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**MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS**

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**BEIJING DECLARATION AND  
PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

**BRUNEI DARUSSALAM'S  
NATIONAL REPORT  
2020 – 2024**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
AGC	Attorney General's Chambers
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination Against Women
DCD	Department of Community Development
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
LegCo	Legislative Council
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
MIB	<i>Melayu Islam Beraja</i> (Malay Islamic Monarchy)
MKIS	Majlis Kebangsaan Isu Sosial (National Council of Social Issues)
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
NCWBD	National Council of Women Brunei Darussalam
POA	National Plan of Action on Women
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RCYPNP	Register of Child and Young Persons in Need of Protection
RWD	Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SKN	National Welfare System ( <i>Sistem Kebajikan Negara</i> )
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics
Wawasan 2035	Brunei Darussalam Vision 2035
WPPL	Women's Political Participation and Leadership in Brunei Darussalam
VAW	Violence Against Women

# INTRODUCTION

1. The Government of Brunei Darussalam remains steadfast in its dedication to upholding the principles outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Brunei Darussalam has demonstrated significant strides in advancing the development and empowerment of women both domestically and internationally. This report not only outlines the measures taken to promote women's advancement in alignment with the BPfA but also highlights initiatives geared towards realizing the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and our national vision, Wawasan Brunei 2035.

2. Data included in this report has been sourced from various ministries and government agencies, including the Brunei Darussalam Voluntary National Review Report (VNR) 2023 from the Prime Minister's Office, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Brunei Darussalam from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brunei Darussalam Key Indicators (BDKI) 2023 from the Department of Statistics and the Department of Economic Planning and Statistics under the Ministry of Finance and Economy, Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (BDSY) 2022 from the Department of Economic Planning and Statistics (Depts) under the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Report 2013 – Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam's Report on Women's Political Participation and Leadership (WPPL) 2023 from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and findings from the Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam, conducted by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and concluded in 2023. As a signatory to the CEDAW and committed to the pledges outlined in the BPfA, Brunei Darussalam reaffirms its dedication to the development and empowerment of women, ensuring the protection of their rights.

## SECTION ONE: HIGHLIGHTS

3. Brunei Darussalam holds steadfast to its longstanding commitment recognizing the pivotal role of women in the nation's development. This ethos is enshrined in policies aimed at fostering their active and equitable participation across various sectors. Over the years, significant strides have been made towards advancing women's empowerment, a cornerstone of our national agenda.
4. With women constituting 47.2% of the population as of 2023, their empowerment is deemed essential for unleashing the full potential of our development endeavours. Since 2009, the promotion and safeguarding of women's rights have been overseen by a dedicated Special Committee on Family Institution, Women, and Children, operating under the auspices of the National Council on Social Issues.
5. Brunei Darussalam has witnessed notable progress in elevating women to leadership and decision-making roles across legal, political, financial, and managerial domains. Women hold prestigious positions such as Minister, Deputy Minister, Ambassador-at-Large, Heads of Missions, Legislative Council members, Attorney General, High Court Judge, Permanent Secretaries, Solicitor-General and Chief Executive Officers, both in public and private sectors. Moreover, the leadership roles assumed by women extend to civil society, with numerous NGOs being led by women.
6. The private sector has also seen a remarkable presence of female executives, with Brunei Darussalam boasting the highest proportion of female executives in the ASEAN region, as per the 2021 ASEAN Gender Outlook. Women's active involvement in civil society organisations further underscores their multifaceted contributions, ranging from advocacy for women's rights to addressing social and healthcare issues.
7. According to the same report, Brunei Darussalam stands out in the ASEAN region for its significant representation of women in public policy and decision-making roles, along with a substantial presence of female executives in business and managerial positions.
8. Looking ahead, Brunei Darussalam is poised to bolster its efforts towards women's development through a new National Plan of Action on Women. Aligned with the Social Blueprint, this plan aims to harness women's full potential by promoting gender equity, enhancing capacity building, and fostering self-development. Priority areas include ensuring women's safety, maximising career opportunities, and driving community empowerment.
9. The nation's commitment to women's empowerment is deeply rooted, as evidenced by historical initiatives emphasising female education dating back to the First National Development Plan (1953-1958) which stated that "educating a boy means educating one person but educating a girl means educating the whole family". Recognizing women as invaluable assets, Brunei

Darussalam remains steadfast in its resolve to ensure their inclusion and advancement, viewing it as integral to familial welfare, economic prosperity, and broader social development.

10. By investing in women's education, promoting workplace equity, and advocating for increased participation in leadership roles, Brunei Darussalam endeavors to pave the way for a brighter and more equitable future for all its citizens.



## **SECTION TWO: PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS**

### **(i) Background**

11. Brunei Darussalam acknowledges the pivotal contribution of women to the nation's socio-economic development, recognizing gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental human rights crucial for women's advancement. Enshrined in the nation's "Vision 2035," which aims for a dynamic and sustainable economy driven by an educated populace, this commitment underscores the importance of inclusive development across all sectors.

12. Women in Brunei Darussalam play a vital role in national progress, contributing openly and equally to society. The nation is dedicated to advancing the rights of all women and girls, evidenced by significant strides towards women's empowerment and gender equality. Women and girls enjoy equal opportunities in education, training, healthcare, employment, asset ownership, benefits, and citizenship. Ensuring women's equal economic participation, they have access to incentives and entrepreneurial support, including financial assistance schemes, ICT, business counselling, and training.

13. Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5, Brunei Darussalam prioritises the empowerment and development of women and girls to achieve gender equality and foster an inclusive society. Women remain a high priority in the national agenda, with numerous plans and programs implemented to promote their empowerment, visibility, and representation in public life.

14. Brunei Darussalam's commitment to the SDGs is marked by its rankings on global gender indices, ranking 61st out of 195 countries on the 2021 United Nations Gender Inequality Index and 104th out of 146 in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Index 2022. While various mechanisms are in place to promote and protect women's rights, challenges persist in closing the gender gap, as identified in voluntary national review reports. Nonetheless, the nation prioritises the protection of women and girls, ensuring the application of appropriate legal frameworks in cases of violence against women.

15. From as early as the first National Development Plan in 1953-1958, which emphasised the transformative impact of female education, to recent initiatives promoting women's participation in decision-making positions, Brunei Darussalam demonstrates its commitment to inclusive and participatory development strategies. This reflects the nation's acknowledgment that women are integral to national development and its efforts to ensure their inclusion and participation in decision-making processes.

## **(ii) Brunei Darussalam in General**

16. Brunei Darussalam, an independent sovereign Sultanate, operates under a written constitution and adopts a ministerial system of government. Gaining independence on January 1st, 1984, the nation is governed by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, who serves as the Supreme Executive Authority, concurrently holding positions as the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Finance and Economy Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister.

17. Situated on the northwest of Borneo along the South China Sea, Brunei Darussalam's strategic location has facilitated the development of its most significant economic assets: oil and natural gas resources. With a land area of 5,765 square kilometres, approximately 70% of which is still enveloped by tropical forests, the country is divided into four districts: Brunei-Muara, Tutong, Belait, and Temburong. The capital city is known as Bandar Seri Begawan.

## **(iii) Population**

18. Brunei Darussalam, with an estimated population of 450,500 in 2023, demonstrates a multi-ethnic composition, predominantly Malay at 73.8%. Women constitute 47.2% of the population, totaling approximately 212,800 individuals. The societal structure is largely characterised by an extended family system, with an average household size of 6 persons.

19. The nation's proactive efforts in improving healthcare and education have contributed to the positive development and continued progress of women. Bruneian women play increasingly visible and influential roles in various spheres, actively participating in decision-making processes and impacting numerous policies. They contribute equally to economic progress, family well-being, and the social prosperity of the country, benefiting from equal opportunities in social and economic spheres.

20. According to Labour Force Statistics in Brunei Darussalam's Key Indicators 2023, the labour force participation rate for women has increased to 66.4% in 2023. The employment rate for women aged 18 to 59 years has shown a positive trend, increasing from 39.7% in 2022 to 40% in 2023.

## **(iv) Legal Framework for Women and Girls**

21. In Brunei Darussalam, a series of legislative measures have been implemented to uphold and safeguard human rights, with a particular focus on ensuring the welfare of all citizens, notably women and children. These statutes encompass a wide array of protections and provisions, including:

- i. **Women and Girls Protection Act (Cap. 120):** This act offers legal protections for women and girls, criminalising various acts that endanger their well-being, such as prostitution, trafficking, and living off the proceeds of prostitution.

- ii. **Women and Girls Protection (Place of Safety) Rules 2001:** These rules establish safe spaces for women and girls who are in vulnerable situations.
- iii. **Married Women Act (Cap. 190):** Governed by this act are the rights of married women, encompassing matters like maintenance, property rights, and legal recourse, with recent amendments (2010) addressing domestic violence issues, providing enhanced protection for victims.
- iv. **Islamic Family Law Order 2000:** This order regulates Islamic family law matters, including marriage, divorce, and guardianship, with provisions aimed at safeguarding the interests and rights of women and children, with recent amendments (2010) incorporating measures against domestic violence.
- v. **Children and Young Persons Act 2006:** Replacing the previous Children Order 2000, this order focuses on the care, protection, and rehabilitation of children, establishing Juvenile Courts and Action Teams on Child Protection.
- vi. **Penal Code (Cap. 22):** This code includes provisions aimed at protecting women from harm, including acts of violence, rape, incest, and insulting their modesty.
- vii. **Compulsory Education Act 2007:** Ensures compulsory education for all children, including girls.
- viii. **Criminal Procedure Code (Cap. 7):** Contains specific provisions concerning women, such as prohibiting the imposition of the death penalty on pregnant women convicted of capital offences and regulating the manner of searching women.
- ix. **Prison Rules (under section 62 of the Prisons Act (Cap. 51):** These rules outline provisions for the welfare of female prisoners, covering aspects like accommodation, employment, education, and health.
- x. **Chinese Marriages Act (Cap. 126):** Criminalises cruel treatment within marriages and desertion without reasonable excuse.
- xi. **Employment Order 2009:** Contains provisions governing the employment and labour rights of women in Brunei Darussalam with recent amendments (2011) introducing the Maternity Leave Regulation that extends paid maternity leave for women up to 105 days.
- xii. **Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2019:** Criminalises human trafficking, smuggling, and exploitation of trafficked persons.
- xiii. **Prevention of People Smuggling Act (Cap. 229):** Constitutes the criminalization of smuggling persons.
- xiv. **Unlawful Carnal Knowledge Act (Cap. 29):** Protects girls from sexual exploitation, making it illegal to engage in sexual intercourse with a girl under 16 years of age.
- xv. **Old Age and Disability Pensions Act (Cap. 18):** Provides financial support, including pensions and allowances, for blind individuals, those with Hansen's disease, those with mental disabilities, and their dependents.

22. These legislative measures collectively demonstrate Brunei Darussalam's commitment to promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of its citizens, particularly women and children, within its legal framework.

## **2.1. ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS**

### **2.1.1 Key Achievements for Women in Brunei Darussalam**

23. Brunei Darussalam persists in its endeavours to promote gender equality and empower women and girls. Acknowledging their roles as agents of change and vital contributors to socio-economic progress and preservation of peace and security emerges as a progressively vital endeavour.

24. A notable advancement in the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the initiation of a research project focusing on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam (RWD). Mandated by the National Council on Social Issues in 2018, this research aimed to identify the existing challenges and opportunities for women in the country, ultimately aiding in the formulation of a National Plan of Action on Women. The research was entrusted to the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies. Subsequently, in April 2022, Brunei Darussalam, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, embarked on a year-long research on Women's Development in the nation.

25. The significance of this research was underscored by its comprehensive scope and methodology. It encompassed a national household survey that involved over 1,403 women, 400 at-risk women, and 291 men. This sample size was considered statistically representative, capable of achieving a confidence level of 99%. The research was designed to explore various domains, such as work-family balance and harmony, along with personal viewpoints, beliefs, and perceptions regarding gender roles.

26. Findings from the research have found that remarkable progress has been made toward women's development in Brunei Darussalam, such as:

- i. The female enrolment rate at the primary and lower secondary levels is high, close to 100%. However, the female enrolment rate at the upper secondary level is comparatively low on the international level, at 72%, but higher than for males. The graduation rate is even lower (at 30%) by international standards, but again higher than for males.
- ii. About 37% of the managers in the whole economy are women, a percentage that is higher than in many other countries. The percentage of women in managerial positions is significantly higher in the public sector.
- iii. There is a high representation of women in policy-making and decision-making. 56% of the public sector workforce are women, with the composition of women in senior positions in Division I and Division II increasing from 61% in 2015 to 65% in 2022.

27. Brunei Darussalam also engaged in the ASEAN-EU-READI study on "Women's Political Participation and Leadership (WPPL)." This study seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of

women's involvement in politics and leadership roles within ASEAN countries, including Brunei Darussalam. It aims to assess the influence of women on sustainable development in the region, contributing to a more inclusive understanding of political participation and leadership among women in ASEAN.

28. The report noted, among other findings, that data obtained from the Public Service Department spanning from 2015 to 2022 revealed a notable rise in the representation of women in middle management to senior-level positions. This trend signifies a commendable advancement towards achieving gender parity within the government's decision-making sphere. Such positive developments suggest broader shifts in societal attitudes and behaviours, likely influenced by widespread education initiatives and the government's commitment to fostering gender equality in the workplace.

### **2.1.2 Challenges and Setbacks**

29. Although significant strides have been achieved towards women's development in Brunei Darussalam, there are still some areas that require policy attention to better support Bruneian women in reaching their full potential. The Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam which was completed in 2023 identified several challenges and setbacks towards women's empowerment, some of which are summarised as below.

30. While the number of gender-based violence in Brunei Darussalam is considered small, a significant proportion of women in the RWD admitted to experiencing some form of gender based-violence including physical violence, not just at home but also at work. A major concern within this domain is the perception of gender-based violence and the underreporting of gender-based violence cases. In the Social Issues domain, amongst the areas of concern for females are loitering, poverty (do not have enough to pay for necessities and household bills), afraid of physical violence and bullying. In the Health domain, mental health is an area of concern, with a small but significant proportion of women experiencing depression and suicidal thoughts.

31. In education, no gender disparities are found, with Bruneian females faring better than males at all levels, from primary to tertiary education. However, within the education domain, the main issues of concern for females are low tertiary enrolment by international standards and the lack of relevant skills (such as soft skills, future-ready skills, and STEAM education) to move towards the 4th Industrial Revolution, which Brunei Darussalam aspires for. There is also a need to provide more attention to reducing educational disadvantages for women and girls coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Although Bruneian females are achieving higher educational attainment than males, gender gaps in the labour market remain, and this is an area where we see gender disparities start to widen for our females. This is mainly due to traditional gender roles and views of women as primary caregivers that still hold them mainly responsible for household work and childcare regardless of their employment status. Several issues were found to impact employment opportunities for females, including childcare and domestic responsibilities, low attainment and enrolment in STEAM subjects, and significant wage gaps in low to medium skills jobs and in the private sector. In terms of career development, issues of concern for our Bruneian women are the lack of career development opportunities, a need for more supportive workplaces for their caring roles, and flexibility to better manage work and family life.

32. Although the female labour force participation rate in Brunei Darussalam is about average by international standards, it is significantly lower when looking at the working age group. Higher educational attainment has also not translated to more opportunities for our women to hold leadership and decision-making power, with the proportion of women in managerial and senior positions both in the public and private sectors remaining low. There is also a need to address cultural and societal norms that propagate gender stereotypes so as not to hinder women's empowerment or development.

33. Through the findings of the research, there are 3 strategic thrusts outlined for the formulation of the National Plan of Action on Women:

- i. Prioritise Women's Safety and Well-Being – To ensure women are protected from harm and have access to the resources needed to live a safe and healthy life.
- ii. Optimise Women's Work Potential and Career Development Opportunities - To ensure women have access to resources and opportunities that support them in reaching their full potential at work.
- iii. Drive Women's Empowerment within the Community – To support women in gaining greater control over their lives and participating fully in social, economic and civic activities within their community.

## **2.2. PRIORITIES FOR ACCELERATING PROGRESS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

### **2.2.1 Eliminating violence against women and girls including sexual harassment**

34. Brunei Darussalam has established laws and regulations aimed at safeguarding the rights of women and girls, including the Women and Girls Protection Act (Cap.120), Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.219), provisions within the Penal Code (Cap.22), Unlawful Carnal Knowledge Act (Cap.29), Syariah Penal Code Order 2013, and Islamic Family Law Act (Cap. 217). However, there is acknowledgment of the need for enhanced protection for women and girls, particularly in light of the growing concern over sexual harassment. In response, the government is currently in the process of developing guidelines to address this issue within the public sector.

35. As for domestic violence, both Civil and Syariah Laws provide protection and restraining orders for any victim of domestic violence regardless of gender, for example, the Penal Code Amendment Order 2017 expanded the definition of rape to include an offender in a position of trust or authority, criminalized any use of words, gestures or acts intended to insult the modesty of women, and introduced heavier penalties for sexual offences against women.

36. Agencies that are involved in the assessment and intervention of cases on violence against women and girls include the Women's Unit under the Department of Community Development, the Medical Social Work Unit under the Ministry of Health and the Women and Child Abuse Crime Investigation Unit under the Royal Brunei Police Force. The Department of Community Development is active in raising awareness within the community on the issue of VAW such as *Merakit Masyarakat* which is an outreach programme for villages and NGOs, community segments on national TV programmes, *PREPanita* which is a programme to help women to prepare for the

world of work and social issues. Measures on protecting women and girls against violence also extend to cases involving victims of human trafficking.

37. National helplines are also available for reporting cases of abuse and violence against women and girls: Child Helpline 121 (Department of Community Development), Welfare Helpline 141 (Department of Community Development) and emergency services 993 (Police).

38. Brunei Darussalam also joins the international community in celebrating International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women which falls on 25 November every year.

39. The National Consultation for the Mid-Term Review of Progress on the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Eliminating Violence Against Women (RPA VAW) took place in Brunei Darussalam in 2021. A total of 26 representatives from various government agencies and civil society organisations were invited to engage in a roundtable discussion. The Department of Community Development, in collaboration with Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Commissioner on Women's Rights and ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), organised the consultation, with support from the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UN ROAP).

40. A key suggestion to enhance the advancement of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Eliminating Violence Against Women (RPA VAW) in Brunei Darussalam involves creating a National Taskforce on Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW). This will be included as an initiative under the proposed National Plan of Action on Women. This taskforce would play a vital role in various aspects, including:

- i. Coordinating efforts to gather prevalence data on violence against women.
- ii. Establishing guidelines for the collection and analysis of data related to violence against women.
- iii. Supporting the development of legal frameworks aimed at addressing violence against women.
- iv. Planning capacity-building initiatives and formulating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide service providers in handling cases of violence against women effectively.
- v. Developing guidelines for support services catering to victims and survivors of violence against women.

41. NGOs focusing on women's issues have been active in calling for more protection for women and girls and have also been promoting awareness about the protections offered to women and girls. Notable NGOs that are active in creating awareness about women's issues are Project Women Brunei, Survivors.bn, *Persatuan Siswazah Brunei*, *Majlis Wanita Negara Brunei Darussalam* and *Persatuan Membangun Wanita dan Masyarakat (MAWAR)*. Project Women Brunei, for example, regularly holds webinars and awareness programmes including in rural areas where women and girls are informed about the rights and protections provided by the government.

### **2.2.2 Work-life balance**

42. The Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam was assigned to explore various areas, encompassing aspects concerning the balance and harmony between work and family, as well as individual viewpoints, beliefs, and perceptions regarding gender roles. The findings revealed that a majority of women in the sample expressed a need for flexible work arrangements to effectively manage household responsibilities, school runs, and childcare. Regarding work-life balance provisions, family support emerged as the most positive aspect, with over 90% of women feeling adequately supported in their jobs. Additionally, 80% of women agreed that their management had clear procedures for addressing grievances. The same percentage of women reported satisfaction with the amount of time available for non-work activities and agreed that women in their workplace enjoyed a healthy work-life balance. Conversely, 40% of women indicated that they struggled to find time to prioritise their health from home, even if reasonable arrangements were in place. Furthermore, 60% of women admitted to being preoccupied with home-related concerns during work hours.

43. In regards to the opinions around division of family responsibilities, the findings revealed that;

- i. A majority of both women and men surveyed believed that household chores should be equally shared, with this sentiment being stronger among younger age groups.
- ii. Similarly, most surveyed individuals expressed the opinion that childcare duties should be equally distributed between partners.
- iii. Satisfaction with the current division of childcare and household chores was high among married respondents, with minimal variation across different age groups.

44. The research also showed a strong correlation between marital satisfaction with the number of household and childcare tasks usually done by the wife alone. Stakeholder forums which looked at these findings believed that more efforts should be made to increase awareness on shared responsibilities within a marriage, not only in reducing the burden of care on women, but also as a necessary factor in promoting greater harmony within a marriage and thereby further strengthening the family institution.

### **2.2.3 Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises including for vulnerable women**

45. Brunei Darussalam is dedicated to advancing the economic empowerment of women, in accordance with the development goals outlined in Brunei Vision 2035. Thus, there is strong support for women entrepreneurs through various initiatives. At the national level, these encompass training programs, financial grants, and microcredit facilities provided by both governmental and non-governmental agencies such as the Department of Community Development, the Brunei Darussalam Islamic Religious Council, the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation, and Darussalam Enterprise.



46. Several programs and actions have been put into effect, including the *PREPanita* Forum (Preparing Women). This forum was introduced alongside the celebration of International Women's Day in 2021, in partnership with the Brunei Graduates Association. Discussions encompassed topics like 'Welcome to the World of Work' and 'Communi-Kasih: Communication is the Key to Happiness'. These endeavours, among others, were designed to raise awareness about the significance of self-empowerment and to equip both women and men with the necessary skills and knowledge.

47. Corporate partners such as Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam (BIBD) administer a dedicated initiative and program for underprivileged women known as BIBD SEED, denoting the 'Special Entrepreneurial Empowerment and Development' Programme. Recognized with the '3G Women Empowerment Programme' accolade at the 4th Global Good Governance Awards in 2019, this program targets the empowerment of vulnerable women, including single mothers, by providing them with opportunities to evolve into competitive, resilient, and successful entrepreneurs.

48. The achievements of Brunei Darussalam's women entrepreneurs are further recognised at regional and international awards such as the ASEAN Young Women Entrepreneurs Award 2022. Darussalam Enterprise (DARE), as the main agency promoting and facilitating the growth and development of local Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), supports small-scale businesses owned by women through their flagship programmes, namely the Institute Business Academy and Micro Business Bootcamp. Since 2016, a total of 15,000 entrepreneurs have been assisted through entrepreneurship training programmes.

49. Brunei Darussalam also recognizes the value of international partnerships and programmes that help drive female economic empowerment. A total of 30 Brunei-based businesswomen have been selected to be the first cohort of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), a worldwide initiative of the United States of America's State Department (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs), as part of the White House-led Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative. The programme gives enterprising women the knowledge, network, and access they need to launch and grow successful businesses. Other programs such as the ASEAN-Japan Women Entrepreneurs Linkages Program is another example of international collaborations that have benefited many Bruneian women businesses through skills development, financing, mentorship and networking opportunities.

#### **2.2.4 Digital and financial inclusion for women**

50. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers significant opportunities for promoting gender equality by granting equal access to online resources and opportunities for all. It empowers women to amplify their voices in their communities, governments, and on the global stage.

51. In the digital industry, in 2023, two out of three telecommunications companies in Brunei Darussalam are headed by female CEOs. Additionally, the InfoCom Federation of Brunei Darussalam is currently chaired by a woman.

52. Brunei Darussalam has made notable progress in female mobile phone ownership, with nearly every woman owning a mobile device in the field of ICT and innovative technology. In efforts to bolster women's empowerment in this area, the Government organised various capacity-building programmes. These include events such as Girls in ICT Day and digital skills training for senior citizens in all districts, and webinars that cover a wide range of topics including basic ICT skills, online safety and security, introduction to e-commerce and its opportunities, useful mobile applications, online shopping and cyber security tips for women and girls.

53. The Authority for Info-Communication Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI) has launched various programs aimed at nurturing an interest in ICT from early stages, with the goal of encouraging further exploration of ICT studies at secondary and post-secondary levels, ultimately leading to greater female workforce participation.

54. Additionally, the private sector has initiated initiatives to promote women's development. Dynamik Technologies, a leading IT company in Brunei Darussalam, has introduced several programs, including eBunda, to drive positive change in communities through technology. eBunda serves as a platform offering e-learning opportunities for women, covering topics such as health, environment, business, and finance. It primarily targets women who have taken career breaks to raise children, providing support for their continuous learning endeavours.

55. Women in Brunei Darussalam have also been recipients of awards, such as the 2021 ASEAN ICT Awards, 2022 Asia-Pacific ICT Awards and Women of the Future Awards in the Science, Technology and Digital category.

56. In 2023, Brunei Darussalam commemorated International Women's Day under the theme 'DigitALL: Innovation and Technology'. As part of the celebrations, MCYS orchestrated a forum in partnership with Womentechmakers Brunei titled 'Forum W-IT' or 'Women in Technology'. Distinguished panellists at the forum shared their journeys as female innovators, discussing the hurdles encountered within the ICT domain. Their insights aimed to inspire women to explore opportunities within the digital and ICT sectors.

57. On financial inclusion, the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Community Development introduced the Self-Reliance Scheme and few other programmes with the same objectives to its welfare recipients in 2006, such as BKB100, Employment Plan, Small Business from Home and also Innovation Visionary Youth Programme. One of the objectives for these programmes are to empower women and some of the objectives are also to help alleviate the financial burdens and change the crutch-mentality of welfare recipients by reducing their dependence on welfare benefits to support their livelihood and by stimulating a culture of self-reliance and self-sustenance. The targeted group consists of poor and needy people with limited income; the unemployed and those with limited income-generating skills as well as entrepreneurial willpower.

## **2.2.5 Changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes**

58. Currently, the National Plan of Action (POA) on Women is being drafted, which is supported by The Research on Women's Development in the country. The Prime Minister's Office also plays a critical role in coordinating and overseeing the SDGs, including Goal 5, and reports its assessments and reviews of current laws and policies, that are provided in the publication of the SDG's Voluntary National Reports. Laws and policies in Brunei Darussalam are generally non-discriminatory towards men and women, as they have been crafted to be applicable to all in a fair and equitable manner, where relevant.

59. In addition, leadership positions in Government are obtained based on a merit-based system that focuses on individual qualifications, regardless of age and gender. It is also observed that more young women in Brunei Darussalam are also leading community advocacy and civic engagement through non-Government organisations (NGOs), as evident in social media (e.g., Instagram and Facebook).

60. Moreover, the criteria for educational scholarships too focuses on merit rather than gender. Both the Technical and Vocational Education Centralised Admission System and the Higher Education Centralised Admission System consider academic qualifications without any bias based on gender. In 2018, the gender distribution of students was nearly equal across all levels of education, except for Pre-University and Tertiary levels where female enrollment surpassed male enrollment. Females constituted nearly 60% of tertiary education students.

## **2.3. WOMEN IN VULNERABLE GROUPS**

### **2.3.1 Marginalised groups of women and girls**

61. The majority of intervention programs and initiatives aimed at women and girls in Brunei Darussalam are characterised by their universal and non-discriminatory nature, as they are designed to benefit the population as a whole rather than targeting specific groups. For example, on healthcare, Brunei Darussalam upholds the universal right to healthcare, affirming that each citizen is entitled to a healthy life and access to comprehensive healthcare services of high quality. As part of its commitment to ensuring equitable access to healthcare and contributing to global efforts to leave no one behind, Brunei Darussalam continues to deliver comprehensive primary healthcare services to all segments of the population, including rural and remote communities. These services encompass the management of minor ailments, chronic diseases, dental care, and health promotion and prevention initiatives, facilitated by the nation's Flying Medical Service. In addition, maternal and child health services are also provided for women living in rural areas.

62. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Brunei Darussalam formulated a vaccination strategy that prioritised accessibility and equity for all citizens and residents. The vaccination distribution plan was structured into three phases, with dedicated vaccination centres established in each of the country's four districts. To ensure equitable access for rural and homebound

individuals, the government implemented mobile vaccination services and home visits. As of January 2024, 79.2% of the population had received the complete three-dose vaccination regimen.

63. Community endeavours to engage marginalised groups in Brunei Darussalam are facilitated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social enterprises. Specifically for marginalised women and girls, noteworthy among these is Project Women Brunei, a non-profit social enterprise established in 2019, dedicated to advocating for women and girls' rights awareness and fostering their participation in developmental pursuits. Project Women Brunei collaborates with communities at local, regional, and global levels.

64. Project Women Brunei prioritises engagement with underrepresented and marginalised groups, including indigenous women, migrant women, and women with disabilities. Through targeted community interactions, particularly with indigenous women and girls, the organisation seeks to empower these marginalised communities by promoting awareness of their rights, responsibilities, and avenues for seeking justice and protection. Moreover, these community engagements yield disaggregated data vital for evidence-based policymaking and program development, thereby supporting inclusive initiatives aimed at leaving no one behind.

65. The flagship projects and campaigns spearheaded by Project Women Brunei further advance the rights, safety, and well-being of women and girls:

- i. Project Women Pro: This initiative focuses on enhancing mechanisms for women's protection and rights, with a particular emphasis on marginalised communities. Activities include awareness campaigns, such as those centred on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and advocacy for improvements in women's developmental agendas, including social welfare protection and healthcare.
- ii. Project GirlSafe: Dedicated to promoting awareness of reproductive health and rights among women and girls, this initiative also advocates for the protection of girls and children.
- iii. Project WISE: Designed to support livelihood programs, especially for women in marginalised communities, and to facilitate employment opportunities.
- iv. Project WIT: This initiative aims to bolster ICT skills and technological literacy among women and girls, empowering them to thrive in the digital era.

66. The Government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs, also runs initiatives for villages in Brunei Darussalam including rural areas where women are empowered through the 'One Village, One Product (1K1P) Product', a project that was initiated by the Village Consultative Councils. This project aimed to develop new, high-quality products with commercial viability, affordability, and market demand by innovating existing 1K1P products.

## **2.4. PRIORITIES FOR ACCELERATING PROGRESS FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS**

67. Based on the findings of the Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam, three key strategic thrusts have been identified for the formulation of the National Plan of Action on

Women. These priorities will guide efforts over the next five years to advance the development of women in Brunei Darussalam.

68. One crucial priority is ensuring the safety and well-being of women. This involves implementing measures to protect women from harm and providing them with access to necessary resources for leading safe and healthy lives.

69. Another focus area is optimizing women's work potential and career development opportunities. This entails providing women with the resources and opportunities necessary for them to reach their full potential in the workplace.

70. Additionally, there is an emphasis on driving women's empowerment within the community. This involves supporting women in gaining greater control over their lives and enabling their full participation in social, economic, and civic activities within their communities.

71. Both Civil and Sharia Laws in Brunei Darussalam offer protection and restraining orders to victims of domestic violence, irrespective of gender. For instance, the Penal Code Amendment Order 2017 broadened the definition of rape to encompass offenders in positions of trust or authority, criminalized any act intended to insult the modesty of women, and imposed harsher penalties for sexual offenses against women. The Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) is presently drafting amendments to the Penal Code, which include raising the age of consent, expanding the scope of offences, and revising penalties.

72. Brunei Darussalam's legal framework, including the Women and Girls Protection Act (Cap.120), Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.219), provisions in the Penal Code (Cap.22), Unlawful Carnal Knowledge Act (Cap.29), Syariah Penal Code Order 2013, and Islamic Family Law Act (Cap. 217), safeguard women and girls from various forms of abuse, such as domestic violence, trafficking in persons (TIP), rape, and outraging modesty. However, there is a recognized need for enhanced protection for women and girls, particularly regarding issues like sexual harassment. Consequently, the government has formulated guidelines to address sexual harassment within the public sector.

73. Aligned with Brunei Vision 2035, the nation is committed to promoting the economic empowerment of women. Various initiatives support women entrepreneurs, including training, financial grants, and microcredit financing provided by government and non-governmental agencies such as the Department of Community Development, the Brunei Darussalam Islamic Religious Council, the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation, and Darussalam Enterprise. Corporate entities like Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam (BIBD) also contribute through programs like BIBD SEED (Special Entrepreneurial Empowerment and Development Programme), which targets underprivileged women, including single mothers, empowering them to become competitive and successful entrepreneurs.

74. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a vital role in advocating for women's rights and promoting awareness of available protections. Notable NGOs include Project Women Brunei, Survivors.bn, and *Persatuan Membangun Wanita dan Masyarakat (MAWAR)*. Project Women Brunei, for instance, conducts webinars and awareness programs, including in rural areas, to educate women and girls about their rights and the protections offered by the government.

75. Recognizing the importance of international collaboration in advancing female economic empowerment, Brunei Darussalam participates in initiatives such as the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs developed by the U.S. Department of State and the ASEAN-Japan Women Entrepreneurs Linkages Program. These collaborations offer Bruneian women businesses opportunities for skills development, financing, mentorship, and networking.

# SECTION THREE: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

## 3.1. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

### 3.1.1 Labour Force Participation Rate

76. Over the past five years, the average Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for female citizens was 54%, whereas the overall LFPR for females reached 66.4% in 2023. Despite being lower than the male LFPR of 65% during the same period, the participation rate among women is about average by international standards. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for labour participation is 83%, aligning closely with figures seen in developed economies.

77. To enhance the participation of women in the workforce, the government has implemented policies, legislation, and regulations aimed at promoting gender equity in employment. Key initiatives include the Workplace Safety and Health Order of 2009, and the Employment Order of 2009, which features a section specifically addressing the Employment of Women, detailing maternity benefits and post-confinement employment provisions.

78. The Employment Order 2009 also have provision under a specific part on women called Part X: '*employment of women*' which aimed at protecting women in the workplace, specifically on maternity provisions, which include paid leave, payment benefits, rights to benefits, and offences committed by employers who fail to provide these benefits as mandated by law. More explanation on the The Employment Order 2009 are as follow:

- i. Maternity protection measures apply to every female employee who shall be entitled for benefit period (Maternity Leaves).
- ii. In section 91(a)(ii) of the Employment Order 2009, benefit period (Maternity Leaves) are given to a citizen of Brunei Darussalam or permanent resident, as stated that every such female employee shall be entitled to absent herself from work during (a) the period of 2 weeks immediately before her confinement; and (b) the period of 13 weeks immediately after her confinement. Every such female employee shall be entitled to receive full payment of 13 weeks from her employer.
- iii. Provided further that in the case of a citizen of Brunei Darussalam or permanent resident, who suffers from incomplete pregnancy at 24 weeks or above, every such female employee shall be entitled to absent herself from work during (a) the period of 2 weeks immediately before her confinement; and (b) the period of 6 weeks immediately after her confinement. Every such

female employee shall be entitled to receive full payment of 8 weeks from her employer.

- iv. On the other hand, benefit periods (Maternity Leaves) for female foreign employees are given as stated in 91(a)(i) the period of 4 weeks immediately before her confinement; and (ii) the period of 5 weeks immediately after her confinement. Every such female foreign employee shall be entitled to receive full payment of 8 weeks from her employer. Following this, the government helps to pay salaries for a period of 5 weeks. However, the employer is obliged to make advance salary payments for the above-mentioned 5 weeks period and then make a claim to the government for repayment.
- v. These entitlements are only eligible to a female employee who has served an employer for more than 180 days. For a citizen of Brunei Darussalam and permanent resident, the female employee is payable by her employer with the contributions of Tabung Amanah Pekerja (TAP) and is lawfully married.

79. Furthermore, the Maternity Leave Regulation of 2011 serves as a significant step towards addressing the prenatal and postnatal needs of women, as well as the health concerns of working mothers. Under this regulation, women are entitled to 105 days of paid maternity leave, which can be availed from 38 weeks of pregnancy onwards. This represents a substantial increase of 87.5% from the previous allowance of 56 days.

80. This extended mandate not only encourages women to pursue their aspirations related to childbirth and family life, but also facilitates ample time for nurturing quality mother-child relationships. Additionally, it ensures a secure pathway for women to return to work following maternity leave, thus fostering a conducive environment for their continued participation in the workforce.

81. Based on the findings of the Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam, the importance of providing a more supportive working environment for women is crucial to ensure their labour force participation and career development.

82. To address the correlation between childcare centres and women's involvement in the workforce, as well as to ensure children's safety and well-being, the following initiatives have been implemented:

- i. The drafting of Guidelines for Child Care Centers in Government Buildings (Child Care Centers Act) is currently underway as part of the Family Plan of Action. This aims to enhance the balance between family and work responsibilities, promoting better work-life harmony.
- ii. A reinforced licensing process for childcare centres has been introduced under the Child Care Centre Act.
- iii. The National Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines for Child Care Centers were launched on 24 August 2019 through collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.



### **3.1.2 Women's Political Participation and Leadership**

83. In leadership and decision-making, Brunei Darussalam has recorded progress in women's career development in various fields, including legal, political, financial and managerial professions, with several high-level appointments in both Government and private sectors. Women continue to serve in senior positions, including positions related to upholding of peace and security, such as Minister, Deputy Minister, Ambassador-at-Large, Heads of Missions, Legislative Council members, Attorney General, High Court Judge, Permanent Secretaries, Solicitor-General, and Chief Executive Officers in the public and private sector.

84. One remarkable advancement thus far has been the appointment of The Honourable Datin Seri Paduka Dr. Hajah Romaizah binti Haji Mohd Salleh as the first female Minister as the Minister of Education in June 2022. Subsequently in February 2024, The Honourable Datin Paduka Dayang Hajah Nor Hashimah binti Haji Mohammed Taib was appointed as the Attorney General while Nur 'Azizah binti Dato Seri Paduka Haji Ahmad has been appointed as the first female president of the Brunei Darussalam Law Society at the same period of time. At the ASEAN level, it is also noteworthy to mention that the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) appointed a Bruneian woman as its first female Secretary General, Her Excellency Ar Siti Rozaimeryanti binti Dato Paduka Haji Abdul Rahman for the period ending 2025, who once helmed a position as Legislative Council member for a five-year tenure. Since 2011, the representation of women in the Parliamentary Assembly (*Majlis Mesyuarat Negara*) has also doubled (2 women from 2011-2016, 3 women from 2017-2022 and 4 women in 2023). In 2022, almost half of Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries are women.

85. According to the 2021 ASEAN Gender Outlook, Brunei Darussalam recorded the highest proportion of women (37%) to hold middle and senior managerial positions at work within the region. While many countries across the globe have shown an increasing trend in women-to-men labour force participation rates, Brunei Darussalam's considerable increase in ratio from 56.2% in 1990 to 81.7% in 2020 highlights the significant improvement towards gender parity in the workforce over the past three decades. Furthermore, the growing representation of women in policy and decision-making positions is reflected in the increasing proportion of women in senior and middle management levels to 65%. The public sector workforce comprises 56% women, while the private sector continues to elevate and champion women to break through glass ceilings and sit in executive levels. These form part of the picture that women in Brunei Darussalam are actively contributing to the nation's development, and highlights their increasing roles and visibility in decision-making processes vis-a-vis the attainment of senior positions in various legal, political, financial, business and entrepreneurial executive management professions.

### **3.1.3 Unpaid Care and Domestic Work, and Work-life and Family Balance**

#### **(i) Unpaid Care and Domestic Work**

86. In October 2021, amendments to the Old Age Pensions and Disability Allowances Act (Cap 18) came into force where, apart from updates on the eligibility requirements to receive old age pension, the amendments also introduced double benefits for persons with disabilities (PWDs) to

receive monthly old age pensions in addition to disability allowances upon reaching the age of 60. The amendments also introduced a monthly Care Providers Allowance for recipients of disability allowances. Primarily aimed to support unpaid care and domestic work, this allowance is also intended to ensure the wellbeing of PWDs, especially those who are bed-ridden or unable to care for themselves, and at the same time to support and care for their family members.

## **(ii) Work-life and Family Balance**

87. In the Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam, the research was assigned to explore various areas, encompassing aspects concerning the balance and harmony between work and family, as well as individual viewpoints, beliefs, and perceptions regarding gender roles. The findings revealed that a majority of women in the sample expressed a need for flexible work arrangements to effectively manage household responsibilities, school runs, and childcare. Regarding work-life balance provisions, family support emerged as the most positive aspect, with a majority of women feeling adequately supported in their jobs, reported satisfaction with the amount of time available for non-work activities and agreed that women in their workplace enjoyed a healthy work-life balance. However, the research has highlighted that more needs to be done to help women prioritise their health and balance home-related responsibilities and work.

88. In regards to the opinions around division of family responsibilities, the findings revealed that;

- i. A majority of both women and men surveyed believed that household chores should be equally shared, with this sentiment being stronger among younger age groups.
- ii. Similarly, most surveyed individuals expressed the opinion that childcare duties should be equally distributed between partners.
- iii. Satisfaction with the current division of childcare and household chores was high among married respondents, with minimal variation across different age groups.

## **3.1.4 International Commitment**

### **(i) Mid-Term Review of Progress on the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Eliminating Violence Against Women**

89. The National Consultation on the Mid-Term Review of Progress on the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Eliminating Violence Against Women was conducted in Brunei Darussalam on April 24, 2021. Attended by 26 representatives from relevant government agencies and civil society organisations, the roundtable discussion aimed to assess achievements and chart the way forward.

90. Organised by the Department of Community Development under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, in collaboration with Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Commissioner on Women's Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), the consultation received support from the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UN ROAP).

91. A key recommendation emerging from the consultation is the establishment of a National Taskforce on Eliminating Violence Against Women (EVAW). This taskforce would play a key role in coordinating various efforts, including:

- i. Collecting prevalence data on violence against women.
- ii. Developing guidelines for the collection and analysis of such data.
- iii. Facilitating the creation of legal frameworks to address violence against women.
- iv. Planning capacity-building programs and developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for service providers in handling cases of violence against women.
- v. Creating guidelines for support services for victims and survivors of violence.

## **(ii) ASEAN Comprehensive Framework in Care Economy**

92. The ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy, adopted during the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits in October 2021, stands as a decisive guide for ASEAN Member States in fostering a sustainable economy with a commitment to inclusivity. This framework, a cornerstone of Brunei Darussalam's Chairmanship of ASEAN 2021, resonates with the overarching theme: 'We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper'. It highlights the vital role of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Pillar, complementing the efforts of the ASEAN Political-Security Community and the ASEAN Economic Community, in alignment with the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan.

93. Addressing the mounting challenges encountered by ASEAN in sustaining investments in care across the region, this framework propels the region forward in achieving its Vision 2025. It seeks to reshape ASEAN care policies comprehensively, capitalising on the opportunities presented by digitalization and the advancements of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

94. The ASCC plays a vital role in ensuring that the ASEAN Community 2025 is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient, emphasising engagement and benefits for all. The framework outlines six strategic priorities:

1. Promotion of healthy ageing and harnessing opportunities in ageing societies.
2. Enhancement of care's role in building a disaster-resilient ASEAN.
3. Acceleration of technological innovations and transformations.
4. Strengthening of families as the bedrock of the care economy.
5. Enhancement of social protection.
6. Promotion of resilience and care for the environment.

95. Collaboration among ASEAN Member States, bolstered by the ASEAN Secretariat and relevant stakeholders, is paramount for the successful implementation of this framework. Strategic coordination across pillars and sectors will be instrumental in realising its objectives.

### **(iii) ASEAN Declaration on Gender Equality and Family Development**

96. Brunei Darussalam was also a co-proponent for the "ASEAN Declaration on Gender Equality and Family Development" which was adopted by ASEAN Leaders in 2023. The declaration stresses the vital contributions of both men and women to family and community development, emphasising values such as respect, collectivism, and social harmony. In the post-pandemic era, men and women are seen as complementary in addressing economic challenges and fostering resilience.

97. The declaration signifies ASEAN member countries' commitment to collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing family development, women's empowerment, gender equality, and inclusive sustainable growth. It outlines actionable steps to achieve these goals:

- i. Development and implementation of strategies to strengthen family resilience and well-being throughout their life cycle, ensuring every family can develop independently and harmoniously. This includes the formulation, execution, and assessment of family-centred policies in ASEAN and its Member States, with a focus on gender mainstreaming.
- ii. Promotion of economic empowerment for women through increased educational and vocational training opportunities, along with gender mainstreaming in labour and employment policies to foster work-life balance and shared family responsibilities.
- iii. Enhancement of regional and national capacities to collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data and statistics on families, raising awareness on family-inclusive approaches and gender equality policies, and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of family-centred policies and programs.
- iv. Investment in universal, gender-responsive, and sustainable care systems and social services to alleviate the burden of unpaid care work for women and girls within families.
- v. Strengthening cross-sectoral and inter-pillar cooperation across the ASEAN Community through knowledge exchange, research, and engagement with relevant stakeholders, academia, businesses, social enterprises, experts, practitioners, dialogue partners, and international organisations to promote family development, women's empowerment, gender equality, and inclusive sustainable growth.

### **(iv) ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW)**

98. In 2001, ASEAN cooperation on women's issues was restructured and officially coordinated by the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW). The ACW is mandated to oversee and coordinate ASEAN's cooperation on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Brunei Darussalam participated in and continues to support the implementation of projects on women under the ACW Work Plan. Two significant projects include:

- i. During Brunei Darussalam's chairmanship of the 18th ACW Meeting in 2019, Brunei Darussalam as co-proponent with Vietnam, conducted the "**Regional Forum on Social Protection Policy Focussing on Focussing on Elderly Women and Ageing**", which was a combined project under the ACW Work Plan 2016 - 2020 as well as the ASEAN Strategic Framework on Social Welfare and Development 2011 - 2015; and
- ii. Under the current ACW Work Plan 2021 - 2025, Brunei Darussalam as co-proponents with Singapore and Vietnam, will undertake the **ASEAN Master Plan on Women's Development**, which is also a project under the ACWC Work Plan 2021 - 2025.

### 3.1.5 Gender Digital Divide

99. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers significant opportunities for promoting gender equality by granting equal access to online resources and opportunities for all. It empowers women to amplify their voices in their communities, governments, and on the global stage.

100. In the digital industry, in 2023 particularly, two out of three telecommunications companies in Brunei Darussalam are headed by female CEOs. Additionally, the InfoCom Federation of Brunei Darussalam is currently chaired by a woman.

101. Brunei Darussalam has made notable progress in female mobile phone ownership, with nearly every woman owning a mobile device in the field of ICT and innovative technology. In efforts to bolster women's empowerment in this area, the Government organised various capacity-building programmes. These include events such as Girls in ICT Day and digital skills training for senior citizens in all districts, and webinars that cover a wide range of topics including basic ICT skills, online safety and security, introduction to e-commerce and its opportunities, useful mobile applications, online shopping and cyber security tips for women and girls.

102. The Authority for Info-Communication Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI) has launched various programs aimed at nurturing an interest in ICT from early stages, with the goal of encouraging further exploration of ICT studies at secondary and post-secondary levels, ultimately leading to greater female workforce participation.

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104. Women in Brunei Darussalam have also been recipients of awards, such as the 2021 ASEAN ICT Awards, 2022 Asia-Pacific ICT Awards and Women of the Future Awards in the Science, Technology and Digital category.

105. In 2023, Brunei Darussalam commemorated International Women's Day under the theme 'DigitALL: Innovation and Technology'. As part of the celebrations, MCYS organised a forum in partnership with Womentechmakers Brunei Darussalam titled 'Forum W-IT' or 'Women in Technology'. Distinguished panellists at the forum shared their journeys as female innovators, discussing the hurdles encountered within the ICT domain. Their insights aimed to inspire women to explore opportunities within the digital and ICT sectors.

## **3.2. POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **3.2.1 Reduce/ eradicate poverty among women and girls**

#### **(i) National Plan of Action (POA) on Poverty Eradication 2020-2024**

106. The primary responsibility for ensuring social protection in Brunei Darussalam lies with the government, encompassing various aspects such as pensions, healthcare, education, housing, allowances, and subsidies. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports plays a pivotal role in addressing poverty-related issues, with the Special Committee on Poverty Issues, operating under the National Council on Social Issues, intensifying efforts to implement the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. This plan aims to provide support to low-income and vulnerable families, particularly dependent children, and break the cycle of poverty. The Poverty Eradication Action Plan, spanning from 2020 to 2024, serves as a guiding framework to alleviate poverty and prevent individuals from falling into the poverty trap. Moreover, initiatives are underway to bolster overall social protection in the country through the introduction of the Social Blueprint.

107. The National Plan of Action (POA) on Poverty Eradication for the period 2020-2024 underscores the government's commitment to enhancing the social well-being of Brunei Darussalam's populace. It seeks to improve the effectiveness of existing empowerment programs through enhanced monitoring and result-oriented mechanisms. The POA focuses on three main areas: enhancing capacity, access, and opportunities for income generation; improving access to education; and addressing policies, legislation, and infrastructure. Efforts to empower the community and uplift livelihoods through various programs and interventions, including virtual initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic, remain ongoing.

108. In addition to empowerment programs, the government extends support to welfare recipients and their dependents through educational initiatives aimed at breaking the poverty cycle. The Department of Islamic Studies under the Ministry of Religious Affairs offers the Rif'ah Scholarship Scheme, which provides opportunities and scholarship assistance to underprivileged students for higher education, both locally and abroad, based on specified criteria and conditions. This scheme serves as an incentive to foster a growth mindset among the underprivileged, encouraging continuous efforts to improve their living standards.

109. Through focused strategies and collaborative efforts, the revised POA aims to enhance the effectiveness of poverty eradication measures and facilitate the holistic development of individuals and families in Brunei Darussalam. Collaborative programmes and initiatives are undertaken by strategy champions among government agencies, government-linked agencies (GLCs), established companies and NGOs in order to reduce dependence on welfare to create a self-reliant and resilient society.

## **(ii) National Welfare System (SKN)**

110. In July 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, introduced the digitalized National Welfare System (SKN) as part of comprehensive welfare reforms aimed at uplifting underprivileged families and ensuring targeted financial assistance reaches those in need. With the overarching goal of achieving 'zero poverty', this initiative signifies a crucial step towards realising His Majesty's vision.

111. The implementation of the integrated and digital SKN system has revolutionised the application and distribution processes for financial aid by consolidating various welfare schemes managed by relevant agencies. This streamlined approach has facilitated information sharing and significantly improved the efficiency of welfare programs, notably benefiting individuals seeking assistance through initiatives such as the Monthly Welfare Assistance (BKB) program under the Department of Community Development and the Department of *Zakat, Waqaf and Baitulmal* Affairs (JUZWAB).

112. In 2022, further enhancements were made to the SKN, including the incorporation of the Annual School Needs Assistance previously managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). This addition enables the provision of educational support to low-income families through school coupons, enhancing access to education for vulnerable children. Efforts are underway to integrate application processes for monthly old-age pension schemes and disability allowances into the SKN framework, streamlining access to these vital support systems.

113. Beyond its role as a centralised online platform for welfare assistance applications, the SKN has emerged as a valuable source of poverty-related data for Brunei Darussalam. By generating a visual poverty map and aggregating data on welfare recipients and their dependents, the system provides insights into demographics, employment status, educational levels, and housing conditions. This data-driven approach enables the design of targeted programs to empower vulnerable communities and address systemic issues contributing to poverty.

114. Since its inception, the SKN has processed almost 56,000 welfare applications. As of March 2024, approximately 4,900 individuals are actively receiving monthly assistance, of which more than 40% of beneficiaries are women, including single mothers, divorcees, widows, and individuals with disabilities or other barriers to employment. These statistics call attention to the system's impact in supporting marginalised segments of society and advancing inclusive social welfare policies in Brunei Darussalam. (Refer to Table 18)

### **(iii) Provision of Old Age Pension and Disability Allowances**

115. Under the Old Age Pension and Disability Allowances Act (Cap 18), Brunei Darussalam provides universal monthly old age pensions in the amount of BND250 to all Bruneian citizens and stateless permanent residents above the age of 60 since 1955. In addition, the Act also provides monthly disability allowances to PWDs in the amount of BND150 for those below 15 years old and BND250 for those aged 15 years and above. As of May 2024, out of 42,648 recipients of Old Age Pension, 53.5% are women pensioners whilst out of 5,920 recipients of disability allowances, 36.3% are women and girl PWDs.

116. This Act was revised in 2021 to prioritise the welfare of citizens and permanent residents who meet specified criteria, emphasising the importance of fulfilling eligibility conditions for receiving old age pensions and disability allowances. These provisions underscore the government's commitment to ensuring that financial aid reaches those in need, while also safeguarding the interests of citizens and permanent residents.

117. A significant change introduced by the amendments is the replacement of the previous "Dependents Allowance" with the Care Provider Allowance. Under this new scheme, caregivers of recipients of blind pensions, mental disorder allowances, and Hansen's disease allowances are entitled to a monthly allowance of BND250. This initiative, overseen by the Department of Community Development, aims to enhance the well-being of individuals with disabilities by providing financial support to caregivers and reducing their dependency on family members for financial assistance. As of May 2024, out of 1,201 recipients of care provider allowance, 71.6% are women.

118. Furthermore, the Care Provider Allowance now extends to recipients of Disability Pensions and Disability Allowances, who were previously ineligible to apply for dependent allowances. Care providers, aged at least 16 and deemed fit by the controller of pensions, are responsible for providing care and support to individuals with disabilities. To ensure accountability, care providers must make a formal declaration accepting responsibility for caregiving, with legal consequences for neglecting their duties.

119. Additionally, the guidelines outline criteria for assessing the needs of individuals with disabilities who require full-time care, particularly those who are bedridden or unable to care for themselves independently. Eligibility for full-time caregiving is determined based on household income thresholds, ensuring that support is allocated to those most in need.

120. In addition to the amendments under the Old Age Pension and Disability Allowances Act, Brunei Darussalam also introduced a new law called the Persons with Disabilities Order 2021 which signifies a pivotal step towards ensuring equal opportunities and inclusivity for individuals with disabilities in Brunei Darussalam. Administered by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS), these amendments aim to bolster the welfare of individuals with disabilities while ensuring equitable access to financial support and opportunities for all citizens and permanent residents.



121. Overall, these amendments signify a significant stride towards enhancing the welfare and inclusivity of individuals with disabilities in Brunei Darussalam, aligning with the government's commitment to fostering an equitable and supportive society for all its citizens and residents.

### **3.2.2 Access to social protection for women and girls**

#### **(i) Welfare Helpline 141 and Child Helpline 121**

122. In its commitment to addressing public concerns and enhancing social welfare services, the Community Development Department (CDC) launched the Welfare Helpline 141, serving as a vital medium for lodging complaints, making inquiries, and submitting applications. With its 24-hour service carrying the slogan "*Kami Mendengar, Kami Memedulikan*" (We Listen, We Care), the helpline provides a platform for addressing a wide range of welfare and community issues, including services for people with different abilities (OKU), monthly welfare assistance, food ration assistance, natural disaster aid, family, women, children, and senior citizens' concerns, pensions, and allowances. Additionally, it ensures that complaints are addressed through proper channels, promoting efficient resolution.

123. The Welfare Helpline 141 has emerged as a crucial resource, with more than 50 per cent of calls received pertaining to inquiries on the application procedure for the National Welfare System (SKN). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the helpline has also facilitated applications for food ration assistance, accounting for nearly 17% of calls. In August of the previous year, the helpline handled a total of 1,627 calls, with 79 related to complaints, 1,547 inquiries, and one follow-up call, highlighting its significant role in addressing public needs and concerns during challenging times. Most recently, the helpline has attended 3,636 calls as of April 2024.

124. Furthermore, the Child Helpline 121 initiative, also known as Talian ANAK 121 (*Anak Negara Aset Kitani*), with the motto "*Kami Mendengar*" (We Listen), gives emphasis to the country's commitment to improving the quality and efficiency of social services for children. As of April 2024, the helpline has received a total of 1,163 calls, reaffirming its importance as a dedicated platform for addressing the unique needs and concerns of young citizens.

#### **(ii) Welfare Home Complex for Protection and Care**

125. Under the Women and Girls Protection Act (Cap 120) and the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap 219), Brunei Darussalam provides shelter for women and children through the Welfare Home Complex which is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Community Development.

126. The Welfare Home Complex was originally established in 1982 to provide temporary protection and care for individuals facing social problems and as a rehabilitation centre for young offenders. In December 2022, a new and improved protection home was built, as part of protection

services accorded to women and children particularly those affected by abuse and violence. The building carries the concept of a contemporary home with family values and safety as well as a comfortable environment. The building structure concept also takes into consideration the need of differently-abled individuals. The home also provides shelter for mothers and children who have no family support. The complex aims to:

- i. Provide care and temporary shelter to residents until their case is resolved;
- ii. Provide reform, guidance, and training to residents in order to become virtuous, disciplined, and viable individuals through programmes and training provided; and
- iii. Help shape residents' identities with the self-belief as a provision before they return back to their families and the society, and to become individuals who can contribute to the people and country.

127. The complex provides services such as shelter, food and drink, clothing, daily goods, medical examinations, academic and religious education, vocational training, sports and recreation, character development training, and counselling.

### **(iii) Government Initiatives**

128. The Department of Community Development has done numerous preventive programs on violence against women, one of them is the launching of *PREPanita* Forum (Preparing Women). The forum was launched in conjunction with International Women's Day Celebration in 2021 in collaboration with the Brunei Graduates Association. Topics covered include 'Welcome to the World of Work' and 'Communi-Kasih: Communication is the Key to Happiness'. These activities, among others, aimed to enhance awareness of the importance of self-empowerment, and prepare both women and men with exposure and ways to come forward (or seek help). The forum is in partnership with other relevant Government agencies, NGOs and women advocates.

129. The Department of Syariah Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs has organized awareness-raising talks on domestic violence from 2015 - 2016. They invited representatives from the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) to be the speakers. Royal Brunei Police Force has continuously done talks on sexual harassment upon request by schools, NGOs, corporate companies and other private institutions. RBPF also conducted pre-marital courses to talk about VAW in households.

130. The Counseling Unit of Ministry of Education (MOE) has developed prevention programs on social issues including psycho-education for students, peer-education program for students in secondary schools, drug prevention talks and Attendance and Social Factors program and Counselling sessions. Moreover, the Student Welfare and Development Unit in 2016 to 2021 has conducted awareness-raising programs on reproductive health, mental health program, educational talk on social issues and growth mindset workshops. In light of sexual harassment or abuse cases,

the Ministry of Education have also conducted Psychological First Aid training for school guidance and counselor teachers to identify and guide students who are suffering or experiencing sexual harassment or abuse.

131. In November 2023, MOE also launched a '*Bantu, Empati, Sayangi, Tanggungjawab*' (BEST) programme to address the growing concerns for bullying in schools nationwide. The programme looks to educate students on the importance of self-control, help them to identify the various types of bullying in school and raise awareness on the effects of bullying on the victims. The launch of the programme coincided with the International Day against Violence and Bullying at School including Cyberbullying, set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on every first Thursday of November. The health, safety, security and well-being of students, in particular, girls, is a priority of the Government of Brunei Darussalam. To that end, the provision of a healthy, safe, secure and conducive environment for girls to live and learn is critical. The Ministries responsible for girls, education and health work closely with law enforcement and other relevant agencies to support and protect chronically absent students and girl victims of physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Various criminal sanctions are provided for under the Penal Code for various sexual crimes and sexual harassment including imprisonment, fine and whipping. These provisions have been updated from time to time.

132. Another avenue that is deemed important in complementing and strengthening statements in policies and legislations is the Khutbah Jumaat (Friday Sermon or talk delivered in the mosque). On 6 November 2020, the Khutbah Jumaat theme was on sexual harassment. This helped raise awareness among the topic nationwide since all the mosques delivered the talk that was also seen on television and heard over the radio, and covered by local newspapers.

133. The G.I.N.I.S. program, facilitated by the Counseling Unit within the Student Affairs Division of the Schools Department, operates in collaboration with various government agencies and school counselors across secondary schools and government colleges nationwide. This initiative aims to provide early prevention measures for students, safeguarding them from negative influences and behaviors that could jeopardize their academic performance and future prospects.

134. Government agencies actively involved in the G.I.N.I.S. programs include the Department of Internal Security, Royal Brunei Police Force, Narcotics Control Bureau, Department of Prisons, Community Development Department, Islamic Da'wah Center, Islamic Legal Unit, Counseling and Religious Understanding Unit (KAFA), and Cyber Security Brunei. Each agency contributes its expertise and resources to address different facets of student well-being and social development.

135. The acronym G.I.N.I.S. represents key values and principles instilled through the program: Generation, Human, Nationalism, Intellect, and Stability. By integrating these values into the school curriculum, the program aims to equip students with the necessary skills and mindset to navigate the challenges posed by the rapid pace of economic and technological advancements.

136. Furthermore, since 2010, Brunei Darussalam also appoints an ASEAN Commissioner for Women Rights under the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Girls (ACWC). Amongst others, the role of the ASEAN Commissioner for Women Rights is to promote the implementation of international and ASEAN instruments on the rights of women. Nur Judy binti Abdullah has been appointed as Brunei Darussalam's Representative on Women's Right to the ACWC for the 3-year period starting 19 August 2023 to 19 August 2026. Advocate on behalf of women, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, and encourage ASEAN Member States to improve their situation

#### **(iv) NGOs as Active Strategic Partners**

137. In recent years, the collaboration between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government of Brunei Darussalam has significantly evolved, particularly in advancing programs aimed at the development and protection of women. This paradigm shift towards active partnership between NGOs and the government has proven instrumental in the successful implementation of various initiatives. NGOs, with their grassroots reach and specialised expertise, have emerged as invaluable allies in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by women in Brunei Darussalam. Through collaborative efforts, these organisations have played a pivotal role in designing and executing development projects tailored to the specific needs of women, ranging from education and healthcare to economic empowerment.

138. Moreover, NGOs have actively contributed to the formulation of policies and frameworks aimed at safeguarding the rights and interests of women across diverse sectors. By leveraging their networks and resources, these strategic partnerships have facilitated the effective dissemination of information, advocacy campaigns, and capacity-building programs, thereby fostering a conducive environment for women's empowerment and gender equality.

139. The emergence of women-led non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Brunei Darussalam dates back to February 1951, with the establishment of the inaugural organisation, "*Kaum Ibu.*" This pioneering NGO was established through collaborative efforts between the Girl Guides Association and the British government, which provided support to Brunei Darussalam as a protectorate. Over the years, several other women-led NGOs emerged, culminating in the formation of the National Council of Women Brunei Darussalam (NCWBD) in 1985, which aimed to unify these groups under one umbrella organisation. Today, NCWBD oversees 13 affiliated associations, reflecting a concerted effort to address and advance the interests of women across various sectors of Bruneian society. (Refer to Table 9).

140. Beside NCWBD, a diverse array of many other notable women-led non-governmental organisations (NGOs) spans across multiple sectors, collectively contributing to the advancement and empowerment of women. These organisations encompass a wide spectrum of endeavours, ranging from business advocacy and substance abuse prevention to support for single mothers, community engagement, and youth empowerment. Among these remarkable NGOs are as in Table 10.

141. Project Women Brunei, for example, regularly holds webinars and awareness programmes including in rural areas where women and girls are informed about the rights and protections provided by the government. Another example, in conjunction with International Women's Day (HWA) 2021 which is celebrated on March 8th every year, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in collaboration with *Persatuan Siswazah Wanita* (PSW) has organised the First Forum of Kafe Ilmu or "Knowledge Cafe" (attended by 170 people) and Kafe Ilmu III (attended by 50 people) on 10 April 2021. From those events, several issues have been identified as issues of interest to women in Brunei Darussalam, and suggested to be adapted as a research focus under The Development of Women in Brunei Darussalam.

### **3.2.3 Women and Health**

142. Brunei Darussalam remains steadfast in its commitment to enhancing its healthcare system, guided by the principles of Universal Health Coverage, to ensure equitable and accessible services for all citizens and residents. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Health (MOH), comprehensive healthcare services are readily available across all districts.

143. This dedication has yielded notable outcomes, including a low maternal and child mortality rate, a high proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, and substantial routine vaccination coverage rates. Despite facing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the resilience of the health system was evident through proactive measures, including regular public communications and a strong sense of solidarity, resulting in a low death rate and a high rate of recovery.

144. Significant investments in the health sector have enabled Brunei Darussalam to achieve most of the health-related targets outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO). This includes remarkable reductions in both the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) and infant mortality rate (IMR). Over the past two decades, these figures have remained consistently low, comparable to standards observed in developed nations. Noteworthy achievements also include the high immunisation coverage obtained through the National Immunization Programme.

145. Furthermore, the MOH places emphasis on preventive and educational health programs, such as those focused on safe motherhood, reproductive health, and screenings for female cancers, diseases, nutrition, and tobacco. These initiatives are facilitated through Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services, operating at both primary and tertiary levels.

146. Recognising the growing need for specialised healthcare for women and children, a dedicated Women and Children's Block in the state hospital complex costing BND 64,655,348.84, the Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital, began construction in May 2011 and was completed in December 2014, bringing the healthcare standards for women and children to the next level.

147. In efforts to enhance access to timely and reliable health information, various digital platforms have been introduced, including the BruHealth application, Health Advice Line 148, Brunei Red Crescent (BRC) Helpdesk Line, dedicated email services by the MOH, and the use of

the Telegram mobile application for public inquiries and concerns. As Brunei Darussalam transitions to a post-pandemic society, endeavours are directed towards sustaining and advancing these digitised information dissemination channels. This includes features such as online booking for vaccinations and medical appointments, personal health records tracking, access to video consultations, and an online payment platform, all aimed at furthering the digitalization of healthcare services.

### **3.2.4 Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

148. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to the maintenance of social welfare services. In response, the Government implemented measures to safeguard the welfare of its citizens. The National Welfare System (SKN) was utilized to administer the government's COVID-19 stimulus initiatives, including the provision of short-term financial aid to workers in sectors adversely affected by the pandemic, encompassing the private sector.

149. The pandemic underscored the critical role of a robust healthcare system in effectively addressing health emergencies. The Ministry of Health (MOH) asserts that investing in healthcare is indispensable for societal well-being, yielding enduring benefits in terms of longevity and quality of life, while also contributing to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals beyond health-related objectives.

150. To address the challenges posed by COVID-19, strategic initiatives were implemented, including the establishment of major swabbing centres and the expansion of testing capacity through the construction of an additional National Virology Laboratory, augmenting testing capacity by ten-fold. In response to subsequent waves of the pandemic, the Brunei Darussalam COVID-19 AirLab was established through collaborative efforts between the Government and the Borneo Genomic Institution. Community isolation centres, including an extension to the National Isolation Centre, equipped with medical facilities for the treatment and monitoring of COVID-19 patients, were also established. Furthermore, quarantine facilities were prepared for inbound travellers, requiring self-isolation at designated accommodations upon arrival.

151. A central initiative was the introduction of the BruHealth application, serving as both an epidemic response platform and a means for population engagement, facilitating information dissemination and contact tracing. Additionally, the Health Advice Line 148 was established to provide supplementary health information and advice to the public.

152. Despite challenges posed by school closures and social distancing measures, families of children with disabilities received continued support through online learning platforms, with special needs education teachers employing flexible teaching methods adapted to the digital environment using their ICT skills and multimedia techniques.

153. In support of citizens who lost their income due to pandemic-induced business disruptions, the Government implemented several relief measures. These included deferment of contributions to the Employee Trust Fund (TAP) and Supplemental Contributory Pensions (SCP) for local employees earning less than BND1,500 per month in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with fewer than 100 employees. Furthermore, the government ensured continued monthly contributions to safeguard annual dividend payments to employees.

### 3.2.5 Education and training of women

154. Brunei Darussalam is committed to providing women and girls with equal opportunities for education and training, aligning with present and future trends. The nation maintains a steadfast pursuit of universal access to quality education, emphasising equality and fairness for all learners. Guided by the principles of Malay Islamic Monarchy (*Melayu Islam Beraja*), the Ministry of Education (MOE) is dedicated to delivering equitable and high-quality education to cultivate future-ready citizens equipped with 21st-century knowledge and skills. Through effective educational policies and legislation, Brunei Darussalam has achieved commendable results in organised learning participation rates, Universal Primary Education, and various literacy benchmarks. Encouraging outcomes have also been observed in areas such as gender parity, life skills, and educational quality.

155. Students in Brunei Darussalam are provided with equal opportunities to acquire knowledge, regardless of gender. Ongoing efforts are focused on enhancing standards and curricula, with several frameworks under development to implement a curriculum centred on 21st-century skills. Initiatives such as the Financial Literacy Competency Framework for School Children and Adults and Digital Citizenship underscore the commitment to equipping students with relevant skills for the modern world.

156. The Ministry of Education is committed to providing quality education and ensuring equal educational opportunities and access to learning at all levels. This commitment includes offering opportunities to upskill and reskill through participation in lifelong learning programs, in alignment with MOEBD's Strategic Plan for 2023 – 2027. It outlines three strategic objectives:

- i. Objective 1: to nurture future-ready learners with skills and the ability to innovate, and have capabilities to co-create, live, work, navigate the ever-changing future and contribute as active members of society.
- ii. Objective 2: to establish an innovative education ecosystem that can navigate the rapidly changing education landscape to ensure that education practices and processes remain robust and relevant, delivering value to learners and providing novel and adaptable solutions by engaging stakeholders.
- iii. Objective 3: to build up human resources by providing top-notch professional training while maintaining high ethical standards and a commitment to public responsibility and sustainability.

157. Brunei Darussalam has made education fully accessible in accordance with the Compulsory Education Act, which has been enforced by the government since 2007. The Act was recently amended in 2023 to extend compulsory education to 10 years for children above the age of 5 years and who have not yet attained the age of 15 years, regardless of social background, gender, and abilities. This is supplemented by a 12 year education policy which encourages students to complete at least their secondary education.

158. In 2023, the literacy rate among females aged 10 and above was 96.1% respectively. Further, while 47% of the country's population was female, female students accounted for 48% of students

in pre-primary education, 48% in primary education, 48% in secondary education, 57% in pre-university education, 43% in technical/vocational education, and 58% in tertiary education.

159. The Special Education Policy Guidelines, introduced in 1997, have been further enhanced with the introduction of the Special Education Framework (SEF) and a guidebook for Special Education Needs (SEN) for educators and parents in 2022. Anchored in the 5As of inclusion (Acceptance, Accessibility, Adapted Assessment, Adapted Instructions, and Adapted Curriculum), the SEF aims to address critical issues related to inclusive quality education for students with educational needs. It focuses on equity and the enhancement of learning environments to foster greater participation and involvement of individuals with special educational needs in national mainstream activities.

160. To complement and strengthen special education programs, Brunei Darussalam has established Centres of Excellence (COE) with infrastructure and facilities tailored to accommodate the physical needs and learning facilities of students with special needs.

161. Additionally, MOE has instituted measures to support the education of children who have endured abuse or come from dysfunctional families, ensuring their welfare, protection, and uninterrupted learning. These initiatives encompass:

- i. Enhancing the Department of Special Education to concentrate on nurturing specialised competencies and skills tailored for students with special educational needs (SEN).
- ii. Monitoring students' attendance throughout the academic year to forestall prolonged or chronic absenteeism, which may negatively impact their academic performance.
- iii. Establishing students' welfare sections in schools nationwide to safeguard the well-being of students, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds or dysfunctional families, and furnishing support to those grappling with mental health issues.
- iv. Facilitating ongoing collaboration between the Department of Special Education and the Department of Community Development to address the needs and furnish assistance to students with special educational needs in schools. Monthly Inter-school Progress Meetings are convened, involving representatives from various departments, including the Department of Islamic Studies, Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), and Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports.

### **3.3. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES**

#### **3.3.1 Violence against Women**

162. A number of mechanisms have been established to address the issue of domestic violence from prevention to protection, including the Penal Code (Cap. 22) and Women and Girls Protection Act (Cap. 120). The Islamic Family Law Act (Cap. 217) and the Married Women Act (Cap. 190), amended in 2010, include provisions dealing with '*Dharar Syarie*' (domestic violence). According to



Section 42 of the Islamic Family Law (Cap. 217), both husbands and wives hold rights to initiate divorce proceedings. Sections 43 - 53 of the Islamic Family Law outlines various methods through which a wife may apply to dissolve a marriage.

163. For example, under the law, a Muslim woman can apply to dissolve a marriage on the grounds of conflicts between the spouses (*Syiqaq*), causing violence to the wife (*Dharar Syarie*) or non-compliance of matrimonial requirements (*Fasakh*).

164. Both Civil and Syariah Laws provide protection and restraining orders for any victim of domestic violence regardless of gender, for example, the Penal Code Amendment Order 2017 expanded the definition of rape to include an offender in a position of trust or authority, criminalized any use of words, gestures or acts intended to insult the modesty of women, and introduced heavier penalties for sexual offences against women.

165. In addition, the Employment Order 2009 does not explicitly address violence against women however it does provide a general provision under section 18 regarding termination by an employee threatened by danger. According to section 18:

*"An employee may terminate his contract of service with his employer without notice where he or his dependant is immediately threatened by danger to the person by violence or disease such as the employee did not by his contract of service undertake to run."*

166. Under Section 18 of the law, employees have the right to terminate their contract without providing notice if an employee or their dependent faces immediate danger due to violence or disease, which was not a risk the employee agreed to as part of their employment. Other than that, under Section 152 of the Employment Order 2009 prescribes the circumstances and conditions under which women may be employed as employees or may work at night.

167. Based on the findings from The Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam, the most common type of gender-based violence is verbal abuse and the research also recognised that domestic violence and GBV could be underreported and as such more needs to be to raise awareness on this matter.

168. Awareness-raising activities on VAW by relevant agencies and increased collaboration with NGOs, private sectors as well as youth advocates, which have positive impacts, have resulted in a significant increase among victims of VAW being more willing to file a report as well as greater awareness of the interventions needed to address the health (including mental health), welfare and safety of women.

169. In the 2021 Legislative Council Session, the Prime Minister's Office informed that it is preparing guidelines to address sexual harassment in the workplace and prevent it from happening.

### **3.3.2 Human Rights of Women/ Trafficking in women**

170. Brunei Darussalam remains committed to enhancing legislation and enforcement to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIPs). In 2019, significant efforts were made to review and bolster relevant laws, resulting in the introduction of the new Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and Prevention of People Smuggling Act. These acts criminalise trafficking in persons and people smuggling,

respectively, imposing strict penalties including imprisonment and fines. (UPR) Significant efforts include the implementation of the National Framework on Child Protection (NFCP) in December 2020, which aims to ensure every child's right to a nurturing environment conducive to realising their full potential.

171. The introduction of the NFCP also marked the creation of the Register of Child and Young Persons in Need of Protection (RCYPNP) in May 2022. This register enables inter-agency collaboration for the monitoring and immediate protection of children or young individuals in vulnerable situations.

172. With the establishment of the TIP Assessment Team in 2020, Brunei Darussalam continued to enhance inter-agency coordination in conducting investigative efforts to evaluate human trafficking cases. The TIP Assessment Team comprises the Prime Minister Officer, Attorney General's Chambers, Human Trafficking Investigation Unit (HTU) of the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF), Royal Customs and Excise Department, Department of Immigration and National Registration, and the Department of Labour.

173. Brunei Darussalam has also introduced a National Plan of Action Against TIP in September 2020. The plan is structured around four main strategies: protecting potential victims, raising awareness, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and improving investigations and prosecutions. Further to this, the National Standard Operating Procedure for TIP (NaSOP) was introduced in 2021, which includes an inter-agency checklist for identifying the elements of human trafficking. Under Section 2.3 of the NaSOP, it states that the SOP caters to the interest of all victims and is applicable without any discrimination against any victim. Various departments including AGC, Department of Immigration and National Registration and the Department of Labour have conducted training and also reviewed and enhanced their respective internal operational procedures to align with the NaSOP.

174. In terms of prevention, Brunei Darussalam has maintained its efforts by conducting training programs for labour and immigration officials as well as NGOs. In November 2020, the National Committee on Trafficking in Persons established the Taskforce of Awareness Programme on TIP, tasked with raising public awareness about human trafficking. Various awareness campaigns have been conducted across both public and private sectors, covering topics such as immigration offences, passport regulations, trafficking and smuggling laws, and the penalties for violating workers' rights as per national labour laws. Additionally, the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF), in collaboration with the state broadcaster RTB, produced a television series featuring a case handled by the Human Trafficking Unit (HTU), which aired in March 2021. This initiative aimed to increase public understanding of human trafficking crimes and the components of TIP, while also providing insight into the HTU's daily operations.

175. Brunei Darussalam is actively involved in collaborating with bilateral and regional partners to conduct training programs aimed at combating trafficking in persons. A recent example is the participation in the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) on Combating Trafficking in Persons, which took place in the United States from November 27 to December 16, 2023.

176. Under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, victims of human trafficking are accommodated at the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) shelter, located within the Welfare Home Complex under the

supervision of the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. The shelter became fully operational in 2023 and has since provided protection for 9 female trafficking victims as of May 2024. (Refer to Table 14)

177. Recognizing the interconnectedness of forced labour and human trafficking, Brunei Darussalam reaffirmed its commitment to combating these egregious violations of human rights by depositing the instrument of ratification of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) on June 12, 2023. Upholding the highest standards of labour rights, the government remains steadfast in its efforts to protect workers' rights and prevent human trafficking through legislative measures and international cooperation. By promoting and enacting legislation and collaborating with other nations, Brunei Darussalam remains dedicated to eradicating human trafficking and ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens.

### **3.3.3 Women and the Media**

178. Brunei Darussalam recognises that the media serves as a significant tool for influencing perceptions and fostering awareness of role models and opportunities, particularly regarding gender equality and women's advancement. Daily news coverage consistently showcases women in leadership positions, including events where female leaders conduct their business. For example, following the appointment of the first female Cabinet Minister in Brunei Darussalam, Datin Seri Setia Hajah Romaizah Mohd Salleh as the Minister of Education in June 2022, she was featured in an interview with The Borneo Bulletin, reflecting on her achievements and advocating for women's empowerment.

179. Brunei Darussalam's national platform, Radio Television Brunei (RTB), broadcasts programs portraying women favourably, accessible through internet streaming services. Shows like "Hawa" focus on contemporary women's issues in Brunei Darussalam, featuring interviews showcasing women's achievements and challenges across various domains, including industry, entrepreneurship, and public engagement.

### **3.3.4 The Girl Child**

180. In the year 2020, Brunei Darussalam established the National Framework on Child Protection (NFCP), a comprehensive guide designed to be implemented from 2020 to 2024 which signified a concerted effort to fortify the existing child protection infrastructure within the country. The NFCP is dedicated to safeguarding the rights and well-being of children and young persons (CYP) under 18 years old, outlining strategies to address crucial national priorities in child protection through a whole-of-nation and whole-of-government approach.

181. The formulation of the NFCP is underpinned by the Brunei Vision 2035, which envisages a future where the nation is characterised by high educational standards, an enhanced quality of life, and a robust economy. Additionally, the NFCP draws inspiration and guidance from existing national legislations, such as the Plan of Action on the Well-being of Children (POA), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and Brunei Darussalam's core principles of Malay Islamic Monarchy. Moreover, regional and international frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Violence

Against Children (2016-2025), inform the development and implementation of the NFCP, aligning Brunei Darussalam's efforts with global best practices in child protection.

182. Central to the NFCP is the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA), which delineates a child as an individual below 14 years old and a young person as one between 14 and 18 years old. Enforced by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, the CYPA serves as the cornerstone legislation ensuring the protection of minors in Brunei Darussalam.

183. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of child protection cases, Brunei Darussalam implemented standardised assessment and reporting protocols in collaboration with the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore (MSF). These protocols, namely the Sectoral Assessment Protocol (SAP) and the Child Protection Reporting Protocol (CPRP), aim to provide uniform guidelines for identifying and responding to child protection concerns across key sectors including enforcement, health, education, and social services. Additionally, the Register of Children and Young Persons in Need of Protection (RCYPNP), launched in May 2022, facilitates inter-agency communication and information sharing to identify and assist vulnerable individuals.

184. The SAP serves as a sector-specific guide for first responders, categorising potential child protection cases into three risk levels – red, yellow, and green – and delineating the requisite involvement of stakeholders along with the expected response timelines. Complementing the SAP, the CPRP outlines the subsequent steps to be taken by internal experts or focal persons within each sector, incorporating standard operating procedures (SOPs) for high-risk cases identified through the SAP.

185. In addition to protocol development, Brunei Darussalam has instituted vital support mechanisms to ensure children's access to social protection. Notably, the launch of Child Helpline 121 by the Department of Community Development in October 2019, stands as an essential initiative. This 24-hour toll-free helpline provides a platform for children to voice their concerns or report issues, emphasising the significance of children's well-being and enhancing access to social services.

186. The establishment of the NFCP, alongside the development of assessment protocols and support mechanisms, underscores Brunei Darussalam's unwavering commitment to ensuring the protection and welfare of its young citizens, aligning with its broader national vision and international obligations in child rights advocacy.

<b>3.4. PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS</b>
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**3.4.1 Women in power and decision-making**

187. In leadership and decision-making, Brunei Darussalam has recorded progress in women's career development across various sectors, including legal, political, financial, and managerial roles. Women hold significant positions in both governmental and private sectors, such as

Ambassador-at-Large, Heads of Missions, Legislative Council members, Deputy Minister, Attorney General, High Court Judge, Permanent Secretaries, Solicitor-General and Chief Executive Officers. Notably, in the Council of Cabinet Ministers, one out of fourteen Ministers and one out of six Deputy Ministers are women, constituting 10% of the highest ranks.

188. The judiciary system in Brunei Darussalam encompasses English Common Law and Islamic Syariah Law. The Supreme Court comprises the High Court and the Court of Appeals while the Subordinate Court consists of the Magistrate's Courts. The Islamic Syariah Law co-exists with the Supreme Court and mainly handles crimes or offences that are under Islamic Law and conducted by Muslim offenders. While one female judge serves in the Supreme Court among 14 judges, there are also 16 women prosecutors and 67 women lawyers.

189. The Legislative Council comprises 37 members, with four women representatives, all appointed as 'Persons who have achieved distinction in their own fields'. The proportion of women in The Legislative Council currently stands at 10.8% of the total membership.

190. Women's presence in managerial positions in Brunei Darussalam exceeds that of many other nations, with women constituting approximately 37% of managers across all sectors. A notable surge in women's employment in executive and managerial roles within the Government highlights progress towards gender parity. Between 2003 and 2021, there was a 19.5% increase in women in Division I and a 9.5% increase in Division II. For example, there were fewer men in Division I in 2022 (625 persons) compared to 2015 (685 persons). The trend of a decline for men in Division II parallels the decline observed among men in Division I.

191. According to the 2021 ASEAN Gender Outlook, Brunei Darussalam recorded the highest proportion of women (37%) to hold middle and senior managerial positions at work within the region. While many countries across the globe have shown an increasing trend in women-to-men labour force participation rates, Brunei Darussalam's considerable increase in ratio from 56.2% in 1990 to 81.7% in 2020 highlights the significant improvement towards gender parity in the workforce over the past three decades. Furthermore, the growing representation of women in policy and decision-making positions is reflected in the increasing proportion of women in senior and middle management levels to 65%. The public sector workforce comprises 56% women, while the private sector continues to elevate and champion women to break through glass ceilings and sit in executive levels. These form part of the picture that women in Brunei Darussalam are actively contributing to the nation's development, and highlights their increasing roles and visibility in decision-making processes vis-a-vis the attainment of senior positions in various legal, political, financial, business and entrepreneurial executive management professions.

## **3.5. PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES**

### **3.5.1 Women, Peace and Security Agenda**

192. As a member of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam participates in efforts to advance Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as a regional priority agenda. At the ministerial level, women-specific policies are not outlined explicitly, however, there are no barriers to women's equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems nor any barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, and to develop their capacities. The WPS agenda in ASEAN is guided by the commitments to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and other related resolutions on women, peace and security such as 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), and 1889 (2009).

193. On 16 November 2023, MINDEF as a member of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) adopted the Joint Statement by the ADMM-Plus on WPS. The joint statement stated that ADMM and ADMM-Plus members will remain committed to strengthening regional endorsements and frameworks on the implementation of the WPS Agenda to protect, respect and promote the full realisation of women's and girls' rights in the face of ongoing and emerging threats and security challenges. MINDEF Brunei Darussalam through the ADMM also supports the work to continue enhancing women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership at all stages and all levels of peace processes, and has lent support to the endorsement of the Concept Paper on Enhancing Support Mechanisms for ASEAN Women Peacekeepers during the 16th ADMM on 22 June 2022.

194. Pertinently, MINDEF Brunei Darussalam and its ADMM-Plus counterpart's support towards WPS is echoed through the inclusion of WPS initiatives in all seven areas of practical cooperation for ADMM-Plus EWG activities; namely Maritime Security (MS), Counter-Terrorism (CT), Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), Military Medicine (MM), Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) and Cyber Security (CS). Notably under the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR), MINDEF Brunei Darussalam has also appointed Colonel Norsuriati binti Haji Sharbini as national representative, in which the AWPR aims to contribute to the implementation of the 'Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN', which encouraged the integration of gender perspectives in all conflict prevention initiatives and strategies.

195. Highlighting the national military efforts in upholding the WPS, the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) has also incorporated the participation of female peacekeepers in its peacekeeping missions under UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) since 2008. Presently, the RBAF continues making efforts to consistently deploy female personnel to participate in UNIFIL, which is intended to enhance the overall holistic approach in the operations by contributing an additional perspective and skills to the mission.

196. Brunei Darussalam, known as the Abode of Peace, prioritises the peace and security of its people and the nation as fundamental pillars of governance. Upholding stability and social harmony is paramount, with ongoing efforts directed towards ensuring peace, justice, and the resilience of

institutions. Adopting a holistic approach, Brunei Darussalam is committed to fostering peaceful and inclusive societies, providing equitable access to justice, and building effective, transparent, and accountable institutions.

197. The nation's dual legal system, comprising Civil and Syariah laws, serves to safeguard society from harm and injustice. The civil service, acting as the administrative machinery of the government, upholds the supreme authority of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, while also ensuring national development and the welfare of the people. Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, swift government action, including amendments to the Infectious Diseases Act and adherence to guidelines from the Ministry of Health, enabled the maintenance of peace and security, ensuring the safety of citizens.

198. Brunei Darussalam has made commendable progress in maintaining peace and security, evidenced by low rates of intentional homicide and human trafficking cases. The nation has intensified efforts to protect vulnerable groups and combat human trafficking and exploitation. However, further endeavours are required to address issues such as the proportion of unsentenced detainees and ensure prudent government spending. Upholding strong institutions has facilitated advancements in public service satisfaction, safeguarding children's rights through birth registration, and promoting representativity in public institutions.

199. The legal framework in Brunei Darussalam provides protection for vulnerable groups, including women and children, through various statutes. Provisions provided under the Penal Code (Cap.22), the Syariah Penal Code Order 2013, Women and Child Protection Act (Cap.120), Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 219), Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (Cap. 230) and Prevention of People Smuggling Order provide the basis for protection from violence, abuse and exploitation for vulnerable groups. Notable initiatives, such as the National Framework on Child Protection introduced in December 2020, aim to ensure a healthy environment for children to thrive and reach their full potential.

200. Brunei Darussalam has intensified efforts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) and exploitation through the establishment of a National Committee on TIP in January 2020 and the introduction of a National Plan of Action Against TIP in September 2020. Key strategies include protecting potential victims, raising awareness, and enhancing inter-agency coordination for investigations and prosecutions. The completion of a National Standard Operating Procedure for TIP (NaSOP TIP) in January 2021 further strengthens systematic identification and referral of TIP victims, ensuring their safety and well-being during legal processes.

201. Remaining committed to its international obligations, Brunei Darussalam continues to uphold core international human rights treaties. The nation recognizes the sovereign right of all states to accede to treaties and actively assesses the feasibility of accession, ensuring alignment between domestic laws, policies, and international obligations.

### **3.6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION**

202. The primary custodians of environmental stewardship in Brunei Darussalam are the Department of Environment, Parks and Recreation (JASTRe) under the Ministry of Development, the Department of Fisheries, and the Forestry Department, both falling under the purview of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism. These agencies, each led by capable female leaders, collaboratively undertake diverse roles and responsibilities in ensuring sustainable environmental practices.

203. Moreover, several initiatives on environmental awareness programs, and activities in Brunei Darussalam, including events like 'Plastic-Free Weekend,' 'Car-Free Day' during 'Bandarku Ceria,' mangrove and coastal tree planting, participation in 'Earth Hour,' and others, serve as symbolic platforms to educate the public about the significance of mitigating climate change impacts.

204. Complementing governmental efforts, several NGOs led by female presidents have actively contributed to environmental conservation in Brunei Darussalam. These organisations, including Green Brunei, Biodiversity and Natural History Society (BruWILD), Big Begawan (BWN) Project, Zero Waste Brunei, and Sustainable Ocean Alliance Brunei, have played pivotal roles in raising awareness and initiating community-driven projects to protect the environment.

205. The country has thus witnessed an increase in green-focused non-governmental organisations (NGOs), campaigns, and eco-friendly businesses. To sustain this momentum, the government is actively working towards a nationwide initiative, which includes incorporating climate change-related programs and educational materials into schools and universities.



# SECTION FOUR: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

## 4.1. NATIONAL MACHINERY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

### 4.1.1 The Special Committee on Family Institution, Women and Children, National Council of Social Issues

206. In April 2008, Brunei Darussalam established the ministerial level National Council on Social Issues (MKIS), chaired by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports. The council is entrusted with a range of responsibilities, including the identification of prevailing social issues, the formulation of policies, legislation, and action plans to address these issues, and the coordination and oversight of their implementation by relevant government agencies. Membership of the council comprises key stakeholders such as the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II, the Minister of Education, and the Chairman of the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation.

207. Within the framework of the National Council on Social Issues, several Special Committees have been established to streamline national efforts in addressing specific social concerns. Notably, the Special Committee on Family Institution, Women, and Children, chaired by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, is dedicated to coordinating initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women and strengthening the family institution. The committee's secretary is the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and its members include senior officials from various ministries and government bodies, such as the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Ministry of Home Affairs. Additionally, representatives from key institutions such as the Royal Brunei Police, the Director General of Civil Service, the Attorney General's Chambers, the *Syari'ah* Court, and the Council of Women of Brunei Darussalam are also part of the committee.

208. The Department of Community Development serves as the Secretariat of the Special Committee, facilitating coordination and collaboration among stakeholders to address the multifaceted issues pertaining to women, children, and family well-being. Through the concerted efforts of the National Council on Social Issues and its Special Committees, Brunei Darussalam remains committed to promoting social cohesion, safeguarding human rights, and enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.

209. The Special Committee operates under the following terms of reference:

- i. Formulating recommendations for policies, legislations, and action plans to address issues pertaining to women and family institutions.
- ii. Coordinating and overseeing the implementation of action plans and programs related to women and family institutions by relevant agencies.
- iii. Reviewing, analysing, and executing action plans and programs concerning women and family institutions.
- iv. Ensuring the integration of gender and family perspectives into all national policies and budgetary requirements.
- v. Identifying pertinent issues related to women and family institutions and commissioning research to uncover their root causes, as well as recommending strategies for their resolution.
- vi. Facilitating close cooperation among relevant stakeholders from government and non-governmental agencies, including the private sector, voluntary organisations, corporate entities, businesses, community and village leaders, parents, and the general public, to address issues concerning women and family institutions.

#### **4.1.2 National Plan of Action on Women in Brunei Darussalam**

210. Brunei Darussalam reiterates its steadfast commitment to prioritising women's advancement within the national agenda. Recognizing women as the cornerstone of familial harmony and vital contributors to the country's development, the government has established a dedicated Plan of Action for addressing women's issues under the auspices of the Special Committee on Family Institutions, Women, and Children within the National Council on Social Issues (MKIS). Aligned with the principles of CEDAW, this strategic framework is implemented through a whole-of-nation approach, engaging stakeholders at all levels, including grassroots communities and NGOs.

211. The Plan of Action on Women's Issues, overseen by the Special Committee on Family Institution, Women, and Children within the National Council of Social Issues, is currently undergoing revision to integrate findings from the Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam. This comprehensive research initiative, mandated by the National Council on Social Issues in 2018, aims to identify prevailing challenges and opportunities for women in the country, with a strategic focus on promoting gender equity, capacity building, and self-development. The ultimate goal is to inform the formulation of government policies and national initiatives geared towards the advancement and empowerment of women in Brunei Darussalam. Through collaborative efforts involving key ministries such as the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance and Economics, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Attorney General's Chamber, Royal Brunei Police Force, Syariah Court, Public Services Department, and the Women's Council of Brunei Darussalam, unified action is sought to address the diverse challenges faced by women and ensure their holistic empowerment.

212. Conducted by the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies, the year-long research endeavour commenced in April 2022 under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. A key component of this research initiative was a national household survey involving over 1,403 women, including 400 at-risk women, and nearly 291 men. This statistically representative sample, designed to achieve a confidence level of 99%, facilitated a comprehensive examination of various domains, including work-family balance, personal opinions, beliefs, and perceptions on gender roles.

213. The outcomes of this research are poised to shape the development of a National Plan of Action on Women, with priority areas focusing on enhancing women's safety and well-being, maximising their work potential and career advancement opportunities, and fostering their empowerment within the community. By harnessing the insights gleaned from this research initiative, Brunei Darussalam reaffirms its commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable society where women are empowered to realise their full potential and contribute meaningfully to national development.

#### **4.1.3 The Department of Community Development**

214. The national machinery responsible for addressing women's issues in Brunei Darussalam is The Department of Community Development under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS). The Department of Community Development is the focal and lead agency for the promotion and protection of women and girls including the support, care, protection and rehabilitation. Some of the roles of Department of Community Development in relation to women and girls are as follows:

- i. The Director of the Department of Community Development is appointed as the protector under the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap 219) (CYPA);
- ii. The Department of Community Development is the secretariat for Action Team on Child Protection (ATOCP) which was established under the Children and Young Person's Act (CYPA), and oversees cases of child abuse.
- iii. The Director of the Department of Community Development also chairs the Child Protection Committee, one of the action teams under ATOCP.
- iv. The Department of Community Development is the secretariat for the national POA for women and children under the Special Committee on Family Institution, Women and Children under the National Council on Social Issues.
- v. The issues of the women and girls cut across all sectors of society, therefore The Department of Community Development works closely with all other relevant government and non-government bodies towards the implementation of the protection of women and children's rights.

#### 4.1.4 Non-Governmental Organisations

215. The presence of NGOs in Brunei Darussalam serves as a valuable complement to the government's efforts in ensuring the nation's prosperity, social well-being, and economic progress. These organisations play a pivotal role in promoting welfare and social equality by offering support and platforms to address various societal concerns. Active across multiple sectors, NGOs in Brunei Darussalam are particularly engaged in:

- i. Raising awareness about persons with disabilities.
- ii. Advancing the social and economic status of women.
- iii. Empowering youth through various initiatives.
- iv. Fostering excellence in sports.
- v. Educating the public about mental health, HIV/AIDS and combating drug abuse.
- vi. Enhancing human development by fostering personal skills.

216. Within the domain of women's rights, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports collaborates closely with NGOs, facilitated through an umbrella organisation, the National Council of Women Brunei Darussalam (NCWBD). This collaboration aims to enhance the status of women across all spheres, including education, the economy, welfare, culture, and society. Affiliated with CWBD are thirteen other women's associations in Brunei Darussalam, each contributing to the advancement of women in various sectors.

217. Another example of NGO is the Women's Business Council of Brunei Darussalam where it serves as a platform for women in both government and private sectors, including academia, to address business-related issues. It facilitates the exchange of ideas, fosters entrepreneurship skills, and supports the development of quality businesses for women.

218. At the ASEAN level, NCWBD's engagement extends to regional platforms such as the ASEAN Confederation of Women Organizations (ACWO), aiming to further enhance the development of women in Brunei Darussalam through regional collaboration and exchange of best practices. Additionally, Brunei Darussalam holds representation in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), with its first female Secretary General, Her Excellency Ar Siti Rozaimeriyanti binti Dato Paduka Haji Abdul Rahman, for the term ending in 2025. Her Excellency previously served as a member of the Legislative Council for a five-year tenure.

## **4.2. STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

219. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been implemented through the Whole of Nation approach with the active involvement and contribution of all relevant ministries, government agencies, as well as non-Governmental organisations (NGOs). For the preparation of this report, besides incorporating insights and inputs from all relevant agencies and NGOs, various government reports were also cited for reference purposes.

# SECTION FIVE: DATA AND STATISTICS

## 5.1 NATIONAL DATA COORDINATION STEERING COMMITTEE

220. In October 2020, the establishment of a National Data Coordination Steering Committee aimed to create a coordinated and collaborative mechanism among primary data providers at the national level. This initiative seeks to enhance effectiveness in national data coordination through a comprehensive approach, ensuring the availability, timely production, and dissemination of pertinent statistics for evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation.

221. Functioning as an advisory body, the steering committee offers guidelines and direction in national-level data planning and fosters collaboration among data resource agencies. It focuses on generating key statistical indicators for both national and international utilisation.

222. The steering committee's primary functions include setting up working committees to address national statistical needs, identifying areas of focus with data gaps or in need of enhancement aligning with national priorities, and monitoring data availability progress while providing guidance to overcome challenges and achieve targets.

223. Chaired by the Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy (Economy), the committee consists of eight Permanent Secretaries from relevant ministries. Six working groups have been formed, each specialising in specific thematic areas such as Tourism, Industry (MSMEs & Informal Sector), Finance, Social (Housing & Environment), Social (Gender & Disability), and Digital Economy.

224. The Working Group on Social (Gender & Disability), led by the Permanent Secretary (Community) at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, has identified 207 relevant indicators on gender and disability. Among these, 110 are available, 34 are partially available, 48 are currently unavailable, and 15 are deemed not applicable.

## 5.2 NATIONAL WELFARE SYSTEM (SKN)

225. In 2020, Brunei Darussalam implemented the integrated and digitised National Welfare System (Sistem Kebajikan Negara or SKN) as a strategic measure to streamline the application and distribution processes for financial assistance. This system serves as a centralised platform for managing various welfare schemes administered by relevant agencies across the country.

226. Since its inception, the SKN has revolutionised the landscape of welfare programs in Brunei Darussalam, facilitating seamless information sharing and significantly enhancing the efficacy of these initiatives. Notably, it has brought about marked improvements in the administration of the Monthly Welfare Assistance (Bantuan Kebajikan Bulanan or BKB) scheme, which is overseen by

the Department of Community Development and the Department of *Zakat, Waqaf and Baitulmal Affairs* (JUZWAB).

227. One of the pivotal features of the SKN is its capacity to provide comprehensive data analysis, including sex-disaggregated information and detailed demographic profiles of applicants. By delving into factors such as family composition and specific needs, the system enables tailored interventions to address unemployment challenges and facilitate the socioeconomic empowerment of beneficiaries. Moreover, it serves as a vital platform for aligning and allocating resources to support underprivileged and vulnerable segments of the population.

228. Through the SKN, inter-ministerial coordination processes have been streamlined, leading to more efficient assessment and validation procedures. This concerted effort not only ensures the effective utilisation of resources but also fosters a targeted approach towards uplifting disadvantaged individuals and communities. Ultimately, the SKN represents a crucial step towards building a more inclusive and resilient society in Brunei Darussalam.

### 5.3 LIST OF ANNEXES

**Table 1: Population by Gender, Sex Ratio and Growth Rate**

Year	Gender		Sex Ratio	Growth Rate		
	Male	Female		Male	Female	Total Growth Rate
2013	207,900	195,400	1.064	1.0	1.3	1.2
2014	209,700	197,900	1.060	0.9	1.3	1.1
2015	211,900	200,500	1.057	1.0	1.3	1.2
2016	214,104	203,152	1.054	1.0	1.3	1.2
2017	223,100	203,300	1.097	4.2	0.1	2.2
2018	232,100	204,500	1.135	4.0	0.6	2.4
2019	241,600	209,400	1.154	4.1	2.4	3.3
2020	236,000	205,800	1.147	-2.3	-1.7	-2.0
2021	232,194	208,521	1.114	-1.6	1.3	-0.2
2022	235,000	210,400	1.117	1.2	0.9	1.1

*Source: Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (2022)*

**Table 2: Population by Employment and Labour Force Participation**

Year	Total Labour Force		Employed		Unemployed	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2018	140,102	94,736	130,395	86,251	9,707	8,485
2019	142,245	91,111	133,986	83,738	8,259	7,374
2020	138,683	89,040	129,881	81,212	8,802	7,828

2021	132,709	90,629	127,575	84,807	5,134	5,822
2022	134,013	87,955	127,666	82,857	6,347	5,098

Source: Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (2022)

**Table 3: Total Number of Students by Level of Education**

Level of Education and Sex	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Pre-Primary</b>	<b>13,839</b>	<b>13,408</b>	<b>13,251</b>	<b>12,165</b>	<b>10,282</b>
Male	7,108	6,885	6,867	6,306	5,305
Female	6,731	6,523	6,384	5,859	4,977
<b>Primary / Preparatory</b>	<b>39,404</b>	<b>39,236</b>	<b>39,649</b>	<b>39,517</b>	<b>39,077</b>
Male	20,265	20,181	20,433	20,365	20,079
Female	19,139	19,055	19,216	19,152	18,998
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>34,247</b>	<b>33,666</b>	<b>32,706</b>	<b>32,453</b>	<b>32,033</b>
Male	17,764	17,347	16,913	16,856	16,622
Female	16,483	16,319	15,793	15,597	15,411
<b>Sixth Form (Pre-University)</b>	<b>4,575</b>	<b>4,476</b>	<b>3,959</b>	<b>4,379</b>	<b>4,793</b>
Male	1,952	1,905	1,607	1,776	1,996
Female	2,623	2,571	2,352	2,603	2,797
<b>Technical / Vocational</b>	<b>5,082</b>	<b>4,977</b>	<b>4,996</b>	<b>5,239</b>	<b>4,660</b>
Male	2,795	2,641	2,607	2,944	2,660
Female	2,287	2,336	2,389	2,295	2,000
<b>Tertiary</b>	<b>11,406</b>	<b>11,403</b>	<b>11,201</b>	<b>12,059</b>	<b>13,648</b>
Male	4,701	4,689	4,591	5,006	5,585
Female	6,705	6,714	6,610	7,053	8,063
<b>Total</b>	<b>108,553</b>	<b>107,166</b>	<b>105,762</b>	<b>105,812</b>	<b>104,493</b>
Male	54,585	53,648	53,018	53,253	52,247
Female	53,968	53,518	52,744	52,559	52,246

Source: Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (2022)



**Table 4: Students Enrolments by Level, Age and Sex**

Level and Age (Years)	2021			2022		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
<b>Pre-Primary and Primary</b>	<b>51,682</b>	<b>26,671</b>	<b>25,011</b>	<b>49,359</b>	<b>25,384</b>	<b>23,975</b>
5 and Below	11,587	5,970	5,617	9,223	4,715	4,508
6	6,105	3,190	2,915	6,394	3,330	3,064
7	6,646	3,416	3,230	6,240	3,199	3,041
8	6,602	3,411	3,191	6,714	3,482	3,232
9	6,642	3,374	3,268	6,732	3,568	3,164
10	6,339	3,141	3,198	7,137	3,600	3,537
11	5,908	3,002	2,906	5,669	2,855	2,814
12 and Above	1,853	1,167	686	1,250	635	615
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>32,453</b>	<b>16,856</b>	<b>15,597</b>	<b>32,033</b>	<b>16,622</b>	<b>15,411</b>
11 and Below	846	441	405	913	457	456
12	4,953	2,593	2,360	5,662	2,898	2,764
13	6,483	3,217	3,266	6,198	3,240	2,958
14	6,263	3,232	3,031	6,028	3,061	2,967
15	6,643	3,463	3,180	6,147	3,147	3,000
16	5,361	2,814	2,547	5,636	2,973	2,663
17	1,656	926	730	1,259	712	547
18 and Above	248	170	78	190	134	56
<b>Sixth Form</b>	<b>4,379</b>	<b>1,776</b>	<b>2,603</b>	<b>4,793</b>	<b>1,996</b>	<b>2,797</b>
15	90	37	53	78	35	43
16	948	366	582	810	321	489

17	2,057	850	1,207	2,301	933	1,368
18 and Above	1,284	523	761	1,604	707	897
<b>Technical / Vocational</b>	<b>5,239</b>	<b>2,944</b>	<b>2,295</b>	<b>4,660</b>	<b>2,660</b>	<b>2,000</b>
16 and Below	294	159	135	2	1	1
17	1,158	620	538	137	75	62
18	1,264	719	545	980	579	401
19	955	517	438	1,189	657	532
20	602	353	249	868	460	408
21 and Above	966	576	390	1,483	887	596
Age Unknown	-	-	-	1	1	-
<b>Tertiary</b>	<b>12,059</b>	<b>5,006</b>	<b>7,053</b>	<b>13,648</b>	<b>5,585</b>	<b>8,063</b>
16 and Below	200	94	106	4	2	2
17-19	3,592	1,475	2,117	1,827	803	1,024
20-24	6,602	2,764	3,838	8,068	3,257	4,811
25-29	1,034	413	621	2,091	823	1,268
30-34	248	93	155	442	167	275
35-39	148	65	83	234	107	127
40 and Above	190	84	106	228	101	127
Age Unknown	45	18	27	754	325	429

Source: Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (2022)

**Table 5: Number of Student Enrolments at Tertiary Level by Sector**

<b>Sector and Year</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Government Sector</b>	<b>9,876</b>	<b>10,095</b>	<b>10,096</b>	<b>11,002</b>	<b>11,983</b>
Male	3,892	4,012	4,041	4,453	4,780
Female	5,984	6,083	6,055	6,549	7,203
<b>Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD)</b>	<b>4,368</b>	<b>4,325</b>	<b>4,098</b>	<b>4,234</b>	<b>4,288</b>
Male	1,503	1,521	1,423	1,515	1,474
Female	2,865	2,804	2,675	2,719	2,814
<b>Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA)</b>	<b>1,269</b>	<b>1,399</b>	<b>1,595</b>	<b>1,758</b>	<b>2,127</b>
Male	460	504	565	641	742
Female	809	895	1,030	1,117	1,385
<b>Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB)</b>	<b>1,389</b>	<b>1,501</b>	<b>1,516</b>	<b>1,684</b>	<b>1,785</b>
Male	681	724	743	824	885
Female	708	777	773	860	900
<b>Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPU SB)</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>1,113</b>
Male	276	289	253	326	456
Female	497	459	411	481	657
<b>Politeknik Brunei</b>	<b>2,077</b>	<b>2,122</b>	<b>2,223</b>	<b>2,519</b>	<b>2,670</b>
Male	972	974	1,057	1,147	1,223
Female	1,105	1,148	1,166	1,372	1,447
<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>1,530</b>	<b>1,308</b>	<b>1,105</b>	<b>1,057</b>	<b>1,665</b>
Male	809	677	550	553	806
Female	721	631	555	504	859
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,406</b>	<b>11,403</b>	<b>11,201</b>	<b>12,059</b>	<b>13,648</b>

Male	4,701	4,689	4,591	5,006	5,586
Female	6,705	6,714	6,610	7,053	8,062

Source: Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (2022)

**Table 6: Total Number of Yearly Graduates at Tertiary Level by Sector**

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Government Sector</b>	<b>3,129</b>	<b>2,899</b>	<b>2,622</b>	<b>2,744</b>	<b>2,718</b>
Male	1,101	1,104	1,000	1,040	1,037
Female	2,028	1,795	1,622	1,704	1,681
<b>Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD)</b>	<b>1,543</b>	<b>1,211</b>	<b>1,182</b>	<b>1,171</b>	<b>1,028</b>
Male	441	380	407	386	348
Female	1102	831	775	785	680
<b>Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA)</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>340</b>
Male	80	113	74	119	171
Female	128	176	183	222	169
<b>Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB)</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>421</b>
Male	188	216	133	188	136
Female	273	235	174	230	285
<b>Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPU SB)</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>243</b>
Male	68	73	98	74	91
Female	165	186	153	133	152
<b>Politeknik Brunei</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>686</b>
Male	324	322	288	273	291
Female	360	367	337	334	395
<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>615</b>
Male	425	325	338	457	315
Female	419	366	294	468	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,973</b>	<b>3,590</b>	<b>3,254</b>	<b>3,669</b>	<b>3,333</b>
Male	1,526	1,429	1,338	1,497	1,352
Female	2,447	2,161	1,916	2,172	1,981

Source: Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook (2022)

**Table 7: Proportion of women in senior or managerial positions in government**

	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Permanent Secretary</b>	10	12	9	12	9	11	13	11
<b>Deputy Permanent Secretary</b>	14	8	14	8	15	8	12	9

Source: *Women's Political Participation and Leadership in Brunei Darussalam (2023)*

**Table 8: Proportion of seats held by women as chief executive or head at local government**

<b>Total Number of Women in Government Managerial Positions (Division I and II)</b>								
Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Division I</b>	<b>1,029</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>1,076</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>1,036</b>
Male	685	648	566	589	636	677	579	625
Female	344	313	301	323	371	399	408	411
<b>Division II</b>	<b>10,775</b>	<b>10,557</b>	<b>10,429</b>	<b>10,865</b>	<b>11,319</b>	<b>11,672</b>	<b>11,121</b>	<b>11,229</b>
Male	3,880	3,826	3,676	3,769	3,898	4,013	3,644	3,682
Female	6,895	6,731	6,753	7,096	7,421	7,659	7,477	7,547

Source: *Women's Political Participation and Leadership in Brunei Darussalam (2023)*

**Table 9: List of Women's Associations in Brunei Darussalam**

No.	List of Women's Associations in Brunei Darussalam
1	<i>Badan Kebajikan Wanita Perumahan Negara Lambak Kanan, BAKANITA</i>
2	<i>Badan Kebajikan Isteri Angkatan Bersenjata Diraja Brunei (Royal Brunei Armed Forces, RBAF Wives' Welfare Body), BAKTI</i>
3	<i>Badan Kebajikan Isteri-Isteri Pegawai dan Kakitangan Kerajaan Brunei (Welfare Body for Wives of Officers and Government Staff), BISTARI</i>
4	<i>Pertubuhan Tindakan Wanita Islam, PERTIWI</i>
5	<i>Persatuan Belia Kampung Lambak, PERBEKAL</i>

6	<i>Persatuan Wanita Kampung Junjungan, PEWAJA</i>
7	<i>Persatuan Gabungan Kebajikan Wanita Daerah Tutong, PERGANITA</i>
8	<i>Persatuan Pandu Puteri Brunei Darussalam (Girl Guides Association), PPPBD</i>
9	<i>Persekutuan Guru-Guru Melayu Brunei (Brunei Malay Teachers Association), PGGMB</i>
10	<i>Persatuan Siswazah Wanita (Women Graduates Association), PSW</i>
11	<i>Persatuan Nurul Islam, PNI</i>
12	<i>Persatuan Kebajikan Perempuan Daerah Belait, PKP</i>
13	<i>Pertubuhan Perkumpulan Perempuan Brunei Darussalam (Women's Institute), WI</i>

Source: *Women's Political Participation and Leadership in Brunei Darussalam (2023)*

**Table 10: List of Notable Women-Led NGOs in Brunei Darussalam**

No.	List of Notable Women-Led NGOs in Brunei Darussalam
1	Women's Business Council (WBC)
2	<i>Persatuan Basmi Dadah (BASMIDA)</i>
3	<i>Persatuan Gerakan Ibu Tunggal (PGIT)</i>
4	<i>Persatuan MAWAR</i>
5	RespectME Community
6	<i>Majlis Belia Brunei (MBB)</i>
7	Buzzing Bees
8	My Action for SDGs Campaign
9	Sutera Memento
10	BANTU Services
11	Project Women Brunei
12	Big BWN
13	Community for Brunei
14	The Scoop/Scoop Media
15	<i>Kumpulan Meraih Berkah</i>
16	Bleedsafely

Source: *Women's Political Participation and Leadership in Brunei Darussalam (2023)*

**Table 11: List of programmes and initiatives organised by the Department of Community Development, including collaborations with Women-led NGOs (Between 2017 - 2024)**

NO.	NAME OF PROGRAMMES	AGENCIES
1.	International Women’s Day: Forum on Women and EXPO “Me Time For the Ladies”	DCD
2.	Peer Group Support Session (PGSS): <i>Bisikan Hati Wanita</i>	MAWAR Brunei Association
3.	Peer Group Support Session (PGSS): <i>Bisikan Hati Wanita</i>	MAWAR Brunei Association
4.	Perdana Forum “Women Empowerment”	DCD
5.	<i>PREPanita</i> (Preparing for Women) Forum: “Work Life Balance”	DCD
6.	Weekend Women (Workshop dan Expo)	DCD
7.	Café Ilmu (Knowledge Café)	<i>Persatuan Siswazah Wanita</i>
8.	A National Consultation on the mid-term review of the progress on the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Eliminating Violence Against Women (RPA on EVAW)	DCD ACWC
9.	Cross Movement Dialogue on Ending Violence Against Women and Girl: Children during COVID-19 and Beyond	Project Women Brunei
10.	Marriage: Reality and Practical Tips	MAWAR Brunei Association
11.	WEBINAR: Supporting Survivors Of Sexual Harassment In The Workplace	M & E
12.	Listen to Their Voices: Rights of Children and Women ( <i>Dengari Suara Mereka: Hak Asasi Kanak-Kanak dan Wanita</i> )	<i>Projek IMPAK Bicara</i>
13.	Relax and Share ( <i>Santai-santai berkongsi</i> ): Women’s Resilience: “Breaking the Nutshell”	DCD

14.	Relax and Share ( <i>Santai-santai berkongsi</i> ): Our Story of Hope: COVID-19	DCD
15.	<i>PREPanita</i> (Preparing for Women) Forum: Welcome to the World of Work	DCD
16.	Forum: Men's Involvement In Supporting Women	DCD
17.	Forum on Self-care: You can't pour from an empty cup	DCD
18.	Forum: "Celebrating Partnership in the Household"	MAWAR Brunei Association
19.	Forum: "About women: What are PCOS and TTC?"	DCD
20.	Workshop Supporting My Wife's Interests: Supporting My Wife's Passion	DCD
21.	Relax and Share ( <i>Santai-santai berkongsi</i> ): "Girl boss"; My definition of success	DCD
22.	<i>Doa Kesyukuran</i> Ceremony in conjunction with International Women's Day 2023	DCD
23.	Forum and Workshop W-IT (Women in Tech)	DCD
24.	Let Your Past Make You Better, Not Bitter	MAWAR Brunei Association
25.	Training of Trainers on Prevention of Sexual Harassment among Women and Girl-Children in Brunei Darussalam	Project Women Brunei
26.	<i>Doa Kesyukuran</i> Ceremony in conjunction with International Women's Day 2024	DCD
27.	Cook For Good Program	DCD
28.	Community Development Segment on Radio Television Brunei	DCD
29.	Community Outreach Programme ( <i>Merakit Masyarakat</i> )	DCD
30.	Program SINAR	DCD, Ministry of Education



31.	Protection of Women and Girls	DCD
32.	Rehabilitation of Female Delinquents	DCD
33.	Shelter for Women and Girls in the Welfare Home Complex	DCD
34.	Shelter for TIP Victims in the Welfare Home Complex	DCD
35.	Counseling for Violence Against Women (VAW) victims	DCD
36.	Please refer to Table 12 for programmes attended by women/female welfare assistance recipients	DCD

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

**Table 12: List of Programmes handled by the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports attended by Welfare Assistance Recipients**

NAME OF PROGRAMMES	YEAR							
	2021		2022		2023		2024 (APRIL)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Home Business Program	2	3	10	19	19	36	11	
Community Program	0	19	20	19	3	3	20	
Community Program: Sewing	0	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
Skills Program	-	-	12	30	-	-	-	-
Agricultural Workshop	-	-	15		-	-	-	-
DARe: Industry Business Academy	0	4	-	-	13		-	-
DARe:Micro Business Bootcamp	-	-	49		-	-	-	-
Assistance Entrepreneur Program	1	1	4		-	-	-	-

BIBD SEED	0	10	-	-	-	-	7	
<i>Program Tadribat Maharah</i>	28		5		22		-	-
BIG BWN	-		59		-	-	11	

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

**Table 13: Statistics of Rehabilitation Cases at the Welfare Home Complex under the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports**

TYPES OF CASES	YEAR											
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024 (MAY)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Beyond Parental Control	6	-	-	2	1	2	1	3	2	6	1	1
Theft	9	-	5	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Fighting	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Driving without licence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cigarette Smuggling	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drug Abuse	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unlawful Carnal Knowledge	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Animal Cruelty	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Human Trafficking (TIP)	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>		<b>9</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>12</b>	

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

**Table 14: Statistics of Residents for Protection Cases at the Welfare Home Complex under the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports**

TYPES OF CASES	YEAR											
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024 (MAY)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>												
Incest	2	1	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Rape	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Molestation	-	5	-	4	-	1	-	1	1	4	-	-
<b>Abuse</b>												
By Husband	-	1	-	5	-	3	-	4	-	-	-	-
By Biological/Step Parents	-	2	8	6	2	3	4	6	1	-	-	-
<b>Family problems</b>												
Neglected	3	2	-	1	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Temporary Placement	14	20	8	18	14	14	5	6	2	4	2	1
Abandoned Babies	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-

Violating Brunei Waters (Immigration)	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>						

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

**Table 15: Number of Women’s Cases Reported Under the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports**

TYPES OF CASES	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Domestic Violence	28	32	28	25	24	12	34
Marital Problems	12	21	19	19	12	15	12
Family Issues	1	6	3	9	3	2	13
Immoral Activities	6	8	29	16	35	23	27
Sexual Harassment	0	0	0	5	-	2	4
Various Complaints (Financial Problems, Mental Health Issues, Drug Abuse, Defaulting Clinic Appointments)	13	18	16	25	19	23	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>120</b>

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

**Table 16: Achievements of National Level Athletes in International and Regional Sport Events**

YEAR	SPORT EVENT	SPORT	MALE	FEMALE
<b>2019</b>	30th Sea Games, Philippines	Wushu	1 Gold	1 Silver, 1 Bronze
	Kejohanan Hari Keputeraan Brunei	Silat	1 Gold	1 Gold, 1 Silver
	8th Open Singapore Pencak Silat Championship	Silat	-	2 Silver
	Korean Ambassador's Cup Taekwondo World Championship	Taekwondo	-	1 Gold

	Brunei Open Taekwondo Championship	Taekwondo	2 Gold	-
<b>Total Number Of Medals Won In 2019</b>			<b>4 Medals</b>	<b>7 Medals</b>
<b>2020</b>	World Virtual Taijiquan	Wushu	-	1 Gold
<b>Total Number Of Medals Won In 2020</b>			<b>None</b>	<b>1 Medal</b>
<b>2021</b>	31st Sea Games, Vietnam	Wushu	1 Gold	-
		Silat	-	2 Silver
	Asian Traditional Virtual Wushu Championship (Online)	Wushu	-	1 Silver
	Virtual International Pencak Silat Championship	Silat	-	1 Bronze
<b>Total Number Of Medals Won In 2021</b>			<b>1 Medal</b>	<b>4 Medals</b>
<b>2022</b>	The World Games	Wushu	1 Silver	1 Gold
	19th World Pencak Silat Championship Malaysia, Melaka	Silat	1 Bronze	3 Bronze
	Sukan Malaysia (Sukma)	Swimming	1 Silver	-
		Karatedo	1 Bronze (Team Of 3)	1 Silver
		Silat	1 Bronze	-
	2nd Korean Ambassador's Cup International Championship, Brunei Darussalam	Taekwondo	-	1 Gold
	8th World Junior Wushu Championship, Indonesia	Wushu	-	1 Bronze
<b>Total Number Of Medals Won In 2022</b>			<b>5 Medals</b>	<b>7 Medals</b>
<b>2023</b>	32nd Sea Games, Cambodia	Wushu	2 Gold, 1 Bronze	1 Bronze

		Silat	1 Bronze	1 Silver
		Karatedo	2 Bronze	-
<b>Total Number Of Medals Won In 2023</b>			<b>6 Medals</b>	<b>2 Medals</b>
<b>Total Medals Won By Each Gender Between 2019-2023</b>			<b>15 Medals (41.7%)</b>	<b>21 Medals (58.3%)</b>

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (2023)

**Table 17: Statistics off Old Age Pension Recipients under the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports**

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE
2022	18,842	21,586
2023	19,617	22,448
May 2024	19,840	22,808

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

**Table 18: Statistics of Women Welfare Recipients (including single mothers, divorcees, widows, PWDs) under the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports**

YEAR	FEMALE
2021	1,485
2022	2,639
2023	2,818

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

## **SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

229. Brunei Darussalam has demonstrated commendable progress in advancing gender mainstreaming, equality, and empowerment, underscoring its steadfast commitment to these pivotal areas. However, there is a recognized imperative for concerted action to expedite the realization of Goal 5 objectives. Particularly, enhancing the capacity of policymakers and fostering greater participation of women in national development planning are essential.

230. The nation has identified key priorities for accelerating progress, including eliminating violence against women and girls, promoting work-life balance, fostering women's entrepreneurship, enhancing digital and financial inclusion, and challenging discriminatory social norms. Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups of women and girls is also a priority, with efforts aimed at ensuring their inclusion and empowerment.

231. Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern reflects Brunei Darussalam's commitment to inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work. Initiatives such as the National Plan of Action on Poverty Eradication, access to social protection, and education and training opportunities demonstrate the government's dedication to addressing poverty, social protection, and gender disparities.

232. Efforts to fortify the safeguarding of women and girls from violence are imperative, necessitating further research and development initiatives to bolster the efficacy of existing plans. Alignment with regional strategies, such as the Regional Plan of Action on combating extreme violence against women, is essential for comprehensive and effective interventions. Moreover, enhancing technical proficiency in data governance for gender equality is vital. By adhering to international standards in data collection methodologies and implementing comprehensive data disaggregation, Brunei Darussalam can obtain accurate insights into gender progress at the grassroots level, thereby fostering inclusivity and leaving no one behind.

233. The nation's commitment to addressing violence against women is further evidenced by its active participation in international and regional engagements and partnerships. Brunei Darussalam continues to strengthen its capabilities and expertise in this regard, demonstrating a resolute dedication to advancing gender equality and empowerment. By exploring additional avenues and mechanisms to augment capacity-building programs, the nation endeavors to consolidate its progress in these crucial areas.

234. In summary, Brunei Darussalam's unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality and promoting the empowerment of women and girls is evident. Through national initiatives and adherence to international frameworks, coupled with collaborative efforts involving government agencies, NGOs, and international partners, the nation is poised to build a more inclusive and prosperous society for all its citizens. However, sustained efforts and collaboration are imperative to overcome remaining challenges and fully realize the potential of women and girls in Brunei Darussalam. By continuing to prioritize women's empowerment within the national agenda and implementing targeted interventions, the nation can achieve its vision of a more equitable and prosperous future.