



Organisation name : Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
Organisation website : <https://arrow.org.my/>
Submitted by : Shamala Chandrasekaran, Programme Manager, shamala@arrow.org.my

Chapeau Introduction?

(Add your concise, concrete, and action-oriented language for the Chapeau)

We envision the Pact to speak the language of equality, intersectionality, human rights and gender responsiveness; we envision it to be a progressive outcome document that speaks to the challenges and aspirations of women and young people in all their diversities from Asia and the Pacific region and, to truly reiterate the need to advance gender equality and health including sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially given the set back by the impact of COVID-19, the climate crises, and various global conflicts.

To establish the importance for a gender responsive and intersectional approach in plans, laws, policies and programmes, we need not look any further than the disproportionate, gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls especially the marginalised and vulnerable, including but not limited to the poor, lesser educated, from rural and hard-to-reach areas, with disability, of lower caste, indigenous, ethnic minorities, diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, those suffered by humanitarian crisis resulting from conflict and climate change, stateless, and undocumented migrants. The crisis has visibly deepened the multidimensional inequalities, reinforced the longstanding gender inequality and exacerbated the scale and severity of the impact.

The Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) works extensively on gender equality with a focus on upholding women, girls and young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in 17 countries in Asia and the Pacific, further ensuring a world with greater equality and opportunities for women, girls and young people in all their diversities in the region.

The efforts to advance gender equality and human rights including health and wellbeing of women and girls should not be compromised. Gender equality is only achievable when women and girls have bodily autonomy, as well as reproductive rights and choices. Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services also mean that women and girls are unable to exercise control over their reproductive health and their general health. While gender equality is referenced in many of the human rights instruments and development agenda at the international, regional and national levels, many of the recognised barriers are still in existence even after years into the implementation of Agenda 2023, 30 years into the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+30) as well as almost 30 years into the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+30), maintaining gender equality a distant goal for many countries in the region.

The region is also far from achieving universal health coverage, the key solution for health and well-being for all through universal access to health services including sexual and reproductive health care services. A comprehensive range of sexual and reproductive health care services is still not included in the Essential Services Package where in such circumstances, women are forced to pay 'out-of-pocket' and this deters them from accessing the much-needed health services, further contributing to inequalities in utilisation of health care services particularly among the most marginalised.

With only 7 years remaining to achieve the Agenda 2030, we urge Member States to double the efforts to advance gender equality and human rights including health and wellbeing of women, girls and young people in all their diversities by:

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 1)

- Improve public investment in health and develop social protection systems including universal access to health and health strategies to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive rights for all women & girls, especially the marginalised and vulnerable groups.
- Uphold commitments and carry out human rights and constitutional obligations to adequately resource and ensure that all women and girls, in all of their diversity have safe, timely and uninterrupted access to full range of health information, supplies and services including sexual and reproductive health information and services such as access to contraceptives, safe abortion, respectful maternal care and new-born and child health, sexually transmitted infections and reproductive tract infections, anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and reproductive cancer prevention and treatment services which are essential and life-saving health services in the context of COVID-19.
- Provide adequate financial, human and infrastructural resources towards implementing health policies, which ensures the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health for all including their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- investment should also be made on disaggregated data for monitoring and strengthening policies and programmes especially for decision making in all aspects of response and recovery during a crisis.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 4)

Young people in all their diversity are equal partners in achieving the 2030 Agenda. They must be at the forefront for accelerated transformation and action to enable accelerated sustainable solutions through young people's leadership, meaningful participation and support, and empowering youth-adult partnerships across the region. Prior to the Asian Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, young people from the region are brought together by ARROW and the co-conveners to craft the annual Regional Call to Action at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) recognised Pre- Asian Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development Youth Forum detailing recommendations for sustainable, inclusive and human rights focused solutions for the Decade of Action. These Preparatory APFSD Youth Forums since 2017 have enabled inclusive young people participation at the intergovernmental APFSD meetings over the years.

Overall, the Regional Youth Call to Action urges the Member States for recovery actions that stimulate equity, resilience, sustainability, and progress towards the SDGs by:

- Ensuring meaningful and inclusive youth participation in not only youth-focused spaces but in all decision making spaces concerning policy making and implementation with extended support to youth-led organisations and initiatives for their participation. Also ensure that youth participation is safe and based on transparent processes and appropriate feedback.
- Tackling intersectoral challenges around healthcare and ensuring young people's access to youth friendly SRHR information and services,
- Emphasising the need for research to advance gender equality including to eradicate harmful practices
- Ensuring commitment towards financial support, intergenerational solidarity and commitment for meaningful youth participation.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 5)

- Recognising that women play a critical role in pandemic and crisis management and mitigation and include them equally and meaningfully in the designing, implementation, financing and monitoring of the crisis response, ensuring that the response at the local, national, regional and international levels include gender and human rights perspectives.
- Incorporate provision of sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services into the national crisis and disaster management policies, budget and programmes.
- Place the most vulnerable and marginalised women and girls at the center of all crisis and disaster management policies and incorporate provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services into the national crisis and disaster management policies, budget and programmes.

Our Recommendations on Laws and Policies:

- Committing to universal access to health care, especially the existing commitments including in the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), and Agenda 2030 in addition to other human rights treaties and relevant mechanisms to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services. This includes increasing investments in healthcare and specifically for sexual and reproductive health resources.
- Governments should enact laws that will enable universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, ensure sexual and reproductive health services are included comprehensively in the universal health coverage packages at the country level,
- Governments must increase funding and national response mechanisms towards the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices such as FGM/C and forced surgeries on intersex persons, child and forced early marriages, contraceptive measures (both permanent and temporary) forced onto persons with disabilities, those in institutions and in conflict with the law, as well as intimate partner violence including but not limited to marital rape.
- Transformative and robust care policies, social protection schemes and services for older persons need to ensure mental as well as physical health, address SRHR, violence, neglect and abuse of older persons, promote positive images of ageing, prevent ageism and age-related discrimination at the workplace.
- Governments must consider law reform towards amending the laws and policies that restrict the right to safe abortion and expose pregnant persons to discrimination and restrict their rights to bodily autonomy. Ample resources must also be made available to provide accessible, high-quality, stigma-free contraception and safe abortion services for diverse individuals, enabling them to live with dignity
- Prioritise budget availability for and integrate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into school curricula, and update curricula to make it comprehensive. CSE programmes and resource material must be tailored and made accessible for marginalised youth,

Our Recommendations on Implementation Mechanisms:

- The leadership, meaningful, sustained participation and voice of women and young people in all their diversities (elderly persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, those from conflict areas/and in conflict with the law, people of diverse SOGIESC, and other marginalised groups and communities) must be promoted in decision-making including planning, implementation and monitoring processes
- Ensure and invest in capacity-building efforts for women and young people in all their diversities that are co-owned and co-designed with the communities themselves to ensure their meaningful participation and representation at local national and global advocacy spaces.
- Strengthen CSOs full collaboration, participation, and accountability in SRHR efforts. Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track gender equality initiatives across communities and particularly to track the impacts.
- Establish essential monitoring mechanisms, ensuring effective implementation and multistakeholder partnerships across various government levels, highlighting the need to fortify public-private collaborations for delivering quality services.
- Immediate steps must be taken to implement existing policies and strategies that include integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and establish special SRH services for women and youth in all their diversities in the severely impacted areas such as island and mountain regions. Multisectoral approaches are urgently needed to build health system resilience to climate, health and humanitarian crises
- Support measures to ensure the meaningful inclusion under the UNFCCC framework, and accelerate climate, gender equality and SRHR related education with disaggregated data, invest in research, build capacity, training, and participation in a comprehensive set of measures to ensure that States adopt inclusive solutions to the climate crisis and uptake SRHR services.

Our Recommendations on Access to Services:

- Strengthen health systems to deliver SRHR services using an adolescent, youth-centric, and disability friendly approach, as defined in international guidelines. Medical curricula must be inclusive of the health needs of all.
- Encourage the use of innovation and technology in education. Public internet facilities should be installed in communities to bridge the digital divide that has severely impacted communities. However, when thinking about digital solutions and technologies we must also be cognizant of the disparate gendered-use of

technology, threat to privacy and cyber security, and the risk of backlash and work towards bridging these gaps.

- Ensure the access, availability, affordability, adaptability and quality of SRHR services that address the impacts of climate change and that the design, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all climate-related SRHR policies and services address the multiple barriers faced by indigenous peoples, marginalised individuals living in poverty and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, such as persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, and deaf and/or blind persons
- Develop the capacity of teachers to deliver CSE in a life skills-based approach. Engage with out-of-school children and youth through outreach programmes. Expand digital learning opportunities for CSE targeting young people, including by sharing best practices among countries across the region.
- Conduct gender, age, disability, and ethnicity disaggregated data collection and targeted data collection methods in order to reach those who are most marginalised and left behind. Smaller populations and areas that are not easily accessible must be involved in data collection methods. Efforts must be taken to break the gender binary with regards to data collection and move towards the inclusion of gender diverse people.

Source:

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Call to Action (organised ahead of of the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference 2023)

<https://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Call-to-Action-Multi-stakeholder-Dialogue-ahead-of-the-Seventh-APPC.pdf>