

THE FIRST GENDER FOCAL POINT CONFERENCE 2015
COLOMBO PLAN GENDER AFFAIRS PROGRAMME

1st Gender Focal Point Conference 2015
Advancing Women & Child Development
Colombo, Sri Lanka



CONFERENCE REPORT

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
26-27 NOVEMBER 2015



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Message Director - The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme

Empowering women and child advancement is among the most outstanding agents to the actualization of a country's progress and beyond. Across Asia Pacific countries that have made great strides, gender inequality, educational, livelihood, social and economic gaps and vulnerability still exist.

The Colombo Plan has enjoyed a strong partnership with all our member countries since its early days. 64 years from its inception, The Colombo Plan in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Government, is hosting the First Gender Focal Point Conference. It brings together The Colombo Plan's Gender Focal Points from all member countries in Asia-Pacific to discuss the importance of bridging the gap and increasing participation, access, empowerment and development of women and children across Asia and the Pacific.

Today we stand together in partnership to Advance Women and Child Development, with a collective understanding that there can be no effective sustainable development without improving the situation of women and children.

Twenty Colombo Plan's member country delegates have attended this conference from Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, United States of America and Vietnam.

The Colombo Plan's 43rd Consultative Committee Meeting in 2012 held in Manado, Indonesia, noted the importance of establishing a specific programme for women and children. On 7th May 2014 in Colombo, as approved by the Colombo Plan Council, The Colombo Plan established the Gender Affairs Programme (CPGAP) – that aims to increase awareness, build capacity, share knowledge and technical skills on women and child development issues among member countries through workshops, capacity building, direct programming, research and training.

This first conference is the platform that will set the pace, discussion and future planning and investment of the various initiatives and potential synergies The Colombo Plan can collectively undertake for our countries and regions to prosper and advance women and child development. The Gender Affairs Programme looks forward to continue working with all partners and member countries to take forward the momentum that has been set at this conference and to build the future to advance women and child development.



Dr. Sheeba Harma

Head of Mission - Afghanistan,
Director - Gender Affairs Programme

The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme

The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and Pacific, which has its headquarters in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is an inter-governmental organization with a membership of 27 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Colombo Plan has been working on gender issues and development since 2007 by facilitating training programmes in member countries and access to protection, shelters and justice for women and child victims of violence in Afghanistan.

The importance of establishing a specific programme for women and children was recommended during the 43rd Consultative Committee Meeting in Manado, Indonesia, 2012 and on 7 May 2014 in Colombo, as approved by The Colombo Plan Council, The Colombo Plan established The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme (CPGAP) whose objectives are as follows:

- To increase awareness on gender equality and development, women and child rights and gender issues among member countries through workshops and training

- To raise funds on gender capacity building and support direct empowerment such as economic development, protection, education and health programmes for women

- To support member countries through government and non-governmental agencies to implement global gender standards on women and children

- To conduct research on gender, women and child development issues

- To share technical skills, resources, capacity and experiences on gender, women and child development among the member countries

- To represent The Colombo Plan in international forums to upgrade knowledge and to share our collective experiences

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Introduction:

CPGAP First Focal Point Conference 2015

Following its inception in 2014, The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme in early 2015 invited the member countries to nominate two focal points each to facilitate the objectives of the Gender Affairs Programme in each member country. The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme successfully launched its first Gender Focal Point Conference from November 26th to 27th 2015 in Colombo with the participation of senior level delegates from 20 Colombo Plan member countries.

Women and child advancement and empowerment are among the most outstanding agents to the actualization of a country's progress and beyond. Across the Asia Pacific, although countries have made great strides in gender equality, educational, livelihood, social and economic development, gaps and vulnerabilities still exist.

The two day conference held from November 26th and 27th 2015 at the Hilton Colombo was inaugurated by the Minister of Women and Child Affairs Her Excellency Chandrani Bandara, in the presence of distinguished guests representing various diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka. The welcome note by Dr. Sheeba Harma, Director of the Gender Affairs Programme was followed by the opening address of the Chief Guest. This was followed by an address from His Excellency Kenichi Suganuma, Ambassador of Japan and President of The Colombo Plan Council. The inauguration ceremony was concluded with the vote of thanks by His Excellency Kinley Dorji, Secretary General of The Colombo Plan Secretariat.

Visiting dignitaries and participants including Ministers, Secretaries, Under Secretaries, Advisors and Chief Directors at various levels from women's ministries and departments across member countries shared their inputs towards creating a gender equality perspective in the region on development goals. It is hoped that the conference will further lead to initiating Action Plans from all member states, which will serve as a roadmap for future cooperation to ensure women and child development across the region.



Executive Summary: Conference Sessions

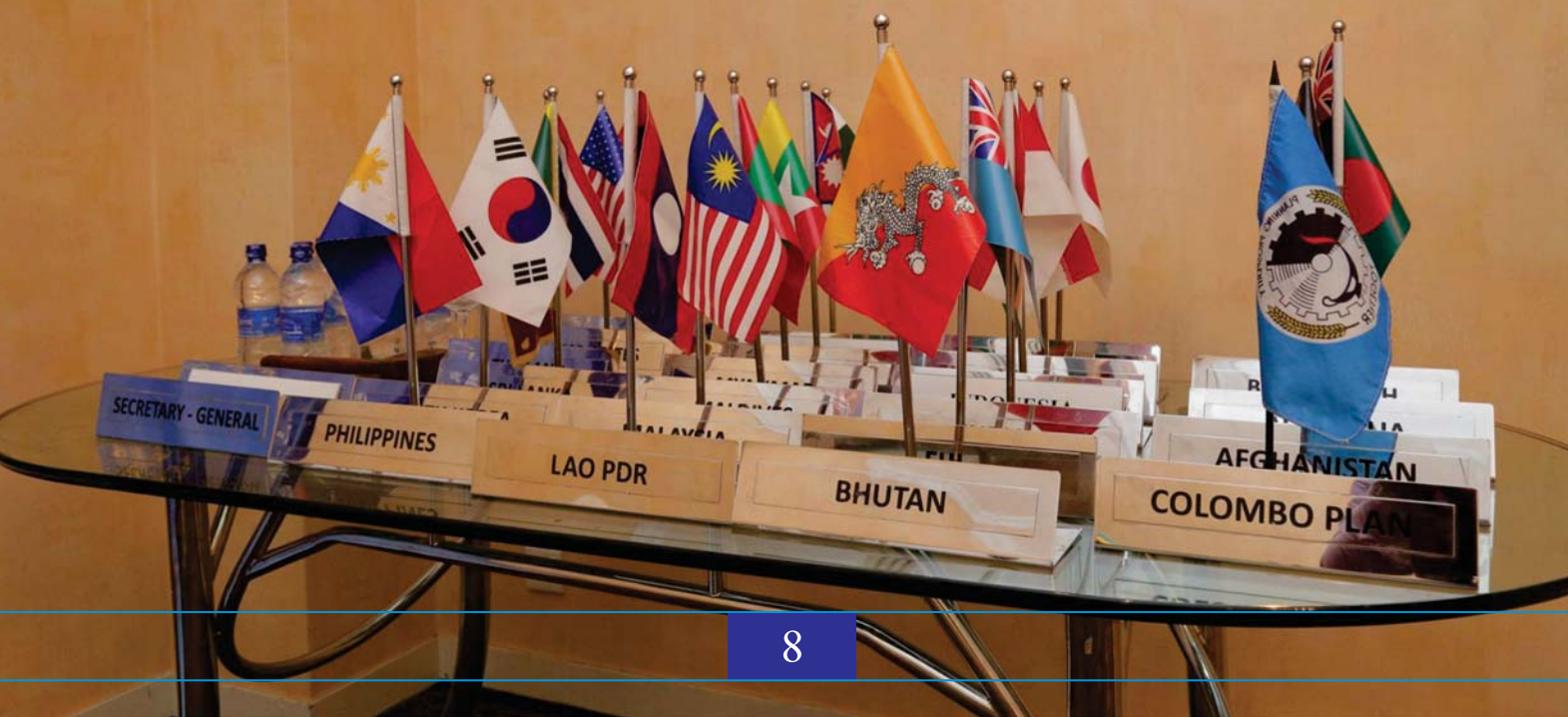
The Colombo Plan's First Gender Focal Point Conference on Advancing Women and Child Development began on the 26th of November 2015 at Hilton Colombo. The aim of the two day conference was to enhance gender empowerment in member states and enable progress and development for children and women

The participating member countries provided an overview of the situation of women and children and noted their achievements, gaps and challenges.

Sri Lankan government stated as some of its most significant achievements to be the establishment of a Prevention of Domestic Violence Act that has facilitated progress in preventing violence against women. On another note, the government has created awareness programmes for men and schoolboys and has recently amended the Local Government Election Act to allocate 25% of seats for women in public participation.

Other countries like Indonesia and Philippines noted to have made numerous achievements in gender empowerment, the former having implemented gender mainstreaming in 34 agencies whilst 18 big companies have become members of the Association of Indonesian Child Friendly Companies for the first time ever. The Philippines' ranking in the Global Gender Gap has improved by two places: it is now 7/145 countries. This was attributed to the increase in women owning businesses and the high rate of women in politics. The Philippines also has a Chief Justice and a Secretary for the office of the Presidential Advisor in the Peace Process who are both women, whilst an impressive 25% of the Senate is female and 27% in Congress are all women. Any countries spoke of their shortcomings, including the USA, which noted that it needs to improve its own situation which is far from perfect. As pointed out by the delegate, many American men still believe women are fighting for special rather than equal rights and treatment and that power should not be held by women. He ended on a significant note, stating that no country can develop or progress by leaving half of its population behind.

Countries like India spoke of innovative schemes they have implemented to solve its declining child sex ratio problem, namely the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme (Save the Girl Child, Educate Her). This has seen a big awareness and advocacy campaign launched to educate the public on the value of the girl child. Other countries like Japan spoke of Prime Minister Abe's deep interest in women's empowerment within Abenomics and the creation of the World Assembly for Women, where 145 participating leaders in women's empowerment have engaged in discussing how to improve the current situation. Japan has also established a Revitalization Strategy that focuses on incentivizing companies to



hire women, supporting women during the major stages of their life (childrearing, re-employment, entrepreneurship) and creating an environment that helps them balance work and child-rearing.

Member countries also focused on three main topics in group discussions, which grouped South Asia, Pacific and East Asia.

These topics were on women's economic empowerment, women's leadership development and protection for children. The women's economic empowerment sessions brought much discussion and recommendations. The South East Asian delegates focused on helping women moot small businesses by concentrating on the quality of the products, providing training and organizing a showcase of the best work at an exhibition. Indonesia noted that their success on economic empowerment is due to their focus on women's access to market, access to capital, and in skill building capacity for women entrepreneurs. They also hold handicraft exhibitions and programmes to improve financial literacy for women entrepreneurs.

Myanmar has established vocational centers and training for women to enhance their economic potential. Malaysia stressed the importance of helping women realise what they want to focus on rather than imposing jobs and economic sectors on them. Malaysia now focuses on empowering women to challenge themselves further, take risks and eventually involve their husbands in their business. The Philippines has established a six-year project to enhance entrepreneurship and create awareness of women's rights amongst women themselves.



The South East Asian group focused on identifying how to support young entrepreneurs and the facilities required in this process. There was also a strong point noted on involving household men and husbands in the process, thereby eliminating potential violence and assisting women in growing their business. The South East Asian group focused on identifying how to support young entrepreneurs and the facilities required in this process. There was also a strong point noted on involving household men and husbands in the process, thereby eliminating potential violence and assisting women in growing their business.

The South Asian team focused on some of the core barriers that prevent large scale women's economic empowerment including the fact that many women still work at home in the informal sector, the divide between urban and rural, the lack of a support system and the lack of access to market information. Several other factors namely the importance of registering properties in the woman's name, the significance of female decision making, financial aid from banks and the establishment of women's federations to empower women, were all seen as ways to move forward.

The South Asia Women's Political Participation discussion outlined that having women leaders and the presence of education does not necessarily mean a change in mindset: women still often take a backseat in the political process. Gender sensitized training for both men and women was suggested as a solution to address this issue. The group noted the examples given by Bangladesh and Nepal of having 33% of reserved seats in parliament, making women more visible along with having winnable seats.

South East Asia stressed the importance of female quotas and representation within companies and in all sectors. Bringing men on board and teaching children not to stereotype between genders are other important recommended approaches to take note of.



The last session, on protection for children involved numerous opinions from the countries present. Afghanistan stated the need to have institutions in place for child soldiers and victims of war and systems for child protection as well.

Pakistan brought forth many ideas including the need for reintegration of street children into society.

The importance of protection and special education for special needs children, the significance of data collection and the eradication of child pornography with special legislation was noted.

Bangladesh furthered the conversation on street children by proposing the establishment of DNA labs to identify parents and creating shelter homes and educating children so that they can eventually gain an income, based on what they learn. Bangladesh also stated that the eradication of beggars would help eliminate HIV, whilst adolescent clubs would help educate teenagers on the dangers of child marriage.

Sri Lanka mentioned a series of initiatives to protect children, amongst them a graduate officer group to protect children's rights, free compulsory education, and Childcare Protection Committees and Nepal mentioned the creation of a hotline that connects children with the police.



Opening Ceremony



The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme held its First Gender Focal Point Conference in Colombo from Nov 26th-27th 2015 on the theme of Advancing Women and Child Development. Delegates from 20 member countries attended the programme and the official inauguration on 26th November attended by the over 80 dignitaries was inaugurated at the Hilton Colombo by the Sri Lankan Minister of Women and Child Affairs Her Excellency Chandrani Bandara.



Synopsis of Addresses at the Opening Ceremony

The official inauguration ceremony began with the Director of the Gender Affairs Programme, Dr Sheeba Harma welcoming everyone to the 1st Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Focal Point Conference on Advancing Women and Child Development. She expressed her deep appreciation to the Sri Lankan Government for working very closely with the Programme highlighting that there can be no sustainable development without improving the situation of women and children. Dr Harma stated that the Gender Programme aims to create awareness, build capacity, share knowledge and technical skills on women and child development issues across the member countries through workshops, capacity building, research and training.

She encouraged everyone present to build innovative and sustainable partnerships on women and child development with The Colombo Plan, in order to help member countries strive, thrive, survive and realize their greatest potential. The Minister for Women and Child Affairs Her Excellency Chandrani Bandara was invited to present the official opening address.

The Minister expressed her gratitude at being invited to participate in the Conference as the Chief Guest and share Sri Lanka's own experiences and success stories on women's issues. She stated that discrimination against women and girls is deeply rooted in all spheres of society – including political, social, economic, legal and cultural – and this weakens it. She claimed that a lack of education, socio-cultural traditions, lack of access to opportunity and resources and a bond with tradition has hindered the development process of women in Sri Lanka and abroad.

It was noted that women and men have equal rights in Sri Lanka, and the country produced the world's first female Prime Minister and granted women suffrage in 1931, allowing women to run for political positions. However, the Minister stated that, despite there being gender equality in terms of access to education and health, there is still much inequality amongst men and women: for example, despite more women in university, the labour force contains more men than women. This is an indicator that educational achievements do not necessarily translate into economic gain.





The Minister further noted statistics from Sri Lanka: the 97% female literacy rate – higher than any other South Asian country, 11/225 parliamentarians are female (4.88%) and that the infant mortality ratio has decreased from 25 in 1990 to 11 in 2005. She also expressed her regret at the low percentages of women in lower political positions: 2/40 deputy female ministers, 3.4% of women in Municipal Councils, 2 state minister posts and 2 cabinet minister posts.

The new President and Prime Minister are committed to increasing the Provincial Council and Local Government authority female percentages to 25%. Women in professional business positions and careers are also becoming increasingly commonplace.

The Minister proudly stated that Sri Lanka has nearly reached the second Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education with 96% of boys and girls enrolled in primary school. Furthermore, there has been much funding channeled into self-employment programmes (training, skills development, marketing assistance and micro credit schemes). Many women, approximately 48% - work abroad to support their families at home and the government has taken measures to protect them from harm. Moreover, Sri Lanka has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, is a signatory to the Vienna Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and is carrying out a National Plan of Action for Women. She



concluded by noting that this National Plan aims to implement policy reform and improve female political representation, health, economic conditions and prevent violence against women.

Following her address, the Colombo Plan Council President, His Excellency Kenichi Suganuma, Ambassador of Japan welcomed all the delegates and dignitaries present. He stated that the Gender Affairs Programme was the first programme dedicated solely to women's empowerment by The Colombo Plan, while noting the Colombo Plan's Drug Advisory Programme also dealt with some of these issues in the past. He hoped that issues of gender empowerment and



prevention of violence against women and children would become one of the main pillars of The Colombo Plan. He stressed that Japan views with great importance issues related to gender empowerment and the support it can give in all aspects.

Following the Council President's speech, the Secretary General of The Colombo Plan His Excellency Kinley Dorji gave his closing address. He mentioned the 64 year history of The Colombo Plan and the numerous good deeds it carried out, amongst them, the construction of airports, dams and institutions and in human capacity development. He noted that the most recent programme under The Colombo Plan on gender affairs initiatives and this very conference would serve as an important platform to improve the plight of women and children among member countries.

The Secretary General concluded the opening ceremony by welcoming the collaboration between the member states and the formulation of innovative ideas

and strategies through discussion to help guide the way forward in the area of women and child development through the Gender Affairs Programme. As part of the opening ceremony the Sri Lankan government hosted a welcome State Dinner for all Delegates and dignitaries, organized by the Department of External Resources of the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs. The Secretary of the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs M.I.M. Rafeek welcomed the delegates from the other countries on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka.

Cultural performances showcasing Sri Lanka's multi-faceted creative arts were presented by the national dance troupe of the Department of Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka. Six traditional dances were performed during the State Dinner.



COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS



SRI LANKA



Mrs Ashoka Alawatta
Additional Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs

Mrs Chula Ratnayake
Director of the Women's Bureau

successful policies for promoting gender equality in Sri Lanka, exempling the granting of the universal franchise to men and women in 1931 and the recognizing of gender equality and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sex as a fundamental right.

The delegates from Sri Lanka made a joint presentation that noted a series of facts about Sri Lanka: 51.5% of the country is female, it has a relatively high 77.9 year life expectancy for females and a GDI rank of 73. They also noted that the number of births attended by skilled personnel was high at 99% because Sri Lanka has good health facilities. However, gaps were noted for women in public space: that there is a low female representation in parliament of 4.8% - where only 35% of parliament is composed of women.

Three critical areas on national gender issues were noted; firstly, on violence against women which was a definite reality in both urban and rural settings on a daily basis. However, there are many laws available that condemn these acts, for example the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and law enforcement authorities and units within the Police Department, the Ministry of Justice and the Women and Child Affairs Helpline to help deal with the situation. Importantly, awareness programmes are also being conducted for men and schoolboys.

The vision from Sri Lanka was for a society which is sensitive and friendly to children and women throughout which their rights and protection are secured. The plan expressed by Sri Lanka was to develop, implement, monitor, evaluate and coordinate policies and programmes for the realization of the rights of women and children.

Secondly, the focus was on the high rate of poverty amongst women and a high widow-headed home rate (due to the 30 year civil war). According to statistics, these women are usually self-employed but do not earn enough money to be able to save

The delegates further detailed the structure of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and the various

Thirdly, it was noted that women are still severely under-represented in politics. Even though Sri Lanka's education and health sector has performed well, this has

not translated into action when it comes to the empowerment of women in politics and public life. However, through awareness raising programs there has been increased participation of women in politics. Cabinet approval has recently been granted for amending the Local Government Election Act to allocate 25% of seats for women. Similarly, there are training programmes for women leaders who aspire to enter into politics.

Questions were raised from the floor, which include

Q. Sri Lanka has noted high literacy rates and a high HDI but low economic participation. What is the reason behind this?

A. Most women in Sri Lanka stay at home and prefer to

take care of their families; the divorce rate is also very low at a national level. The women with jobs are usually teachers and do not venture into politics. However we need to involve more women for economic participation through setting up industries and small and medium programmes for women to enter economic roles and combat poverty.

Key Challenges noted by Sri Lanka on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Eliminate violence against women
2. Eradicate women's poverty
3. Increase female representation in politics

AFGHANISTAN



Dr (Mrs) Habiba Sarabi

Women and Youth Affairs Advisor
Chief Executive Office of the National Unity Government

Mrs Rahima Zarifi

Director- Policy and Planning
Ministry of Women's Affairs

The Afghanistan presentation delivered by Dr Sarabi noted that the Ministry of Women's Affairs is the key policy maker in the country, its two key goals being gender equality and women's empowerment.

Its three key strategies are the elimination of all forms of discrimination, the development of women's human capital and women's leadership development. There is a key focus on security, governance, rule of law and human rights and economic and social development. Security is most important due to the ongoing conflict and the lack of safety faced by women. For the first time in Afghanistan's constitution, men and women have equal rights and there are quota systems to increase female political participation that currently out of 249 members of parliament, 69 are women (26%).

Economic empowerment was noted to be very important for women, and to create an environment that is conducive to the full development and realization of women's economic potential.

The National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 was launched in June 2015 initiated to increase the number of women in the Afghan National Security Force. Furthermore, there has been an adoption of a policy to ensure women's participation in several political bodies. The NAP also provides health services to survivors of violence. There is a High Commission for Violence Against Women that has lobbied to draft and pass the Violence Against Women law. However, the law was not passed because the majority of male parliamentarians were opposed to it. The Ministry and the Government are working towards raising awareness of women's rights on a local level.

A national programme is also being created to economically empower women. This aims to improve the political and legal work environment for women, create a business-enabling environment for women, enhance participation by women in the market and private sector and encourage female participation and status in committees and communities.

There are also other plans and policies, the most important of these being the anti-harassment policy guideline and the Ministry of Interior policy of integrating female police into the National Police force. There also exists a gender unit as a mainstreaming mechanism within the Ministry of Women's Affairs and

in other Ministries. However, these units do not have much power and acceptance within each ministry, although slow progress is being made to skill and empower them.

Two questions were raised from the floor, which include

Q. Given the 26% political participation for women – do women in Afghanistan actually have influence over gender policies and women's empowerment?

A. From the 69 women in parliament, most of them are not very powerful. However, unlike during the time of the Taliban, the women in the Afghan Caucus can now raise their voice internationally and are heard to influence certain decisions and policies. However their voice is limited.

Q. Does Afghanistan have programmes that engage men and boys in gender equality?

A. The First Lady is pushing for this as is the religious community. This is a mainstreamed intervention or component in most of the projects in-country, working on women's rights and in changing mindsets.

Key Challenges noted by Afghanistan on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Due to being a country in conflict, gender equality is tough to implement
2. Although 26% of politicians are women, a high 80% of women are illiterate, and violence against women is also a huge problem
3. Women usually take a backseat when it comes to cabinet meetings: this needs to change
4. It is also incorrectly believed that women's rights are a western notion and incompatible with Sharia law
5. There is a distinct lack of resources and coordination between the different ministries, whilst several gender-promoting mandates are difficult to implement due to weak institutions
6. Gender policies only tend to apply to the capital and not to the rest of the country. It is not easy to operate these policies in a non-supportive atmosphere where there is fear
7. Afghanistan's high level of donor dependency is also a challenge to getting gender recognized as an issue within development. It is noted within the country as a western phenomenon and hence, little understood and accepted

AUSTRALIA



Ms Edwina Sinclair

Second Secretary, Australian High Commission, Sri Lanka

One of the critical areas the Australian Government is focusing on is eliminating violence against women and children. 1 in 3 women has experienced physical violence and almost 1 in 5 has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.

The Australian Government established a National Action Plan in 2010 to reduce violence against women and children; and in 2022, the progress of this plan will be assessed. There are three sub-action plans within this plan, among them creating an infrastructure to engage the community in reducing violence against women and children. The Australian Prime Minister announced a women's safety package of AUS \$100 Million, the first part of many policies to address violence against women. The Government continues to work with the community to address women's safety and it has an independent expert advisory panel – the council of the Australian government's advisory panel on reducing violence against women and children.

Australia also has a strong history of engaging with its civil society partners and is keen to support and share

their experiences with other countries. It has created five women's national alliances which represent 180 women's organizations which is a forum for these organizations to discuss how to improve the lives of women from marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The Economic Security for Women, the Equality Rights Alliance, the Australian Women Against Violence and the National Rural Women's Coalition. The Government also invites non-government delegates to take part in gender related forums.

Several questions were raised from the floor, which include

- Q. How can countries access funds through Australian Aid programmes?
- A. The Australian foreign aid website has all the details and further Direct Aid programme focuses on gender. Applications are also received through diplomatic missions in various countries.
- Q. Are there programmes in Australia that target female Aborigines and women in rural areas? What is the female representation in government?
- A. The Australian Government is collaborating with

BANGLADESH



Ms Laila Jesmin

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

Ms Nurun Nahar Begum

Senior Assistant Chief, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

The delegates from Bangladesh provided a joint presentation with a series of country facts and figures, and on Article 28 (2) of their Constitution which states that women and men are to have equal rights. The presentation covered anti-domestic violence acts, anti-human trafficking acts, pornography control acts and high court directives for sexual harassment.

Key Challenges noted by Australia on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Approximately 1 in 3 women has experienced physical violence, and almost 1 in 5 has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. Eliminating violence is a huge focus

Q. Are there any indigenous women in politics?

A. There is one indigenous senator and some indigenous representation at state level.

Bangladesh is about to approve the 7th Five Year Plan which states that men and women shall have equal rights and opportunities socially and politically. Job quotas for women have been introduced as well: 10% for offices and 60% in primary school teaching. Furthermore, it introduced gender responsive budgeting to ensure the advancement of women and a Social Safety Net programme to receive primary health care, immunization, maternity and lactating mother allowances. Furthermore, the Government has created income generating activities for women living under the poverty line; a poverty reduction programme to make rural destitute women self-reliant and a credit line is

provided. There is also a helpline for victims of violence. Moreover, there is a one stop crisis centre operating in seven divisions, providing medical treatment, police assistance, legal support and rehabilitation. There is also education on maternity health and child health, provided by a female individual who travels from home to home.

Under political representation of women: parliament has reserved 50/350 seats for women. Women occupy the positions of prime minister, speaker and opposition leader. There are also 3 seats available for women in local government organizations. 16.2% women work in government and private jobs whilst 68.1% work in agriculture. It has steadily risen through the ranks to become 10/142 countries for women's political empowerment and 68/142 in the Gender Gap Index – a rise of seven places in one year. Women occupy 20% of the parliament, and top positions like secretaries, supreme court judges, vice chancellors at universities and women in the armed forces.

Female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are allowed collateral free loans of up to Tk 2.5 Mn to help start up their businesses and the Joyeeta Foundation promotes grassroots level women entrepreneurs in marketing and

designing. There is now a minimum wage for garment workers (Tk. 5300) and day care centres are provided for the children of working mothers.

Children also face less severe conditions as corporal punishment is now banned based on 2015 policy guideline. There is a child budget allocated within five different ministries and a National Child Labour Elimination Policy has been adopted to prevent and eliminate child labour. Education is also compulsory under the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1990 which made education free.

No questions were raised from the floor.

Key Challenges noted by Bangladesh on women and child development at national level are:

1. Women face barriers in gaining access to justice
2. Discriminatory land ownership laws are a barrier for women
3. Discrimination against women with HIV
4. Support for the disabled members of the female community

BHUTAN



Mr Sonam Penjor

Chief Programme Officer, National Commission for Women and Children

Bhutan noted specific Constitutional laws to help prevent violence against women (Domestic Violence Prevention Act), along with the Penal Code. Similarly, the Labour and Employment act protects women's chances in gaining employment and gender is taken into account when screening policies (Employment Policy, Policy Screening Protocol, Economic Development Policy) and these policy screenings often help rather than hinder gender equality advancement.

Bhutan has a high rate of births attended by trained personnel – 89% - and a falling fertility rate of 2.3% in 2013 (up from 4.7% in 2000). The contraceptive prevalence rate has risen steadily from 30.7% in 2000 to 65.6% in 2010.

Since gaining democracy in 2008, the participation of women in politics has dropped and the country is exploring various reforms to increase the numbers. It

currently stands at 8.3% at national level. The participation of women in the civil service is on the rise – at 34.16% - and the Government of Bhutan hopes that with more women graduating these numbers will continue to rise. The delegate stated the integral importance of women in the labour force with regards to developing the country. Labour Force Participation is lower for women than for men (58.9% versus 65.3% respectively), whilst the unemployment rate is lower for men than women (2.2% versus 3.7% respectively). The Government is looking at how it came improve this scenario.

Questions raised from the floor, include

- Q. What is Bhutan's policy to increase female participation at the tertiary level?
- A. Despite the rate for women being lower than for men, it has improved over the past few years. Gender responsive classrooms are currently being implemented under the Education Ministry.

Key Challenges noted by Bhutan on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Creating an enabling environment for women in Governance – Politics, Civil Service and the Private Sector
2. Improving economic empowerment of women by enhancing access to finance skills and technology which would in turn create employment and generate income

3. Prevent domestic violence – the most prevalent form of violence against women

Bhutan aims to address these concerns by means of initiatives that create Awareness and Advocacy, Capacity Development and through Evidence Building.



FIJI



Ms Anushka Artika

Senior Women's Interest Officer, Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

Fiji noted that while progress is made, gender equality is far from being a reality. Only now are 47% of the female population receiving the recognition they deserve due to recent laws. The National Women's Machinery has received a 300% increase in the government allocated budget over the last ten years, which has been of huge assistance in gender empowerment.

Fiji is amongst the highest on the global scale for violence against women, more than 64% of women have been victims of violence, especially by their partners and 58%

of women have been emotionally abused by partners. Overall 72% of women have been through abuse of some kind in their life.

The Department for Women runs a Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community Programme, whereby communities are taught legal literacy, economic cost and access to justice in relation to violence against women. Thus, the number of police reports being received has increased.

Fiji also has its First Domestic Violence Decree. To deal with the lack of implementation of this decree by the Police Force, the Police Department was forced to



undergo gender sensitization training, especially at the recruitment stage. Fiji also has the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence and the focus is to create male champions for change.

Only 7 of 50 seats in parliament are held by women, but 2014 saw the first female elected speaker of parliament in Fiji and the Pacific and the First Female Leader of Opposition. However, there is low representation of women in top-level positions.

The National Women's Machinery is planning a symposium that discusses female advancement, challenges faced by women and how to attain the top positions for women. There is also leadership training for women to assist them in becoming more effective representatives of women. There are also plans to conduct gender sensitization training for all members of parliament.

In terms of economic training, startup funds of 5000 have been given to women and groups to begin income generating projects. Furthermore, they have been provided with training to become self-reliant and earn their own living. The literacy rate is 98.6%.

There has also been the launch of a National Gender Policy that ensures the mainstreaming of gender into government agencies, particularly with regard to female employment.

An Expo is planned, placing the work of Fijian women artisans to display their products, provided they are registered with the Ministry. The public and corporate members are invited to help connect these artisans with markets. Moreover, there is the FJ Rocket Stove Initiative, whereby a scientist within the Ministry helps women construct their own stoves, which requires them to use very little wood to light fires, sell them and gain an income. Due to the maternal mortality rate being 50 per 100,000 births, the Government has launched a food voucher programme to ensure nourishment of these would-be-mothers.

No questions were raised from the floor.

Key Challenges noted by Fiji on women and child development at a national level are:

1. The implementation of the Domestic Violence Decree
2. 30% of statutory bodies are meant to comprise women, but this is far from reality
3. The majority of people living below the poverty line are women
4. Inequality is rife at the higher ends of all the organizations
5. Access to justice
6. Access to roads
7. Access to health facilities

INDIA



Ms Lopamudra Mohanty
Director, Ministry of Women and Child Development

India noted much common ground between its national aspirations for gender equality and other member countries, especially in terms of preventing violence against women and in increasing female political representation.

India with its 29 states, was noted as the second largest populous country in the world, its female population accounts for 49% of its 1.21 billion people. It has a low female literacy rate at 64.64% in comparison to men's 73%.

India is a member of the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW and it has several platforms for women's empowerment but this has not eradicated gender inequality. Some states are far from it whilst others are faring better.

India noted a declining Child Sex Ratio – there is a lack of value towards the girl child and this is a crucial problem. Other challenges include maternal health, the fight to close the gender gap in secondary and higher education, women's economic empowerment and decision-making.

The Child Sex Ratio has been steadily declining since the 1970s; initially it was only in the northern states but the 2011 census stated that an alarming 22/29 states have this problem. There is a misconception that this problem only persists with the non-educated; it was noted, the educated people are also largely involved in gender biased social practices. Thus, the problem lies in how to educate the educated against pre-birth discrimination and gender biased sex-selective elimination along with post-birth discrimination where the survival rate for girls is low due to inadequate health care and lack of education.

The Prime Minister has launched a scheme called Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate Her) to combat the declining Child Sex Ratio and other problems faced by women and children. Currently, the Indian Government is in the process of launching a national awareness and advocacy campaign to educate the public on the value of the girl child and how to reverse the socio-cultural norms.

Maternal health is another critical issue as it leads to related problems like malnutrition; India has failed to achieve the lowering of its death rate target to 100. There is a disparity between states, and currently, the overall rate

is at 141. Thus, the government has established the Janani Suraksha Yojana, a safe motherhood intervention to incentivize institutional deliveries to around 78%. There is also the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) where a pregnant woman is given INR 6000 for fulfilling certain conditions relating to maternal health. Furthermore, under Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) Sabla – a comprehensive scheme for adolescent girls between the ages of 11 and 18 – there is education provided for girls on health. Other problems lie in the gender gap in higher education; additionally educating children during their elementary years is insufficient and dropout rates are high.

In terms of safety and security, more and more crimes are being reported: women are less afraid to speak up. There are several acts including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act and the Criminal Law Act to further protect women. Furthermore, the Government has created the Nirbhaya Fund to address women's public safety. Gender Champions in schools are being created to sensitize both men and women at an early age. There are also One Stop Centres to provide medical aid and temporary shelter to women affected by violence.

Economically, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aims to enhance the security of rural dwellers, with at least 1/3 of the beneficiaries being women. Moreover, 970,000 women are enrolled in Self Help Groups.

The parliamentary representation of women is still very low at 12.15%, despite India being the largest democracy in the world. A high level lobby is ongoing to bring in a rule that states that at least one female position should be available on each Board of Directors and as a part of Corporate Social Responsibility, companies should invest their money into women's empowerment.

Questions from the floor include:

- Q. What is the reason behind the declining Child Sex Ratio in India?
- A. The socio-cultural mindset is a determining factor. Through the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate Her) programme, the Government is combatting it. These problems can also be addressed by society through changing mindsets and attitudinal/ cultural shifts in practices, not just by government.
- Q. Does India have policies to combat sexual harassment?
- A. The Domestic Violence Act and several workplace policies are in place to help prevent sexual harassment.

Key Challenges noted by India on women and child development at national level are:

1. Declining Child Sex ratio
2. Low maternal health rate leading to malnutrition
3. Low 12.15% female representation in parliament

INDONESIA

Ms Valentine Ginting

Head, Bureau for Planning, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child

Ms Rika Kiswardani

Head, Bureau for Foreign Technical Cooperation, Ministry of State Secretariat

Ms Yane Agie Widayanti

Head of Sub Division, SST&MTC, Ministry of State Secretariat

Ms Maftuh Muhtadi

Cooperation Specialist, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child

Ms Cahya Daru Saputro

Head of Budgeting, Sub Division, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child

Ms Fakh Usman

Head of Programme Planning and Budgeting Division, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child

Dr. Ms Rina Hentarti

Government Official, National Family Planning Commission

Dr. Fajar Firdawati

Head Section of the Family Planning and Demand Creation through Government Hospitals, National Family Planning Commission

Indonesia's presentation delivered by Ms. Valentina Ginting noted that it has had a steadily declining female population over the last twenty years. The Gender Empowerment Measurement stands at 70.46 in 2013, whilst a female minister in the cabinet exists. The Indonesian President is very keen on promoting gender



empowerment and child protection, and at a national level, Indonesia has a gender, women and children development programme. Indonesia has laws to eradicate human trafficking, to protect women and children of mixed marriages, to protect children and develop the population.

Indonesia has many achievements, noted amongst them the implementation of gender mainstreaming in 34 agencies, the creating of centres for victims of violence in 34 provinces and 264 districts. These centres also focus on empowering women who have been victims. Moreover, for the first time ever globally, 18 big companies have become members of the Association of Indonesian Child Friendly Companies. Similarly, 264 cities have been certified as Child Friendly. There is also a system by which provides birth certification; this allows children to attend school. There is also a National Standard Procedure on Assistantship for Women and Children who are victims of violence. In addition, the 2007 Eradication of Human Trafficking Law, a 2006 Protection of Civil Rights of Women and Children of Mixed Marriage law, a 2004 Domestic Violence Prevention Law, a 2008 Anti-pornography Law, a 2014 Child Protection Law and a 2009 Law to Promote Family Development are all established and implemented.

Questions from the floor include:

- Q. What is the cause of the declining Child Sex Ratio? Is there any concern to reverse this process before it reaches alarming levels?
- A. Indonesians are very keen on having children of both sexes so this trend will reverse in time to come.

Key Challenges noted by Indonesia on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Fulfilling women's and children's rights
2. Decreasing the number of women and children victims of violence
3. Increasing female participation in politics and decision making
4. Eradicating child labour in a big country
5. Boosting institutional capacity and implementing good governance
6. Including child participation in development planning
7. Strengthening local governments' capacities in family planning and reproductive health programmes
8. Strengthening the institution of Integrated Centre for the Empowerment and Protection of Women and Children



Dr (Ms) Susan Bastani

Deputy of Strategic Planning, Vice Presidency of Women and Family Affairs

Ms Nazari Zohreh

Chief of Social Studies, Vice Presidency of Women and Family Affairs

Iran's objectives on women development is to improve female status in family and society, to strengthen men's and women's freedom of choice, to develop women's and families' social capital, to promote equitable access to opportunities and resources and finally, to overcome women's challenges for full participation in the country's development.

Iran noted many successes in the improvement of women's status. Amongst these, women have secured more university student positions: over 14 times more (145,000 female students in 1994 to 2 million in 2013). Furthermore, the maternal mortality rate has decreased by 75% due to the development of health clinics and enhanced maternal health care provision in urban and rural areas.

Similarly, life expectancy amongst women have increased due to the distribution of health services through the

country: the numbers for health coverage currently stand at 100% in urban areas and 99% in rural areas. Promoting public health has seen a rise in life expectancy for women from 67 years – in 1991 – to 74 years in 2014.

The delegate noted economic empowerment, rather than political empowerment for women. Amongst Iran's aims, there is a drive to promote women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and improve institutional and legal measures to enhance gender equity in access to economic resources and opportunities. There were several policies that Iran hoped to implement: the creation of a conducive policy and business environment for women's businesses, the provision of facilities and vocational training for self-employment and the enhancement of women's business networks through the application of information technologies. Furthermore, Iran hopes to empower rural women by increasing access to production resources, land, capital and ownership rights and allocate financial support for home based works.

Unfortunately, the number of women in the public sector has reduced from 39.5% to 27.2% in the last twenty years. However, the number of women in the private sector has

increased significantly from 14.5% in 1995 to 72.8% in 2014.

In the labour market, the government is undertaking a series of activities to increase the advancement of women's presence; these include the amendments of laws and regulations, the implementation of entrepreneurial support projects, technical and vocational trainings. The results show that in terms of female economic participation, the rates have risen from 9.1% in 1996 to 12.7% in 2014, whilst 12.7% of the working age population (out of 37.1%), were women in the year 2015.

In 2010, the Law of Regulation and Protection of Home Based Works was implemented. This created 597, 633 jobs and as of 2014, there are 1,288,02 licensed owners. The industries include handicrafts, handmade carpets, livestock and fisheries and artistic activities.

Iran also has a number of policies to help balance work and family responsibilities: these include the establishment of kindergartens near workplaces, the reduction of work hours for mothers with disabled children social insurance coverage, early retirement for women and employee benefits for women.

Questions from the floor includes

- Q. Why is the public sector unattractive to women unlike the private sector?
- A. Males dominate the public sector and are given priority in this field, hence women choose the private sector. Furthermore, 80% of women are housewives so many work at home.

Key Challenges noted by Iran on women and child development at a national level are:

1. To determine women's contribution to the national economy
2. To adjust employment policies with social and cultural differences of the regions
3. To adjust productions of home-based works to the needs of the market
4. To develop appropriate mechanisms for women's SMEs



Mr Kiichiro Iwase

First Secretary, Embassy of Japan, Sri Lanka

Japan noted country facts and figures with Prime Minister Abe's focus of considering women's empowerment to be of utmost importance in the advancement of the country. He has demonstrated this through enacting legislation that ensures that Japanese companies empower women by drawing up action plans that specify how they will increase women's participation in the workforce.

Japan noted that there is a gap in the women's labour force participation rate and the rate of women wishing to work: over 3 million women wish to work but cannot. However, Japan is striving to close this gap and understands how important the inclusion of women in the labour force is for the economic growth of the country. If Japan meets its goals and the women's labour force participation rate converges with the male rate by 2030, the labour supply would decline by only 5%,

increasing GDP by almost 20%. Similarly, closing the gender gap could boost Japanese GDP by up to 13%.

To increase employment and participation of women the Japanese government has created a Revitalization Strategy. This includes three points: the incentivization of companies to hire women, the support of women during the major stages of their life (childrearing, re-employment, entrepreneurship) and the creation of an environment that helps them balance work and child-rearing.

Japan has also improved childcare leave benefits by raising the rate from 50% to 67% prior to leave. This means that mothers then go back to work earlier and the drop in household income is accounted for. However, more males need to be encouraged to take leave than the current figure: 2.03%.

In terms of women's empowerment, Japan created and held the World Assembly for Women (WAW) in Tokyo.

This included 145 participating leaders in women's empowerment engaged in discussion on how to improve the current situation. Prime Minister Abe announced a package of Yen 42 Bn towards the education of women and girls.

Questions from the floor include:

Q. There was a movement some years ago that encouraged women to be stay-at-home mothers instead of working. Has this affected Japan's employment data?

A. There are a limited number of kindergartens in Tokyo; this limits women from working as they have to take care of their kids. The government is doing its best to change this and the stereotype that women should stay at home.

Key Challenges noted by Japan on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Single mother parentage
2. Lack of education for women
3. The lack of women involved in the peace building process.
4. Access to adequate sanitation



KOREA



Ms Jisun Jun

First Secretary, Embassy of Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka

Korea noted their key focus to be on the enhancement of women's economic participation and the eradication of violence against women and children. Korea's 53.5% female employment rate has meant a 4.9% loss in GDP.

The employment goal from women is 61.9% in 2017

through the creation of 1.65 million new jobs for women. In 2014, the number of jobs created for women were 290,000; the goal being to boost this to 1,655,000 in 2017. To encourage female employment, the government has devised a 4-R approach to cover a woman's lifespan: recruiting, retention, re-starting and representation.

However, retention is difficult as many women find it difficult to retain their jobs after giving birth and post

marriage. Many women are forced to leave their jobs; only 60% of women (as opposed to 94% of men) in the age group of 30 are working. So the Korean government is working to enforce a work-life balance (Re-start). Companies that support childcare (parental leave etc) are rewarded with incentives. Moreover, women that are re-starting their career can seek help from the women's re-employment centres that provide vocational training, information on job openings and childcare support.

In terms of representation, there has been an increase in female representation in government committees and public office; the goal is to increase this percentage from 29.6% in 2014 to 40% in 2017.

Questions from the floor include:

Q. South Korea hires foreign labour, particularly from Nepal. Do the laws that protect local citizens from violence apply to foreigners too?

A. Yes, international laws apply to violence against foreign workers. A policy of equal treatment is in place: they are allowed to report incidents to the police.

Key Challenges noted by Korea on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Domestic violence
2. Sexual harassment
3. School violence

To deal with these challenges, a monthly Bora Day campaign takes place: this has provided victims with 34 support centers to counsel and provide medical aid and the investigative help of the police. There are now harsher laws and punishments in place for sex offenders.





Ms Sirikit Boupcha
Vice President, Lao Women's Union

Ms Kaysamy Lathvilayvong
Deputy Director General, Women's Development Department

Lao has mainstreamed gender issues since 2010, focusing on four sectors: health, education, agriculture and transport. There are targets to increase female representation in high ranking positions to 15% and to increase female membership in the National Assembly to more than 30%.

Lao's strategy is to increase the number of women receiving training in agriculture, handicraft and services to 20%. It also aims to increase the proportion of women in the paid workforce to 40%, whilst giving women priority. Furthermore, it plans to increase women's participation in planning and sectoral development policies and build opportunities for women and girls to access social services equally to men.

Moreover, the Government is taking steps to support women's economic activities, improve access to education and health and involve them in decision-making and policy planning. In 2014, the Lao Women's Union Law was passed: this guaranteed equality for men

and women in political, economic, cultural, social and family affairs.

The establishment of the Lao Women's Union (LWU) means further protection of interests for women and children, the education of women on their rights and national duties and the promotion of gender equality policies. Activities include educating and training women in female and child development, fighting domestic violence and trafficking and providing health services.

In addition to the LWU, there exists the Lao- National Commission for the Advancement of Women which supports, promotes and protects the rights of women in political, economic, social, cultural and family life.

In terms of political empowerment, the Women Parliamentarian Caucus of the Lao National Assembly aims to reinforce the capacity of female parliamentarians in studying and decision-making.

Questions from the floor include:

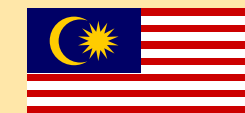
Q. What kind of technical assistance does Lao PDR need regarding gender and development budgeting?

A. Support is required in sensitizing the government to endorse budgeting for gender empowerment, as well as technical training/capacity building on gender mainstreaming and budgeting.

Key Challenges noted by Laos on women and child development at a national level are:

1. A huge poverty and gender gap in education remains
2. Less access to health in rural areas for women

3. Traditions hinder the advancement of women
4. Many of the old stereotypes still exist, preventing advancement of women
5. The government itself is hardly aware or understands gender mainstreaming
6. Poor mechanisms for social advancement
7. No coordination between the different departments, leading to inefficiency and lack of proper gender mainstreaming



Dr (Ms) Waitchalla R.R.V. Suppiah
Undersecretary of Policy Division
Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development

Ms Mazlyana Ramli
Assistant Director
Director of Department of Women's Development office, Penang

Malaysia noted that awareness amongst men must be created in gender empowerment. There is not enough interest being taken in women's issues at national level. Most women are in the service sector and females have a life expectancy of 77.2%, while female literacy is 92.1%.

Women are expected to work and support their families; when men help out with household work, they are reprimanded by their mothers. Malaysia noted that there is low 10.8% female participation in politics, but some of the top positions are occupied by women. Half the population are women so it is important, socially and economically to involve women. There are policies in place that support women, however, implementation and change is usually a problem.

There is a National Policy on Children and a Bill involving children in decision-making and information

sharing. These policies protect children, create awareness and provide support services. It is also important to create awareness amongst other agencies so that these national aims are properly implemented. There is a National Advisory and Consultative Children's Council, a Child Protection Team, a Child Activity Centre and a National Children's Representatives Council.

A gender focal point was established within the ministry in 2005 and several senior officers in Ministries were appointed. Furthermore, a gender expert was appointed for capacity building and to help increase gender empowerment.

The 11th Malaysia Plan proposes to organize gender-disaggregated data to identify specific gender issues that affect women and men differently. Similarly, gender sensitization programmes are being organized for men and women.

There is also a new action plan for single mothers and guidelines for domestic violence. This means that every agency involved in dealing with domestic violence knows its responsibility. This creates a sense of cohesion between the Government and the NGOs who have in the past

voiced discontent with the Government's lack of knowledge.

Furthermore, there is a National Women Advisory and Consultative Council which is not totally Government driven, but involves NGOs and the private sector too, to make the system less rigid.

There has also been much research done on gender mainstreaming for men.

No questions were raised from the floor.

Key Challenges noted by Malaysia on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Insufficient numbers in the fields of science and technology
2. Convincing women to do things their own way, rather than follow men
3. People in positions of gender empowerment (officers, for example) change rapidly, so there is no continuity
4. Lack of gender disaggregated data

MALDIVES



Ms Rishmee Amir

Assistant Director, Ministry of Law and Gender

The Maldives has a Ministry of Law and Gender that provides support for women, children, the elderly and the disabled and two of the current Government's main policies are on empowerment of women and the eradication of violence against women.

The National Machinery within Maldives has undergone several changes which has hindered sustainable change. This is also highlighted by the lack of women in leadership positions: only 5 of 85 parliamentarians are women, 3 of 14 in the Cabinet are female, 5 of 35 state ministers are women, 11 of 79 deputy ministers are women and only 61 of 1118 local councilors are women. Similarly, in terms of salaries, the higher the salary range, the less likely a woman is to receive it over her male counterpart.

However, there are positive development aspects. In 2008, the gender bar for the Presidency was removed, allowing women to run and to participate in elected bodies. Acts were also introduced to prevent domestic violence and prevent sexual harassment and sexual offences. The development of the Gender Equality Bill gives the Minister extensive roles. Furthermore, all Boards of Directors must have at least two female members.

There has been progress in some areas to advance gender equality and gender gaps in education have declined. However, the need for more work was noted by Maldives.

No questions were raised from the floor.

Key Challenges noted by the Maldives on women and child development at a national level are:

1. The low representation of women in decision making
2. The lack of technical human resource capacity in specialized areas including gender and development

3. Although there are no barriers that prevent women from occupying positions of power, they are reluctant to occupy these high level positions
4. Women are usually forced to marry early and tend to household responsibilities

5. No conducive environment for women to advance in the civil service ranks
6. Women usually take a backseat when it comes to politics; they would rather support male candidates than become these candidates themselves. Thus, women's issues are rarely dealt with in policies



MYANMAR



Dr (Ms) Theingi Myint

Director, Maternal & Reproductive Health, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health

A series of facts on Myanmar, including the low female representation figure – 4.6% - and its rank as being 83/187 countries in the Gender Equality Index formed the introduction to this country presentation. Myanmar noted the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) which covers key areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2014, the National Reproductive Health Strategic Plan was established to decrease maternal and infant mortality rates and gender based violence. Furthermore, training has been provided to the different ministries on gender awareness.

Enhancing the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sector Working Group is valuable in helping implement NSPAW to formulate the Anti-violence Against Women Law. Myanmar also has a Gender Unit in the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Department of Rural Development and the Department of Public Health.

The Gender Situation Analysis (GSA), which consolidates existing data in the country on gender equality and women's rights, has concluded that the country has made huge leaps forward in both these categories. Moreover, it has also improved its female participation in the labour force, the number of women in non-agricultural wage employment, gender parity in



the enrollment of girls and boys in primary and secondary education, advancements in maternal health and social protection measures for women.

No questions were raised from the floor.

Key Challenges noted by Myanmar on women and child development at a national level are:

1. High maternal mortality rate
2. Unequal pay for women

3. Weaker female representation and voice in politics
4. A mismatch between the quick pace of reforms
5. A low absorptive institutional capacity for women, hence women get lower marks
6. An uneven political will to pervasively apply the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW principles of democratic governance in policy and institutional environments

NEPAL



Ms Radhika Aryal

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare

In Nepal, it was noted that life expectancy is 69 years for women. female labour force participation is increasing and educational enrollment is high at 94.7%. However, gaps remain in the inordinate numbers of female deaths, the maternal mortality rate is at 170 per 100,000 live births, disparity in girls' schooling, unequal access to economic opportunities and differences in voice in households and society.

Furthermore, around 26% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15. Female workers are more likely to have experienced physical and sexual violence, particularly divorcees and separated women. It is also prevalent in the case of women with less education.

However, Nepal is a member of different conventions that empower women and protect children; these include CEDAW, CRC and the SAARC convention on Trafficking and Promotion of Child Welfare. Recently,

the Constitution of Nepal in 2015 has helped to eradicate gender based discrimination and violence and empower them. Moreover, the current President of Nepal and the Speaker of Parliament are women, which is a great achievement. Several acts such as the Workplace Sexual Harassment Control Act 2014, the Domestic Violence Act of 2009 and the Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act of 2007 have also improved women's empowerment.

At the top of the Women's Machinery is the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare; followed by the Department of Women and Children, and at the grassroots level, the District Women's and Children's Office and several Women's Groups. There is also a Parliamentary Committee for Women's Welfare and a Gender Focal person to ensure the implementation of gender related issues. Furthermore, there is also a Child Welfare Board.

Nepal has recently been through several setbacks which have obstructed progress. The Gorkha Earthquake which killed 8,992 people and destroyed 602, 257 homes and the recent fuel crisis has affected health, education (closure of schools), employment and mobility. Industries are currently on the verge of collapse and the economy has been hit hard, with the country on the verge

of a crisis. There has also been a connection between foreign migration and human trafficking, especially for women, which has developed into a huge problem.

Questions from the floor include:

Q. What are the traditional practices such as Kumari impacting women and children??

A. Once girls have been identified as 'Kumaris', they are not allowed an education or mobility; this destroys her rights. In other situations, girls are offered to temples and abused, from which several problems arise.

Key Challenges noted by Nepal on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Discrimination against women
2. Low female participation in leadership positions
3. Sexual and reproductive rights and health issues
4. Gender based violence
5. Feudal mentality
6. Inadequate data and statistics on gender equality
7. Sex-selective abortion
8. Illegal child labour
9. Sexual abuse and harassment
10. Trafficking





Ms Huma A. Chughtai
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice & Human Rights

An important quote by the Pakistan Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was noted: “No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you.”

Pakistan is particularly low in the HDI rankings, standing at 146 and its Gender Inequality Index ranking is 127, while Maternal Mortality Rate is 260 as of 2010. In terms of children, it has a low birth registration of 27%, 6.91% between the ages of 10 and 14 years in child labour and a maternal mortality (per 100,000) of 170. There is also a gap between female and male literacy rate: 70% and 47% respectively. However, Pakistan has ratified all major conventions, including the SAARC/Regional Conventions.

There are other issues women encounter: men control money, income and assets and there is a lack of technical know-how on financial management for women. Most women are in the informal sector with no social protection. Women have a heavy domestic workload, are not involved in well-paid jobs and rural women have low

literacy rates. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness amongst rural women. They have a limited role in household decision-making and many women lack the confidence to claim political rights. Particularly in the judiciary, there is a large problem with regard to conservative mindsets which prevent the implementation of new laws.

Pakistan has many strong female leaders, amongst them Benazir Bhutto and Malala Yousufzai. However, most cultural barriers obstruct change and it is not the same for the rest of the country.

Key Challenges in child development:

1. Low birth registration, absence of desegregated data collection, no census since 1996
2. Access to health and nutrition, shelter for orphans, education
3. Street children, drug abuse, children with disabilities, children affected by terrorism, early marriages
4. Poverty, child labour and exploitation

It was noted that despite measures in place to protect women and children, corrupt practices usually bypass

such laws. However, by law, women are protected against harassment in the workplace, anti-rape laws, anti-honour killings and inheritance laws to prevent women from forfeiting their rights. There are shelters for women and the prevention and control of human trafficking.

Within the Ministry of Human Rights, there is a National Commission on Human Rights, a National Commission for Child Welfare and Development and a National Commission on the Status of Women. Furthermore, the Government has established crisis centers for women in need, a free helpline for legal advice on human rights violations, a 24 hour national helpline, the Madadgar for sufferers of abuse and violence, CEDAW and CRC Implementation Committees at the National and Provincial Levels and launched Women's Parliamentary Caucuses at the National and Provincial levels.

There are also initiatives being taken to protect women against acid throwing, which is commonplace, and to create a 15% employment quota for women in the public sector. There are also plans to include at least one woman in recruitment committees, have female representation on all boards of statutory bodies and public sector

companies (33%), maternity and paternity leave and daycare facilities among a host of other initiatives.

Questions from the floor include:

- Q. Why is birth registration low in Pakistan?
A. Culturally, people do not want their children counted because they feel it may not be good for their family development. Women are also usually reluctant to reveal details about themselves and their families during census research. It is only after the Government incentivized these women to share information, that they came out and did so. It is ignorance too. For example, polio drops were thought to cause infertility.

Key Challenges in implementation:

1. Terrorism
2. Natural calamities – earthquake, floods
3. Capacity issues of the functionaries – the people who are meant to implement policies are ineffective
4. Prevailing mindsets
5. Lack of resources



Ms Marianne Delgado
Planning Officer III, Philippine Commission on Women

The Philippines noted that their ranking in the Global Gender Gap has improved by two places – now at 7 from 145 countries. This was attributed to the fact that there are more women in politics and more women in the informal economy (women who own small businesses).

The Philippines has the Magna Carta for Women, which involves women themselves in the decision-making process – this includes female members of the indigenous populations too. The law focuses on the marginalized women of the Philippines, ensuring that their rights are protected with no discrimination. It has also implemented gender mainstreaming into the Government, ensuring that it is a part of their budget.

There is also a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to help resolve security related conflict-based issues and for recognizing, sustaining and expanding women's role in the peace building process.

There is also a National Machinery for Women, which releases information on implementing the process of gender development planning in the Government and schools.

Furthermore, politically, the situation has improved for women; positions usually held by men are now held by women. The Chief Justice is a woman and the Secretary for the Office of the Presidential Advisor in the Peace Process is also female. Now, 25% of the Senate is female and 27% in Congress. The statistics show an increase in female Provincial Governors (from 15.4% to 22.5%) and Municipal Mayors (from 15.3% to 20.9%). In education, statistically, boys lag behind girls in education. There is also a law for education on reproductive health and contraception. 73 Women and Children Protection units have been established.

The Philippines has begun collecting data on violence and abuse through a survey conducted every five years, whilst there is also a National Consciousness Day for the



Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children and an 18 day campaign to end violence against women. Furthermore, there is Men Opposed to Violence Against Women: a body of men that educates others on how to end violence.

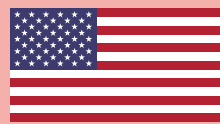
No questions were raised from the floor.

Key Challenges noted by Philippines on women and child development at a national level are:

1. The Philippine Commission for Women is very small: only 20 technical officers
2. Fewer political posts when compared to men

3. Being elected into a position of power does not necessarily mean substantial participation
4. The labour force participation rate for women remains low
5. High maternal mortality rate (221 per 100,000 live births in 2014)
6. Rising teenage pregnancy rates (1/10 girls between 15-19 years already pregnant)
7. Ensuring full functionality and monitoring of WCPUs and other facilities
8. 1 of 5 women still experience domestic violence
9. 1 in 10 women are sexually abused
10. Women are still afraid to report violence due to social stigma

USA



Mr Peter Zarnite

Economic Officer, Embassy of USA, Sri Lanka

USA has been assisting to empower women in Afghanistan, but when comparing the issues of women on a large scale, there is more required to be undertaken. Similarly, it was noted that although the USA may consider that many of these empowerment issues don't apply to itself: this is quite the opposite. There are

problems in the USA with women and child trafficking, the lack of economic and political participation of women, domestic and sexual violence, child abuse, and lack of education for children of poorer backgrounds. Furthermore, the USA actually has less female political participation than countries like the Philippines, no parental leave like Bhutan and no day-care available in government facilities like in Pakistan.



It was noted that many American men still believe women are fighting for special rights and treatment, rather than equality and that power should not be held by women. USA distributed a programmes flyer amongst all delegates and further noted that the US State Department: Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) works to advance the rights of women in Afghanistan, with a focus on programmes that empower women as well as address gender-based violence and seek justice for its survivors. Programmes support the Afghan government's goals of building and sustaining a secure environment for women to live free from intimidation, fear, and violence, and guaranteeing equal rights and protections for women under the law.

As the single largest donor of women shelters in Afghanistan, INL works with The Colombo Plan and other development agencies to run women shelters and also to provide training to shelter staff on operations, such as security, database management, and

sustainability, as well as on psycho-social trauma, legal skills, and strategies for dealing with the media. Additionally, the support from INL also provides training on gender and human rights to police investigators, prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges and sponsors the development of gender justice and family law curricula at Afghan universities.

The delegate concluded his presentation stating that no country can get ahead by leaving half their population behind.

The delegate from Afghanistan thanked the US for its assistance in Afghanistan. The Colombo Plan noted that they continue to engage with the USA through INL supporting women and children victims of violence and protection services in Afghanistan.

No questions were raised from the floor.



Mr Nguyen Khac Tuan

Vice Director, Research Centre for Gender and Female Workers

Vietnam listed a series of pro-gender equality laws such as the Gender Equality Law in 2006, a decree on measures to ensure gender equality and a series of decisions by the Prime Minister to approve the national strategy on gender equality. The country believes that gender equality is one of the key factors in enhancing the quality of life of every individual and society itself.

Its objectives by 2020, are to ensure equality between men and women in the workplace, culturally, politically and socially: it is Vietnam's belief that this will contribute to the rapid development of the country. Specifically it would like to increase political participation to reduce the gender gap, reduce the economic, labour and employment and education gap, improve access to health care, and eliminate gender-based violence.

Vietnam noted a series of solutions to implement strategies: strengthening the guidance and supervision of the government at different levels, promote communication, education and propaganda on gender equality for the public, develop and implement the

national programme on gender equality and convince Ministries to address gender issues in the next four years.

Channeling finances into gender equality through effective gender budgeting, developing high quality services to support men and women equally and enhancing research and data on gender equality, were all suggested as potentially enabling progress.

In order to strengthen political leadership, the state aims to review the regulations concerning the age for training, retraining, promotion, appointment and retirement and pinpointing any disadvantages it may cause women – whilst also monitoring progress on all these fronts. Furthermore, it plans to implement more female leadership, raise awareness of gender equality and eliminate stereotypes, support capacity building for young female leaders.

In order to reduce the gender gap in economic and labour sectors, Vietnam proposed reducing costs related to getting access to employment opportunities and jobs, improving social insurance policies for vulnerable groups in society, equal access to economic resources for women, vocational training for rural areas and ethnic minorities,

the higher participation of women in agriculture and forestry and the enhancement of the monitoring process on all these policies to ensure their proper implementation.

To improve the quality of female human resources and ensure equal participation for both sexes, the Vietnamese plan is to include gender equality training in the education system, scholarships for girls and women to improve their qualifications, remove stereotypes from textbooks, mainstream gender issues into education.

In terms of access to health services, the Vietnamese Government aims to improve reproductive and sexual health for both sexes, expand counseling network on reproductive health for men, enhance communication activities to raise the awareness on reproductive and sexual health for women and men, and very importantly, mainstream gender into health policies and programmes.

For culture and information, the Government plans to eliminate stereotypes in products created for the public, enhance propaganda and education on gender equality in the mass media and regularly monitor progress.

To eliminate gender inequality within families, the Government plans to promote gender equality amongst these units, educate men on participating in activities that educate them on the prevention of violence, create a system of counseling and support to deal with gender based violence and human trafficking and duplicate other successful models.

The Vietnamese Government plans to enhance the capacity of state management on gender equality by assigning full time staff and enhancing skills on gender analysis for policy making cadres.

No questions were raised from the floor.

Key Challenges noted by Vietnam on women and child development at a national level are:

1. Gender bias in society amongst public employees makes implementation very challenging
2. Ineffective implementation of measures due to the limited knowledge and skills of those mainstreaming initiatives

SUB REGIONAL SESSIONS

DAY 1: November 26 2015

Women's Economic Empowerment – South East Asia and Pacific

The South East Asian and Pacific group noted several ideas to enhance women's economic empowerment and following a group discussion of all the sub-regional country delegates, some member countries gave specific inputs.

Fiji noted that a large number of women depend on agriculture; however, when it comes to women and their economic empowerment, the informal sector is not as well recognized in contrast to women in the formal sector. Although women are educated, they do not make up the top leadership sphere and many assist their husbands in family businesses. Fiji provides funding to women groups, however, since there are so many, very little trickles down and there is little incentive to work and set up their own businesses. Now instead of focusing on the quantity of women, Fiji is working on the quality of the products.

Fiji has made country to country links with Indonesia, which has provided much training to Fijian women entrepreneurs in wood-crafting, seashell crafting etc. Fiji has also organized a showcase of products, but quality products is a limited number. There are also initiatives to help women with financial literacy and access to credit.

Indonesia noted three focus areas in the area of economic empowerment: access to market, access to capital and capacity and skill building. Multiple government agencies work in tandem to economically empower women. Handicraft exhibitions are also organized as a platform to show their products. There is also a policy to promote the best quality products and business; the Indonesia Women's Business Association assists with this. It is also working with the Indonesian Financial Services Authority to provide financial literacy to women and the Ministry of Trade organizes training on the process of obtaining a business license.



Myanmar noted the establishment of women's centres and a school for home sciences to provide vocational training, which also includes disabled women. All ministries coordinate and engage to conduct awareness raising training. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women is helping to increase social welfare for women and assists to empower them.

Vietnam ensures women have access to social insurance in the formal sector. Vietnam is committed to ensuring equality and opening up financial credit for women. There have also been vocational training programs set up including retirement plans.

Malaysia stated that the most vulnerable women they have in Malaysia are in the below 40 age group in the category of single mothers. Rather than imposing a job on them, Malaysia noted that it is best to engage and assist with what they themselves would like to do. Educating them on market dynamics, linking their skills with a specific industry/sector and financial literacy and access to credit are important aspects.

For women who cannot go out, there is the option of starting an online business, or cottage industry; however, providing Internet facilities to them is often a problem. Women entrepreneurs are also connected to Ministries who will help them establish themselves. It was also noted that often women don't challenge themselves further, expecting handouts or daily support systems. This mindset needs to change across rural and urban contexts. In Malaysia there is also opposition from families who believe that the unit should be tended to rather than setting up a business. Sometimes, giving money does not help: what does help is infusing that entrepreneurship spirit, effort and risk-taking required to set up a business and the support and engagement of men in the family for women owned businesses.

Laos noted that the government has allocated funds for villages and money for microfinance institutions. Furthermore, the Ministry of Welfare promotes vocational training and is doing its best to improve capacity for women in business. There are no partnerships with other countries but Laos is working on creating them.

The importance of setting up a regional women's economic trade fair, identifying which office can support entrepreneurs, pinpointing what marketing strategies can be used for expansion was noted – whether these will be exhibitions, forums for trade or marketing assistance for women.

The Philippines noted the country implemented a six-year project to enhance entrepreneurship. Along with this, it is striving to create convergence between the different bodies so that change is implemented more efficiently. The Philippines also sees the importance of ensuring that women are trained and are aware of their own rights, along with their husbands. The need for appropriate training is also needed from The Colombo Plan.



The South East Asia and Fiji group's collective presentation was delivered by the delegate from the Philippines. Capacity building areas were noted for vocational and skill technical training, bookkeeping and training on how to apply for a business permit. Other important factors are the facilities and equipment needed to carry out such activities, gender sensitivity training for men and women, and very importantly the involvement of the men in the work process to support women in the economic sectors. Often the husband does not know or understand the training the woman is undergoing and this can lead to violence. Women's business organisations should also include mentors that assist them in growing and create a success out of it.

Women's Economic Empowerment – South Asia

The South Asian sub-regional group discussions reflected all the challenges and gaps across the region that affects women's economic empowerment and the delegate from India presented the South Asia regional group discussion. It was noted that across South Asia many women still work only at household level and this needs to change for harnessing large scale economic empowerment. Furthermore, women's security is still at risk and this hinders access and safe spaces for women to engage in business activities. There is also inadequate access to market information and inadequate opportunity for skilling which means a huge divide between urban and rural women. There is also no support system for women entrepreneurs especially between the ages of 25 and 35, where women largely remain at home due to lack of day care centres and child rearing and household responsibilities.

For enhancing women's economic empowerment strategies for South Asia, it is important that women have access to credit, land and property belonging to them registered in their names; women's decision making at household level must increase; banks should be open to provide more funding for women entrepreneurs and women owned businesses and vocational training centres should be set up in rural areas to reach the women directly. There should also be an increase in income generating activities and women's federations to empower women at large. Lastly, inter-country trade fairs should be established to create links between the member states and empower women.



Women's Leadership Development - South Asia

The South Asia sub-regional group noted that the presence of women leaders does not necessarily translate into change for the country, as frequently they are afraid to make decisions and do not have decision making authority granted to them. Moreover, literacy and education are not necessarily linked with empowerment: it does not always make women gender-responsive. This is, as one delegate said, because women have always been used to conceding from the beginning. It was also observed that the mindset of women needs to be changed from the very highest echelons to the lowest, in order to be responsive and effect proper change.

The delegates from Bangladesh and Nepal pointed out the female quota systems in their parliament: 33% reserved seats. This increases the visibility of women and their decision making and collective power within a forum. The group also noted that strengthening legislation is key towards enforcing the quota system and rights for women. A minimum of 33% was the figure the group deemed adequate for women, however, these need to be winnable seats.

Delegates noted the importance of involving men in training, so as to sensitize them for enabling development and empowerment for women across the region and in countries.

Additionally the group noted that Governments need to be gender responsive and gender sensitized, along with gender responsive legal and policy frameworks in place for sustainable leadership and development for women.

Women's Leadership Development - South East Asia and Pacific

The South East Asia and Pacific group focused much on political empowerment and the civil service. One of the first points made was that proper research is required to assess the reason for insufficient numbers of women in the political sector in leadership roles. Penalties should be established if female quotas in companies are to be instituted and if this is the case, penalties should be considered carefully. Japan's example of naming and shaming companies was used if quotas are not fulfilled. It was stated that men must be sensitized on gender responsive leadership approaches, it is necessary to sensitize equality and gender issues in children from a young age, not through stereotyping which is counterproductive for societies. Women should also be provided with flexible working hours, training and maternity leave. It was also



noted that once a women gains political/leadership office, she must affirm her role in the prominent position and not compromise based on gender biased social practices.

Women therefore require capacity building to effectively communicate and make themselves heard: this will improve their standing in business and local companies. Similarly, men should be brought on board and be asked to participate in gender issues.

Safeguarding and Protection for Children

An open floor discussion was held in the area of safeguarding and protecting children across all member states.

Indonesia noted that it was key to change child policy through the Ministry of Health; through creating child-friendly cities that have health and vulnerability aspects. The task force for protection should also be in charge of enforcing the law.

Afghanistan pointed out that institutions should be established to take care of child soldiers, child trafficking, victims of violence and war affected children. All children must be officially registered.

Pakistan suggested the creation of a commission that observes and maintains children's rights also addressing special needs. A Child Protection Policy is currently being developed in Pakistan, as well as a proposal for amendments to the civil procedure code. Pakistan also has Amendment 25A which gives all children free education up to the age of 16. Currently, a bill to criminalize child pornography is being considered. Prisons across Pakistan have special sections for children. Pakistan also noted one of their focus areas being people with disabilities and having mechanisms in place to focus on reintegrating street children into society and vocational training.

However, the significance of data in this particular area on child protection was noted: the current lack of it is a problem that affects policy development that The Colombo Plan was requested to potentially assist.

Bangladesh proposed setting up DNA labs to identify children's parents as there is a huge street child problem and many of these children are in a vulnerable position. This was noted to be further solved by increasing shelter homes, providing education and creating income-generating activities. Adolescent clubs are also helping to discuss and prevent child marriage. The rehabilitation of beggars from the streets to help eradicate HIV and vulnerability for children and minors was also noted.

Sri Lanka noted a series of different initiatives around child protection. One of these is the National Child Protection Authority which has appointed graduate officers and focuses on protecting children's rights at a grassroots level. There are also vigilant Child Protection Committees and the National Childcare Authority which takes care of school children. Sri Lanka also has initiatives such as a box within schools where children can lodge complaints and problems. Whilst noting that Sri Lanka is the most child-friendly country in South Asia and it provides free compulsory education, free schoolbooks and uniforms, it was also observed that teenage pregnancies and child abuse in public and private spaces are rife.

Nepal stated the establishment of a child help line that connects them to the police has significantly helped the country assist vulnerable children. Local governance in Nepal was noted to be child-friendly and that special measures are taken to protect special needs children. However, child marriage, trafficking, corporal punishment and abuse are problems that prevail.



RECOMMENDATIONS

How can The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme assist to advance women and child development?



SRI LANKA

1. Provide technical support for gender training/sensitization for all government officials
2. Support the implementation of NAP on SGBV
3. Improve the income of women in the informal sector by conducting technical training and provide market facilities at Provincial & District levels
4. Provide accessible and affordable child care services
5. Provide support for the establishment of vocational and skill development centres for women
6. Launch cultural exchange programmes for children to build peace and harmony
7. Help establish day care centres at large scales in government and private sector institutes
8. Organize foreign training for ministerial level Gender Focal Points and women development officers and counseling assistants to share their experiences



AFGHANISTAN

1. Provide support to women entrepreneurs in finding regional and international markets and developing adequate market strategies
2. Provide learning from countries with more experience on mainstreaming gender, especially in the economic and security sectors
3. Find financial and technical resources to be able to implement gender and child policies effectively
4. Establish regional networks of women's rights defenders to share experiences and solutions to address protection concerns



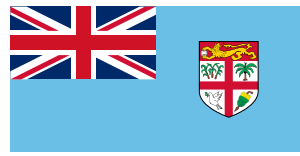
BANGLADESH

1. Exchange good practices and views across member states
2. Help build the capacity of women's machineries
3. Provide support to undertake South Asian Initiative on Violence Against Women including Trafficking in persons
4. Undertake a Multi-Year Capacity Development of Women Officers of the MOWCA on Gender Mainstreaming
5. Support to undertake a multi-sectoral project to reduce vulnerability and child labour of street children and safe homes
6. Rehabilitate street girls to reduce the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS
7. Strengthen Adolescent Clubs for awareness rising on HIV/AIDS through the Colombo Plan's Drug Prevention Programme
8. Provide support to promote the inclusive development of disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities



BHUTAN

1. Encourage and establish partnership between member states on capacity development
2. Sharing best practices of gender mainstreaming focused projects
3. Mobilizing resources for mid term or long term- regional plans and projects in socio-culturally similar member states



FIJI

1. Help increase the capacity of the Ministry for Women and educate the members on gender technical expertise



INDIA

1. Organize training and capacity building on gender budgeting
2. Organize exposure visits
3. Share knowledge and best practices on issues concerning women



INDONESIA

1. Capacity development for Gender Focal Points across partner ministries/state institutions
2. Training on women entrepreneurship and their access to economic resources
3. Training on the collection and the usage of gender disaggregated data for Gender Focal Points across ministries
4. Learning best practices to increase male involvement in family planning and reproductive health programmes



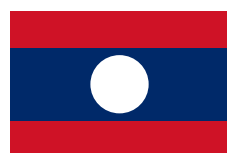
IRAN

1. Hold workshops that share:
 - Policies and programs developed and implemented for female university graduates
 - Policies regarding the improvement of home-based works for export
 - The experiences of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) in the world market
2. Educate on family friendly policies that balance work with home responsibilities



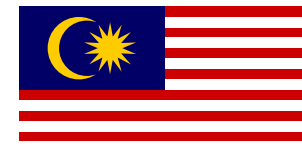
KOREA

1. Share best practices, opinions and experience



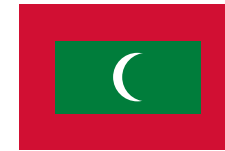
LAOS

1. Strengthen awareness and understanding of CEDAW, Beijing Platform For Action, MDG and gender mainstreaming for Government officials at all levels such as central, provincial, district and village levels and private sector
2. Promote Gender Responsive Budgeting
3. Women and economic empowerment support



MALAYSIA

1. Increase awareness on gender equality, gender development, women's legal rights and gender issues among the developing member countries through workshops and training
2. Invite Malaysia to represent The Colombo Plan in international forums on gender and children and discussions to upgrade knowledge and to share experiences



MALDIVES

1. Help the Maldives understand best practices used by other members
2. Provide ideas and assistance in empowering women in the Maldives



MYANMAR

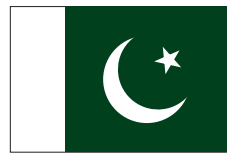
1. Technical assistance (reform policies)
2. Share member countries' experiences
3. Strengthen capacity on gender equality and women's rights
4. Ensure resource mobilization
5. Enhance women's participation and representation in all aspects of peace processes



NEPAL

1. Provide economic empowerment: the creation of economic opportunity
2. Enhance skill and capacity development
3. Transfer technology
4. Fund research and development
5. Help with budgets/financing through focused programmes
6. Provide institutional support, cooperation and partnership
7. Assist with the planning process : mainstreaming gender issues and independent evaluation of gender related programs
8. Protect the rights of women (foreign labour migrants)





PAKISTAN

1. Conduct needs assessments and comprehensive surveys on all aspects of violence against women and children
2. Assist with data collection and analysis – there is nothing concentrated. Different organizations have different data. Similarly, there is no analysis done
3. Help develop comprehensive referral mechanisms, rather than compartmentalized mechanisms
4. Implement technical training in psychotherapy of women and children in distress
5. Help in the sensitization of law enforcement, judiciary, executive arms of the government and the civil society
6. Assist in capacity building of law enforcers, implementation functionaries
7. Support the sensitization of media and modern techniques in awareness raising
8. Capacity building with regard to special education
9. Set up thematic groups and sub-thematic groups within the member countries that share best practices and develop possible recommendations to strengthen and promote gender perspectives in bilateral cooperation, as well as furthering child protection efforts.



PHILIPPINES

1. Share experiences to check progress on a regional/international context through attendance to conferences to share best practices, conducting benchmarking activities
2. Conference Statement that will enjoin all Colombo Plan member countries to implement the resolutions of the 1st Gender Focal Point Conference



VIETNAM

1. Allocate funds to implement strategic activities. Current funds limited to in country
2. Improve coordination of concerning agencies in implementing strategies



Closing Ceremony



The two day conference ended with a closing ceremony and farewell dinner hosted by The Colombo Plan Secretary General for all the delegates.

Director Gender Affairs Programme Dr Sheeba Harma, delivered the closing remarks and thanked all participating countries and delegations for their valuable participation and collaboration. The Colombo Plan exchanged gifts and tokens of appreciation including a framed photograph of the group of delegates. The closing ceremony was also attended by a high level delegation from the Sri Lankan Department of External Resources of the Ministry of National Policy and Economic Affairs. A video of the highlights of the conference was also shown at the closing ceremony noting the achievements and success of the conference. The participants evaluated the programme as a platform shown at the closing ceremony noting the achievements and success of the conference. The participants evaluated the programme as a platform that has enhanced wide information on gender issues across the region and complemented the Gender Affairs Programme for the initiative taken to connect and facilitate collaboration across member states.

In the backdrop of an exquisite Sri Lankan cultural performance, calypso singers and an evening filled with new found friendships



and exchange of ideas, the Conference ended on a high note with the hope for future closer collaborations and the formulation of a common strategy to advance women and child development across all Colombo Plan member states.





Acknowledgements

The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme acknowledge and appreciates all colleagues, staff and service providers who have contributed to the success of the First Gender Focal Point Conference 2015.

We are thankful for the collaboration and support received from the Sri Lankan Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Policy and Economic Affairs and Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and for the welcome State Dinner hosted by the Department of External Resources of the Ministry of National Policy and Economic Affairs.

The Colombo Plan would like to especially thank the Gender Focal Points from 20 countries, as well as the nearly 80 dignitaries and Council Members for their distinguished participation.

Annexure 1

Agenda

Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme
First Gender Focal Point Conference- Advancing Women and Child Development

26-27th November 2015, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Day 01 : Thursday, 26th November 2015

Time	Activity
08.00 - 08.45	Registration of Delegates
Time	OPENING CEREMONY
09.00 - 09.05	Host Country National Anthem: Sri Lanka
09.05 - 09.10	Lighting of the lamp
09.10 - 09.15	Welcome- Dr. Sheeba Harma Director- Gender Affairs Programme Colombo Plan
09.15 - 09.25	Opening Address- Chief Guest H.E Ms. Chandrani Bandara. Honourable Minister for Women and Child Affairs, Sri Lanka
09.25 - 09.35	Address: H.E Mr. Kenichi Suganuma, Ambassador of Japan and The Colombo Plan Council President
09.35 - 09.45	Address: H.E Mr. Kinley Dorji Secretary General, Colombo Plan
09.45 - 09.55	Group photograph with dignitaries
09.55 - 10.30	High Tea and Networking
Time	PLENARY SESSION
10.30 - 10.45	Conference Briefing-Director, CPGAP - Participant Introductions
10.45 - 12.30	GENDER and WOMEN EMPOWERMENT REVIEW across member countries (Country Presentations) - 15 minute presentation on gender priorities, key support required from The Colombo Plan Gender Affairs Programme and how member countries wish to engage with CPGAP and on technical assistance/sharing capacity and skills amongst member countries Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, India

Day 01 : Thursday, 26th November 2015

Time	PLENARY SESSION
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch Break
13.30 - 15.00	GENDER and WOMEN EMPOWERMENT REVIEW across member countries (Country Presentations) - Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia
15.00 - 15.30	Coffee Break - Stalls: Women's Economic Development Programmes in Sri Lanka
Time	SUB-REGIONAL GROUP SESSION
15.30 - 16.45	<i>Special Focus Session:</i> <i>Women's Economic Empowerment – What is required to enhance women entrepreneurship and participation of Women in SMEs</i> - Sub-regional group discussion on the technical needs, policies, plans, training, capacities and programmes to enhance women's economic potential across member countries Sub-regional groups covering South Asia, South East, Pacific
17.00-17.15	Close of Day 1
19.00 - 20.30	State Dinner hosted by the Sri Lankan Government

Day 2 : Friday, 27th November 2015

Time	PLENARY SESSION
08.45 - 10.20	GENDER and WOMEN EMPOWERMENT REVIEW across member countries (Country Presentations) - Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, USA, Vietnam
10.20 - 10.45	Coffee Break
Time	SUB-REGIONAL GROUP SESSION
10.45 - 12.00	Special Session : Shaping the Future: Women's Leadership Development and Gender Inclusive Participation in Social and Public Sphere - Sub-regional group discussion on the technical needs, policies, plans, training, capacities and programmes to enhance women's leadership and gender inclusive participation across member countries Sub-regional groups covering South Asia, South East, Pacific











Day 2 : Friday, 27th November 2015

Time	SUB-REGIONAL GROUP SESSION
12.00 - 13.00	Lunch Break
13.00 - 14.15	Special Session : Enhanced Protection for Children in CP member countries - Sub-regional group discussion on the technical needs, policies, plans, training, capacities and programmes to enhance child protection across member countries Sub-regional groups covering South Asia, South East, Pacific - 10 mins: Technical overview - 45 mins: Group discussion - 20 mins: Presentation 5 mins per group
14.15 - 14.25	Close of sessions and administrative announcements
14.30 - 18.30	Colombo City Tour for visiting delegates
19.00 - 21.30	Closing and Farewell Dinner hosted by the Secretary General of The Colombo Plan

Annexure 2

List of Participants

NO.	NAME	DESIGNATION
Afghanistan 		
1.	Dr. Habiba Sarabi	Women and Youth Affairs Advisor, Chief Executive Office of the National Unity Government
2.	Ms. Rahima Zarifi	Director - Policy and Planning, Ministry of Women's Affairs
Australia 		
3.	Ms. Edwina Sinclair	Second Secretary (Political), Australian High Commission, Sri Lanka
Bangladesh 		
4.	Ms. Laila Jesmin	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
5.	Ms. Nurun Nahar Begum	Senior Assistant Chief, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
Bhutan 		
6.	Mr. Sonam Penjor	Chief Programme Officer, National Commission for Women and Children
Fiji 		
7.	Ms. Anushka Artika	Senior Women's Interest Officer, Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
India 		
8.	Ms. Lopamudra Mohanty	Director, Ministry of Women and Child Development
Indonesia 		
9.	Ms. Valentine Ginting	Head, Bureau for Planning, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child
10.	Ms. Rika Kiswardani	Head, Bureau for Foreign Technical Cooperation, Ministry of State Secretariat
11.	Ms. Yane Agie Widayanti	Head of Sub Division, SST&MTC, Ministry of State Secretariat
12.	Mr. Maftuh Muhtadi	Cooperation Specialist, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child
13.	Mr. Cahya Daru Saputro	Head of Budgeting, Sub Division, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child
14.	Mr. Fakhri Usman	Head of Programme Planning and Budgeting Division, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child
15.	Dr. Ms. Rina Hentarti	Government Official, National Family Planning Commission
16.	Dr. Ms. Fajar Firdawati	Head Section of the Family Planning and Demand Creation through Government Hospitals, National Family Planning Commission
Iran 		
17.	Dr. Susan Bastani	Deputy of Strategic Planning, Vice Presidency of Women and Family Affairs
18.	Ms. Nazari Zohreh	Chief of Social Studies, Vice Presidency of Women and Family Affairs

NO.	NAME	DESIGNATION
Japan 		
19.	Mr. Kiichiro Iwase	First Secretary, Embassy of Japan, Sri Lanka
Korea 		
31.	Ms. Jisun Jun	First Secretary, Embassy of Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka
Lao PDR 		
20.	Ms. Sirikit Boupha	Vice President, Lao Women's Union
21.	Mrs. Kaysamy Lathvilayvong	Deputy Director General, Women's Development Department
Malaysia 		
22.	Dr. Ms. Waitchalla R.R.V. Suppiah	Undersecretary of Policy Division, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
23.	Ms. Mazlyana Ramli	Assistant Director, Director of Department of Women's Development office, Penang
Maldives 		
24.	Ms. Rishmee Amir	Assistant Director, Ministry of Law and Gender
Myanmar 		
25.	Dr. Ms. Theingi Myint	Director, Maternal & Reproductive Health, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health
Nepal 		
26.	Ms. Radhika Aryal	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
Pakistan 		
27.	Ms. Huma A. Chughtai	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice & Human Rights
Philippines 		
28.	Ms. Marianne Delgado	Planning Officer III, Philippine Commission on Women
Sri Lanka 		
29.	Ms. Ashoka Alawatta	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
30.	Ms. Chula Ratnayake	Director, Women's Bureau

NO.	NAME	DESIGNATION
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United States of America



32.	Mr. Peter Zamite	Economic Officer, Embassy of USA, Sri Lanka
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Vietnam



33.	Mr. Nguyen Khac Tuan	Vice Director, Research Centre for Gender and Female Workers
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The Colombo Plan



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