

## Young Feminists Call-to-Action for the Beijing+25 Review

### Political Statement

We, 75 young feminists from across Asia and the Pacific region, gathered on 22-23 November 2019 in Bangkok to review and recalibrate strategies towards achieving gender-just societies as envisioned in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA).

We are organising towards strengthening and extending solidarity across young feminist movements in the region and beyond. We come together as young feminists - women, girls, trans, non-binary, intersex and people belonging to SOGIESC<sup>1</sup> spectrum, in all our diversities including various sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality/citizenship status, ability, race, age, caste, indigeneity, rural and urban poor, women workers including sex workers and trade unions, socio-economic status, migrant status, household status, marital status, health status including people living with HIV, sector of work and religion from across Asia and the Pacific. We recognise that gender equality does not just require addressing discrimination against women and girls, but also dismantling structures, social norms and institutions of cis-heteronormativity and the binary of femininity and masculinity, and centring people's pleasure and dignity.

We call upon governments in the region to address the persisting structural barriers and systemic inequalities hindering the full exercise of our human rights and centring of human dignity. Rising authoritarianism, macho-fascist, fundamentalist governments from Pakistan to India to the Philippines to Fiji have continued to polarise our socio-economic and political spaces. Neoliberal economic policies and the yoke of colonialism benefit corporations over peoples and the planet, as masses of workers from China to Vietnam suffer from back-breaking labour, only to face deepening inequalities and increasing poverty. Militarism intensifies in frontline communities that fight for their collective rights, dignity, and the environment. Women's human rights and environmental defenders are arbitrarily detained, persecuted and murdered from China to Thailand. We also acknowledge the harmful effects of the limited and heteronormative definition of family used in legal and social spheres and call to recognise various forms of families as people choose to define them. Moreover, the climate emergency threatens our present and future with islands sinking in Kiribati to mass flooding in Bangladesh, while global north countries, including Australia, are failing to meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement and blocking progress in international forums towards a sustainable future.

<sup>1</sup> Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics

These realities for young feminists in the Asia Pacific region reinforce and fuel deep-rooted patriarchal norms and harmful and discriminatory practices affecting the most marginalised of us, among others.

Our solution to this crisis lies in unity and solidarity across our communities. As young feminists, you can find us everywhere, on the streets, in peace negotiations, in the corridors of power, in classrooms, in markets, in abortion clinics, and from the mountains to the sea. We are deepening our intersectional analysis, creating positive narratives, believing survivors, loving indiscriminately, learning from the lived realities of those around us, changing the ways we organise, listening to those that came before us, and paving the way to a feminist future.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. Poverty eradication, universal social protection and social services, including public care services:** Shift the current neo-liberal development framework to be inclusive, people-oriented and gender-responsive particularly to rural, indigenous, migrant, refugees, urban poor, stateless women, girls and people of diverse SOGIESC. Address malnutrition and food insecurity among the poor and marginalised and ensure public provisioning of essential services (education, health, water and sanitation, housing, transport, etc) to all by adopting various fiscal measures including progressive tax regimes across the region and rejecting exploitative trade and investment policies that privatise and limit the provision of services which ensure human wellbeing. Using an intersectional framework to eradicate systemic poverty. Implement and promote :
  - proactive policy planning, create employment by enabling skills development and entrepreneurial programmes and promote social protection measures to benefit marginalized communities.
  - the rights of all citizens of a country to confer citizenship on their children on an equal basis by amending gender discriminatory citizenship laws and policies. Ensure non-citizen children of citizens, stateless children and children at risk of statelessness have immediate access to healthcare, public education and equal access to economic opportunities by de-linking social service institutions (hospitals, schools etc) from law enforcement/military forces.
  - institutional accountability mechanisms for both state and non-state actors (corporations/multinational corporations).

**2. Universal Health Care and Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR):**

Implement comprehensive sexuality education and SRHR awareness from the primary level for those in educational institutions and out-of-school youth in alignment with UNFPA's ITGSE (International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education). Increase availability of information and ensure non-discriminatory access to quality, respectful and dignified health services including adolescent and youth-friendly SRH services especially for young people, irrespective of age, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>2</sup>. Ensure equal, accessible and affordable primary healthcare and SRH services to all including women in poverty, women with disabilities and those seeking such services during a humanitarian crisis such as natural and man-made disasters and in conflict settings. Recognise and respect indigenous traditional practices and medicines. Address mental health issues as part of sexuality education and services and put in place health policies covering universal access to quality and pleasure-centred SRHR for all. Gather more data/statistics/analysis of issues related to SRHR and social determinants on abortion, surrogacy, maternal mortality and women with disabilities. Engaging men while centering the choice and agency of women to improve SRHR services and addressing hegemonic masculinities. Decriminalise sex work and align laws and policies around the age of consent, marriage and abortion. Enforce stronger ICT laws and policies to address cybercrime and online gender-based violence and restrictions on pornography in public spaces and create more awareness and recognition around SRHR violations arising from early, forced and child marriage, domestic and intimate partner violence etc.

**3. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work:** Recognise all forms of work, including unpaid care work, sex work, and work in informal and entertainment sectors. Ensure inclusive work environments including the right to unionise and collective bargaining and a living wage, protection against all forms of gender-based violence including human trafficking and exploitation, discrimination in the world of work, and the right for their chosen work to be treated and viewed with dignity. Bridge the gender pay gap for all workers, including migrant women workers, and commit to ratifying and implementing all international labour standards. Hold governments and businesses accountable to labour rights violations. End all forms of labour rights violations and ensure accountability including providing criminal liability for businesses/corporations and government officials complicit in the unlawful activity of corporations.

<sup>2</sup> Marital status, gender and sexual orientation and identity, Choice based contraception

- 4. Positive peace, and freedom from violence, stigma, stereotypes and harmful social norms:** Reform discriminatory laws and policies and ensure their compliance to international human rights and humanitarian laws and standards including in conflict and post conflict areas. Recognize and eradicate sexist, misogynist, racist, casteist, and harmful patriarchal norms, and create safe and enabling environments for all women and non-binary people in all SOGIESC. In addition LBTQI people and women human rights defenders and peacekeepers on the ground are also targets of so called “corrective rape”, “honor killings”, acid attacks, and other forms of torture intended to dehumanise, by the state, family, community, and informal courts. We need immediate action to fight against such deeply rooted violence against LBTQI people both in geological and digital spaces, including online gender-based violence, by taking proactive, survivor-centered measures including legislative, judicial and executive to ensure everyone’s equal access to justice and protection against violence, decriminalisation, and end impunity against all forms of violence perpetrated by both state and non-state actors which can include access to justice being limited by the heteronormative definition of family.
- 5. Participation, social dialogue, accountability and gender-responsive institutions:** Ensure the meaningful participation and inter-generational gender-mainstreaming dialogue of women and non-binary people and communities in all SOGIESC in all levels of institutional collective decision-making beyond "tokenism". Eliminate all forms of persecution of WHRDs and establish effective protection mechanisms for WHRDs. Cease suppression of independent civil society and provide legal infrastructure to foster functioning independent civil society. Take immediate steps to promote women, girls and LGBTIQ/SOGIESC people’s equality in family laws and practices in compliance with international conventions on human rights, and to respect, protect and realize women, girls and LGBTIQ/SOGIESC right to equality in the family across all types of family law, including those based on religious and customary legal standards, cognizant of recent findings connecting discriminatory family laws to lower levels of women, girls and LGBTIQ/SOGIESC labor force participation and economic empowerment, which impedes overall progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Promote equality and non-discrimination in the family, by reforming discriminatory family laws that includes access to inheritance, guardianship, rights pertaining to custody and adoption, dissolution of legally recognized relationships as well as the dissolution of marriage and recognizing the diversity of families, is crucial for achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Ensure gender-responsive budgetary allocation. Establish monitoring mechanisms to realise st

- 6. SOGIESC/LGBTIQ activism:** Expand the language we use to describe discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality, to ensure we are inclusive of not just cis women, but also people who are trans, gender non-confirming, non-binary people, and ensure the difference between, and intersecting nature of gender, sexuality and intersex variations is recognised. Recognise and making visible the identities of and discrimination against all SOGIESC people, including people who are assigned female at birth including lesbian women, bisexual women, queer women and trans men. Raising the visibility of violence and discrimination against people on the basis of non-cis-heteronormative and binary gender expression, including when a person's gender expression is read differently from their identity, including the violence against trans women. Expanding representations of women in the media and curriculum to include non-normative gender expression, including sex workers, single women and lesbian, bisexual and queer women, and trans and non-binary people. Recognising and addressing the needs of gender non-conforming women and people are included in health, education, and livelihood policies. Condemn and end violence against SOGIESC/LGBTIQ activists who are targeted on the basis of gender identity, expression and sexual orientation.
  
- 7. Women with disabilities:** Recognise and address the issues of women with disabilities including systemic poverty in all policy-making spaces, including those belonging to marginalised communities which may include (but are not limited to) women who identify as queer, rural and indigenous women and women from oppressed castes. Ensure equal accessibility to justice, all forms of representation and participation, and social services for all women living with disabilities, especially those faced with systemic poverty, including quality equipments/assistive technologies, quality education and health services, adequate infrastructure, mental health care, SRHR services that centre their humanity and dignity and legal aid.
  
- 8. Climate justice Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience building:** Recognise the climate emergency and its adverse gendered effects on the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in the region, including women human rights and environmental defenders. Move the money from false climate solutions, the military and extractive industries to finance climate resiliency and responses. Take urgent actions by integrating gender-just, ecosystem-based, indigenous peoples-led, and sustainable and community-driven policies in the climate and environmental decision-making processes.