulted for this task as needed.
- Apply Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) to public spending on rail.
    - GRB is the analysis of how government spending will impact gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Organize diverse panels for all events and conferences (e.g. at least one woman or gender parity).
    - Ministries can make a public commitment to only organize and attend events that meet this requirement.
- Participate in gender equality initiatives, networks, and working groups for the rail sector.
- Push for improvements in legislation to better support gender equality.
    - Ministries can review the tables of gender equality laws included in this report as a starting point.

Gender data

- Identify and fill priority data gaps for measuring gender equality in the rail sector.

- Disaggregate data by sex whenever possible in existing data collections and analyze the data to guide public spending and planning.
- Collaborate with other ministries (e.g. health, labour, education) to share existing data and the burden of filling data gaps.
- Make use of gender-disaggregated data published by international organizations.
- Analyze gender pay gaps to understand their causes, and take action to address gaps.
    - A useful guide for analysing gender pay gaps has already been developed by Male Champions of Change, of Australia's Sex Discrimination Commission.
- Survey the rail workforce at regular intervals to gain insights on how the sector is evolving and whether the issues identified are resolved.

CONCLUSION

If the rail sector is going to successfully grow and replace higher-polluting forms of transport, then it will need to be attractive to both sexes to ensure a stable and innovative workforce in the long term. Attracting more women to the rail sector is essential for the sector to avoid staff shortages in the future, but it is also critical to bring the diversity of perspectives and skills needed to respond to the challenges of climate change. Additionally, the low share of women working in the rail sector equates to women's transport needs and priorities left largely unconsidered in planning and designing railway lines and stations. If women cannot use the new Lao People's Democratic Republic-China rail line to the same extent as men, this will create gaps in access to education, employment, health services, etc. The societal ramifications for transport are often quite extensive and impactful. Gender-responsive transport planning thanks to a diverse workforce will help rail companies better respond to users' needs, expand their market and increase the frequency of ridership.

As the rail sector is currently being transformed by the clean energy transition, including new technologies, jobs and ways of working, right now is an ideal moment to shift towards inclusivity and sustainability by diversifying the workforce. While ASEAN member states have already taken steps to increase women's economic participation, there remain important gaps to fill, starting with data on the share of women working in the rail sector. Many of the policy recommendations listed here are low-cost and quick to implement, such as recruiting with female workers, blind CV selection, or offering flexible working arrangements. Any time, energy and money that is invested in measures to support higher female representation in the ASEAN rail sector will benefit all workers in the sector and all railway users.

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ANNEX. Questionnaire Assessing Gender Diversity in the ASEAN Rail Sector

This questionnaire has been prepared under the joint ASEAN ESCAP project on leveraging the Trans Asian railway network for more resilient transport and logistics in ASEAN and beyond.

The information requested will be strictly used for preparing the study that will recommend

policies on enhancing the role of women in rail sector in ASEAN countries.

I. Gender mainstreaming in rail departments[6]

1. Does your government have a national gender strategy?
    a. If yes, does your ministry contribute to the strategy's implementation?
    b. What are the gender priority topics of the government?

2. Does your ministry consider gender aspects in rail policies or projects? a. If yes,
    i. Please explain any protocols or procedures used.
    ii. Is gender considered for *all* policies/projects?
    iii. Has your ministry or department experienced any challenges integrating gender equality into rail policies or projects?
    b. If not, are there plans to integrate gender into the design of rail policies and projects?

3. Does your ministry/ department consider gender aspects when developing transport policies and projects budgets? If yes, please elaborate:

4. What do you consider to be your railway department/ ministries' priority gender issues when designing policies/projects? Please provide details (e.g. safety, workforce, travel behaviour :

5. Does your national government collect gender-disaggregated data related to rail (e.g. passenger-kilometers, workforce participation)?
    a. If yes, please list the data coverage: _____ b. If not, are there plans to collect gender-disaggregated data related to rail?

6. Have you done surveys of women in the rail workforce? If yes, please briefly explain the name, coverage and objective of the survey.

II. Attracting and retaining women in rail

7. Are there any female-targeted training programs within the rail sector in your country?
    a. If yes, please briefly describe the programs.
    b. Do any of the programs offer subsidized costs or scholarships for girls and women?

8. Are there particular measures taken to recruit more women in your department (e.g. gender-neutral job descriptions, diversity in recruiters and panels, blind CV selection, quotas)?

9. Does your ministry/department have a specific financial and human resources dedicated to promoting gender equality in the rail sector?

10. Does your rail department/ministry have a dedicated team or person focusing on gender equality?

[6] Many of the questions in the gender mainstreaming section are derived from the Gender Analysis Toolkit for Transport created by the International Transport Form of the OECD.

11. Is there any training within rail department on gender bias awareness and discrimination (e.g. for managers, human resources, staff, onboarding, etc.)?
    a. If yes, please elaborate: _____

12. Are there any networking groups or mentoring programs working to support gender equality and women's career advancement in the rail sector?
    a. If yes, please elaborate: _____

13. Does your country have a law requiring equal pay for equal work?
    a. Is this law enforced/supported within the rail department/ministry? If yes, through what measures?

14. Does your rail department/ ministry offer childcare support to its staff?
    a. If yes, please elaborate:

15. Does your department/ ministry have protocols to handle sexual harassment?

16. At the national level, is there guidance on responding to gender-based violence (e.g. a Prevention and Response Protocol or a Code of Conduct)?
    a. If yes, please elaborate:

III. Gender-disaggregated data

RAIL MINISTRY ANALYSIS

Note, please provide the following data in a flat file format in a separate excel file. If the data is available by year, please provide past data.

17. What is the number and share of female employees within your rail department/ ministry? Please provide this data for the total ministry, senior management, and middle management, with breakdowns by position if available.

18. Does your rail department/ministry allow part-time employment?
    a. If yes, what is the share of employees who work part-time by sex?

19. Does your department/ ministry allow working from home and how many days per week?
    a. If yes, what is the share of employees who work from home at least one day a week by sex?

20. What is the average annual salary for the total ministry, senior management, middle management, with breakdowns by sex and full-time/part-time status if available?

21. What is the average career length (in years) of staff working in the rail department ministry by sex

22. Does rail department/ ministry offer paid maternity and paternity leave?
    a. If yes, what is the length of each:
    b. Please provide the share of women and share of men that used their allotted parental leave if data is available.

RAIL INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

For the above data questions (17-22), please provide in a separate excel file the responses for the entire rail sector or for all public rail companies if data is available.