CSO JOINT STATEMENT

Charting the way forward: Progress Gaps, and Actions CSO Forum

In advance of the Mid-Term Review of the

2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development

Bangkok, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

More than 52 civil society organizations (CSOs) from 24 Asia and the Pacific countries convened for the CSO forum “Charting the way forward: Progress Gaps, and Actions” in advance of the mid-term review (MTR) of the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (APMDPD) from the 6th Asian and the Pacific Population conference (6APPC) and International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA) in Asia-Pacific in Bangkok on 24-25 November 2018.

The Forum discussed the progress towards the implementation of the 6APPC and ICPD PoA, gaps as well as challenges as it relates to globally and in the context of Asia and the Pacific. The Forum culminated in this joint statement that has strong and strong recommendations to the member states and delegates at the MTR of the 6APPC.

Various constituencies represented at the forum included women and girls, LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer) people, migrants, young people and adolescents,
REVIEW OF PROGRESS

There has been significant progress in terms of policies that promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across the Asia and Pacific region. Implementation of SRHR policies still continues to be a challenge, especially in regards to marginalized and vulnerable groups such as women, adolescents and young people living in urban slums, rural areas, hard to reach places, persons with disabilities, migrants, stateless and ethnic minorities, indigenous and tribal peoples, people who use drugs, sex workers, people living with and affected by HIV and people of diverse gender identities/expressions, sexual orientations and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

Structural problems in the government, inadequate human, financial and material resources, centralization of the services, limited capacity of the government agencies to operationalize human rights-based policies, and curative framework of the health care system, lack of disaggregated data often lead to implementation gap. Some of the persistent impediments pertain to patriarchal ideology, violence, stigma and discrimination, regressive policy and legislation, lack of accountability and monitoring mechanisms.

We call on our governments and duty bearers to take the following actions:

1. Review, repeal and amend laws and policies that restrict the fulfilment of Universal access to SRHR including services, information and education.
2. Ensure an enabling environment through enactment and enforcement of laws and policies to address SRHR issues of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Promote and facilitate the participation of these groups in leadership and decision-making positions.
3. Ensure universal access to SRHR information and services using a continuum of quality care through the life cycle approach. This includes access to the full range of contraceptives services, maternal health services including emergency obstetric care, safe abortion and post-abortion care, HIV, STIs and reproductive cancers for all. This should address the needs of especially young, unmarried, adolescents and LGBTIQ.
4. Institutionalize a mechanism for regular capacity building of key stakeholders including statistical, finance, justice and other relevant departments on gender sensitive approach and SRHR.
5. Ensure respect for women, informed decision making, autonomy, confidentiality and privacy in the provision of safe abortion services. Expand laws and policies to reduce unsafe abortions and increase access to safe abortion as well as provide post abortion care.
6. Increase national investment and enhance capacities of providers for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) to ensure availability and accessibility of rights-based information.

7. SRHR policy-making and programming must be evidence based and supported by ethical, gender-sensitive and country-specific research with strong inter-linkages to ICPD, and Agenda 2030.

8. Eliminate all forms of multiple intersecting sexual and gender-based discrimination and violence including intimate partner and non-partner violence, violence perpetrated against LGBTIQ

EMERGING ISSUES AND GAPS

The Asia-Pacific region is at the forefront of experiencing extreme climate change events and disasters. This has increased in frequency and intensity in recent years, and disproportionately impacts women, girls and marginalized groups. SRHR is often neglected in the context of climate change and humanitarian responses.

We call on our governments and duty bearers to take the following actions:

1. Ensure the collection, availability and use of high-quality data, disaggregated by sex, age, gender, disabilities, geographical settings, ethnicity, religion, marital, economic status, migrant and social status, on the impact of humanitarian situations in order to promote effective policy-making for enhanced disaster preparedness and management as well as effective implementation.

2. Strengthen regulations and policies to halt global carbon dioxide, greenhouse gas emissions without resorting to geo-engineering and other techno-fixes to protect livelihoods. Where countries can no longer support the lives of people due to adverse changes in their circumstances and environment resulting from climate change, the policies should ensure survival and adaptation of migrants with dignity and according to human rights based standards.

3. Address inequalities through the formulation of policies for enhancing mobility, resilient human settlements to address the impact of climate change and disasters.

4. Regulations should ensure corporate and government entities are accountable to actions that increase degradation of the environment. They should promote environmentally friendly practices and ensure the publishing of regular environmental impact assessments, especially in high risk areas and industries.

5. Ensure that human rights and SRHR of marginalized and vulnerable populations, receive increased attention during the humanitarian response to crisis and post-crisis situations through access to timely, safe, high-quality, gender sensitive, affordable and comprehensive information and services.

6. Integrate SRHR, including minimum initial service package (MISP) and prevention and response to GBV into disaster risk management mechanisms at country level.

7. Recognize and promote local and traditional knowledge on mitigation and adaptation.

8. Disseminate information on climate change and disasters in local languages.

9. Ensure public participation in environment and climate change related decisions.
The reliance on private sector and external funding that allow States to shift the burden and responsibility of Universal Health Care (UHC) to the private sector is alarming. Combined with lack of regulatory mechanism this perpetuates corruption and capitalization of health resources and commodities. The lack of transparent and accountable health financing structures exacerbate the non-alignment of national policies with resource allocation.

**We call on our governments and duty bearers to take the following actions:**

10. Health financing policy frameworks need to be redesigned/created and aligned with health priorities, keeping in mind a rights-based perspective to encourage an enabling environment to ensure health financing for marginalized and vulnerable groups.
11. Conduct assessment of the specific health needs, including SRHR, of marginalized and vulnerable populations to ensure appropriate resource allocation in national budgets.
12. Engage CSOs in the review and development of budgets. Independent Monitoring Bodies with CS representation must be appointed/created to evaluate health allocation and budget expenditure.
13. Provide technical support for countries, particularly low and middle-income countries to scale-up access to essential medicines by maximizing utilization of the flexibilities under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the Doha Declaration.

In many countries in Asia and the Pacific, spaces for CSOs, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and whistle blowers are shrinking; those who dare to make a stand against injustice and defend human rights are under attack.

**We call on our governments and duty bearers to take the following actions:**

14. Promote, protect, respect human rights of CSOs and all human rights defenders to ensure safe and enabling environment for all.
15. Institute, protect, and strengthen the implementation of whistle-blower policies. Ensure effective grievance redressal mechanisms are in place.
16. CSO registration and renewal should be transparent, simple, and according to human rights standards.
17. Ensure meaningful spaces for CSOs and human rights defenders in decision making processes at all levels including local, national, regional and global.

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING**

Critical dimensions of sustainable development are poorly or not measured at all in most countries. This includes critical issues such as the extent of stigma or discrimination, the quality of education, access to health care among adolescents and youth, the quality of health care, and spatial inequalities. In the absence of a uniform data collection mechanisms to capture such qualitative and disaggregated data, planning and addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable populations becomes impossible.
True accountability requires robust, transparent, participatory and well monitored mechanisms. Reminding Member States of their commitments towards regular monitoring and evaluation by relevant national authorities of progress towards the continuing implementation of PoA of ICPD and its related follow up outcomes, we recommend:

**We call on our governments and duty bearers to take the following actions:**

1. Ensure all national policies are inclusive and non-discriminatory and sensitive to the rights of all, to uphold the highest standard of human rights, including SRHR.
2. Create and strengthen mechanisms to empower communities to demand the accountability of governments in the implementation of the APMDPD and ICPD PoA.
3. Develop and implement a rigorous rights-based and qualitative regional indicator framework for tracking the commitments of 6APPC, beyond Agenda 2030 indicators.
4. Evaluate national frameworks and indicators to ensure alignment with the ICPD PoA and APMDPD commitments. Frameworks should include qualitative indicators and be amended as appropriate.
5. Strengthen national data collection and statistical bodies to collect data disaggregated by sex, age, gender, disabilities, geographical settings, ethnicity, religion, economic, marital, social and migrant status.
6. Provide adequate financial and human resources and regular capacity building to enhance collection, analysis and dissemination of data and statistics.
7. Establish an effective partnership between governments and CSOs to develop regular country progress reports on regional and national commitments pertaining to ICPD and APMDPD. These progress reports should be translated into local languages and shared through public domain for dissemination.
8. Regulate the private sector through development of robust and transparent regulatory frameworks to strengthen accountability.
9. The right to Information should be instituted, promoted and protected in all countries.