



**Kathmandu Declaration and regional cooperation to advance social protection:
Lessons learned from SAARC**

Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for CSW 63

“Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure
for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”

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SAARC at a glance

- 8 member states – 1.8 billion people, 1/4th of world population
- From the highest mountains of the Himalayas to the lowest islands of Maldives.
- Fastest growing region, but yet many live under poverty
- SAARC Summits at the Heads of State level are the highest tier of decision making. The last Summit was held in 2014.
- Secretariat monitors and coordinates the implementation of activities that are agreed by the member states unanimously.



Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

- Women constitute almost 50% of our population.
- The need to bring them fully into the mainstream of socio-economic development.
- Mechanisms include Ministerial Meeting on Women, a Technical Committee on Women, Youth and Children
- SAARC Social Charter and SAARC Conventions also focus on women and girls.
- SAARC Year of the Girl Child



Efforts undertaken

- intra-regional connectivity
- Programmes aimed at home-based workers, to assist in the economic empowerment
- Awareness efforts on child marriages, early pregnancies, healthcare facilities and nutrition
- SAARC Gender Policy Advocacy Group (SAARC- GPAG)
- Womens leadership and participation



Challenges - Poverty!

- Access to rural communities – education, health
- Age-old traditions and customs
- Lack of awareness and patriarchal societies
- Informal methods of income generation – formalization / protection
- Employment generation
- Aging population



- **Solution:** End Poverty!
- Revisit the SAARC Plan of Action and its effective implementation, taking into account the Post-2015 Development Agenda
- Universal health coverage (UHC)
- Eliminate illiteracy from the region
- Women's political leadership and economic empowerment
- Role of community leaders
- Gender responsive budgeting – role of parliamentarians



Thank You!