

Asia-Pacific CSOs Key Messages to Regional Knowledge Exchange: Supporting Policy Coherence for Accelerating Progress towards the 2030 Agenda

Three years into the implementation of the Agenda 2030, the world continues to be characterized by economic growth on one hand, while on the other, widening inequalities in wealth, power and resources between and within countries, between rich and poor, and between men and women and socially excluded communities.

We welcome the core principles of SDGs “Leaving No One Behind” and ‘reaching the furthest behind first’. However, we believe that exclusion is the result of deliberate policies, practices and decisions designed to accelerate the wealth and power of the wealthiest at the expense of others. Communities are not accidentally “left behind”, but their situation made worse by the current global economic and political system that depends on exclusion, exploitation, systemic and historical discrimination.

To ensure that we achieve sustainable, inclusive world by 2030, we need to address the systemic barriers for sustainable development, among others: **1) Rise of patriarchal authoritarian governance** that further restrict and impair freedoms and human rights of their citizens, including civil and political rights, **2) Militarism and conflict** - used by capitalist to grab and amass resources within and across and country borders as well as authoritarian rule. Militarism also directs much needed state resources away from social spending, **3) Neoliberal capitalism, trade and investment and corporate capture** - the concentration of economic wealth has translated to almost unchallenged political power, corroding democracy and rolling back of the state, weakening of the public sector and its’ capacity to provide basic and essential goods and services, **4) Land and resource threats** - land tenure policies, land grabbing and threat of climate change expose communities that are directly dependent on land and natural resources to risk of being left behind and denied livelihoods, and lastly **5) Patriarchy, fundamentalism, Casteism and social exclusion** - A systemic driver of inequality can be found in ideologies that rigidly limit opportunities, participation and autonomy for some members of the population be it based on gender identity, race, Caste, ethnicity, religion and other systems of hierarchy.

We continue to assess efforts to achieve sustainable development through the lens of ‘Development Justice’, the model demanded by Asia-Pacific CSOs that requires Redistributive Justice, Economic Justice, Environmental Justice, Gender and Social Justice and Accountability to the Peoples. The efforts to plan and implement Agenda 2030 should uphold human rights and just transition measures that put people at the center of development.

We, 52 Asia-Pacific CSOs from diverse constituencies - women, indigenous peoples, dalits, people with disabilities, farmers, youth, environment groups, and human rights advocates - met in Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines on 1-4 October 2017 and actively engaged in the SDG Regional Knowledge Exchange. Our key messages and recommendations are as following:

Policy Coherence:

- Interlinkages and policy coherence should be guided by human rights and recognition of the systemic barriers and the need to address this. The monitoring of 2030 Agenda should not only be reviewing the progress, but also look into the contradictions of economic policies to sustainable development. Policies that foster unsustainable development and privatization at the cost of peoples survival should be rescinded. The intersection between trade and human rights requires

human rights and sustainability assessments and in the context of SDGs, and SDGs compatibility Impact Assessment, of all trade and investment agreements, to ensure that they are aligned with the national and extraterritorial HR and SDGs obligations of governments.

- Corruption has become a deep-rooted problem in some countries and it has become a culture of practice that then severely marginalises some people and communities. Government must adopt zero-tolerance policy against corruption and strengthen the anti-graft bodies and Governments must enforce good governance laws. Political accountability is an urgent need of the countries.
- Institutionalise policy coherence at all levels, including enforcement and coordination mechanism among the development agendas and sectoral agendas in the country as well as establishing a policy framework that creates synergy in achieving agenda 2030.
- Horizontal policy coherence among the government agencies/ministries and vertical policy coherence are important part of policy coherence to achieve the SDGs in the country.
- Integration of cross-cutting concerns such as technology in policy coherence efforts and ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement on decisions in technology options to achieve the SDGs.
- We demand policy coherence and effective implementation of policy measures meant to specifically promote the respectfulness of rights of communities to resources, human rights, equal and meaningful participation and development of marginalized and socially excluded communities.
- We demand the UN to have more policy coherence across the UN agencies, bodies, treaties and policies, so that they too practice synergies and have an integrated agenda.

Gender Equality as Accelerator of 2030 Agenda:

- The systemic and structural barriers addressed earlier have a very particular and distinct impact on women due to the exclusions and marginalizations that women experiences. Indeed, rural, indigenous, migrant, Dalit, urban poor women, women farmers, older women and women with disabilities, sex workers, informal workers and others, today still find themselves socially, politically and economically excluded and marginalized from national development and governance processes, with few opportunities for redress.
- Challenging gender equality therefore, requires challenging the economic, policies, institutions and accounting that entrenches social and gender inequality: privatisation of public goods and services, growing reliance on public private partnerships, land-grabbing, tax and investment rules that strongly favour foreign investors and the trade agreements that cement those rules, erode national sovereignty and threaten the commitments made in Agenda 2030. Gender equality therefore, needs to be cross-cutting and integrated throughout all of the SDGs. And ensuring that the implementations of all the Goals in gender responsive in nature.
- Autonomous and independent women's movements are the most significant factor for change and advancing progressive social policies. As such, an enabling environment for women's rights organizations, women's human rights defenders and people's social movements are free to operate, without restrictions and threats are important means by which gender equality and development justice can be achieved.

Government's Role in SDG Processes (Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting):

- Human rights-based governance. The human rights-based approach should be the overarching framework in realising the SDGs. Therefore, governments must respect, protect and fulfill the rights of the peoples in planning and implementing the full SDG agenda while abiding by the

human rights treaties and guiding principles such as International Covenant on the Economic, Social and Political Rights and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights..

- Ownership of the SDG agenda. Local governments should understand and be clearly guided in implementing SDGs at local level. Localization of SDGs at sub-national level should ensure the rightful participation of civil societies and must integrate the realities of unsustainable development fostering inequality and impoverishment. Full commitment of all development actors, working in a coordinated manner, determine the success of SDGs in the country. Good practices include embedding the 2030 Agenda in specific cultural and traditional practices that are relevant to countries, such as leveraging the value of ethno-diverse communities or combining the SDGs with locally embedded philosophies. We caution against embedding the SDGs in the mainstream neoliberal narrative that is already unmaking achieved progress on justice and sustainability.
- Data systems and analysis for SDG policies and programs information. Governments should take the lead in developing data systems, especially in collecting data and analysing data to address inequity. Disaggregation of data and understanding the multiple dimensions of marginalisation and at the same time intersectionalities of indicators will enable the government to strategically address inequities. Governments must also recognise and bring into planning, the evidences collected by the CSOs, research institutions, academe and others.
- Accountability, planning and financing. While aligning their development plans to the SDGs, governments must look at the gaps, needs and necessary steps to fulfill their commitments to the SDGs. Should the private sector be involved in the implementation of SDGs, the government should put in place a regulatory framework that ensures accountability of the private sector. Governments must have the political will to develop and implement programs to deliver on their full commitments to the SDGs. The marginalised communities should fully benefit from the SDGs implementation.
- Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). All countries should commit to report at least 3 times between now and 2030 at the HLPF. The VNR review process should ensure the consideration of unsustainable development challenges & realities and ensure the rightful involvement of CSOs in the review itself. between, there will be a gap of several years where governments should allocate funds and continuously update national progress reports. Continuous reporting will be helpful to gauge whether countries are on (or off) track to meet the SDGs. VNR report should also look at challenges that government faces, not only on implementation.

Multi-stakeholder Engagement:

- Across Asia-Pacific, there is an ongoing trend of government regulations making it extremely difficult for CSOs to engage, and even exist, while at the same time, private corporations continue to gain access to decision making through trade and investment agreements.
- There is a need to re-politicize the narrative of multi-stakeholder engagement and redefine the multi-stakeholders that put the people, especially those most marginalized and disadvantaged groups at the center, inter alia, women, indigenous peoples, farmers, grassroots communities. We recognize the importance of inclusion in using the term of multi-stakeholders referring to UN, international development agencies, state/governments, donors and philanthropies, business and private sectors, media, civil society organizations, science and technology and academic communities, with clear distinction and differentiation of their respective roles and obligations as rights-holders and duty-bearers, bearing in mind the complex power dynamics and unequal power relations among them.
- Engagement is a means, not an end. The meaningful transparent and participatory engagement mechanism should hold the multi-stakeholders accountable for SDGs, for each other, and for the most – the people and planet. This mechanism should build on the following:

- To apply human rights principle and rights-based approach for SDGs.
- To develop tools that can monitor SDG progress of the socially excluded communities which have the capacity to capture multi-dimensional, intersectoral and intersectional elements with particular reference to Indigenous, Dalits, Religious and Sexual Minorities, Persons With Disabilities and others
- To develop adequate indicators and community-generated data to monitor and measure the SDG17 for people's participation at the local and national level.
- To establish the mechanisms across all different levels, from grassroots/community, to national, regional and global level to ensure the critical voices from the ground to be included in the policy making /decision making processes.
- To engage with social movements and reclaim the CSO spaces and build the coalition across movements.
- To ensure the transparency and good governance in the mechanisms, i.e. each stakeholders should be self-governed and not depend on the financial or political resources they have, considering there is imbalance in these resources. There is a need to conduct capacity to all stakeholders and engage them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.
- To showcase the best practices of multi-stakeholders engagement such as Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and its monitoring framework that effectively engage CSOs, Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Sri Lanka, and promote the Public Private and CSO Partnership (PPCP) in SDGs.

Financing, Development Cooperation, and Private Sector:

- Financing Means of Implementation (MOI) is largely missing in action. Donors should live up to their basic commitment of providing 0.7 GNI to developing countries, and 0.15-0.20 GNI to LDCs. Additional funds distinct to ODA must be allocated for climate financing and refugee cost hosting. The integrity of ODA for socio, economic, and environmental purposes should also be protected. ODA should not be used in furthering militarism and military spending in the region.
- South-South Cooperation is crucial and must also be founded on transparency, human rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, it must not be a door to allow the developed countries to walk away from their responsibilities. South-South Cooperation is complementary to North-South Cooperation contribution to key deliverables.
- Participation of the citizens particularly the of the excluded and most vulnerable communities must be ensured at the stages of financing, execution and oversight of all SDG related initiatives.
- Military spending of Asia Pacific countries in 2015 amounted to USD 1.62 trillion. This huge budget can be re-allocated towards supporting sustainable development such as supporting small and indigenous farmers particularly in the indigenous peoples' territories, supporting climate adaptation for vulnerable groups, universal access to education and health, and so on.
- Veer away from overreliance to foreign direct investments, migrant remittances and domestic resource mobilization to finance SDGs.
- An overwhelming focus on private sector financing for implementing 2030 development agenda is concern for its potential to deepen inequality, environmental catastrophe, privatization of social services, human rights violations etc. Private Sector must adhere to all development effectiveness and human rights principles, promote decent work, and adopt strict transparency and accountability mechanisms. The drive for public-private partnerships (PPP) is not the ideal model for people-friendly development as it involves public expenditure essentially for private

profits and the people at large are not benefitted, as user fees for services developed are most often quite high. A clear mechanism to hold private sector accountable should be established.

- There is a need to establish a multilateral forum for regional tax cooperation so that at the regional level, developing and least developed country voices are better included in the planning and implementation of tax cooperation mechanisms between countries as well as issues of tax competition and illicit financial flows are addressed. Eradicate incentives for extractive industries, special economic zones, tax competition, and trade liberalization that continue to bleed marginalized communities in developing countries.
- Put Effective Development Cooperation (i.e. focus on results, country ownership, transparency and accountability) and Sustainable Development principles at the core of development.

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