

Policy Paper



Pacific: An analysis of the Beijing+25 review reports

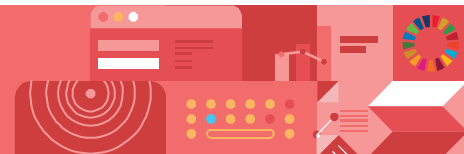


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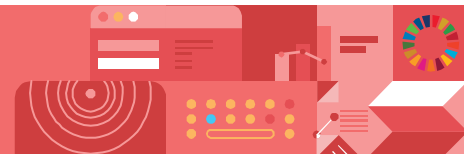


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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defense Force
GPC	Gender and Protection Cluster
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
DV	Domestic Violence
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPVAW	National Action Plan on Violence Against Women
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
NWM	National Women's Machinery
SDP	Service Delivery Protocol
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WDD	Women's Development Division
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WUTMI	Women United Together Marshall Islands

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.

“It is this type of platform (Beijing platform) that pulls all of us together and provides all of us the opportunity to share and learn from one other as neighboring islands and states. A collaborative effort with key stakeholders, development partners, and civil society organization(s) in addressing our many challenges and achieving our goals. This is a special place where we as Asia and Pacific come together as one and promote what is good for our nations, for our children, and for our part of the region in this world.”

Palau. Country statement


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 Pacific sub-region to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The countries that submitted their national review reports¹, and are therefore included in this report, are: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The following countries have not submitted their national review report: American Samoa, French Polynesia, Guam, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, and Papua New Guinea. 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 2. 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

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.



<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

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

Adoption of laws, regulations, action plans and policies

Countries in the sub-region adopted laws, regulations, action plans, and policies to advance gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. All countries in the sub-region, except Tonga, have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). ³ Furthermore, several countries have adopted progressive legislations to prevent violence and promote women’s economic participation and leadership.

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

³ For more discussions on Tonga, see section ‘National institutions, processes and partnerships’.



The Republic of Marshall Islands adopted the Gender Equality Law 2019. In 2018, Palau endorsed the National Gender Mainstreaming Policy and is currently under implementation. In 2016, the Government of Vanuatu launched the National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) 2015-2019. New Zealand adopted a Gender Pay Gap Action Plan 2018-2020 with the aim of eliminating the gender pay gap in public services. The Employment Relations Act 2018 of Fiji recognizes the value of unpaid care and parental leave by providing paternity and family leaves and extending maternity leave. In Samoa, the Labour and Employment Regulations 2016 prohibits discrimination against women in the workplace. **Tuvalu adopted the Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act in 2014, which became the foundation for a lot of activities to prevent VAWG.** The Cook Islands adopted the Family Protection and Support Act 2017 which addresses domestic violence and passed the Harassment Act 2017 to provide protection against violence and abuse when there is no domestic relationship. In 2017, the Solomon Islands launched its National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) covering the years 2017 to 2022.

Women's economic empowerment

To promote women's economic empowerment and ensure their continued engagement in the labour force, countries in the sub-region strengthened/enforced workplace laws, improved financial inclusion, took measures to prevent sexual harassment and sexual violence at work, introduced or strengthened family leave policies, and introduced or strengthened support for the elderly.⁴

Data estimates show that women's labour force participation in the sub-region has marginally increased over the last five years from 57 per cent in 2015 to 58 per cent in 2020.⁵ In the meantime, the male labour force participation rate has marginally dipped from 68 per cent to 67 per cent over the last five years. The labour force participation of women in the sub-region at 58 per cent is much higher than regional and global figures of 44 and 47 per cent, respectively. However, as evidenced from Figure 1, the labour force participation rates across the sub-region have gender gaps. The gap is the starkest in Fiji and shortest in Papua New Guinea. Notably, the gender gap in the sub-region is smaller compared to the Asia-Pacific region and the global gender gap which is 32 percentage points and 27 percentage points respectively.

To ensure sustainable engagement of women in the labour force, countries in the sub-region have adopted measures that promote women's empowerment at work and have taken efforts to provide institutional support in reducing care-burdens, thereby freeing-up time that could be invested elsewhere.

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