



**SEARCH** strengthens legal and institutional mechanisms for the promotion and the protection of the rights of children, ethnic minorities and migrant workers in Southeast Asia. Working with three regional partners, as well as national civil society organizations, the project encompasses seven countries: Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Laos and Timor Leste.

*SEARCH programming is funded by the Southeast Asia Regional Program of the Canadian International Development Agency.*

### A Chronology of Human Rights Development in ASEAN

Event	Date	Significance
1. The establishment of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines under the country's 1987 Constitution	Feb 1987	The Philippines was the first ASEAN country to establish a national human rights institution, thereby setting a precedent for others to follow.
1. The foundation of FORUM-Asia	Dec 1991	FORUM-Asia is a membership-based human rights organization committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights including the right to development. It has been instrumental in building the network of civil society organization to parallel the human rights architecture created by ASEAN.
1. The adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action by the World Conference on Human Rights	June 1993	The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action emphasized the need to <i>“consider the possibility of establishing regional and sub-regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights where they do not exist”</i> .
1. The 26th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, Singapore	June 1993	The ASEAN foreign ministers, in support of the Vienna Declaration, agreed that ASEAN should consider the establishment of an appropriate regional mechanism on human rights.
1. The creation of a National Commission on Human Rights in Indonesia	June 1993	Presidential Decree Number 50 creates The National Commission on Human Rights of Indonesia, widely thought to be a response to the intense international pressure mounted on the GOI in the wake of the 1991 massacre in East Timor.
1. The creation of the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism	July 1995	The Law Association of the Asia and Pacific Region set up a Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, which since then has acted as the facilitator of regular interchange between the “community of experts” and senior officials on human rights issues and capacity development.

Event	Date	Significance
1. <b>The operationalization of CIDA's Southeast Asia Fund for Institutional and Legal Development Project</b>	<b>April 1996</b>	<b>SEAFILD was a small project funding mechanism for supporting innovative initiatives in human rights, democratic development and good governance challenges. It ended in 2004</b>
1. ASEAN's adoption of its Vision 2020	Dec 1997	Amongst other things this vision statement committed ASEAN to creating a "community of caring societies . . . where civil society is empowered and gives special attention to the disadvantaged, disabled and marginalized and where social justice and the rule of law reign".
1. The gazettement of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act	Sept 1999	Malaysia was the third ASEAN country to set up a national human rights commission.
1. The emergence of the Southeast Asian Committee for Advocacy (SEACA)	Sept 1999	A meeting of national networks of NGOs and People's Organizations from eight countries in the region formed SEACA to focus on advocacy and capacity building of civil society organizations in Southeast Asia
1. The establishment of the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking	June 2000	UNIAP's aim is to facilitate a stronger and more coordinated response to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.
1. The 33 <sup>rd</sup> meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Thailand	July 20	The Working Group submitted, for ASEAN consideration, a draft agreement for the establishment of an ASEAN human rights commission.
1. The establishment of the Thai National Human Rights Commission	July 2001	The Thai National Human Rights Commission was constituted in July 2001 under the Human Rights Legislation Act of 1999. Thailand was the last of the four ASEAN member countries with NHRIs to take this step.
1. A meeting of the Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare	Aug 2001	This meeting adopted a Declaration on the Rights of Children
1. The signing of the COMMIT MOU by six member countries which made UNIAP (United Nations Inter-Agency Project Against Trafficking) its secretariat	Oct 2004	The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT signed an MOU declaring that they would "continue advocating the goal of eradicating any situation where human beings are traded, bought, sold, abducted, placed and maintained in exploitative situations depriving them of their most fundamental inalienable human rights."

Event	Date	Significance
1. The 10 <sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Vientiane	Nov 2004	To implement the ASEAN Vision 2020, the ASEAN heads of state adopted the Vientiane Action Programme, which called amongst other things for adoption of an MOU to establish a network among existing human rights mechanisms, promoter education and public awareness on human rights, elaborate an ASEAN instrument on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers, and establish an ASEAN commission on the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children.
<b>1. The Operationalization of CIDA's Southeast Asian Regional Cooperation in Human Development (SEARCH) Project</b>	<b>Dec 2004</b>	<b>SEARCH is a partnership with FORUM-Asia, UNIAP and the Working Group for a Human Rights Mechanism aimed at promoting human rights and the rule of law in Southeast Asia. It is scheduled to end in December 2010.</b>
1. Founding of the Task Force on ASEAN Migrant Workers (TF-AMW)	Apr 2006	The TF-AMW is a network of trade unions, human rights non-governmental organizations and migrant worker associations. Its aim is to support the development of a rights-based framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers, in line with ASEAN's Vientiane Action Program.
1. The possibility of an ASEAN Human Rights Body (AHRB)	Jan 2007	An Eminent Persons Group (EPG) comprised of former heads of state and ministers working on the ASEAN Charter broach the possibility of the Charter including an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism.
1. ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers	Feb 2007	This declaration by the ASEAN Heads of State sets out a rights-based framework for protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers, including the obligations of both sending countries of origins and receiving countries where migrant workers are employed.
1. An ASEAN Foreign Ministers Retreat in Cambodia	Mar 2007	The foreign ministers decided that the HLTF could include a draft enabling provision in the ASEAN Charter to create a human rights commission as an organ of ASEAN.
1. The first Regional Consultation on ASEAN and Human Rights organized by FORUM-Asia in Kuala Lumpur	Aug 2007	During this consultation, civil society actors came together to set up a Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights (TF-AHR) – a network of civil society organizations under the Solidarity for Asia People's Advocacy (SAPA) Working Group on ASEAN.
1. The 3 <sup>rd</sup> ASEAN + Civil Society Conference in Singapore	Nov 2007	This conference launched the process of drafting an ASEAN People's Charter that would embody the shared and collective aspirations of the peoples of the region.
Event	Date	Significance

1. The 13 <sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit	Dec 2007	This 13 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the ASEAN heads of state was highly significant in that it adopted an ASEAN Charter which made ASEAN a legal entity and established norms for the behaviour of member states towards their people - democracy, human rights, the rule of law and social justice. As well it committed the Association to the creation of a human rights body.
1. The establishment of an ASEAN National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) Forum, now known as the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Forum	Jan 2008	This forum, made up of the NHRIs of Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, seeks to foster collective consultation amongst the four NHRIs on measures to respond to human rights of common concern and with inter-border implications.
1. The convening of national workshops on the ASEAN Human Rights Body	May to July 2008	The civil society inputs of these national consultations were submitted to a meeting of the ASEAN Ministers of Foreign Affairs which took place in Singapore in July 2008.
1. Ratification of the ASEAN Charter with the provision of Article 14 promising the establishment of a "human rights body"	Oct 2008	The Charter was finally ratified when approved by the Government of Indonesia.
1. The creation of the Solidarity for ASEAN Peoples Advocacy (SAPA) convened primarily by FORUM-Asia and SEACA	Dec 2009	SAPA is a network of CSOs working on ASEAN related issues such as human rights, peace and conflict, child rights and indigenous people's rights.
1. The launch of the ASEAN People's Centre now known as the Southeast Asian People's Centre	Jan 2009	The APC was established to be a regional hub for civil society to engage with the new "people-oriented" ASEAN on issues like human rights, democratization, and vulnerable groups.
1. Ratification of the ASEAN instrument establishing the ASEAN Intergovernmental Human Rights Commission (AICHR)	Mar 2010	Although the AIHRC is considered to be a weak institution by international standards with no authority to issue binding decisions or carry out investigative visits, the very fact of its creation is seen as a step forward.
1. Formation of an ASEAN Women's Caucus, now known as the Southeast Asia Women's Centre	April 2010	In February 2009 the women civil society activists and human rights defenders from the ASEAN region came together as a Women's Caucus to ensure that women's human rights issues and concerns are reflected, integrated and implemented in all Southeast Asia countries, including within the ASEAN structures and processes.

Event	Date	Significance
1. Establishment of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Women and Children (ACWC)	Apr 2010	The establishment of this second regional human rights commission has raised the subsidiary issue – that is whether the ACWC should be independent of or subsidiary to the AIHRC.
1. The establishment of a Human Rights Resource Centre for ASEAN	July 2010	The HRRCA is a Jakarta based institution linked to a university-based network. It will be able to provide research, education and training support to the AICHR.