

CSEAS Gender Seminars 2022

Organized by Gender Equality Promotion Committee,
CSEAS, Kyoto University

10, 12 January 2023



Seminar on Gender Issues in Academia

January 10th (Tue.), 11:00-12:30

Research Commons, 1st Floor,
East Building, CSEAS, Kyoto University

Title

Promoting Gender Equality in the National University of Laos

Speaker

Champathong Phochanthilath
(National University of Laos)

Commentator

Sharon A. Bong (Monash University Malaysia)

Moderator

Chika Obiya (CSEAS)

Special Seminar

Frontiers of Gender Studies in Asia

January 12th (Thu.), 15:00-17:00

Room 213, 2nd Floor,
Inamori Foundation Memorial Building, CSEAS, Kyoto University

Title

Gender Relations in Laos Since the New Economic Mechanism

Speaker

Champathong Phochanthilath
(National University of Laos)

Title

Critical Relativism: An Intersectional Approach to Gender Equality

Speaker

Sharon A. Bong (Monash University Malaysia)

Commentators

Chika Obiya (CSEAS), **Yoko Hayami** (CSEAS)

Moderator

Kisho Tsuchiya (CSEAS)

Speakers



◆ Dr. Champathong Phochanthilath

Dr. Champathong Phochanthilath is Director of Gender Studies Center, Deputy Head of History and Archaeology Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, National University of Laos. She is a gender specialist and holds a doctoral degree from Humboldt University Berlin. With over 20 years of experience as a lecturer, researcher, trainer and consultant, in collaboration with national and international development agencies, she has a wide breadth of experience in the field of women rights and gender studies. She is well experienced in conducting fieldwork in rural communities particularly among ethnic women in Laos, using qualitative research methods, based on an interdisciplinary approach, including anthropology, ethnolinguistic, history, human rights and social impact assessment related research.



◆ Dr. Sharon A. Bong

Dr. Sharon A. Bong is Professor of Gender Studies at Monash University Malaysia. She has authored *Becoming queer and religious in Malaysia and Singapore* (2020). She is the former coordinator and consultant of the Ecclesia of Women in Asia, an academic forum of feminist Catholic women theologians in Asia.

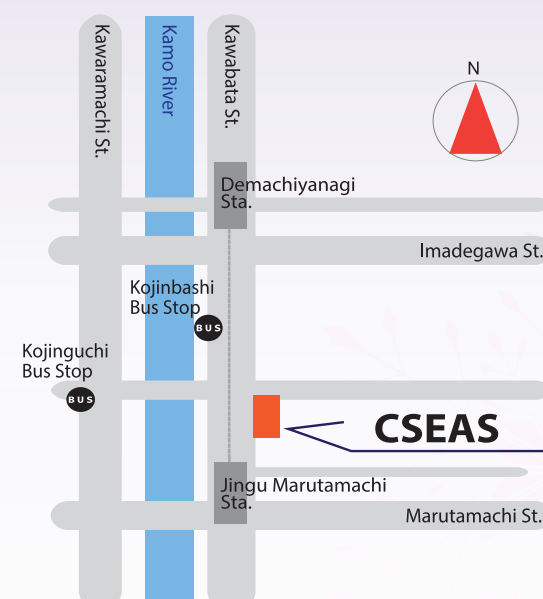
ATTENTION!



For participants who have small children, we can set up a temporary nursery room for children with a professional sitter during the seminars. If you are interested, please email to danjokyodo@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp by 15:00, Dec. 23.

■ Access

- ▶ From "JR Kyoto" Station Take No.4, No.17 or No.205 bus and get off at "Kojinguchi". Then walk for five minutes to the east.
- ▶ From "Jingu-Marutamachi" Station of Keihan Railway. Walk for five minutes to the north.



Abstracts

Seminar on Gender Issues in Academia

January 10th (Tue.), 2023. 11:00-12:30

“Promoting Gender Equality in the National University of Laos”

Speaker: Champathong Phochanthilath (National University of Laos)

National University of Laos (NUOL) was established in 1996, it is the first comprehensive university in the history of Lao PDR. NUOL has made progress on promoting women advancement in the recent decade, the first female vice-president has been appointed and the number of female doctoral degree holders has increased from time to time. However, the gender gap among academic staff remains a challenge. Furthermore, gender issues are integrated in some undergraduate and postgraduate programs, but the gender studies program does not exist yet. In 2021, Gender Studies Center (GSC) was founded in the context of the pandemic COVID 19. Initially, GSC has conducted research projects, provided training and academic consultation to the INGOs and CSOs. However, gender awareness raising and promoting gender equality activities among students and faculty members have not been conducted, which are challenges for GSC.

Special Seminar

Frontiers of Gender Studies in Asia

January 12th (Thu.), 2023. 15:00-17:00

“Gender Relations in Laos Since the New Economic Mechanism”

Speaker: Champathong Phochanthilath (National University of Laos)

This presentation studies the gender relations since the changes instituted under the New Economic Mechanism have been consequently changed by further national development policy reforms. Under the “Chintanakan Mai” slogan comprehensive transformation as a result of the new policy has occurred. Chintanakan Mai represents a new way of thinking; however, socialist ideology remains as the final goal with gender equality left behind. The reform of the economy creates a difference between urban and rural women and privatisation of state property clearly shows gender inequality in relation to land ownership rights. Economic transformation from centrally planned economy to the market-oriented economy, which is called New Economic Mechanism (NEM), has proved that gender equality was not achieved even when Pathed Lao was liberated. The perception of gender has been changed due to the labour force shifted from state female workers – ກຳມະກອນລັດ to ກຳມະກອນຮັບຈ້າງ – unskilled labours in private sectors. The perception – ສາວໂຮງງານຕັດຫຍິບ has devalued women from building the nation to being individual survivors. Gaining access to markets and financial services is difficult for many women due to poor infrastructure and a lack of guarantee, insufficient business history and especially the certificate of land title. On the other hand, the comprehensive reform creates opportunities for women of the lower class who have had a chance to benefit from the market economy and have been able to improve their social class status and move up into the middle class. Professional women who have received the benefit of a good education and who have had strong support from their family have been able to gain promotions. Some women have been successful in obtaining positions to serve as ministers and even in one case as the President of the National Assembly. However, women are still facing challenges such as being women in the rural area where the foreign investors are occupying while rural women are powerless and lack means for negotiation.

“Critical Relativism: An Intersectional Approach to Gender Equality”

Speaker: Sharon A. Bong (Monash University Malaysia)

I draw from my own research and teaching expertise on the intersection of genders, sexualities and religions in Southeast Asia. I begin with ‘The framework’ where I draw on her-story of feminisms and situate intersectionality within knowing and doing feminisms. I move onto ‘The problem’ which begins with the construct of rights as universal and how that clashes with the particularities of cultural and religious underpinnings of sex/gender binaries. Finally, I close with ‘The solution’ – an intersectional approach to realising gender equality and equity. I term this as “critical relativism” as it bridges the tension between universalism and cultural relativism.