Item 3d

Dr. Renu Adhikari, WOREC

My name is Renu Adhikari from Nepal. I represent CSOs and youth organizations from 25 countries that convened for a forum on 13-14 November ahead of 7APPC.

Evidence suggests that our region hosts the majority of the globes’ missing women and girls, girls that are brides, and high levels of teenage pregnancies. Our region accounts for the largest number of intimate partner or family related femicides\(^1\) and hosts millions of conflict and climate refugees. Women are abused, stigmatized, they are unpaid and forced into slavery-like conditions due to their overrepresentation in the informal sectors, including as migrants and sex workers. They are violated physically, sexually and emotionally at home and outside of the home.

As frontliners and often a first contact person \textbf{Women Human right defenders} are making a huge impact by listening, caring, supporting and assisting these women in need. The work of WHRDs is increasingly being recognized as instrumental in breaking the silence against VAW, reducing maternal mortality, and strengthening community resilience.

Yet WHRDs face serious risks: as HRDs and also as women, as cis-or trans or non-binary individuals. They have been strongly impacted by authoritarian actors, they face fundamentalist opposition forces, and they face harassment, threats on life, and incarceration.

WHRDs are the second-most targeted group of defenders, with over 400 cases in 21 Asian countries between 2019-21. Worse, the numbers remain conservative as many cases are not reported and documented. Despite harassment, threats, and even killings by state and non-state forces, WHRDs continue to do critical work in ensuring access to SRHR for all. We call on all governments to:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Stop the criminalisation and attacks on women human rights defenders, including those working on gender, sexuality, CSE and SRHR.
  \item Investigate and prosecute all acts of intimidation and reprisals against WHRDs, all forms of harassment and GBV including technology facilitated violence and misinformation. Establish a robust, fair, and just reporting, documentation, and monitoring mechanism to this end.
  \item Respect, protect and fulfill their human rights, as well as ensure they and their family members can enjoy freedom of association, expression and movement in order to carry out their legitimate work.
  \item Ensure access to free, quality legal aid services and legal protection for WHRDs
\end{itemize}

\(^1\) (18.100 in 2021),