

Session 3. Roundtable Goal 5.

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I am from the women constituency of the Regional Civil Society Mechanism (RCEM), otherwise also known as the Asia Pacific Women's Major Group. We are comprised of more than 100 women's rights organizations and activists from across Asia Pacific. And just the last 3 days, we've had our own civil society convening where we discussed and captures some of broad trends of the systemic and structural barriers for the achievement of Goal 5 and women's rights and some recommendations on how to address it.

As we have heard earlier, the Asia Pacific region has been witnessing conflicting trends in women's rights. There have been some gains in political participation of women with the enactment of gender quota laws, the formation of commissions on women, introduction of gender budgeting and development plans geared towards women's empowerment. This however, is juxtaposed against the increasing inequality in the region, between rich and poor, men and women and both between and within countries. 8 men currently owns the same as the world's bottom half population, and it is mainly women who make up the 2.5 billion of the world's poor. Oppressive socio-cultural norms continues to undermine gender equality and women's control over their lives and their bodies. Moreover, fundamentalisms, patriarchy, militarization and lack of accountability, limit opportunities for women and girls to further realize their full potential. The prevailing economic model perpetuates, and often relies on, the systematic discrimination and disadvantage experienced by women in order to generate growth. Women are the largest producers in the agriculture and informal sectors; yet they own and control the least amount of resources. Many countries in the region continue to criminalize expressions of sexual orientation and gender identities. Unmarried women and girls; are stigmatized for accessing SRHR services. Traditional practices such as FGM and early, child and forced marriage adversely impact their health and ability to be an equal members of society. Inaccessibility of comprehensive sexuality education increases the vulnerability of women and girls towards violence and exploitation.

In order to address the intersection of race, caste, class, sexuality and the economic system in its violation of women's rights we recommend the following:

- Develop and collect gender and age, and account for disability, ethnic, caste, migrant and indigenous status.
- Actively promote women and girls' participation in development decision-making at all levels including the localization, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes of the SDGs.
- Ensure women's equitable rights and access to land, natural and alternative resources.
- Ensure access to justice for women and girls facing violence and displacements. And ensure that laws, policies and practices respect, promote and fulfill women and girls' rights and gender justice.
- Criminalize child, early and forced marriage practices, laws and protect young girls from the labor exploitation.
- Commit financial allocations especially governmental budgets to take into account women's needs

- Recognize home-based women workers as part of the official workforce and ensure that they enjoy decent wages, better working conditions and social protections as their counterparts in the formal sector, including recognition of sex work as work.
- Remove gender stereotyping and patriarchal narratives from curricula and skills development
- Recognize the contribution of women's unpaid care work to country's economy and promote decent work and living wages for women by closing down the increasing gender wage gap.
- Ensure universal social protection and services including high quality sexual reproductive health and rights services, education and information, including access to safe and legal abortion for all: rural, indigenous, migrant, urban poor, living with disability and diverse women
- Recognize that gender justice cannot be achieved without understanding the interlinkages between and interdependence of all goals.