

Foreword

Southeast Asia (SEA) is one of the most dynamic regions in the world today. Rapidly evolving economies and societies, however, present new challenges for governments. For example, citizens and businesses alike have higher expectations: better and more efficient services delivered through both traditional and digital channels, greater transparency, and more inclusive decision-making processes.

SEA and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries share the objective of delivering good quality services to citizens within a sound fiscal framework. The starting point for improving public sector effectiveness is to accurately benchmark government activity and performance. This first edition of *Government at a Glance Southeast Asia 2019* provides internationally comparable data on government resources, processes and outcomes in specific sectors in SEA countries. It builds on and enriches the information collected through previous *Government at a Glance* publications covering OECD countries (since 2009) and the Latin American and Caribbean region (since 2014).

This comparative analysis will help policymakers, public managers and citizens assess the performance of governments in the region. The 34 indicators in this publication cover key aspects of public management, such as budget practices and procedures, strategic human resources management, digital government and open government. Data on public finances, employment, and some key service delivery outcomes are also included.

This report shows that, in general, participating SEA countries – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam – are strengthening their public finances, although there are wide variations between countries. Their citizens report relatively high satisfaction with public services according to the latest Gallup pool data; however, several areas need improvement. For instance, while women are well represented in the public sector, they still face significant barriers in reaching senior leadership positions and are not equally represented in politics. Furthermore, human resource management practices in SEA governments are highly centralised, making it difficult to adapt to rapidly changing environments. There are also challenges in deploying digital strategies to a wider range of policy areas such as education and health. More effective open government policies are key to a citizen-centric approach to public service delivery.

Government at a Glance – Southeast Asia 2019 is the product of close collaboration between the OECD and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). It brings together the OECD’s globally recognised expertise in collecting, processing, and analysing information on public governance practices, and ADB’s knowledge and experience in governance and public sector management in the Asia and Pacific region. This work is aligned with ADB’s Strategy 2030, which envisions a region that is prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. It specifically responds to ADB’s operational priority of strengthening governance and institutional capacity in developing member countries. This will be achieved by helping countries benchmark their performance in public sector management and reforms to promote effective, efficient, timely, and corruption-free delivery of public services. The report will also support related initiatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which focus on helping countries to achieve the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

We are confident that this publication will become a key resource for policymakers, practitioners, citizens and researchers in helping governments make evidence-based decisions, thereby improving citizens' lives through better public policies.



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