



APWW Report back and Civil Society Forum Statements

Presented to the ESCAP Asia Pacific Regional Consultation on the Priority Theme of the Sixty-eighth (68th) Session of the Status of Women (CSW)

6-7 February, 2024, ESCAP Bangkok

A two day meeting of 65 participants from 22 countries representing national and regional organisations from the Asia Pacific met in Bangkok at a 2 day Civil Society Forum to develop input into the ESCAP High Level Preparatory Meeting on the priority theme of the 68th Session of CSW. Over 20 people also participated on-line in this forum. The following statements were delivered on behalf of those represented in the Forum and their constituencies.

The CSO Forum presented 4 statements across the two day meeting. These were:

1. An opening Statement to the Opening Plenary Session of the High Level Meeting (4 minutes)
2. Session 1 : Developing economic and social policies to address gendered poverty – delivered by Beatrice Leong on behalf of the Forum (2 minutes)
3. Session 2 : Fiscal space and mobilizing financing for strategies to end women's poverty – delivered by Gizka Ayu Pratiwi on behalf of the Forum (2 minutes)
4. Session 3 : New Development Strategies : Towards Caring, Green Economies – delivered by Doris Tuilau on behalf of the forum (2 minutes)

Please check against delivery – some words / introductions may not be included in the written statements below.

Recommendations presented in these statements can be found in the ESCAP Report on the High Level Preparatory Session

For more information and the full report of the session :

www.unescap.org/events/2024/asia-pacific-regional-consultation-sixty-eighth-session-commission-status-women-csw68



1. Opening statement to Opening Plenary Session:

Your Excellencies, distinguished speakers, honourable members and delegates, colleagues and my sisters.

It is a privilege to deliver the statement on behalf of the Asia Pacific CSO Forum which brought together the voices of 65 participants representing national and regional level organisations from 22 countries.

Imagine walking down a street at 7:30 in the evening, it's getting dark and the whole street is in darkness, electricity has been cut off because people have been unable to pay the bills, any light comes from candles. There's no fuel to cook the food because prices have gone up so steeply. There is not enough food in the house and women give what little there is to their children. The meal is not nutritious, it may only be some boiled rice or roti. The parents and children are hungry, malnourished and very tired. Children do not go to school because families can't afford the costs of public transport and in some families parents need to choose which child goes to school.

This is the lived reality of many women and girls in the region today. This is not acceptable! This is not what we deserve!

Over the last 30 years, despite gains in the area of women's development and advancement we are now at a critical juncture, witnessing dangerous co-option and dilution of Women's Rights especially sexual and reproductive health and rights, increased violence and gender-based discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity, and a global pushback on women's rights and women human rights defenders.

Our Poverty is a result from the lack of access to resources, structural barriers, regressive gender and other societal barriers and norms including child, early and forced marriages.

The Climate Crisis is real, and remember, it is definitely not gender neutral. Climate change exacerbates poverty, however, resources are not being allocated to address the root causes of the climate crisis. Further to this, climate change analysis and responses are **gender insensitive**. Women and girls in all their diversities face the harsh inequalities that are further exacerbated during climate disasters taking into account the greater household burden and responsibilities shouldered by them.

The gendered division of labour and the burden of care work continues to impede access to decent work.

Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination disproportionately impact the most marginalized which include but are not limited to rural women, Dalit women, migrant women, indigenous women, women with disabilities and diverse sexual orientation and gender identity groups.

With this we call upon the Member States to:



- Ensure access, availability, affordability, adaptability and quality of services that address the impacts of climate change and that the design, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all climate-related policies and services including SRHR.
- Improve public investment in health and develop social protection systems including universal access to health to ensure sexual and reproductive rights for all women and girls, especially the most marginalized
- *Recognize, reduce and redistribute the unpaid care work burden on women by increasing national budget allocations for public services and bringing in equal pay policy, skills upgrading for women and opportunities for decent work.*
- Ensure an enabling environment for civil society and commit dedicated resources to support and enable engagement. Representation, active and inclusive participation requires core, flexible, and sustained funding for feminist networks and grassroots organizations.
- Take strong measures to fulfill and protect women's Human Rights as enshrined in global agreements and human rights standards including the Beijing Platform for Action, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and CEDAW.

Thank you

Session 1: 'Developing Economic and Social Policies to Address Gendered Poverty' delivered by Beatrice Leong

Your Excellencies, distinguished speakers, honourable members and delegates, colleagues and sisters.

I stand here today as an autistic woman, with the privilege to deliver the statement on behalf of the Asia Pacific CSO Forum represented by 65 participants.

Women and girls in all our diversity remain the poorest with least economic opportunities and prospects in Asia and the Pacific. Our unpaid labour in care work creates multiple burdens, further disadvantaging and leaving us vulnerable to gender-based discrimination and violence. 64% of women workers in the region are employed in the informal sector, leaving us without social protections and labour laws. The criminalisation of sex work subjects many of us to ongoing violence, stigma and discrimination.

We recommend:

- Addressing the multi-faceted, structural, intersectional impacts of poverty on women and girls in all our diversity, including those with diverse SOGIESC
- Improving public investment in health and develop holistic social protection systems for women and girls, including universal access to health to ensure our bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive rights across the lifespan.
- Creating equal access to economic opportunities for women and girls including reasonable accommodations for women with disabilities like me. This must extend to



decent work conditions with guaranteed living wages in formal and informal sectors, including sex workers.

- Reducing and redistributing unpaid labour of care work by providing support systems to unburden women and girls, and ensure equal pay policy and skills upgrading
- Increasing national budget allocations to finance and strengthen public services and infrastructures for childcare, elder care, and support for persons with disabilities and gender responsive sharing of household work.
- Strengthening Women's Ministries and machineries to enable strong policies to address gender discrimination and eliminate GBV (gender based violence). This must include data collection to inform these policies, services and programs.

Thank you.

Session 2: 'Fiscal Space and Mobilising Financing for Strategies to End Women's Poverty' delivered by Gizka Ayu Pratiwi

Your Excellencies, distinguished speakers, honourable members and delegates, colleagues and sisters.

It is a privilege to deliver the statement on behalf of the Asia Pacific CSO Forum represented by 65 participants representing national and regional level organisations from 22 countries.

Today, across Asia-Pacific, multiple systemic, simultaneous and interconnected crises continue to disproportionately harm women, including those with diverse SOGIESC, and other marginalised identities. The allocation of large portions of national budgets to debt servicing, whilst allocating little or no resources to critical gender equality services like Sexual and Reproductive Health, the enforced rollout of harsh austerity measures, including regressive taxation, labour flexibilisation and privatisation of essential public services with either weak, inaccessible or no social safety nets altogether, deprives them of fundamental human rights. It also reinforces their vulnerability to threats which range from large-scale corporate abuse to small-scale, unregulated, predatory micro-credit schemes, all while women's organisations and grassroots feminist movements grapple with shrinking civic and fiscal space under increasing fundamentalism, militarism and political repression.

We recommend:

- Cancellation of all unsustainable and illegitimate debts.
- Establishing a fair debt resolution mechanism/platform.
- Accessible, participatory and transparent gender-responsive budgeting processes that incorporate gender and sex disaggregated data, respond to the lived realities and reflect the demands of women and other marginalised identities.
- Social protections that are - universal, binding and enforceable by law.
- Digital surveillance welfare systems to be co-designed by and made accessible to their intended users to minimise incorrect assumptions and/or design.
- Regular Women's Human Rights Impact Assessments/Gender Impact Assessments of economic reforms, policies and legislation.



- Regular gender assessments and reviews of tax policies to identify gender biases and remove discriminatory provisions, and/or policies that could result in inequality of outcomes across gender groups.
- Inclusive, democratic negotiations for a UN Tax Convention to end corporate tax abuses, and strengthening domestic resource mobilisation through progressive taxation and abolishing tax holidays to corporations and wealthy elites.
- Creating a binding, regulatory framework for multi/trans-national corporations, based on international human rights law.

Thank you.

Session 3: 'New development strategies: Towards Caring, Green Economies' delivered by Doris Tuilau

Your Excellencies, distinguished speakers, honourable members and delegates, colleagues and sisters.

It is a privilege to deliver the statement on behalf of the Asia Pacific CSO Forum represented by 65 participants representing national and regional level organisations from 22 countries.

The climate crisis is the greatest, urgent and immediate threat to all including Pacific Island communities, disproportionately impacting women and girls in all their diversity, including between urban, rural and maritime areas, and undermines long-term resilience and economic justice.

This is a crisis driven by the greed of an exploitative fossil fuel industry and its enablers. Eradicating poverty for Pacific women and girls requires financing from multiple sources aimed at enhancing women's economic empowerment through decent work, accessible public services, social protection and sustainable infrastructure. Climate financing attributable to developed countries is currently provided in the form of loans. The burden of loan repayment shifts the responsibility for climate finance onto developing countries, despite the fact that they have contributed least to the climate crisis. It's time for high income countries to bear responsibility for contributing to climate finance.

We call for an urgent move to social, economic, ecological and climate systems that place gender just human rights, care, wellbeing, health, social provisioning, peace and human security at the centre of our lives and societies.

We recommend :

- Advancing feminist-informed climate policies and actions that acknowledge unpaid care work, redistribute resources and acknowledge systemic gender and power inequalities
- Advocating for and prioritising of climate financing decision making and implementation spaces at national, regional and global levels that are accessible and responsive to the needs of all women and girls and their communities; free of red-tape and bureaucracy to increase accessibility and equity for women, girls, activists and human right defenders.



- Climate solutions, interventions, social benefits and mitigation measures are gender transformative to ensure that all our efforts to address climate do not further exacerbate and widen inequalities for women and girls in all their diversity
- Stronger multilateral cooperation, and greater financial commitments, including Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for the Pacific region, as we face geopolitical tensions, economic disparities, and intersecting crises.
- Ensuring that all women and girls have more opportunities to engage with work toward low emissions and energy democracy, and safe, climate resilient transitions within their Pacific Island countries and that their needs are centered in this transition;
- Full inclusion of women and girls in the development of the Loss and Damage funds and ensure there are gender responsive indicators and targets included to measure impact.

Thank you