



## **NGO CSW / Asia Pacific and Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW)**

### **Joint DRAFT Statement to CSW 62<sup>nd</sup> Session**

**[To be agreed at Caucus Meeting]**

#### **Recognising Challenges and opportunities for rural women and girls the Asia Pacific region**

As networks and groups of women working to promote the integration of women's rights and gender equality and empower all women and girls into national sustainable development strategies and sustainable development action plans and for advocating mainstreaming gender equality and women's rights into all goals of national, regional sustainable development strategies and action-plan, we recognize the complex and continuing challenges for rural women in the Asia Pacific region.

A quarter of the total world population is rural women who depend on natural resources and agriculture for their livelihoods. Yet rural and indigenous women's lives are severely impacted by poverty, climate change, food insecurity, lack of healthcare, and global economic crises. Rural and Indigenous women are among the most marginalized populations in the Asia Pacific Region and it is essential in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda to engage work to eradicate the inequalities faced in fulfilling the rights of rural and indigenous women and girls. Rural women are the backbone of sustainable livelihoods and provide food security for their families and communities

Agenda 2030 brings opportunities and new challenges for civil society organisations. Women's organizations in the region will need to apply a more critical understanding of issues, and well-thought approaches in their struggles for social justice and in order to move forward State commitments for rural women.

Gender equality and the empowerment of all rural women and girls is essential for realizing the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals in its spirit of leaving no one behind by reaching the furthest first.

Rural and Indigenous women play a key role in supporting their households and communities, in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being. In the Asia Pacific Region, women's resilience in drought helps the family and community efforts and women are the first to respond when natural disasters hit.

Environmental degradation has a great impact on natural resources which rural families rely on for their livelihoods. Reduced quality of land, stock and availability of feed for stock increase women's time burden, reduce their capacities to cope with shocks and climate changes, affect where they live and impact on the overall well-being of their families and communities.

Where work is available outside of the farms, it is often a distance away and external work adds to farm work; it does not replace it. The jobs of rural women who are employed tend to be shorter term, more precarious and less protected than those of rural men and urban people.

Despite women being active players in achieving the SDG's, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women for every SDG indicator for which data is available. Rural women and girls continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, and face multiple forms of discrimination, violence and insecurity as compared to rural men and urban men and women. This includes diverse forms of discrimination against rural women and girls, various forms of violence in the public and private spheres, trafficking and sexual exploitation, harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage. Rural women contribute hugely to care and it is not valued as well as not recognized, rural women face lack of provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family; rural women especially challenged by very few opportunities for full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Women's participation in local institutions for governing natural resources is critical for sustainable land, forest and water management, as well as for building resilience and planning for climate change and adaptation strategies.

Policy and Legislative commitment to rural women is either not well formulated or not implemented. Lack of time-bound and well-resourced plans of action continues to be challenging.

Climate change is a major concern for all women in the Pacific region especially for those on low-lying atolls. Rising sea levels inundate and destroy gardens, plantations and water supplies threatening food security, disrupting communities adding to the challenges for women and rural women in particular.

Rural women and girls are more vulnerable in access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Lack of accountability on rural women's issues is leading to limited access to education and social services to ensure sexual and reproductive health services, especially girls.

Rural women have very limited access to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. Rural women are deprived of their right to the land as they do not have land in their lands. They have to work in the land of their male members i.e., fathers, brothers, husbands.

Rural women are left behind in development and modern technology including ICT and due to this they are not equipped with necessary skills to face changing world of work in this E -era. Rural women are marginalized furthered by IT world as they lack access and opportunity that promotes the empowerment of rural women. Possibilities of emerging opportunities should include such as ICT, technologies and entrepreneurship opportunities targeted at rural women in our region.

Across the Asia and Pacific Region it is essential to develop strong and sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

**We women from the Asia and Pacific Region call on for governments, private sector and civil society to**

- Provide policy service and support to increase women's resilience from disaster, such as earthquake, flood, tsunami
- Provide accountability for allocations of budgets for rural women's needs. Accountability for rural and to rural women needs new accountability designs with substantial participation of rural women themselves. Rural women must be engaged in accountability processes also as data verifiers.
- Create enabling environments both legally and practically in order to stress the importance to have legal framework to support rural women's property rights for increased control and ownership of assets by rural women, improve nutritional and water security and health, specifically of rural women
- Protect rural and indigenous women's legal rights in property distribution, marriage and reproductive health, political participation and other fields, and enabling women with equal opportunities for education, employment, property income and financial resources as well as providing abundant services.
- Undertake gender budgeting and increase budget allocation for rural women's economic empowerment at all levels.
- Scale up and speed up effective strategies to support rural women's involvement in small business and supporting women entrepreneurs and Increase strategies to support economic security for women in rural areas.
- Support strategies to increase women's economic empowerment in disaster and conflict affected areas.
- Undertake a high level of accountability, and work with national and local rural feminist organisations to ensure effective measurement of women's economic empowerment

including measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective, and women's engagement in agriculture. For measuring and valuing time use and unpaid work.

- To develop a strong gender indicators framework for the implementation of the SDG's and data disaggregation so that no one is left behind.