

Policy Paper



North and Central Asia: An analysis of the Beijing+25 review reports



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES.....	7
ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY	8
A. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK	8
B. POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES.....	12
C. PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE, STIGMA, AND STEREOTYPES.....	18
D. ACCOUNTABILITY, PARTICIPATION AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS.....	22
E. PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES	27
F. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, CLIMATE ACTION AND RESILIENCE-BUILDING.....	28
NATIONAL INSITUTIONS AND PROCESSES TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY	29
DATA AND STATISTICS.....	32
KEY PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	35
KEY MESSAGES	38



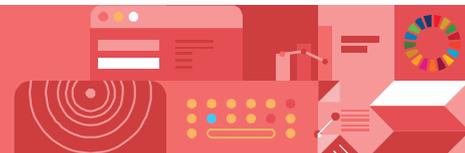
Tables, boxes and figures

Table 1.Linkages between the Beijing+25 Review, the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda	6
Table 2 Time spent on unpaid domestic chores and care work (% of time in a day)	10
Table 3 Status of data disaggregation in North and Central Asia	34
Box 1. New tax regime under consideration in Kazakhstan to facilitate transition of women into formal work..	10
Box 2. Factors affecting poverty amongst women in Kyrgyzstan	13
Box 3 Progress and potential - Kazakhstan healthcare snapshot.....	17
Box 3 North and Central Asian countries take action to address human trafficking.....	20
Box 4 Social norms and violence undermine women in power in Kyrgyzstan.....	25
Box 5. Kazakhstan builds capacity for gender responsive budgeting.....	26
Box 5 Tajikistan and Azerbaijan improve the gender focus of disaster risk management.....	29
Box 6 Many challenges afflict national women’s machinery in Kyrgyzstan	31
Box 7 Gender statistics challenges in Kyrgyzstan reflect those across the region	33
Figure 1 Female labour force participation rate (15+), NCA, modelled ILO estimate, 2020	8
Figure 2 Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births in North and Central Asia, 2017	16
Figure 3.Women in Parliament, NCA, ESCAP and World, 2015-2020.....	22
Figure 4. Women in Parliament, by percent, North and Central Asia, 2020	23

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Acronyms and abbreviations



BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CPR	Contraceptive prevalence rate
CSO	Civil society organization
DV	Domestic Violence
EVAW	Elimination of violence against women
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
ICT	Information and communications technology
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	Non government organization
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPVAW	National Action Plan on Violence Against Women
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive health
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls

Introduction

The world is in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Women health workers are at the forefront of the health response to the crisis. With lockdowns and curfews implemented in several parts of the world, the incidence of violence against women and girls has increased. Women are over-represented



in sectors hardest hit by the outbreak such as manufacturing, garment, tourism and hospitality sectors. Lastly, but most importantly, the burden of extra care work and domestic chores in light of the pandemic falls on the shoulders of an already over-burdened womenfolk. In short, the pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities and discriminatory social norms that exist in our society.

The COVID-19 crisis is a wake-up call for our planet. It is relevant that we introspect our policies and deal with the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of development in an integrated manner. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are critical resources that member States could use to move forward without leaving anyone behind. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development -with its commitment to leave no one behind -and the Beijing Platform- with its wide and far-reaching scope- could together forge a more equal, inclusive planet. The synergies need to be harnessed to create a more gender-equal Asia and the Pacific.

The Asia-Pacific Beijing+25 Review

In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, was adopted and subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. Every five years since 1995, progress in achieving the strategic objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is reviewed by the Commission on the Status of Women. The fifth review marks the twenty- fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In its resolution 2018/8, the Economic and Social Council called upon all States to undertake national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Platform for Action. Additionally, the resolution encouraged “regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level can feed into the 2020 review”.

In accordance with this mandate, ESCAP, in cooperation with the UN-Women and with the support of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (RCM-TWG-GEEW), undertook in 2019 a [regional review](#) of progress in implementing the Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific. Out of its 49 member States and 9 associate members, ESCAP received 45 reports. The analytical review encompassed ESCAP member States geographically located in the Asia-Pacific region.

The 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020 was the first time that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was reviewed with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development fully in place. The Beijing+25 review harnesses the synergies between the Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda to consolidate efforts to accelerate the achievement of key international commitments on gender equality.

The 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action have been clustered into six overarching themes that highlight the alignment of the two frameworks (see table 1) : inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work; poverty eradication, social protection and social services; freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes; participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions; peaceful and inclusive societies; and environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building. In addition, member States have reported on their key priorities, achievements, and challenges with regard to gender equality; national institutions, processes and partnerships; and data and statistics for advancing the empowerment of women and girls in the region.



The present document contains a summary of the identified achievements, challenges, and key actions taken by the ESCAP members and associate members of the North and Central Asia sub-region to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The countries that have submitted their national review reports¹, and are therefore included in this report, are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the key priority areas for action for countries in the region for the next five years are identified, with a view to accelerate the achievement of gender equality in the region of progress in implementing the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda.

Table 1. Linkages between the Beijing+25 Review, the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda

Beijing +25 Clusters	Critical Areas of Concern	Sustainable Development Goals
<i>Inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work</i>	A. Women and poverty F. Women and the economy I. Human rights of women L. The girl child	SDGs 1, 2, 5, 8, 9 and 17
<i>Poverty eradication, social protection, and social services</i>	A. Women and poverty B. Education and training of women C. Women and health I. Human rights of women L. The girl child	SDGs 1,2, 3, 4 and 5
<i>Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes</i>	D. Violence against women I. Human rights of women J. Women and the media L. The girl child	SDG 5
<i>Participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions</i>	G. Women in power and decision-making H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women I. Human rights of women J. Women and the media L. The girl child	SDGs 5, 16 and 17
<i>Peaceful and inclusive societies</i>	E. Women and armed conflict I. Human rights of women L. The girl child	SDGs 5, 10, 16, 17
<i>Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation</i>	K. Women and the environment I. Human rights of women L. The girl child	SDGs 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17

¹ For the national review reports, see: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations> . (accessed 27/10/2020). Unless otherwise specified, all information reported in this document has been taken from the respective national review reports submitted by member States for the Beijing+25 Review.



Achievements and challenges

“It is time to stop trying to change women, and start changing the systems that prevent them from achieving their potential. Our power structures have evolved gradually over thousands of years. One further evolution is long overdue. The 21st century must be the century of women’s equality”

-UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres²

The following section lists the key achievements of the countries in the sub-region with respect to advancing gender equality over the last five years and challenges faced in its pursuit.

Achievements

The national reports submitted by the North and Central Asian member States to the Beijing+25 process showed important progress towards gender equality over the past five years. This included new and strengthened legal frameworks, strategies, policies, plans, and measures for gender equality in areas including:

- The strengthening of national institutions for the advancement of women.
- Mainstreaming of gender equality considerations into SDG implementation frameworks as well as national and sector development strategies and plans.
- The introduction of measures such as gender quotas, leadership training, affirmative action policies, and public awareness campaigns to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making at all levels.
- Initiatives to eliminate violence against women and girls, including raising public awareness about the harmful impacts of discriminatory social norms.
- Revision of labour market policies and legislation to increase women’s participation in the labour market; promote equal pay for work of equal value; and prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors.
- Promotion of women’s entrepreneurship as both a measure to address poverty and strengthen the role of women within the economy.
- Increased women’s participation in higher levels of education as well as vocational and technical training; increased participation of women and girls in STEM; and introduction of measures to address gender bias in educational content.
- Increased attention to and resourcing of sexual and reproductive health and rights, services and systems.
- Introduction of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and (in most cases) initial progress towards implementation.
- Measures to increase the participation of women within the peace and security sphere.
- Improved gender indicators in key areas of political, economic, and social life; and strengthened collection, analysis, dissemination and use of gender statistics.

² ‘Make this the century of women’s equality’. See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1058271> (accessed 27/10/2020)

Challenges

All countries in the sub-region have an increasingly comprehensive architecture of gender-related legislation, policies, strategies, and plans, with addressing violence against women and girls being a major growth area in this respect in recent years. However, the overriding challenge across the region is translating such commitments into effective action, including through the application of gender-responsive budgeting which remains at variable levels of development.

A number of challenges in bringing about the transition from commitment to action emerge from the Beijing+25 national reports on which this paper is based. The main among these are:

- The persistent and pervasive influence of discriminatory social norms which privilege men in all spheres and levels of society. This is reflected *inter alia* by the disproportionate burden of unpaid work and care carried by women and high levels of violence against women and girls.
- Continued low levels of political representation at all levels, despite overall improvements across the region over the past five years.
- A general lack of understanding and expertise on gender issues in government at all levels, despite training that has been provided in recent years, often with the support of international agencies.
- A tendency to regard issues related to gender as “only a matter of the social sector (education, health care, social protection),”³ without comprehensively and systematically integrating gender into laws, policies, strategies, plans, and national budget decisions at the heart of economic development (industry, trade, and agriculture, for example).
- Systemic capacity weaknesses, under-resourcing and the often relative marginalization in practice of government institutions responsible for gender equality.
- A need to further strengthen systematic monitoring of the gender dimensions of all legislation, policies, strategies, plans, and programs.
- A reliance on international agency technical support and financing, contributing to a “projectization” of gender mainstreaming initiatives and a tendency towards ad-hoc initiatives.

Actions taken to advance gender equality

A. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a clarion call for inclusive development that

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