

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”

13-14 February 2019, CR-4, UNCC, Bangkok, Thailand

1. Background

Governments in Asia-Pacific have an opportunity to harness its sustained economic growth to enhance the resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability of their economies. The region is also seeing widening inequalities, demographic shifts, technology-induced inequalities and unemployment, climate change and natural disasters that are exacerbating risks and vulnerabilities, especially for women and girls. Despite gains in reducing extreme poverty, large segments of the population in Asia-Pacific remain vulnerable to falling back into poverty, giving rise to ‘transitional class’ rather than ‘middle class’ⁱ. Against these vulnerabilities, more than 60 per cent of the population in Asia-Pacific have no social protection coverage, many of whom are womenⁱⁱ.

Patterns of gender inequality, often intersecting with other forms of marginalization and discrimination related to race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, geographic location or citizenship, put women at a greater disadvantage than men in accessing social protection. Women often fall through traditional forms of social security as they are disproportionately concentrated in lower paid, less secure jobs, often in informal forms of employment, with more career gaps to tend to caring duties. Due to their gendered role as care-givers, women interact with public services more than men, both as users and through employment in areas such as health, education, child care, elderly care and social work. Public services are thus one of the primary government interfaces for women with the potential to address and mitigate structural gender inequalities across the life course. Gender-responsive public services also underpin the capacity of social protection to reach women, for example by ensuring access to affordable healthcare. Infrastructure has profound implications for women’s welfare and livelihoods, in their daily life, how they access public services and manage and use resources such as water, sanitation and energy. Further efforts are required to address the social, gender and sustainable dimensions of infrastructure to transform the way infrastructure systems and services are developed that more effectively respond to the needs of its diverse user group, many of whom are women.

Asia-Pacific is the most disaster-prone region, with a rapidly ageing population and high-levels of migratory flows and labour-market informality. Volatility and uncertainty continue to overshadow global economic markets. There is thus an urgency to review social protection systems, public services and infrastructure, and their interlinkages, to ensure their capacity to both mitigate the multiple vulnerabilities and risks facing women and girls and shift trajectories towards their empowerment.

Taking into consideration the above, the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) will deliberate on the priority theme “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” from 11 to 22 March 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. To assist the Commission, the 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” is being convened jointly by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific UN Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (TWG-GEEW) at the UNCC in Bangkok, from 13 to 14 February 2019. The objective of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting is to provide an interactive forum for member States to examine the priority theme and develop policy recommendations, which will serve as the regional input to CSW63.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting will also serve as an opportunity to review preparations for the regional review of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25). In accordance with ECOSOC Resolution E/RES/2018/18, ESCAP will undertake the regional review process and convene an Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review in November 2019, Bangkok, in cooperation with UN Women and with the support of TWG-GEEW, to review progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. One segment of the agenda for the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting on CSW63 will address the process and preparations towards this regional review.

2. Objectives

The overall objectives of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting are to provide an interactive forum for member States of the Asia-Pacific region to:

- Examine social protection systems, public services and infrastructure, and their interlinkages, to identify how each area can be further enhanced in response to different gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities.
- Develop policy recommendations, which will serve as the regional input to CSW63 that will be convened in New York from 11 to 22 March 2019.
- Review preparations for the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review, November 2019, Bangkok

Expected Outcome: The outcome of the Asia-Pacific Regional High-Level Meeting for CSW63 will be a report, containing a summary of the discussions and recommendations on the priority theme for CSW63. The report will be submitted to the CSW63, and made available on the website of UN Women and ESCAP, as well as those of other UN agencies and stakeholders as may be applicable.

3. Participants

The Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for CSW63 will bring together Ministers and high-level officials (from National Coordination Mechanism for gender equality and women's empowerment, Ministries of Social Development, Ministries of Public Health, Ministries of Finance or National Planning, Ministries of Infrastructure and entities responsible for social protection) in the Asia and Pacific region, as well as CSOs and UN Agencies.

Expected number of participants: 80-100 people.

4. Date and Venue

The Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for CSW63 will take place at CR-4, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Bangkok, from 13-14 February 2019.

5. Organization

- The Meeting will be jointly convened by ESCAP and UN Women, in collaboration with the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (TWG-GEEW).
- The Meeting will be conducted in English and all documentation will be in English.
- The Meeting will comprise presentations as well as multi-stakeholder dialogue and discussions.

ⁱ ESCAP Economic and Social Survey for Asia and the Pacific, 2018; ADB and Un Women, Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: baseline and pathways for transformative change by 2030, Bangkok, 2018

ⁱⁱ ESCAP, Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific, 2018