

THE ASEAN WORK-LIFE BALANCE PROJECT

Creating Prosperity, Fulfilling Lives

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For Immediate Release

WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR ALL: EHOMEMAKERS TO REDEFINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND LIFE IN ASEAN

Kuala Lumpur, November 14, 2015- For the first time in the history of ASEAN, a grassroots network of mostly women are leading a movement, under the banner of work-life balance, to bring people of different socio-economic backgrounds, in urban and rural areas, together to have dialogues and forge partnerships for a brighter future.

eHomemakers, with the support of the ASEAN Foundation and the Japan-ASEAN Solidarity Fund (JASF), is garnering support for work-life balance (WLB) in ASEAN through a grassroots initiative titled “1 Million ASEAN Voices for Work-Life Balance” under the ASEAN Work-Life Balance Project that also includes a 3-day regional conference to be held in January 2016. The movement, launched in June this year, aims to mobilise the people of ASEAN, through online and offline platforms, to strengthen our call for action to formulate WLB-enabling policies and national machineries in ASEAN.

A rapidly growing regional economy like ASEAN, with frequent workforce expansions and productivity improvements to drive equitable growth, needs to integrate WLB-enabling policies and national machineries across sectors like what developed countries like Norway and New Zealand have done. The participation of public and private actors, as well as civil society organisations (CSOs), in our project is essential to have an engaging discussion on how we can realise WLB in ASEAN with appropriate infrastructure such as convenient public transportation and affordable Internet service, and innovative work schemes such as tele-commuting and e-entrepreneurship.

WLB is essentially a concept that includes proper prioritising between "work" (career, income-earning tasks, unpaid housework by homemakers, agricultural production and subsistence farming) and "lifestyle" (family, community, culture, health, leisure and spiritual development). It is a comfortable state of equilibrium achieved, via the work one chooses, in his or her chosen lifestyle which gives attention in terms of time and personal resources to family, community, culture and surrounding environment, and self. A workforce with WLB is happy,

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healthy (physically and mentally), productive and efficient in contributing to the region's economic growth.

eHomemakers, then, wants to listen to, record and reflect the voices of the people of ASEAN, through our grassroots initiative. In the lead-up to our conference in January, we will utilise 8 online and offline platforms to collect supportive voices that give strength to our advocacy for governments of ASEAN to institute enabling policies in their countries to gain access to and make better WLB for all. For example, our online platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram. Altogether, we are kickstarting online surveys for the youth and professional women and a popular campaign called "Internet for ASEAN: Everyone, Everywhere, Every Time," where we take photographs of people who are in support of better, more affordable and more accessible Internet service in ASEAN. These photographs are meant to reflect the voices of people who lack access to the Internet due to the digital divide, and we want to give them a voice by uploading their photographs on our Facebook pages. Along with our conference proceedings, these voices will drive national policy formulation and regional cooperation.

A simple way for any citizen of ASEAN to join our project is to give us a thumbs-up on our Facebook pages for all ASEAN member states. The links are as follows:

1. Malaysia – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBMalaysia
2. Philippines – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBPhilippines
3. Brunei – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBBrunei
4. Cambodia – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBCambodia
5. Indonesia – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBIndonesia
6. Laos – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBLaos
7. Myanmar – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBMyanmar
8. Singapore – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBSingapore
9. Thailand – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBThailand
10. Vietnam – www.fb.com/ASEANWLBVietnam

*Our conference website is accessible at www.asean-wlb.net.

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