

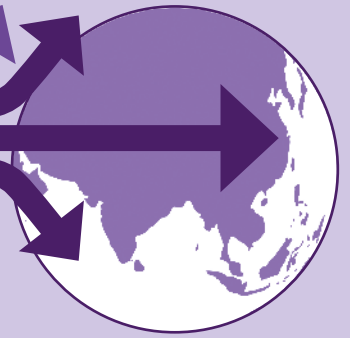


Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Gender assessment of Veterinary Services in South East Asia



Author
Kyoko Kusakabe

December 2015



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Executive summary

In South-East Asia as in other regions, there has been a growing number of female veterinarians compared to men. The increase has been linked to the lifting of restrictions preventing women from entering the profession and the surge in demand for services for companion animals. Except for Lao PDR, there are more female vet students than men in the rest of the ASEAN countries. This study was conducted from July to November 2015, through a series of interviews and focus group discussions in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand as well as an online questionnaire for vets in all the ASEAN countries.

It is often pointed out that female vets do not prefer field-based work, but this study did not find it to be the case. Both women and men tend to move to urban areas as they change their workplace. Even though women are also interested in working in the field, especially since field-based work is more lucrative than clinic-based work, there are various external environments that discourage women from doing so, such as discrimination against women, perception that women are not suited for field-based work, and lack of security in the remote areas. Women's reproductive responsibilities also hamper women from traveling far and long period for work. The very few women in the leadership/managerial level makes it more difficult to change the perception on female vets. However, with the increase in female vets overall and an improvement in facilities and infrastructure in rural areas, it is hoped that there will be more women leaders in the vet organisations.

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made in order to create an effective and inclusive working environment for female vets:

- 1– Improve infrastructure and facilities of animal health centers.
- 2– Recognition of strengths of female vets.
- 3– Hands-on training for vet students.
- 4– Technical, managerial and communication training for female and male vets.
- 5– Work-life balance.
- 6– Salary standardization and skill certification.



Abbreviations

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DLD	Department of Livestock Development
DLF	Department of Livestock and Fisheries
DLD-RRL	Department of Livestock Development Regional Reference Laboratory (for FMD)
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
HP	Huaphan
HS	Haemorrhagic Septicaemia
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
OIE SRR-SEA	OIE Sub-regional Representation for Southeast Asia
PVS	Performance of Veterinary Services
REML	Restricted maximum likelihood
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEACFMD	Southeast Asia and China Food and Mouth Disease
SEAFMD	Southeast Asia and Food and Mouth Disease
STANDZ	Stop Transboundary Animal Diseases and Zoonoses
XYL	Xayyabouli
XK	Xiengkhoung



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Introduction

In the last 30-40 years, there has been a global increase in the number of women studying and becoming veterinarians (Lofstedt 2003; Ali-Salihi and Freeman 2014). Irvine and Vermiya (2010) noted that veterinary science is the most feminised of the comparable health professions. Southeast Asia is no exception to this trend. Earlier, veterinarians' workplaces were limited to farms and livestock. However, with the increase in companion animals in urban areas, work of veterinarians is rapidly changing. There is a need to explore whether and to what extent the "feminisation" of veterinary service practice is advancing in Southeast Asia, and if so, what are the emerging challenges that the veterinary profession need to adjust to. To address this issue, the OIE SRR-SEA commissioned this study in order to¹:

- (1) Determine the gender composition, education level, and type of work carried out by staff employed by the veterinary services, both public and private.
- (2) Assess the patterns of staffing, training, promotion and career development in the veterinary services.
- (3) Analyse the implications of the changing proportions of male and female veterinarians in the profession on the human resources capacity of the veterinary services to deliver programs and services, in particular in controlling FMD, other trans-boundary animal diseases and rabies.
- (4) Identify challenges faced by both male and female veterinarians in entering the profession and carrying out their specific functions.
- (5) Estimate the share of enrolment by both male and female veterinary education students.
- (6) Identify the opportunities available to male and female veterinary graduates.
- (7) Identify factors that encourage male and female students to enrol in veterinary schools and enter the profession.
- (8) Provide recommendations on training needs, other resources and support needed to close the gap between male and female vets.

Previous studies offered some reasons for the increase in female veterinary practitioners and the resulting impact on the profession remain speculative (Lofstedt 2003). Lofstedt (2003:533), the president of Canadian Veterinary Medical Association pointed out the reasons for feminisation is because of (1) elimination of gender discrimination, (2) improvement of chemical restraint for large animals, (3)

increase in role models, (4) caring image of veterinarians in media. Some reasons for a decrease in male participation are (1) low/ stagnant income in veterinary profession, (2) loss of autonomy in profession (relating to the US corporate practices), (3) decreased profession privilege (with the increase in women). Irvin and Vermilya (2010) argued that the feminisation of the profession did not change the masculine nature of the profession, but created and assigned a "nurturing" feminine role for female veterinarians.

This study attempted to explore and confirm whether these points are valid for the situation in Southeast Asia.

This study was conducted from July to November 2015 using the following methods:

- (1) Interview of key informants in the veterinary professions in Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. Most of the interviewees were with government offices. A total of 31 veterinarians were interviewed with two group discussions (see List in Appendix B).
- (2) Collection of gender-disaggregated data from government and universities through email.
- (3) Questionnaire survey using Survey Monkey. A questionnaire (Appendix C) was designed and tested and uploaded to Survey Monkey. The link was shared to key contacts in the ten ASEAN countries to be distributed to veterinarians in each country. The questionnaire was up for 2 months and a total of 401 responses (160 men, 241 women) were collected in all. Please see appendix D for the number of responses from each country by sex.

Since the responses from each country were different, some data is not uniform. Since the online questionnaires were distributed through the contacts, the study has been restricted by the reach of network and by the willingness of respondents to participate in the survey. Therefore, there is a self-selection bias. We might have been able to reach more vets in government offices than in private sector, and those who have higher awareness on their social impact of their profession as well as those interested in social research. For interviews, since the person who helped in organising the interviews was from the government, I have been able to interview more government staff members than private sector vets. Therefore, there is more information about government organisations than private sector.

1. This is from TOR of the study. See Appendix A.

Results

Gender composition of veterinarians

During the key informant interviews, all respondents said that there are now many more female vets than before. Veterinary service used to be a very male-dominated profession and even with the increase in the number of female vets, there are still less women in the profession than men, except for Malaysia, where there are more female vets than men (Table 1). In other countries, women to men vet ratios hovers around 30-50%.

Table 1. Number of female and male vets in ASEAN countries

Country/Position	Men	Women	Female ratio
Philippines			
Provincial vet	57	18	0.24
City vet	75	49	0.40
Municipal vet	27	24	0.47
Total	159	91	0.36
Indonesia (Directorate of Animal Health)			
Officer	36	45	0.56
Contract staff	7	9	0.56
Management	9	8	0.47
Myanmar			
Officers (Livestock, breeding and veterinary department)	125	74	0.37
Clinic	22	25	0.53
Company/ own business	367	100	0.21
Brunei			
Officers	6	5	0.45
Private practice	14	5	0.26
Singapore			
Officers	17	18	0.51
Private practice*1	88	204	0.70
Malaysia			
Officers	56	156	0.74
Private practice	533	443	0.45
Cambodia			
DAHP staff*2	169	75	0.31
Thailand*3			
DLD officers	588	322	0.35
Higher administrators	46	3	0.06
Contract staff	31	88	0.74

*1 Include clinic, research, organizations, wildlife attraction, college, but do not include those who are not practicing.

*2 These staff members are largely not doctors of veterinary medicine. Listed only for countries that provided data.

*3 Based on interview with Dr. Wimolporn Thitisak, Deputy Director General of DLD, interviewed on 17 August 2015.

It is also observed that gender parity is achieved more in the public sector than in the private sector. For clinics, women are employed more, as can be seen in Singapore, where women in private practice out-number men. But for private companies, men are usually preferred since they are perceived to work better on the farms and can travel long distances frequently and alone. While female vets are being employed in all sectors, there are less women working in private companies or farms where the travel and living conditions can be challenging for them.

In the Philippines, because of a hiring freeze of government staff, younger staff members are hired on a temporary basis. They receive 20% higher pay than permanent employees, but the work is unstable and they do not get other benefits that permanent workers enjoy. There are more male vets hired under this job order scheme than women. This is because vet positions in quarantine section are considered more suitable for men who are expected to work throughout the night. In animal health laboratories, where many female vets are employed, there are no job order positions. If there are, they are for non-vets.

Figure 1 (also see Appendix E for details) shows that there is not much difference in the choice of workplace between women and men, although there are slightly more men working in private companies and farms, and more women in hospitals and clinics. There are differences in terms of women and men working in private companies. It is only in Singapore and Vietnam where there are more women working in companies than men. However, it should be noted that the number of responses from Vietnam was small, and Singapore does not have remote farms. Therefore, it still seems that women are more disadvantaged in working in private companies and farms.

So, why is it that there are these differences in workplace patterns between women and men? Table 2 (see Appendix F for country data) shows that there are not many gender differences in the choice of workplace. It is not the case that women do not want to work in the field or prefer urban areas. There are actually more women who chose the lab or clinic in order to gain experience or because of good income. There are only slightly more women who chose their workplace because it is near their hometown, or because of the request from their parents. Very few women said that they came to follow their spouse. It is also noted that in the Philippines, husbands follow their spouses. It is also interesting to note that in countries like Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, there are more women who said that they like to work in the field, and in Malaysia, the

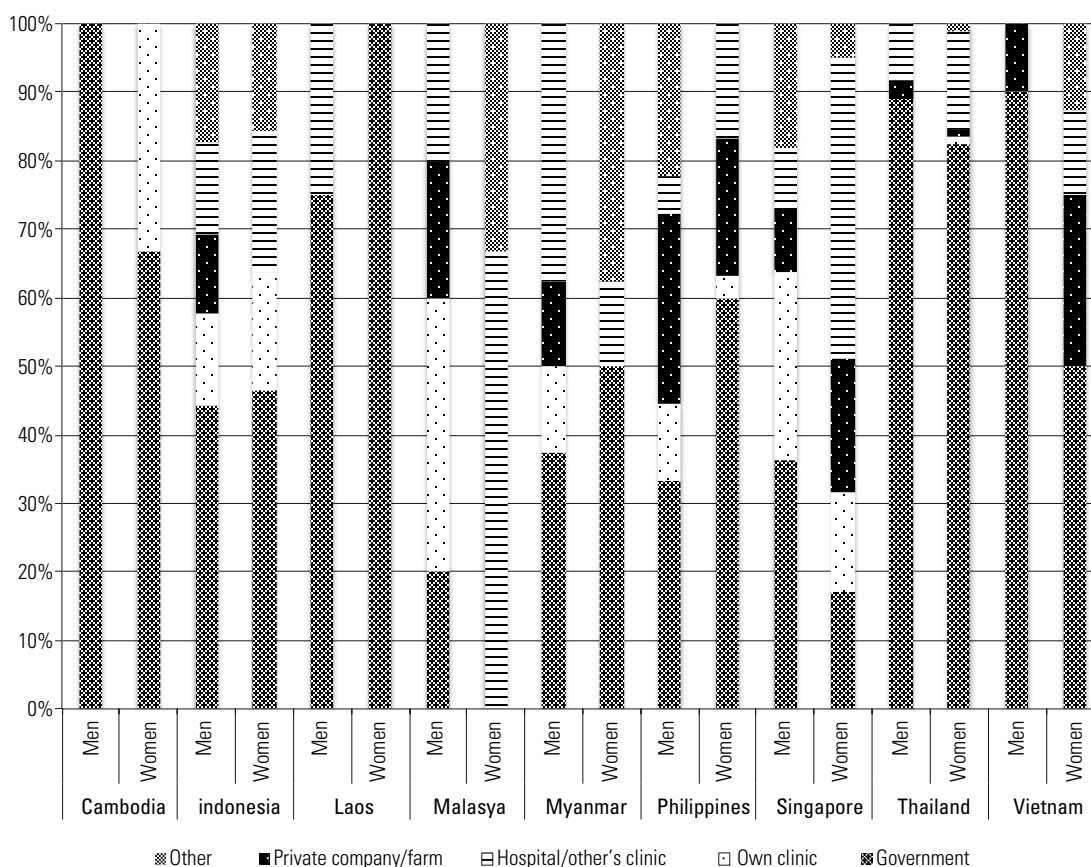


Figure 1: Current workplace of respondents by country

(Source: Online questionnaire survey 2015)

Table 2. Reasons for choosing the current workplace of respondents (percentage of responses within sex group, multiple choices)

Reasons	Men	Women	Total
Gain experience	34.2%	44.0%	40.0%
Job security	32.9%	38.2%	36.1%
Employment opportunity	29.8%	29.0%	29.4%
Good income	26.1%	31.1%	29.1%
Like small animals	18.0%	24.1%	21.6%
Workplace is near my hometown	18.0%	22.8%	20.9%
Like to work in the field	20.5%	15.4%	17.4%
Want to work in the city	17.4%	12.4%	14.4%
High social status	14.3%	12.9%	13.4%
Like large animals	15.5%	9.5%	11.9%
My parents wanted me to work here	3.7%	14.9%	10.4%
Follow spouse	1.9%	4.6%	3.5%
Do not want to travel	0.6%	4.1%	2.7%

Source: Online questionnaire survey 2015

Philippines and Vietnam, there are less women than men who said that they want to work in urban areas.

Table 3. Respondents' reasons for becoming a vet (percentage of responses within sex group, multiple responses)

Reasons	Men	Women	Total
I like animals	64.6%	73.4%	69.9%
I had good grade in high school	17.4%	17.8%	17.7%
Want to open clinic	13.0%	14.5%	13.9%
Want to work in a farm	16.1%	7.1%	10.7%
My parents decided for me	5.6%	11.2%	9.0%
Higher income	6.8%	5.4%	6.0%
My parent(s) are veterinarians	5.0%	3.7%	4.2%

Source: Online questionnaire survey 2015

This pattern is interesting when compared with the respondents' reasons for becoming a veterinarian (Table 3, see Appendix H for detail data). There are less women who initially wanted to work in a farm when they first chose the profession (7.1% in Table 3), but when they actually started to work, more women said that they want to work in the field (15.4% in Table 2). For men, it was 16.1% when they first chose the profession, while it went up 20.5% when they actually selected the workplace. Even though more men prefer to work in the field, the change in preference

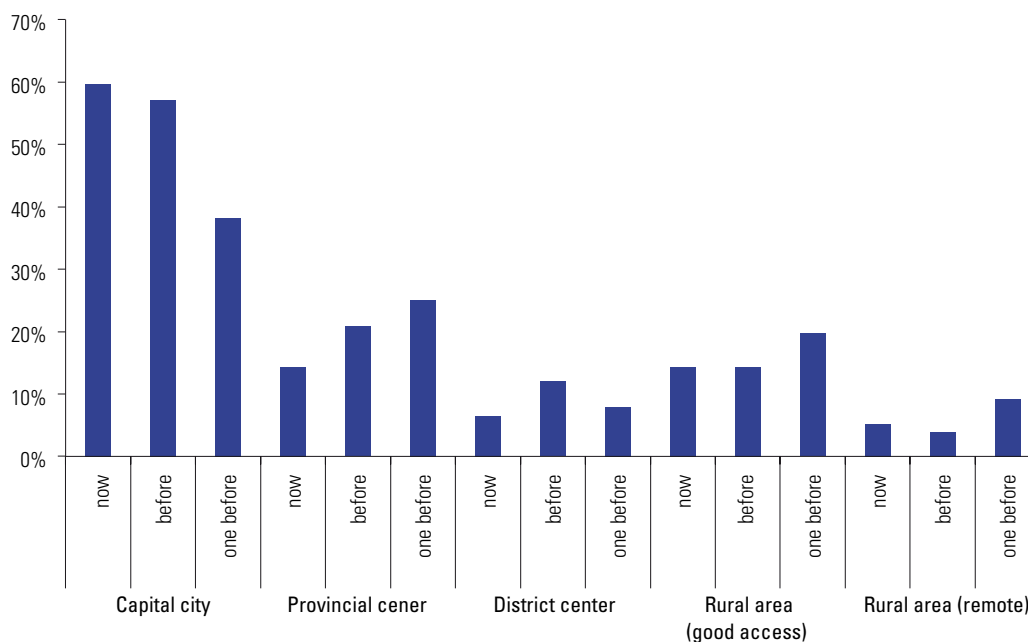


Figure 2. Changes in location of work for men respondents (for those who have changed workplace more than twice) (Source: Online questionnaire survey 2015)

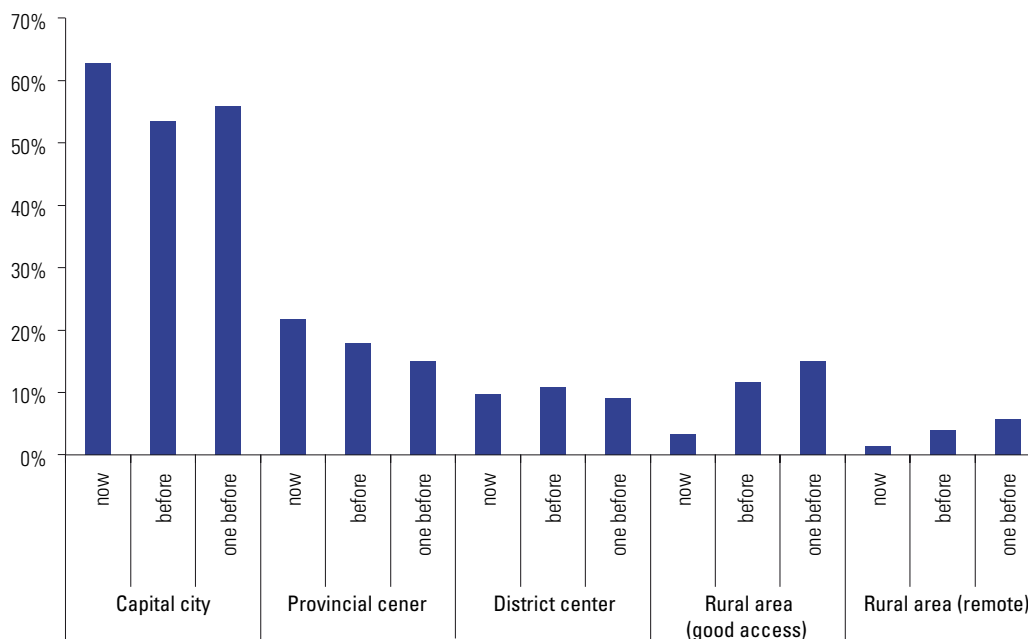


Figure 3. Changes in location of work for female respondents (for those who have changed workplace more than twice) (Source: Online questionnaire survey 2015)

seen among women indicates that with experience, women adjust to the challenges of field work.

For both women and men, income was not a large consideration for their choice in profession (6% in Table 3). On the other hand, income is a significant factor for choosing the current workplace (30% in Table 2). Again, women change their preference during their study and when they actually start to work. Less women chose the profession of veterinarian based on income but more chose

the current workplace because of higher income. It is also interesting to note that women tend to be influenced by their parents more when they chose the workplace (14.9%) than when they selected the profession (11.2%), while it is the opposite for men (3.7% for workplace and 5.6% for profession). These figures suggest that it would not be correct to say in general that women do not prefer working in the field or do not get motivated by earnings compared to men, since their preferences can change according to their experience in their profession.

Contrary to what is often suggested, it is not the case that more women prefer to work in the cities. Both women and men prefer to move to cities¹. Figures 2 and 3 show the changes in location of work for respondents who have changed workplaces more than twice. As can be seen from Figures 2 and 3, in general, those who are working in remote rural areas decrease as they change their jobs, while those who are working in capital city increases. Both women and men have gradually moved into capital city to work, and the trend is higher for men. As for provincial centre, women are moving into the centre more while men are moving out to the province. Both women and men tend to move out of the rural areas as they progress in their career, but women tend to move out of rural areas more than men (Appendix I for detailed data). Ade. Sjachrena Lubis, Secretary General of the Indonesian Veterinary Medical Association, also noted that in Lampung province, Sumatra, 70% of the vets are women which suggests that female vets are not only concentrated in the capital province, Java. Therefore, the different pattern of workplace of women and men does not seem to be attributable to personal preference either in terms of type of organisation or location of work, but to external factors.

Causes for gender differentiated workplace

This section explores other causes that create and maintain gender-differentiated workplaces. Dr. Heru Sitijanto, president of the Indonesian Veterinary Medical Association, summarised the reasons for gender differences in workplaces as below:

‘There are more female vets, but they are concentrated in urban areas as small companion animal vets. Opportunities for such business have increased recently, with the rise in the middle-class so there are less vets who go to rural areas. The challenge is how to distribute vets. District governments need to improve clinic facilities so that vets will be eager to go there. Once they are married and their husbands are working in another town, women will quit and move to follow their husbands. This is a cultural/religious practice that is hard to change². So, whether married women continue to work in the rural area depends on the husband. There are more women who are studying veterinary science, but the workplace is not ready. Men are still preferred in the private sector because they can be assigned anywhere. There

1. Similar findings were made by Wang et al. (2014) for the case of United States.

2. Ade. Sjachrena Lubis, secretary general of IVMA thinks that 70% of the cases, when a couple is married, woman moves to the place where the husband lives or works.

is also a perception that once they are married women will leave the workplace. There is a need for more vet, but there is a need to prepare the workplace for more female vets.’

Security during travel to remote farms, especially at night, has been pointed out by many during the interviews as one of the reasons why women prefer to work in the cities. Even though working on the field and farm is more lucrative – sometimes three or four times more than in the lab – women still face security problems. Dr. Orawan Fakkham, working in a private company in Thailand, said that more than 80% of their male vets compared to 55% of women work in the field. She noted that female vets are usually assigned to nearby locations, not be too far away, especially during night time. Dr. Warangkhana Phanwanich, an animal hospital director in Thailand, said that female vets need to have secure safe accommodation during remote farm visits, and need to plan the trip more carefully than men to ensure safety.

‘Some customers do not behave nicely, and farm workers can be aggressive to female vets. Driving alone is a problem. If there is some problem with the car on the road, it can be dangerous for women, so women need to be extra prepared for their trips.’

Dr. Warangkhana also noted that female vets do get asked to join drinking sessions since such has been the practice with male vets, but they need to be firm to say no in order not to get into trouble. Not only in Thailand, but also in Indonesia, an interview at Sampang district showed that women are assigned to *puskesmas* (animal health centres), but they are assigned to a place where they can commute from the district centre.

Although security is an issue, female vets are prepared and are taking precautions in order to work in the field. Even when women are willing, their bosses consider them not suitable and do not give them the opportunity to work in the field. Further obstacles come from other people around them, including husbands and family members.

‘The director thought that women are not suitable to work with livestock. When they get married, their husbands object to the kind of work they do because they have to drive a car, travel long distances and their safety is always an issue. In the farm, vets are invited to drink with farmers, since male vets normally drink with them. Women go alone to the villages, so they need to be firm in refusing the offer to drink. This issue forced some female vets to transfer after a few years or resign after getting married. So, the director says that women have ‘short shelf life’’. (Dr. Warangkhana of Thailand)

Dr. R.D. Wiwiek Bagja, senior advisor and former president of Indonesian Veterinary Medical Association, herself an established and respected veterinarian, said that female vets

can be perceived to be unreliable because they are seen to be giving priority to the family over work.

‘Women’s priority culturally is their family. She takes leave for maternity, for childcare, and also quits her job to follow her husband. So, companies might see this as a burden. But in government, they are never dismissed.’

Prof. Bambang Purwantara echoed the general perception that when women get married, they need to follow their husbands and move to the city. There they can open a small animal clinic at home.

Dr. Warangkhana said that Thai women do not quit their job because of childcare, but because of their husbands. Some husbands want their wives to come back early from work every day. A husband is not happy if his wife is assigned for upcountry work, even for a day trip, since she will come back home late.

Many women interviewees believed that women need to work harder than men in order to be recognised. Dr. Hnin Thidar Myint, Deputy Director of LBVD, Myanmar said that male vets assumed that women cannot do certain work, and exclude women from various assignments.

‘I do not consider myself a woman, because if I think I am a woman and so cannot do this and that, then, I will be defeated. I do not limit myself. Women need to be aggressive in getting experience, since in the universities, there is hardly any hands-on sessions. If women do not try to learn on their own, seniors do not assign the job for women, assuming that women will not be able to do it. So, women never have the chance to practice.’

Such lack of experience leads to low confidence in female vets’ ability to perform her job. So, in order to let them work effectively, support/supportive comments from more experienced peers and superiors can make a lot of difference. However, such attitudes of people around female vets are changing. Respondents noted the advantages of being a woman vet. Dr. Emelinda Lopez of animal health and welfare division in the Philippines, said that in the past, women were not accepted to become farm vet, because farm vets need to live on the farm. But now there is more acceptance of women as farm vets. Dr. Warangkhana noted that women’s advantage is that they can talk to women farmers who make decisions in the house.

‘There are advantages for female vets. When the vet salesperson is a man, they will normally talk to the men farmers. But when the vet salesperson is a woman, it is easier for her to talk to women farmers. It is normally women who control household finances. If women farmers are convinced, then, men farmers cannot say no.’ (Dr. Warangkhana of Thailand)

This is echoed by Dr. Hnin Thidar Myint in Myanmar, who said that female vets have better access to women farmers. Since women do most of the animal rearing, they are more knowledgeable than their husbands. If a woman vet comes to the village, women farmers will come with the animals and vets can directly discuss with those who are taking care of the animals. Female vets can also talk about household and family matters with women farmers, which is good for building rapport. Especially, young livestock are taken care of by women, so vets need to train women.

In the group discussion in Sampang district, Indonesia, participants noted women’s advantage as having better communication skills. Farmers appreciate it if female vets come to the village. But there are also those farmers who believe more in male vets especially when it comes to dealing with larger animals. But in either case, there is only a slight difference between women and male vets.

Promotion and career development of female vets

In addition to security issues, female vets also have difficulties getting promoted. Although the re-organisation that happened in countries such as Thailand and the Philippines has increased the number of women holding higher positions, gender parity is still non-existent.

As can be seen in Table 1, Thai men continue to dominate top administrator positions. In the Department of Livestock Development (DLD), among the 20 bureaus and divisions, there are only 3 women directors. In the 9 regional offices, all of the directors are men. Among the 77 provincial livestock offices, only two have women directors. In the National Institute of Animal Health, which has 8 satellite centres, only three are headed by women. The requirements to apply for the DDG and regional director posts also limit the chances of women to get appointed since only those who have been bureau/division chief will be considered. For other posts, all are appointed by the DG. When Dr. Wimolporn Thitisak was the bureau chief of the livestock standard and certificate, others questioned whether she can work hard or whether she will have a problem with family. This was in 2004/5, not in the 1960s but the low faith in women’s ability to lead persists. It was also noted that the time it took for a woman to get promoted is longer than that for a man. Dr. Achariya Sailasuta, secretary of the Federation of Asian Veterinary Association, confirmed that women seldom become heads of departments due to a notion that ‘women cannot govern men’. Dr. Warangkhana noted that she is the only woman among the 14 heads of companies her company is affiliated with.

In Cambodia, Department of Animal Health and Production has only one woman in its managerial level. In 2013, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), for the fifth Mandate of Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) (2013-2018), appointed one woman secretary of state and one woman under-secretary of state.

In Myanmar, there are more women staff in LBVD compared to other departments in the Ministry, yet there is no woman DDG, DG or director in LBVD, while other departments have some. There are women heads at the district level, but none at the state level. All the 25 director positions at the union level are held by men. It was only in 2012 when an increase in the number of women deputy directors from less than 20 to around 100 took place as a result of the merger of agriculture and rural development ministries.

In the Philippines, as a result of the government's rationalization program in 2014, the number of National Meat Inspection Services (NMIS) regional offices headed by women increased to seven while the positions of executive director, assistant director and some division chiefs are all held by women. For the first time, the Chief Veterinary Officer of the Philippines is a woman.

Although there are some prominent female vets in Thailand such as the internationally well-known horse vet and the director of elephant institute – many of the leaders in vet related organisations are men.

Figure 4 shows the number of times respondents were promoted. This also shows that men get to be promoted more frequently than women. In all countries except Singapore, there is a higher ratio of men respondents who said that they have been promoted more than three times. In all countries except Philippines, Vietnam and Singapore, there are more women respondents who were never promoted.

In spite of the fact that women are promoted less, in general, respondents feel that there is no gender discrimination in the workplace, as can be seen in the general negative figures in Table 4. However, in Malaysia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam, women replied that there is gender discrimination in the workplace (see Appendix J for country-wise data), and in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Singapore, women feel that it is more disadvantageous to be a woman vet compare to men. At the same time, although the scale is generally negative in Table 4, indicating that respondents do not

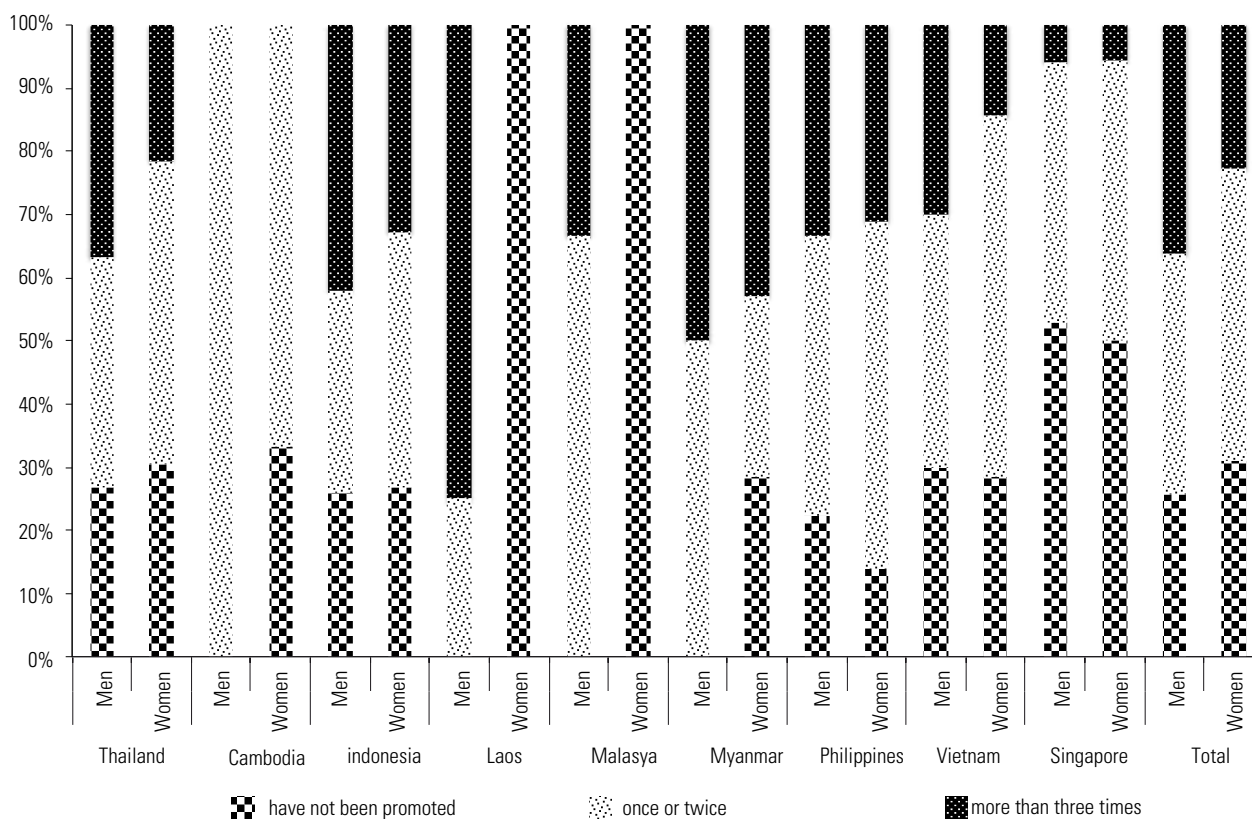


Figure 4. Number of times respondents were promoted
 (Source: Online questionnaire survey 2015)

Table 4. Respondents' perception on gender-based discrimination in workplace (within sex-group average of likert scale)

Statement	Men	Women	Total
Female vets earn less than male vets	-1.01	-0.89	-0.94
Male vets earn less than female vets	-1.24	-1.33	-1.29
There is gender discrimination at the workplace	-0.83	-0.45	-0.6
It is more disadvantageous to be a woman vet than a man vet.	-0.77	-0.54	-0.63
It is more disadvantageous to be a man vet than a woman vet.	-1.04	-1.04	-1.04
We need more women vet in our organization	-0.28	-0.29	-0.29
We need more men vet in our organization	0.19	0.05	0.1

Note: This is based on a likert scale. Respondents were asked to express how much they agree/disagree with the statement. 2 = strongly agree, 1 = agree to some extent, 0 = undecided, -1 = do not agree to some extent, -2 = do not agree at all.

Source: Online questionnaire survey

agree with the statements on gender inequality, women disagree less than men.

Further, interviews and questionnaire comments do suggest that it is not the case that workplaces are free of gender-based discrimination. Dr. Warangkhan Phanwanich in Thailand said that private companies prefer to hire men so that female vets need to be exceptionally good in order to compete. In the questionnaire, respondents noted:

- Women have less chance to get a good position and they have more responsibility (office-work, home-work, caring for children and parents) (respondent 10, woman, Lao PDR)
- Gender discrimination from the standpoint of culture and religion (respondent 361, woman, Indonesia)
- Male vets tend to get better reviews, despite both male and female vets carrying out the same job. Doing follow up calls etc. (respondent 404, woman, Singapore)
- After-hours work is not very compatible with family life, and this creates a disproportionate disadvantage to women. (respondent 448, woman, Singapore)
- Terminated contract because I had small children to look after (respondent 456, woman, Singapore)
- Some clients prefer male vets. Also, female vets who look young have a disadvantage. (respondent 470, woman, Singapore)

Female vets are as ambitious and keen to work the same as their male counterpart, but social norms expect them to remain submissive and feel inferior to men.

Training and work-life balance of veterinarians

This section explores how much support female vets are getting in order to overcome such challenges. Among the recommendations made by survey respondents, both men and women, to develop one's career are training, education and work exposure. Training is also the most appreciated support to boost their career. However, more women respondents thought financial support (4.9% among total women respondents), support from colleagues and bosses (5.6%), as well as facilities, equipment and services (9%) are also helpful. From limited data, it seems that both women and men get equal opportunity to be trained, although it was women who attend training near their home especially in Indonesia. In Thailand, during the fiscal year 2013/14, 16 vets (8 men, 8 women) went for training abroad which lasted between 2 days to several months. During the fiscal year 2014/15, there were 14 vets (8 men, 6 women) who went for training abroad.

Table 5: Respondents' perception on work-family balance (within sex-group percentage of those who replied positive to the statement among total responses)

	Men	Women	Total
Have difficulty balancing work and family	29.6%	34.2%	32.4%
Have difficulty carrying out work	23.1%	33.3%	29.2%

For both women and men respondents, around one-third (32.4%) said that they have difficulty balancing work and family (Table 5, see Appendix K for country-wise data). There were more women (34.2%) than men (29.6%) who said that they had difficulty balancing. Especially, in Singapore, the difference was large with 61% of women reporting difficulty while it was 45% for men. The nature of difficulties reported was slightly different between women and men. For men, it was more that they had little time for family, while for women, it was also time management to fulfil the tasks at home as well. Among those who said that they have difficulty balancing work and family, 30% of women cited time management and pressure from family responsibility as the problem, while for men, those citing these pressures was only 12.5%. Some of the examples raised by the respondents are as follows:

- When I need to go on work-related travel and a domestic emergency crops up (respondent 8, woman, Philippines)
- I am an elder daughter in my family and I have more responsibility, also I get pressure at my work place (respondent 10, woman, Lao PDR)
- I have to stay long at the hospital to write records and finish procedures (respondent 36, woman, Philippines)

- My family was far away in another city when I worked in the hospital in the capital city. I worked hard and work was hard as well, working 6-7 days a week without holidays, I could not balance my work with my friends and my family. (respondent 49, woman, Thailand)
- My work requires a lot of travel. My work usually takes most of my time which includes time I should be spending with my family (respondent 179, woman, Philippines)
- Proper scheduling and prioritising is the best way to balance our time. (respondent 180, woman, Philippines)
- As a single mother, raising 2 children and taking care of ageing and sick parents puts pressures on balancing work and home. (Respondent 232, woman, Philippines)
- When children are small and there is no temporary helpers available while husband also at work (respondent 240, woman, Indonesia)
- Sometimes I don't have enough time to finish my work because I have to finish a lot of tasks concurrently. On these days after finishing work and at home I cannot stop from thinking about my work. And another example, I have two children. My son, the older child, is in 8th grade of a public school. He goes to school in the morning and stays at home in the afternoon. Sometime he goes to school in the afternoon or goes to a private class for extra lessons. He must go alone by bicycle. Traffic in Vietnam is very messy so often I am worried about him when he goes by bicycle by himself. (respondent 266, woman, Vietnam)
- Weekend work and occasional after hour emergency work is difficult when you have young children attending school. (respondent 331, woman, Singapore)
- I love working for wildlife conservation, therefore the ideal job location for me will be mostly in rural area. On the other hand, I am starting a family now, so I can't leave my husband whose business is in a big city, or bring my baby to a rural area. It is a constant battle that I haven't figured out yet. (respondent 386, woman, Indonesia)
- Too many vets and clinics but not enough vet nurses. Also, vets are on-call 24hrs by law giving mothers little time to balance life with spouses and children. Quite a lot of vets stop being clinicians after having a child. (respondent 440, woman, Singapore)
- My current department has expectations that staff will work after hours on weekdays and during weekends, in addition to the required 40 hours per week (respondent 446, woman, Singapore)
- The long working hours can be quite unpredictable, in that we do not always go home on time, this can take a toll on family relations (respondent 450, woman, Singapore)

- I have 3 young children and it can be very challenging when work does not end as planned or in emergency situations. (respondent 482, woman, Singapore).

Dr. Hnin Thidar Myint of Myanmar said that in government offices, women bring their children to the office and there is no problem (but no men bring their children to the office). In Myanmar, for government officers, women are entitled to 6 months maternity leave, and in 2014, a three-month paternity leave was introduced. But none of the people interviewed considered this maternity leave provision as the reason why women prefer government jobs (private sector maternity leave is for 3 months) since government work is irregular, demands long hours and is not women or family friendly in that sense.

During a group discussion in Manila, it was revealed that there used to be a waiver that women who were going for a long study leave had to sign a form stating that her husband agreed to look after the children. Now, there is no form but still women need to choose when to study abroad depending on the age of the child, while men do not need to consider it.

'The best combination is to have women work in the government and husbands in the private sector. Let the men work in the private sector and earn money. Then, women can work in the government and concentrate on mothering. It is possible to combine with household work.' (Focus group discussion in Manila)

Male and female enrolment in veterinary education

Currently, in all the countries, except for Lao PDR, there are more women veterinary students than men (Figure 5). Myanmar has data since the 1960s, and this shows how female vets have suddenly increased since 2008 (Figure 6).

These increases are attributed to both the opening up of universities to female students and also to the surge in demand for vets for companion animals. In Thailand, until around 25 years ago, universities capped the intake for female vets. For example, Kasetsart University restricted the number of female students to 10. In the 1980s, among 70 students, 10 were women. Since the restriction was lifted, the number of female students gradually increased, but still in the 1990s, 90% of vet students were men. But now, 70-80% of students are women. Nowadays, when universities provide scholarship programs for upcountry students, most of the recipients are men because the selection committee preferred men over women. The increase is often attributed

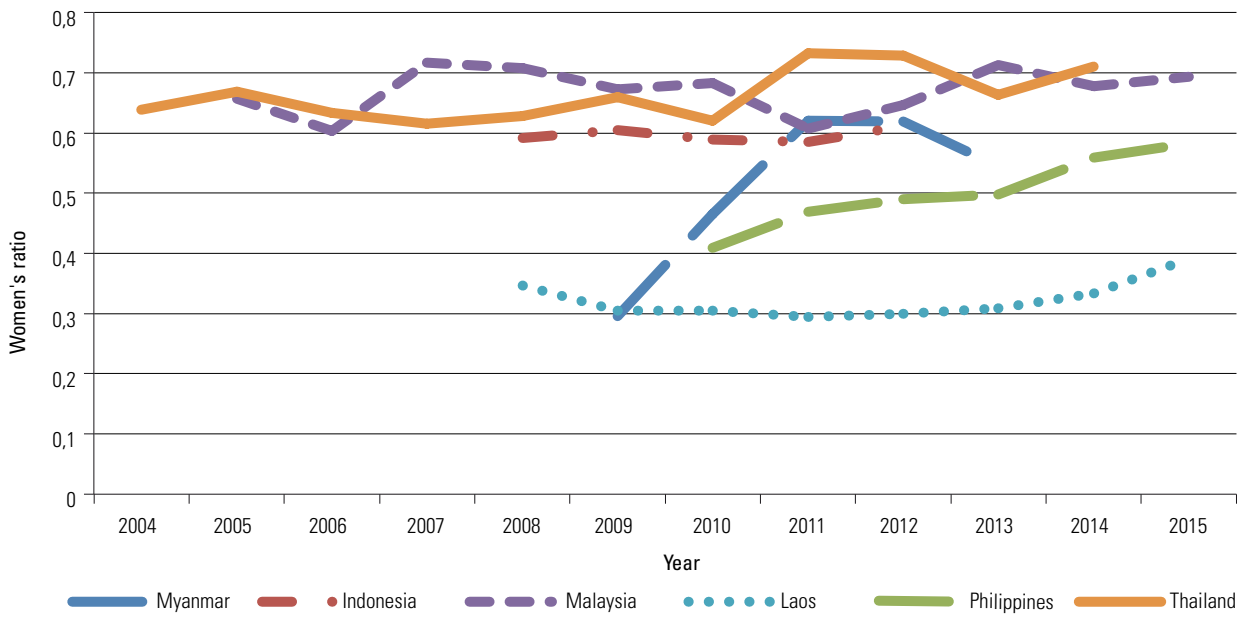


Figure 5. Women student ratio in selected veterinary schools by year by country

Note: for Indonesia, the data is only from Faculty of veterinary medicine, Bogor Agriculture University. For Philippines, it is only from Central Luzon State University. For Thailand, it is only from Faculty of Veterinary Science, Chulalongkorn University.

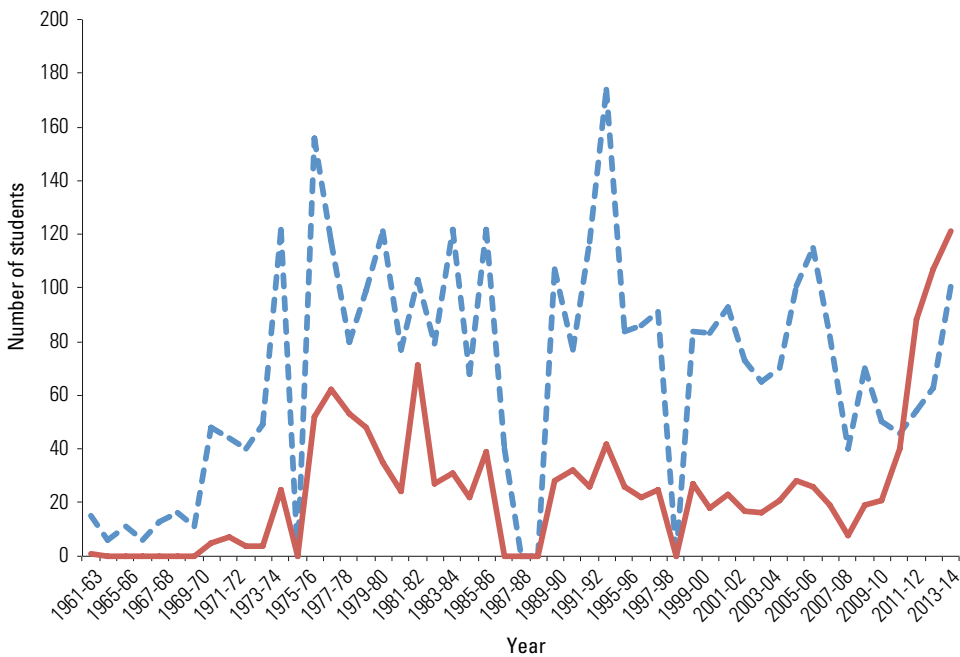


Figure 6: Number of women and men veterinary students in Myanmar by year

to the increase in students interested in small animals. Figure 7 shows that in Thailand, 40-50% of the graduates went to work with companion animals, and it is almost the same as those working in livestock. Such an increase in the companion animal market has opened up more and more work opportunities for female vets, but at the same time, Figure 7 suggests that it is not the case that most graduates go for companion animal clinics. Livestock-related workplaces

have been limited for some time in Thailand because ten years ago, there was a freeze in hiring in the government, and it has only been in the last 5 years that hiring in the government has returned. Therefore, livestock-related workplaces have been limited to the private sector where men are preferred more than women. Still students would like to go for farm-related workplaces, since the income is much higher than in clinics or labs.

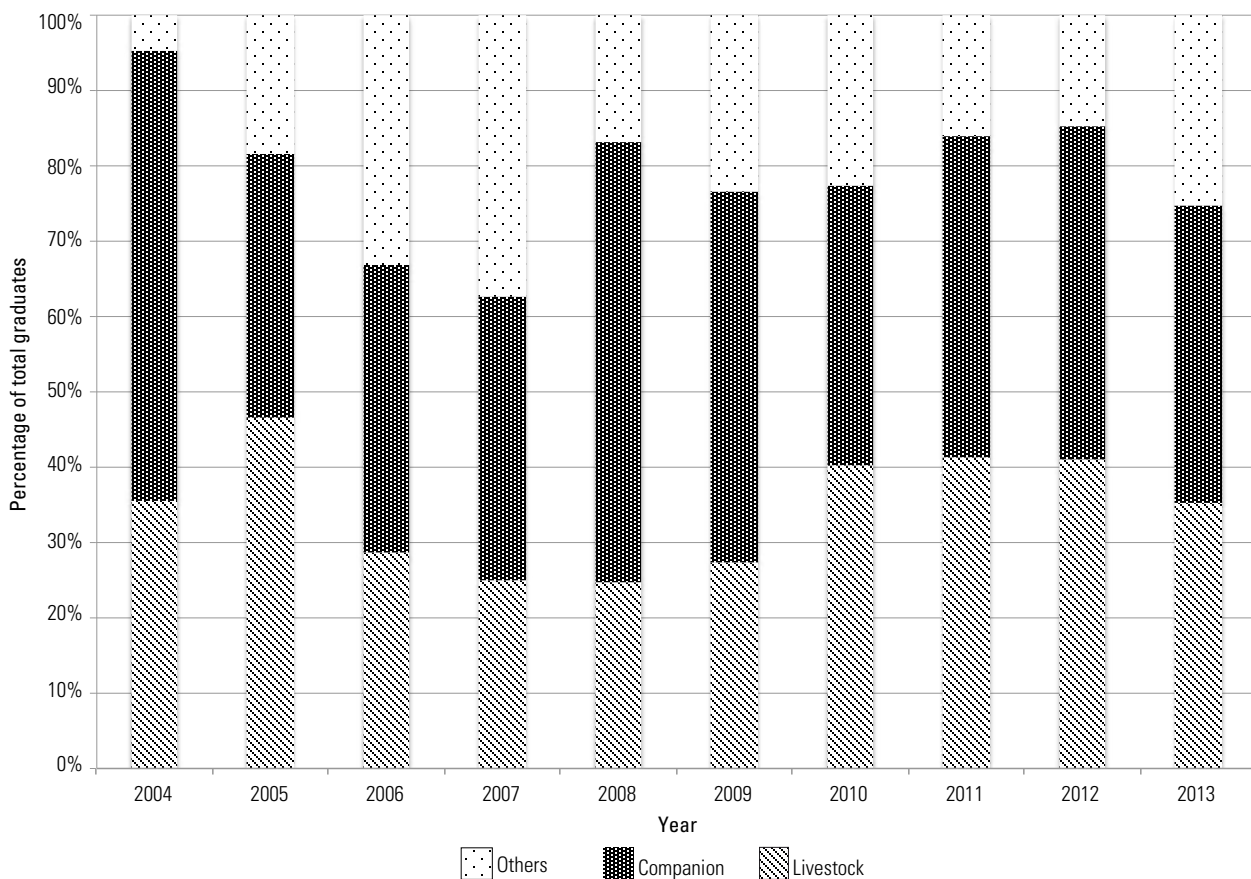


Figure 7. Organizations that vet students are employed after graduation in Thailand by year
(for Faculty of Veterinary Science, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand)

Dr. Usa Chethanond of Songkla University in Thailand attributed women graduates' willingness to work in clinics not because they cannot handle large animals or do not wish to work in the field, but to discrimination:

'Female students are not interested in livestock or wildlife but in companion animals. However, if women are determined, they can do it (work that needs physical strength) well. Men veterinary students have less obstacles. There is no sex discrimination in small animal clinic operation'.

Relative increases in the number of graduates going for companion animals might be because of the changes in the background of students in vet schools. Dr. Wimolporn Thitisak noted that 20-30 years ago, the background of students of vet schools were diverse. Nowadays, the students are mostly from rich families, since they are the ones who can afford to educate and provide opportunities for their children to enter good schools. Poor students get special scholarships, but their performance is not as good as students from well-to-do families. Farms do not like these new crops of students and they will complain to the schools not to send 'lazy kids' to their farm for internships.

The decrease in male students can also be attributed to male students' preference for engineering, since, according to Dr. Wimolporn, engineers' income can be higher than that of vets'.

In Myanmar, around 20 years ago, it was a requirement for new graduates to work in remote places. This made the vet profession unpopular. So, they changed this policy in 2010, and made the assignment flexible. Government started to strengthen the veterinary services around the same time. Before this, there was only one vet for one township, but now they have increased this to three vets per township. They have also increased the intake of students in the veterinary university three-fold. Previously there was a limit to the number of positions for women veterinarians to one-third of the total positions. This was based on the idea that women cannot work as vets because it is hard work. This restriction was abolished in 2010 (hence the sudden increase in female students' number seen in Figure 6).

In the Philippines, group discussions suggested that in the 1970s and 80s, there were more men than women in veterinary schools. During the 1980s to 90s, female

students started to increase, especially with the increase in better paid opportunities offered in clinics (according to group discussion in Cebu 27 July). There is also more work in the private sector (feed, meat, etc), so there is now more demand for vets. Since 1995, there has been no hiring in the government and the freeze was lifted in 2014. So, there has been no hiring and no promotions during this time. There was only contractual hiring (job order), so government could not keep young staff, since they moved to private sector. In the case of Visayas, less than 10% of the graduates go for government jobs. Since there are more job opportunities abroad, male vets go to work abroad such as to New Zealand (for large animals).

In Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia (interview 30 July), since about 10 years ago, number of female students outnumbered that of men (60/40). Many are interested in working with companion animals. It should be noted that in Indonesia (as well as in Myanmar to some extent), government jobs are desired by newly graduated vets over private clinic jobs. Salary has been adjusted to fill in the gap that existed before from the private jobs. Government jobs get a pension and also training opportunities and this is attractive for young graduates.

Conclusions and recommendations

The veterinary profession in Southeast Asia used to be dominated by men due to school policies that limit the number of female students as well as recruitment policies that prefer men over female vets. In countries like Thailand and Myanmar, there used to be restrictions on women studying a veterinary degree. Since these restrictions were lifted and with the surge in demand for female vets in the companion animals sector, female students are now out-numbering men in all the countries in Southeast Asia. Contrary to what is often perceived, there is not much difference between women and men in the type and location of work and women are keen to work in the field as well. However, the belief that women are more suited to work in the labs and clinics due to security issues and discrimination continue to limit opportunities for female vets. Female vets need to work hard to gain the same experience and opportunities their male counterparts receive in order to progress in their career. It is also a challenge to balance work and family since women in general are expected to look after the family compared to men. With long and irregular working hours associated with the vet profession, it is often stressful for female vets to balance work and family. The increasing number of women going into the vet professions does not seem to lead to more women in higher positions in both public and private organisations. Female vets continue to face discrimination in the workplace and they need to work harder than men in order to prove themselves. This is despite the fact that female vets have an advantage over male vets in communicating with women farmers.

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made in order to make the vet profession and workplaces more gender friendly and allow the growing number of female vets to work effectively and contribute more to society alongside their male counterparts:

Improve infrastructure and facilities of animal health centres

One of the obstacles for women to work in remote areas is security. If safety of accommodation or safety along the road is not secure for women, it is difficult for them to work in rural areas. Improvement of work, research, and accommodation facilities would encourage women to take up these jobs. If they have to travel, adequate transportation facilities (well-maintained vehicles, well-lit roads, secure communication on the road, coordination with local authorities, etc.) are needed.

Recognition of the strengths of female vets

It is often the case that the downsides of being a woman in the vet profession are noted, such as difficulty in working with large animals (which is actually not always the case), and the advantages are highlighted less often. Respondents noted women's advantage in communicating with women farmers. Since women farmers are the ones who take care of young livestock, which often requires more attention, it is important to communicate with women farmers to enable them to take care of the young effectively. Recognition from superiors and peers is important for female vets to be able to work effectively and comfortably. Superiors need to be in full recognition of the challenges that female vets face and provide supportive comments to assist their personal and professional growth.

Hands-on training for vet students

Currently hands-on sessions for vet school students seem to be limited, and without individual effort after graduation to gain work experience, the skills level immediately after graduation does not seem to equip them adequately for field work. It is more difficult for women to gain field experience, because of the assumption that field work is more for men, and women do not get field work experience if they do not persist. It is important that the universities provide enough hands-on sessions so that female vets gain enough confidence to work in the field immediately after graduation.

Technical, managerial and communication training for women and male vets

When asked what kind of support that they would like to have, many respondents pointed out that they need training. It can be from further academic studies, to updating technical issues, or management and communication training. Management and communication training is something that is not often covered in vet courses or training sessions, but during the interviews it was pointed out that if women are to be in managerial positions, such training is also needed, since they need to be good not only technically but also in human aspects.

Male vets in management also need to be trained on communication and on creating inclusive working environment. Vets in remote areas noted that it is important that the training be done at local level, since it is more difficult for them to travel far.


Work-life balance

Veterinarians work long and irregular hours, depending on the demand of the clients. This puts much strain on their personal lives. Women have more difficulty since they bear a heavier burden at home. The best way to solve work-life balance is to change the behaviour of the gender roles – in this case, women's bosses and women's family members. There is a need for these people to understand the situation of women who bear double and triple roles and make flexible and cooperative arrangements. For example, female vets complained that irregular and sudden changes in schedule makes it difficult for them to make arrangements for their children. Having to be on a 24-hour alert also make it impossible for them to plan for their family. Therefore, good planning and coordination is needed for women to manage their work and family better.

Salary standardisation and skill certification

There is no data on gender wage gap among veterinarians, but anecdotal evidence indicates that there are at least two causes that leads to women earning less than men. One is the sex segregation in workplace. Women are less in the field, which allow higher earnings. The other is that women don't bargain as hard compared to men, and accept lower wages. Gender wage gap can be minimised by making the pay structure in the profession more transparent. Skill certification to show what skills the vet has will help in guaranteeing a certain pay. Standard pay for certain skills will make it easier for women to achieve the pay without having to bargain for it. As Dr. Wimolporn noted, after AEC, there is a fear that vet wages will go down if foreign vets accept lower pays. Standardisation can help prevent the wage floor to collapse.

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Gender assessment of Veterinary Services in South East Asia



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