



URBAN AND PERI-URBAN DEVELOPMENT

These briefs are intended for organizations and activists engaged in advocacy on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender and sexuality in Asia and the Pacific. They aim to provide a snapshot how SRHR links to the new Agenda 2030 framework laid out by the [2019 Global Sustainable Development Report](#) and the six entry-points it identifies, provide brief evidence from the context of Asia Pacific, and illustrate how fulfillment of SRHR helps countries in the region achieve just and sustainable development using the development justice framework of Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (AP RCEM). The briefs have been developed by members of the Thematic Working Group on Gender, Sexuality and SRHR of the AP RCEM, and supported by the co-coordinator of the TWG, APA.

INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN GENDER SRHR AND ENTRYPOINT 5

Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 13 commit world governments to ‘make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ requiring housing and basic services, transport, air quality and waste management, disaster, infrastructural resilience and sustainability, and urban green and public spaces.

Numerous studies indicate that while policy makers, advocates and financiers have concentrated on rural development, growing urban and peri-urban informal squatter settlements and slum populations in Asia, the result of mass urbanization, are showing signs of acute neglect, especially for the poor and marginalized. Lack of people-centered and inclusive planning; administrative and fiscal mismanagement; waste; overproduction and consumption; high air pollution; homelessness; labor informalization; and dilapidating public services are common symptoms.

Urbanization affects women in all their diversity differently due to persistent gender inequalities, restrictive social norms and stereotypes¹. In many countries across Asia-Pacific, there is higher incidence of female-headed households in urban than rural areas.² While women’s migration to cities has contributed to declining fertility rates, greater access to employment opportunities, delayed marriages and increased independence for women and girls in parts of the region,³ cities pose challenges to their health, social support systems and safety. Informal work, higher amongst urban poor women, is often without legal status, with limited social protection and just-above-poverty-line wages which further restricts their ability to afford quality SRH services. In major urban cities in Asia, lack of access to water and sanitation is also a major source of communal conflict, sexual harassment and gender-based violence^{4, 5}. SRH risks for the urban poor include high rates of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and poor maternal and child health outcomes.

Women’s livelihood opportunities are shaped by their experience of unsafe cities and settlements, which affects travel, hours of work and types of employment opportunities⁶, and access to SRHR. In the Pacific while a greater number of people are not living in cities and maintain a customary kinship systems which alleviate some of the worse aspects of slum dwelling,⁷ it also curtails women and girls’ access to SRHR information and services

Despite notable urban slum reduction or ‘upgrading’ across the globe, too many women, migrants, minority groups, LGBTIQ+ and non-binary folks, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities continue to face inadequate access to health services water and sanitation, housing and shelter, forced evictions, unsafe transportation, lack of electricity, high levels of pollution, and discriminatory land tenure and ownership. Women and gender nonconforming individuals’ daily mobility patterns are not just more restricted⁸ but also generally different⁹ from men which is not accounted for in mass urban transit programs. Violence in public and open spaces further curtails their mobility, taking away career and education choices, access to health including SRHR and justice services and right to social, economic, and political participation.

POLICY COHERENCE

Addressing urban and peri-urban development requires integrated policies and inclusive and participatory planning, while preserving peoples’ cultural and natural heritage. The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030](#) calls upon governments to improve links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas.¹⁰ The [New Urban Agenda](#), 2016, and the [Paris Agreement](#), 2015 complement SGDs 11 and 13, with combined emphasis on natural resource management, climate change, disaster risk reduction, and rising inequalities. Important levers built into these frameworks include 4 areas of implementation: urban/territorial planning; governance and capacity development;



data and technologies for smart cities; and urban financing. The New Urban Agenda further embeds equity and social justice in people's experience of their habitat.

The governance of safe cities and urban/ peri-urban areas carries numerous references to health under the [International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\)](#) and the [UHC2030 Agenda](#), including addressing issues of changing population dynamics under the effects of migration and displacement, making cities safer and resilient, and universalizing primary health access for all and access to quality SRHR services. The [ICPD +25 Nairobi Declaration](#) and the 2013 [Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development](#) also note the increasing importance of climate change, growing inequalities and exclusion within and between countries, migration, the youth bulge and aging populations, and increasing demographic diversity in the region, within the field of population and development.

EVIDENCE FROM ASIA PACIFIC

- The region became majority urban for the first time in history in 2019, with 2.3 billion urban residents which is expected to rise to more than 2.8 billion in 2030, and nearly 3.5 billion in 2050.¹¹
- The region is home to more than half a billion slum dwellers, who constitute more than half of the world's total slum population¹².
- Decrepit or few shelters,¹³ high risk and normalization of violence, poor infrastructure and unaffordable services for slum dwelling women and girls in all their diversity is a concern in most Asia Pacific countries¹⁴.
- Renters in informal settlements mainly comprise poor women, minorities, migrants, LGBTIQ+ and informal industry and trade workers, face ineligibility for compensation under evictions, anti-encroachment drives and relocation programs.
- Nearly half of all forced evictions in the world between 2001 and 2005 occurred in Bangladesh, China, India and Indonesia, which are amongst the most populous countries in the region.¹⁵
- Spatial inequality within cities also forces people onto unsuitable and unsafe land as mass evictions result from rapid urbanization and demands for large-scale market-rate housing¹⁶ and energy projects¹⁷.
- Ninety per cent of people living in cities breathe air that fails to meet WHO standards of **air quality** (10 micrograms per cubic meter of particulate matter); no metropolitan city in Asia meets that standard.¹⁸

CONCLUSIONS

Governance for human settlements needs to account for communities' complex relationship with their habitat and differentiated experiences based on geography, gender norms, social identities, and interlocking marginalization. Right to the city demands that urbanization not only drive economies and enable access to resources, but also include the right to collectively make and remake cities and settlements for those who inhabit them. This requires that women in all their diversity as well as vulnerable communities be placed first in assessments, policymaking, planning, organizing, building and managing cities and related rejuvenation strategies. And access to quality SRH services is critical to empowering women.

Policies must consider the unique needs of vulnerable populations based on location and geography, including slum residents, street children, people with disabilities, urban refugees, internally displaced persons, cross-border migrants, high- and wet landers, are those dwelling in arid or barren terrains. There has to be concerted efforts to universalizing access to secure and gainful employment, addressing rising informalization, overcrowding and mismanagement of public good and services in and around cities, ending corruption, and ensuring provision of basic services and amenities such as clean energy, sanitation and clean water, healthcare including SRH, education and safe transport for all as suited to particular habitats.



- ¹ APRCEM (2020). Position Paper to the Theme of HLPF 2020.
- ² ESCAP/UN HABITAT (2016). [Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development \(Habitat III\) Regional Report for Asia and the Pacific: Transformative Urbanization for a Resilient Asia-Pacific](#) (A/CONF.226/11).
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Emma Fulu et al (2013). [Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent it? Quantitative Findings from the United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific](#). UNDP/UNFPA/UN WOMEN/ WB/ UNVP.
- ⁵ Nausheen H. Anwar et al (2016). [Gender, vulnerability, and violence in urban Pakistan](#). Institute of Business Administration, Karachi; International Development and Research Center; King's College, London; and UK AID.
- ⁶ UN HABITAT/ ESCAP (2010). [Urban safety and poverty in Asia and the Pacific](#) (Nairobi, UN-Habitat, 2010).
- ⁷ Family Planning NSW, Australia, via email.
- ⁸ Amy Lubitow et al. (2017) Transmobilities: Mobility, harassment, and violence experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming public transit riders in Portland, Oregon, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 24:10, 1398-1418, DOI: [10.1080/0966369X.2017.1382451](#).
- ⁹ As primary caregivers, women are more likely to 'trip-chain', i.e., making short trips with changing modes of transportation to get to their various destinations. See ADB (2013). [Gender Tool Kit: Transport Maximizing the Benefits of Improved Mobility for All](#).
- ¹⁰ This framework is rooted in the Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005, on building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, including the urban poor and excluded groups. The Hyogo Framework demands accountability for disaster risk creation at all levels and focuses on tackling underlying disaster risk drivers including poverty and inequality, unplanned and rapid urbanization, poor land management, demographic changes, weak institutional arrangements, non-risk-informed policies, lack of regulation and incentives for private disaster risk reduction investment, complex supply chains, limited availability of technology, unsustainable uses of natural resources, declining ecosystems, pandemics and epidemics amongst others (Preamble; 6).
- ¹¹ ESCAP (2019) | [The Future of Asian and Pacific Cities: Transformative Pathways towards Sustainable Urban Development](#).
- ¹² ESCAP/UN HABITAT (2016). [Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development \(Habitat III\) Regional Report for Asia and the Pacific: Transformative Urbanization for a Resilient Asia-Pacific](#) (A/CONF.226/11).
- ¹³ The Conversation (April 18, 2018): [Sexism and the city: how urban planning has failed women](#).
- ¹⁴ David Mitchell, Danilo Antonio, CheeHai Teo, Lowie Rosales-Kawasaki and Donovan Storey, [Land Tenure in Asia and the Pacific: Challenges, Opportunities and Way Forward](#) (Nairobi, UN-Habitat, 2015).
- ¹⁵ UN-Habitat and ESCAP (2011). [The State of Asian Cities 2010/2011](#).
- ¹⁶ Jan Bredenoord, Paul van Lindert and Peer Smets, eds., [Affordable Housing in the Urban Global South: Seeking Sustainable Solutions](#) (Abingdon, Oxon., and New York, Routledge, 2014).
- ¹⁷ APRCEM (2020). Position Paper to the Theme of HLPF 2020.
- ¹⁸ UNDESA (2019). [The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development. Global Sustainable Development Report](#).