



**ANNUAL
REPORT**
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
2017-2018





UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



UN Women works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls.

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COVER: Women in Viet Nam contribute their work to the economic growth and social development of the country. Photo: UN Women Viet Nam/Giang Dong Son

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FOREWORD



Achieving gender equality and women's rights depends on transformative change that uproots discriminatory policies, norms and practices, wherever they lie. This is the high ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the

promise of the Beijing Platform for Action, agreed at the Fourth World Conference on Women more than two decades ago.

Asia and the Pacific has made impressive strides in social and economic development in recent years. For many people, living standards have improved dramatically, with the region contributing two-thirds of global growth. Women, in civil society and government, business and academia, have driven many recent advances.

Yet many people – and women especially – remain left behind, caught in a net of inequalities that prevent them from reaping the benefits of this growth. Progress towards gender parity in education has not translated into equal rights for women to labour markets, while violence against women remains widespread across the region. In developed and developing countries alike, women still do the brunt of unpaid care and domestic work. Many lack access to social protection and safety nets.

Gender disparities also intersect with gaps in income and access to services, as well with ethnicity, sexual orientation, geographic location and an array of other variables. The region's most prominent challenges, from climate-related disasters to human trafficking, affect women disproportionately because of multiple and compounding inequalities. Yet women are also agents of change in addressing all of these challenges, which require comprehensive, gender-responsive solutions to be successful.

As this annual report repeatedly demonstrates, UN Women is well positioned in the region to help link people and issues, and catalyse lasting results towards the globally agreed goal of achieving gender equality by 2030. Our triple mandate means we are a trusted advocate of internationally agreed norms, an effective implementer of innovative and transformative programmes, and a leader in mobilizing broader UN action on gender equality. Through diverse partnerships and networks, we accelerate progress, leveraging long-standing ties with governments and civil society

advocates, and growing relationships with the worlds of business, media, sports and the arts.

Over the last year, UN Women supported the entry of a record number of women in elected local government seats in Nepal and Sri Lanka. Long-standing partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) contributed to the landmark Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. Eight years in the making, it explicitly refers to acting in line with CEDAW.

In Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu, toll-free hotlines, new services and better training for service providers mean women in these countries now have better resources to protect themselves from violence. UN Women joined two other UN organizations and the Governments of Thailand and Viet Nam in putting rape on trial through the region's first comparative study of why so many rape survivors fail to get justice. The study is now helping to spur positive changes in laws and justice processes that meet women's needs.

Amid the ongoing Rohingya refugee emergency in Bangladesh, UN Women has led humanitarian mechanisms to become responsive to gender, such as through improved access to services, leadership and livelihood opportunities. In several countries, we are pioneering an innovative approach to preventing violent extremism, one that starts with empowering women in their communities to foster social cohesion and peace.

Moving forward, UN Women will continue to sharpen its focus on addressing intersecting inequalities. We will work with partners across the region on closing the gender data gap, which is acute, and an obstacle to accurately tracking progress in meeting women's rights and realizing the global Sustainable Development Goals. Integrated, cross-thematic programme interventions will further enhance our reach and impact, within and across countries.

Without gender equality, our collective ambition for sustainable development will falter, not just for women, but for everyone. At UN Women, we support and create spaces for women and men around the region who are determined to realize a different future – one where all women, without exception, are able to realize their rights and full potential, freed from the constraints of discrimination. Together, we are on the move to make that vision a reality.



Anna-Karin Jatfors
Regional Director, a.i.

UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



Help women and girls in need



WE CONNECT PEOPLE TO DELIVER WHAT WORKS FOR WOMEN

At the centre of the UN system's support for gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women connects people to make connections between the key issues that add up to real change in women's lives, in line with international standards and proven practices.

In 2017-2018, our reach was wide, wholly aligned with realizing gender equality and the goal of leaving no woman behind. These pages show just some of our partners and what we are achieving together.

UN Women works with:

- **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, International Commission of Jurists**, enhancing access to justice
- **UNDP**, reducing barriers in Pakistan's civil service
- **UNFPA, UNESCO**, empowering adolescent girls and young women in Nepal
- **UNFPA, WHO, UNDP, UNODC**, rolling out essential services to respond to violence
- **UNDP, UNFPA, UNV**, working with men to end violence through Partners for Prevention
- **UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**, tackling gender inequalities in climate risks in the Pacific
- **UN Environment**, mobilizing women entrepreneurs to advance sustainable energy
- **United Nations and European Union**, eliminating violence through the Spotlight Initiative
- **European Union, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Pacific Community, Pacific Islands Forum**, ending violence in the Pacific
- **ILO, OECD**, launching a coalition to achieve equal pay
- **ASEAN, Migrant Forum in Asia**, making a historic commitment to protecting the rights of women migrant workers
- **Timor-Leste Civil Service Commission**, adopting new guidelines on sexual harassment
- **Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development**, supporting civil society participation in the commission on the status of women
- **LGBTI activists**, achieving the first recognition in Cambodia's CEDAW report
- **Zhilian Zhaopin**, positioning gender equality in corporate social responsibility in China
- **Benetton Group, CARE**, helping women move into higher level jobs in Bangladesh
- **Procter & Gamble**, improving business skills and financial literacy in Pakistan
- **Unilever**, bettering the lives of women workers in India
- **Oceania Rugby**, levelling the playing field for women in rugby in the Pacific
- **Ali Xeeshan, BBDO Pakistan**, calling for an end to child marriage
- **Safetipin, Akshara Centre, Hindustan Times**, launching an app to collect public safety data in India
- **PIKOTARO**, showcasing comedy as a tool to reach mass audiences and prevent violent extremism
- **J. Walter Thompson Thailand**, galvanizing mass audiences for the #HearMeToo Campaign to end gender-based violence

TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP

Across Asia and the Pacific, women are moving into leadership roles in politics and governance, transforming decision-making. Many have pressed a powerful case for public policies that treat gender equality and women's rights as concerns at the heart of sustainable development and the quest for just and peaceful societies. Their voices, vibrant and committed, are increasingly heard across civil society, even where civic space faces growing constraints.

From climate resilience to economic opportunities, and from the quality of public services to the rule of law, all issues are women's issues. Women have a right to lead and participate equally in all decisions that define the course of societies and the lives of people within them. UN Women works closely with women candidates and politicians across the political spectrum, public officials, gender equality activists and other partners to support women in becoming effective leaders and powerful advocates for transformative, inclusive change.



I am the face of change:

Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Political leader



Photo: World Meteorological Organization

The odds may have been in her favour, coming from an educated family with roots in politics. But for Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, being a woman meant it still was not easy to make a mark. And then there she was in 2016, stepping forward to become the first woman Deputy Prime Minister in **Samoa**, ranked among the countries with the world's lowest share of women in politics.

Since independence in 1962, most Samoan parliaments have seen women holding only one or two seats, usually for a single term. Fiame has not only made history by arriving close to the top of the current political hierarchy, but has kept her seat for over three decades, making her one of Parliament's longest-serving members.

While her father was the first Prime Minister of **Samoa**, it was her mother who overrode objections to the cost of an exceptional education for her daughter and started a banana plantation to pay for it. When Fiame was 18, her father died. She and her mother fought for her to assume his traditional title, which eased her entry into politics.

"Although I had all that going for me, it was still a pretty hard task getting into Parliament because of the gender issue," she says, recalling her first run for office at age 27. "I am so grateful for our Constitution, (which) does have a provision for the protection of (the rights of) women and girls... That's one of my messages to women. Understand what your rights are and lay claim to them."

Fiame has pursued that claim throughout her career. Today she is a face of the changes finally shifting the low representation of women - not just in **Samoa**, but in the Pacific at large. A long-standing partner of UN Women, she has been a staunch advocate for efforts to open doors to women leaders, who finally hold five seats in the Samoan Parliament, a share guaranteed by a 2013 constitutional amendment.

In 2016, a record 24 women stood for election, a 300 per cent increase from the previous poll.

UN Women has continuously stood behind efforts to break down barriers for women at all levels of leadership, such as through training on skills to run for office and support for the formation of networks of women leaders. In 2017, we supported post-election mentoring of women parliamentarians, an effort to which Fiame lent her considerable experience. Other initiatives have entailed outreach to all parliamentarians to develop capacities for instituting gender-responsive budgets and preparing gender-sensitive legislation.

While the number of women MPs is still limited, Fiame can already count the difference they make. Women tend to prioritize the quality of social services such as health and education, she affirms, and scrutinize spending decisions based on the level of public benefit. "There's sufficient numbers for us to now triangulate and talk about things. When you're on your own there's just so much (you can do)," she says, adding, "There are a lot of really excellent women leaders around. We just have to create environments where people can flourish."

Samoa is just one of the Pacific island developing countries where UN Women is an active advocate of more women moving into political leadership as well as public policymaking. In 2018 in **the Solomon Islands**, UN Women assisted women's advocates and the Western Provincial Government in devising the region's first policy for women's development. Women ward representatives and NGO leaders helped push the policy to completion. It features eight outcomes aimed at women's social, economic and political empowerment. To make its aspirations a reality, the provincial government has committed to allocating 20 per cent of the 2018-2019 provincial budget to women's development.

GAINING GROUND IN ELECTIONS

From 82 to 2,000 in elected office. That's the difference that **Sri Lanka's** quota for women candidates in local elections made between the 2011 poll and the one in early 2018. Over 17,000 women ran, taking advantage of an amendment to the electoral law reserving 25 per cent of seats for women. Leading up to the election, UN Women, which had advocated for the quota, joined two national ministries in championing the Women for Change campaign. It raised awareness of the quota and, as importantly, showcased women as visionary, capable leaders who are vital to the country's growth and democracy.

Women in **Nepal** are also on the move in politics, drawing on an explicit constitutional commitment to gender equality that includes election quotas. In 2017, as preparations for the first local elections in 20 years got underway, UN Women worked with electoral officials to support awareness and implementation of the quotas, and sponsored a landmark national conference for women leaders that galvanized attention around equal participation. Collaboration with activists from excluded groups, such as home-based workers and survivors of trafficking, prepared diverse women candidates to run. The poll sent 14,000 women into office, the highest number ever. They now occupy 41 per cent of local seats, setting a new direction for inclusive and accountable local governance across the country.

CHANGING THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

In recent years, a commitment to getting more women into senior positions has come from the top levels of the Government of **Afghanistan**. Yet obstacles to women securing leadership positions are just the beginning. Additional challenges come from making a difference once they are there. Through UN Women's transformative leadership course, senior advisers to the President, directors of departments, parliamentarians and others have learned communications and active listening skills, public speaking, diplomatic etiquette and measures to boost self-confidence, among other subjects.

For many, the training has been a first-ever opportunity to come together with other women leaders for a frank exchange of experiences. A network has sprung up, linking participants to routinely share information and strategize on how to resolve problems. "Why shouldn't we have this kind of support and opportunities, just

like men have?" says Najiba Muram, a top official at the Ministry of Information and Culture who attended the course in 2017. "Transformative leadership changes you. You discover your talents and how to use them. I feel confident and strong, with an internal motivation that is a catalyst to do more."

As **Myanmar** moves towards a federal system of governance, many decisions that profoundly touch people's lives will be made by both central and subnational authorities. UN Women has sought ways to build in advances in gender equality, such as by convening 40 women with strong potential as leaders to learn how they might be part of shaping the future. Coming from all regions of the country, and representing diverse ethnic groups, they discussed how a federal system could offer significant gains for women, such as through more resources for health and education, and more chances to lead public decision-making. "Federalism is an entry point to integrate gender into nation-building," said participant Wine Sandy Myint. "Women's groups should start thinking how to strategically integrate these issues in current decision-making and negotiation processes."

BREAKING BARRIERS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

Civil services remain major employers in many countries, and an obvious locus for efforts to increase women's leadership. In **Pakistan**, UN Women teamed up with UNDP to draw attention to how the civil service is not delivering for female civil servants, despite favourable quotas and other affirmative action policies. New research confirmed that too many women remain stuck at the bottom of the bureaucracy, their skills and years of service trumped by discriminatory gender norms.

Based on a new research model developed with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Gender Equality in Public Administration/2017: **Pakistan** Case Study" stressed that **Pakistan's** female labour force is significantly underutilized, with only one in four women even participating in paid employment. Since the civil service could make a major contribution to closing the gap, the study made recommendations to reduce barriers to women, such as more systematic monitoring, coordinated measures for empowerment and closer networking among women civil servants.



At 12 years of age, Duli Bai got married. She has been a widow for the past 14 years. After being locked up in her house for nine months, she decided to take life into her own hands. The single women's Self-Help Group, which is part of UN Women's programme, has helped her to do that. Photo: UN Women/Gaganjit Singh

ADVANCING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The recognition of women's rights continues to steadily advance, yet at a slower pace for women marginalized by multiple, often overlapping forms of discrimination. In **Samoa**, women married outside their home villages have traditionally endured a stigmatizing label: *nofotane*. It means being denied a voice in decisions at home and in the broader community, even on the most basic issues such as selecting what clothing to wear. Through UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality, ongoing engagement with village leaders in 166 villages has started to shift such attitudes and behaviours. More than 1,700 local leaders have implemented measures to stop discrimination, and 162 villages have adopted by-laws and village council decisions to formally advance the rights of *nofotane* women, including to take part in community meetings. Other efforts have helped 1,600 *nofotane* women gain financial literacy and livelihood skills; of these, almost 240 have started small businesses and created more than 20 collective support groups to sell their products.

In **Cambodia**, with UN Women's support, the concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons have featured for the first time in the national report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. UN Women helped LGBTI activists and

organizations advocate for recognition through learning about CEDAW's potential to promote their rights. Other progress has come through inclusion of a chapter on LGBTI issues in the five-year strategic plan of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. To maintain momentum, activists have launched an online media platform, LOVEISDIVERSITY, to champion their rights and call for social acceptance. A dialogue with Cambodian policymakers during Pride Week in 2018 provided scope for exchanges around an emerging common advocacy agenda, with key issues related to equal rights in employment, adoption, marriage and identity documents.

India's Supreme Court rendered a landmark judgment in 2017. No longer would it allow the triple talaq form of divorce that had been permitted for Muslim couples. This practice meant that a Muslim man could instantly divorce his wife simply by uttering the word "talaq" three times. For many women, the result was a rapid descent into poverty and homelessness. Leading up to the decision, UN Women convened civil society, academia, government and religious leaders to debate and better understand the impacts of talaq. Several years of sustained research deepened the body of evidence and made the case for better protecting the rights of women from Muslim and other minority communities.

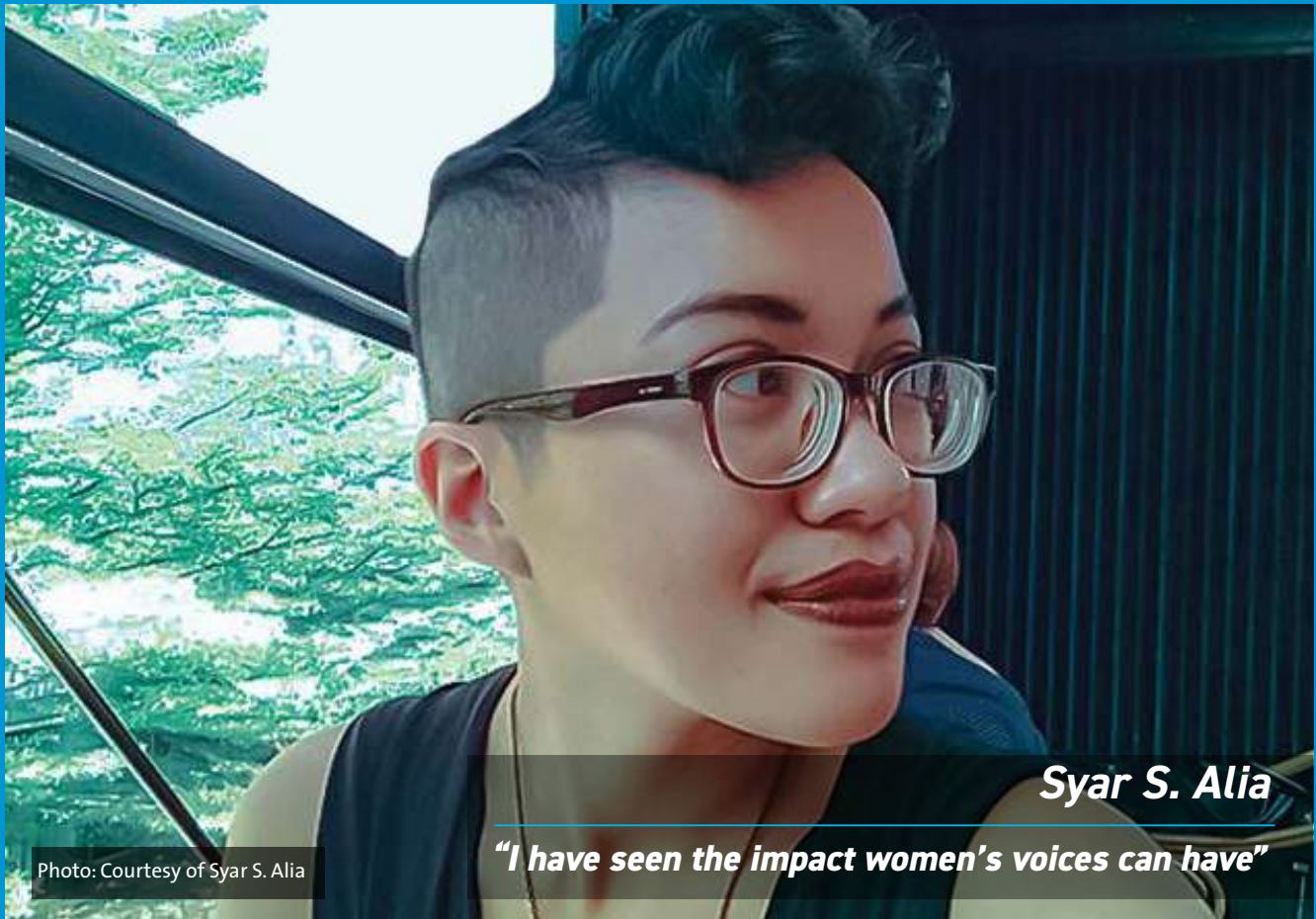


Photo: Courtesy of Syar S. Alia

Syar S. Alia

“I have seen the impact women’s voices can have”

Arts manager and freelance writer Syar S. Alia, 29, has been a gender-equality advocate since she was a teenager. She shared her experiences while participating in the first Young Women Making Change workshop for cis and trans women in **Malaysia**, supported by UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality.

“For me, being a young woman living in **Malaysia** means maintaining an anger about the daily discrimination and harm [that women face], without burning out.

Every day, there is something...an insensitive or downright harmful comment from someone - it could be a Member of Parliament or an anonymous Internet user - directed at women and marginalized groups like trans people, gay people, non-Muslims or non-Malays.

The anger helps me move forward; there is much to change.

Attending the first “Young Women Making Change” workshop broadened my horizons and opened doors for me. I could learn from my peers and find mentors in older and experienced women’s rights activists. Some 30 young cis- and transgender women from all over **Malaysia** attended the first workshop and brought to the table a variety of issues, ranging from indigenous land rights and animal rights to transgender rights, freedom of speech, and more.

The following year, I became one of four peer facilitators for the next workshop. Together, we facilitated an intergenerational dialogue on issues that affected us. We formed a collective to raise awareness about the issue of sexual harassment in **Malaysia**.

As a younger advocate, I have learned a lot from older activists in **Malaysia**. But sometimes, I find that older generations underestimate or dismiss me and my peers because of their perceptions of our generation.

I am a millennial, born into a world where the mistakes of the past are stacked against us; opportunities are fewer and challenges are harder to scale, because of entrenched inequalities, such as existing and growing homophobia, racism, the lasting effects of colonialism, and vast economic inequalities.

But I have seen, first-hand, the impact that women’s voices can have in changing the dynamics. We need to keep prioritizing and fighting for women’s rights. We need to invest in women of all ages, give them space to speak, listen to them and empower them to lead.”

CLAIMING ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT

Economies run on women's work, from farms to high-tech industries to care responsibilities in homes. Yet women's work is typically underrecognized and undervalued. In the paid workforce, they remain concentrated in some of the worst jobs, with gender gaps in compensation and little in the way of job security or social protection. Despite the region's tremendous economic growth, many women are increasingly being left behind, caught in powerful patterns of inequality.

UN Women remains a leading advocate of inclusive economies built on a foundation of women's rights and empowerment. We reach women most at risk of marginalization so they can acquire assets and skills that improve their employment prospects and entrepreneurial aspirations. We help them understand and claim their rights, and take collective action that is transforming markets, industries and labour migration. Across the region, women are standing behind the call to make economic prosperity available to all, including through work that is decent and safe.



Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

*I am the face of change:
Ellen Elecanal, Migrant and entrepreneur*



Photo: UN Women/Nuntana Tangwinit

Once she dreamed of helping her family. Yet with little education, her options were few. Only migrating abroad seemed to offer a way forward. So Ellen Elecanal left her parents, her brothers and her home in Iloilo province in the central **Philippines**. Like many thousands of poor women each year in South-East Asia, she found a job caring for other people's families. First in Manila, then India, then New Zealand, then Hong Kong, then Singapore. Twenty years went by before she could come home for good.

It was not easy to adapt after being away for so long. But Elecanal was helped by a reintegration programme supported by UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality. Two non-governmental organizations work with migrant domestic workers to plan their return and manage once they arrive, when many have little in the way of savings or skills. But driven by similar motivations that once took them abroad, they are devoted to bettering their lives. The programme helps them learn new skills in financial management, while linking them to investment opportunities and teaching them to manage potential risks.

Elecanal, 49, used her savings and what she learned to set up a bakery, D's Daily Beli Bakeshop. Five employees now keep the shop full of rows of neatly stacked breads and pastries; 4,000 pieces are sold each day for wholesale and catering. Elecanal uses the money she earns in her own country to help

her family, setting aside some for savings and investment.

"Most Filipino migrants know how to spend but we don't know how to save," she said. "Through the training, I learned not to only spend the money but to make the money grow."

From domestic worker to small entrepreneur, Elecanal is a face of change. She is not alone—600 other women had passed through the programme in the **Philippines** by the end of 2017. And within the Asia and the Pacific region as a whole, there is growing momentum, strongly encouraged by UN Women through advocacy and hard evidence, to respect the substantial contributions of women migrants and protect their rights.

Recent years have seen major shifts in the approach to migration among the 10 countries in ASEAN, which collectively have 20.2 million migrants, half of whom are women. In 2017, UN Women's regional programme on women and migration, through a partnership with Migrant Forum in Asia, supported advocacy by migrant workers' organizations as well as research on emerging trends in women's labour mobility. Close engagement with senior ASEAN leaders contributed to a historic milestone at the end of the year, with the signature of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. Eight years in the making, it refers to CEDAW and to promoting the rights of migrants, particularly women, as a guiding principle.



Philippine domestic migrant workers pose at their Atikha training in Hong Kong in September 2017. Photo: UN Women/Nuntana Tangwinit

The groundswell of regional attention has prompted actions in individual countries. In 2018, government officials of **Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar** and **Thailand** convened with UN entities, including UN Women, as well as employers and civil society groups to agree on steps to protect migrant workers from exploitation and abuse. Measures include ensuring that both female and male migrant workers are fully covered by labour and social protection laws regardless of the work they do.

After UN Women joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) to document the working conditions of migrant domestic workers in **Malaysia** and **Thailand**, the latter developed new regulations on decent work. **Cambodia** has lifted a ban on migrant domestic workers, while 120 recruitment agencies have adopted **Myanmar's** code of conduct for ethical recruitment practices.

UN Women has also equipped women with information about their rights at work and during

migration, such as through distributing 10,000 copies of a Safe Migration Booklet in **Lao People's Democratic Republic** and **Thailand**. Featuring the upbeat Thai cartoon character Noohin, it covers basics such as the importance of having work documents to reduce human trafficking and other risks. A series of short videos on the rights of migrant workers and the benefits of positive working relationships between employers and domestic workers have aired online in all 10 ASEAN Member States. By the end of 2017, they had been viewed over 160 million times.

In 2018, UN Women began collaborating on the multi-year Spotlight Initiative by the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate violence against women and girls globally. Core to the initiative is the Safe and Fair programme. Implemented over five years through a partnership between UN Women and the ILO, it will focus on women migrant workers in the 10 ASEAN member states, aiming to improve policies, services, data and attitudes by working closely with migrant women and governments.

MARKETS FOR CHANGE



Market vendors Margret Tafili and Melody Anisi with their produce at Auki Market, Auki, Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. Photo: UN Women/Andrew Plant

In the Pacific, bustling traditional markets are a source of fruits, vegetables, baked goods, clothing and other goods and a force for women's empowerment. By 2018, working with a range of public, private and academic partners, UN Women's Markets for Change programme had engaged over 10,000 mostly women vendors in 18 markets across **Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu**.

The programme has empowered women on multiple fronts. Financial literacy training has improved business practices and lifted savings rates. New skills to manage food storage have led to better quality products and more income. Vendors who are farmers have applied agricultural techniques for more productive crops.

Market vendor associations have become effective forums to organize and advocate for better working conditions in all three countries. In **Fiji** in 2017, they negotiated reductions in stall fees, while in **the Solomon Islands** they secured new water tanks. Associations in **Vanuatu** signed on to innovative "Sister Agreements" that allow vendors the flexibility to operate in different markets, even where they are not formally registered. In 2017, 17 markets developed their first disaster management plans through joint exercises between market vendors and managers.

The associations are increasingly influential advocates in local government, swaying decisions that have resulted in improved market infrastructure. The new Rakiraki market in **Fiji**, where the

Prime Minister led the ground breaking ceremony, includes accommodation for women and a training centre. Other markets have improved sanitation facilities and market stalls, and access for people with disabilities.

Through UN Women's continued support, vendors from the three countries have begun to meet and share experiences. An exchange between women vendors from **the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu** in 2018 inspired new ideas on market waste management and composting. And at the 13th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 6th Meeting of Ministers for Women held in **Fiji** in late 2017, representatives of market vendor associations successfully secured high-level support for the public and private sector to continue improving marketplaces and promoting women's influence and agency.



Staff turnover presents a huge challenge to garment manufacturers in Bangladesh. This prompted companies to establish their in-house Enterprise-Based Training (EBT) centres with the support of the ILO. Successful trainees are awarded certificates, which are recognized country-wide. Photo: ILO in Asia and the Pacific

EMPOWERING WOMEN WORKERS

Going to work in the garment industry used to be considered a job with an income but little in the way of prospects for advancement. But in **Bangladesh**, a partnership between the Benetton Group, a global fashion brand, UN Women and CARE is turning that notion on its head by helping women prepare to move into positions as supervisors. Two hundred workers have developed skills for negotiation and leadership, and learned tips to increase their productivity. To reduce instances of harassment and violence, the project coupled gender sensitization sessions for 100 male supervisors with an emphasis on helping women workers understand and communicate their rights. Halima Khatun, who went on to become a supervisor in the operations department of Babylon Garments says, “I always wanted to grow. I wanted to show that women can do everything that a man can do.”

In **Pakistan**, a project to empower women garment workers enrolled 875 women in 16 training institutes and industries producing sports garments. Over 700 have gained better jobs and salaries equal to male counterparts. They can now access social protection schemes, and many have gained their first National Identity Card, required for obtaining formal employment and opening bank accounts.

ADVOCATING FOR RURAL WOMEN

Rural women are consistently among the people facing some of the greatest impediments to better well-being. In **Pakistan**, to draw focused attention to their many concerns, UN Women backed detailed research that culminated in the launch of *Rural Women in Pakistan: Status Report 2018*.

The report chronicled many shortfalls in education and employment, challenges from climate change, and widespread gender-based violence. These persist despite the immense value of women’s unpaid work on family farms and enterprises, which the report estimated is worth a stunning US \$5.3 billion or 2.6 per cent of national gross domestic product. A roadmap for action for rural women presented proposals from boosting connectivity to scaling up access to agricultural inputs and financial services. It highlighted the use of new technology, such as mobile wallets, and the removal of conventional barriers, such as requirements for male guarantors.

REACHING MARGINALIZED GIRLS

In **Nepal**, UN Women, UNFPA and UNESCO have collaborated to empower adolescent girls and young women through an integrated programme touching on education, gender equality and good health. UN Women has led efforts to extend vocational training for girls who are out of school, giving priority to those from highly marginalized families and communities.

Around 4,000 girls and young women will eventually benefit; in an early phase starting in 2017, customized training was developed for nearly 550 participants in two districts. While learning about gender equality and women’s rights, they also picked up skills such as embroidery-making and soap production, where there is strong demand from consumers who otherwise turn to more expensive goods imported from **India**. Some graduates have already started small businesses; over 100 have sought certification from the National Skill Testing Board. The programme is now being rolled out in three additional districts, taking on board market opportunities as well as the strong preference for self-employment expressed by the original participants.



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Beena Pallical

“We are seeking nothing more than our due share”

Beena Pallical is the Executive Director at the Asia Dalit Rights Forum. The Dalit community suffers widespread discrimination, despite recent attempts at redressal. The economic empowerment of Dalit women, an issue that has received little attention, was the focus of a two-year programme funded by UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality.

Across **Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka** and **Pakistan**, there are around 201 million Dalit men, women and children. The caste system divides society into four layers, but the Dalits are outside those layers, at the bottom of the heap, considered fit only for the dirty jobs such as cleaning latrines and sewers, or skinning animals for leather.

“As a Dalit myself, according to the system, people from other castes cannot touch me or eat with me. I cannot use the same (water) tap as the dominant castes, because we are considered to be polluted. This is still in place in several parts of South Asia, especially in rural areas. But it can also take other forms, including in urban areas, for example when people refuse to rent a house to me, or with me, or even from me.

Also, Dalits have restricted access to services across the region, whether those are health services, clean drinking water or education.

There are good policies in place, for example in **India** and **Nepal**, but

the implementation is not there. In **Sri Lanka**, they don’t even recognize the Dalits as a community or social category. In particular the large number of Dalit women in the tea and rubber plantations work without the protection of any specific policies or recognition of their particular vulnerability.

The Fund for Gender Equality has been supporting the Dalit women’s economic empowerment programme in South Asia since 2016. In **Bangladesh**, over the past two years we have seen the creation of Dalit rights groups, and we have been able for the first time to push for Dalit women to sit at the same table with policymakers. This has really created an impact. Other groups in **Nepal, Sri Lanka** and **India** are also working on the ground with Dalit women, as part of the Asia Dalit Rights Forum.

This is a key part of leaving no one behind, as per the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also important to focus on the intersection of different marginalizations, for Dalits as much as anyone else. Imagine a Dalit woman who is transgender and also disabled, that is at least a triple marginalization.

Unless these concerns are kept at the core of policy drafting, I don’t think we will be able to reach this agenda by 2030. There has been a certain invisibilization, so to say, of this problem by policymakers as well as by society.

As a Dalit community, because we have not had any rights for the longest time, we sometimes fail to claim them. Also, some efforts in recent years to assert ourselves have led to economic reprisals and physical violence.

But we have started realizing that we are seeking nothing more than our due share of services and opportunities. We are not asking for charity. It is the government’s responsibility to ensure that every Dalit woman and man has access to services, education, health, etc.

The support of UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality arrived at a critical time, when no other agency recognized the need in South Asia for a programme to empower Dalit women economically. There had been several programmes on violence, but even without violence we need money to build houses and for education.

The Fund has brought this issue to the forefront of Dalit women’s rights and I think this support has been essential. We have now a group of 15 to 20 women, who would never be able to sit with policymakers or go over budgets, who today are sitting at the same table and arguing and putting their points across.

Of course, the sustainability going forwards will remain a challenge, but at least we have this group of women who have realized that these rights are important, and we need to take this forward!”

STOPPING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women touches every country and social group in Asia and the Pacific, affecting the majority of women in some countries and communities. Yet this blatant violation of women's rights, which undercuts progress in all other efforts to achieve gender equality, is increasingly challenged. Women in the region, joined by growing numbers of men, have mobilized to break long-standing silence and institute mechanisms to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, including rape, domestic abuse and sexual harassment.

UN Women, through partnerships with governments and gender equality advocates, has consistently stood behind these efforts. We have helped pioneer new, integrated services that meet the diverse needs of survivors, and advance legislation aligned with international human rights standards. By leading comprehensive research that provides evidence for change, we shift public opinion and inspire actions to remove remaining obstacles to ending violence. While there is still far to go, a new norm is emerging, supporting a vision of a region where every woman and girl can live without fear of gender-based violence.



In Indonesia, 25 influencers participated in a video message produced with the objective of encouraging people to take action to end violence against women. In the video, the influencers encourage everyone to stand in solidarity with survivors, speak out, and take action to stop normalizing violence against women and girls. The video was published on 25 November 2018 to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Photo: UN Women/Putra Djohan

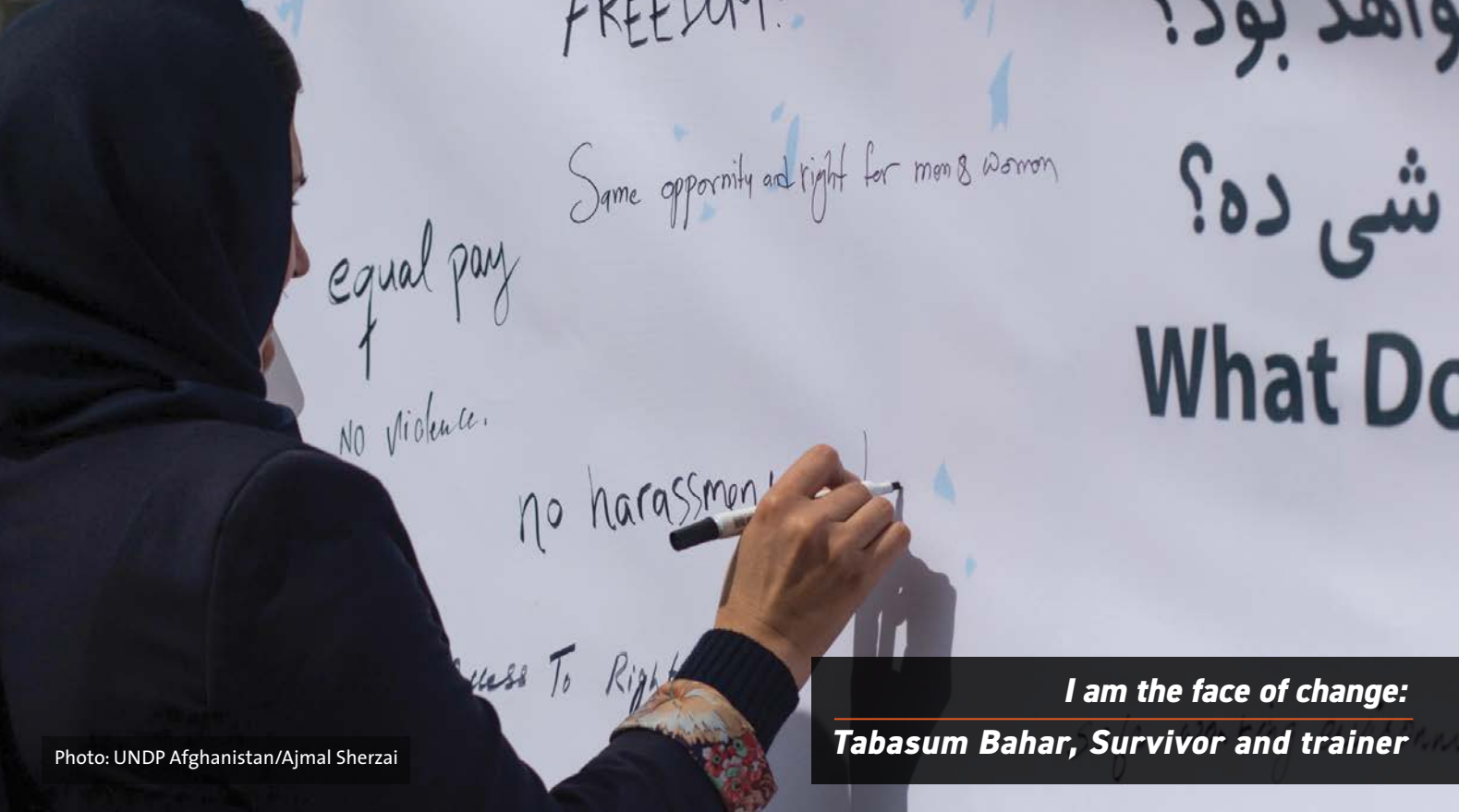


Photo: UNDP Afghanistan/Ajmal Sherzai

**I am the face of change:
Tabasum Bahar, Survivor and trainer**

“I feel so proud of my work. So proud of being part of a movement that helps women like me who have survived violence,” says Tabasum Bahar*, eyes flashing with the conviction forged by surviving a painful past.

“The women I train want to be independent. We don’t want to depend on someone who feeds us and because of that we have to bow down to all the anger and threats. If you have skills, you do not have to depend on anyone except yourself.”

The words of Bahar’s personal, hard-fought struggles truth echo in the lives of so many women in **Afghanistan**. She was four years old when her father engaged her to a much older man, as part of an exchange to secure a wife for her brother. When she was 17 and expected to formally enter the marriage, she refused because she knew her future husband was taking drugs. His family kidnapped and drugged her. When she somehow managed to call the police, the violators were sent to jail. But after only a year, the family raised the issue with community elders, and everyone agreed that she had to go through with the marriage. Everyone except Bahar, that is.

The marriage took place. Within months Bahar had a daughter, and the nightmare intensified. One day, her husband threw a pot of boiling water over Bahar. A doctor treated the burns, which covered half of her body, and then sent her and her daughter to live in a Women’s Protection Centre, which shelters survivors of violence.

The centre kept Bahar safe, even transferring her

to another city when the police failed to arrest her husband. After four years there, feeling restored in body and spirit, Bahar took the still unusual step in **Afghanistan** of finding her own place to live independently. But no one knows where it is - not her mother or anyone else in her family - because too many people would accept that her husband has a right to kill her and claim their daughter, now five years old. Bahar lives with the constant and unrelenting fear of this discovery. Yet she radiates determination because she has found a way forward, as a face of change.

Each day, she goes to the Women’s Protection Centre, where a steady stream of new survivors arrives seeking shelter and protection. Applying the training she herself acquired in her early days there, she teaches them the skills that mean safety in the future. The women make elegant clothes and embroidered scarves that are works of art and sources of income.

“The centre gives us hope; it enables us to have our own wings,” Bahar says.

The Women’s Protection Centre is part of a network of 11 shelters in nine provinces across **Afghanistan**. Supported by UN Women, they have offered refuge to more than 1,600 survivors of gender-based violence in 2018, along with a combination of medical, legal and psychosocial services, and skills training so that women can restart their lives. Family Guidance Centres in five provinces offer mediation support, where lawyers, social workers and others engage with women who remain in their communities without facing imminent risks.



Photo: UN Women/Ishaq Ali Anis

The services are just two parts of a sustained national effort to stop violence, which in **Afghanistan** remains prevalent and often extreme. According to national statistics, 87 per cent of Afghan women will experience violence in their lifetimes. The vast majority of this violence is perpetrated by husbands or family members. Through advocacy and technical guidance, UN Women has backed many stages of a complex and unfolding process that involves legal reforms, new services and legal practices, and shifts in social norms.

In 2018, **Afghanistan's** new anti-harassment law stipulated jail terms and fines for perpetrators of harassment against women and children for the first time, adding a layer of protection to the existing law on eliminating violence against women. A revised penal code finally criminalized the five most serious offences under the anti-violence law and ended the past practice of allowing so-called "honour killing" as a mitigating factor in murder trials. Free legal aid and specialized lawyers are now in place to support survivors who pursue cases.

Judge Anisa Rasooli, who recently became the first woman ever to serve on **Afghanistan's** Supreme Court, points out, "Twenty-three years ago when I became a judge, no woman would go to a rule of law institution. Survivors of violence were not noticed or legally protected. Now many women do understand where to find help and that they can pursue cases. We have 300 women judges, up from only 20 two decades ago, and their presence encourages other women to come forward."

With UN Women's assistance, the Government of **Afghanistan** recently instituted its first online database compiling data on cases of violence. Offering standardized data that can be systematically analysed, it bolstered an existing process of annual reporting that informs evidence-based programming by all partners in preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

In five provinces, other efforts supported by UN Women help communities shift deeply entrenched attitudes and beliefs that justify violence against women. Meetings with local authorities, community elders, religious leaders, women and men, encourage people to reflect on how they might work together for harmonious communities and families.

For many women, it is a first-ever chance to speak up and share their concerns. For men, it is a chance to rethink assumptions about gender roles and family life. Some families are now agreeing to send their daughters to school, a basic step, yet with huge implications—a woman who can read not only has better prospects to earn her own income, but also a greater chance of knowing and claiming her right to live free from violence.

Judge Rasooli stresses that eliminating violence requires a holistic response tackling the major drivers of poverty, illiteracy and insecurity. Like Tabasum Bahar, she has faith in Afghan women, and in the future. "Afghan women today are vocal, visible and playing key roles," she comments. "We can be the best judges, teachers, doctors, engineers - if the conditions are right."

*The name has been changed to protect the privacy of the survivor.

PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND PROTECTIVE POLICIES

In the Pacific, where territories often spread over multiple islands, almost two-thirds of women who spend time in an intimate relationship experience physical or sexual violence, or both, at the hands of their partner at some point in their lifetime. The figure is double the global average. While some services are available to help survivors of violence, they have not always been well connected, and they remain mostly outside the reach of women and girls in rural and remote areas. Trust and the willingness to report cases both suffer when survivors, at an acutely vulnerable moment in their lives, cannot readily obtain all the assistance they need.

In **Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu**, UN Women has helped to close gaps by working with governments to better coordinate service-provision, supporting toll-free hotlines and new centres offering combined services, and providing training to providers. **Kiribati**, for example, in 2018 launched its first crisis centre offering counselling to survivors of violence, with UN Women providing training to staff.

In **Fiji**, UN Women, together with the **Fiji Women Crisis Centre**, worked with the Government to launch the country's first service-delivery protocol, which smooths and standardizes coordination among different service providers. It commits social, police, legal, health and other service providers to high standards of ethics and safety, and to treating all survivors first and foremost with dignity and respect. It is also one of only a few of such protocols to be fully inclusive of the needs of the LGBTQI community and people living with disabilities.

In **Vanuatu**, UN Women assisted the **Vanuatu Women's Centre** in opening a crisis centre in Penama, the only province where no such services had been available. The centre has since played a key role in providing counselling to women impacted not only by domestic violence but also by displacement following the eruption of the Ambae volcano.

With UN Women's support, three provinces of **China** in 2017 became the first in the country to adopt local policies to implement the national domestic violence law enacted in 2016. Training has familiarized local judicial officials with how to implement the law and awareness campaigns have mobilized people from all walks of life to know their rights under it. Integrated domestic violence prevention and response mechanisms link the police, courts, hospitals, schools

and other institutions with critical roles in protecting survivors.

UN Women has played a leading role in a joint United Nations initiative to roll out an Essential Services Package for survivors of violence. Regional workshops have convened representatives from 22 countries; seven are now applying global guidelines to develop national services. **Viet Nam**, for example, has mapped existing service gaps and is finalizing a toolkit for service providers, along with guidance for health-care providers, police and members of the judicial system.

GUIDING BETTER RESPONSES

Through long-standing cooperation with UN Women, ASEAN in 2018 adopted regional guidelines to systematize the collection and use of data on violence against women. Covering issues related to prevalence, administration of responses to violence and costing, the guidelines are a step towards improved services and polices based on sound evidence.

Timor-Leste's largest employer, the Civil Service Commission, adopted new and unprecedented guidelines on sexual harassment. Covering 30,000 civil servants, the guidelines provide standards for defining and reporting cases, and set forth responsibilities for institutions and remedies for survivors.

PUTTING RAPE ON TRIAL

UN Women joined two other UN organizations and the Governments of **Thailand** and **Viet Nam** in putting rape on trial through the region's first comparative study on why so many rape survivors fail to get justice. The study, called the "*Trial of Rape: Understanding the criminal justice system response to sexual violence in Thailand and Viet Nam*", found that discriminatory attitudes and practices discourage and disempower survivors at every step in the judicial process, from reporting to trial. Based on a review of nearly 300 cases and interviews with over 200 officials, activists and service providers, the report is a crucial step in challenging and changing long-standing practices such as prolonged court proceedings that impose additional trauma on survivors. **Viet Nam** has already moved to adopt new gender-sensitive guidelines for rape trials, in line with the study's recommendations.

MAKING CITIES SAFER

Across Asia and the Pacific, cities in five countries have joined the UN Women Safe Cities Global Flagship Programme to make streets and other public spaces safe for women and girls. Quezon City pioneered the programme in the **Philippines**, adopting municipal anti-harassment legislation that in 2017 resulted in two cases of sexual harassment filed against city workers, including police, who subsequently lost their jobs. In Manila, universities and student organizations are mobilizing around Safe Cities campaigns, raising awareness through events such as a competition where musical bands performed around the theme “Break the Silence”. The campaigns aim to show young women they have a right to enjoy public spaces without fear, and young men that they can create a new image of men who do not perpetrate violence.

In **India**, UN Women partnered with the city of New Delhi on an advocacy campaign urging men and boys to step up their efforts to end violence. Street plays and other activities reached 3,500 people in 20 neighbourhoods. The “My City, My Rights” campaign in two areas of the city drew on 20 women’s safety audits led by a community youth group of 700 boys and girls. They engaged with 10,570 market association members and shopkeepers, who signed up to create “sexual harassment free zones”. A partnership in the city of Mumbai with Safetipin, the Akshara Centre and the Hindustan Times launched the ‘My Safetipin’ App. It has already been used by some 200 student volunteers to collect safety data at railway stations and along 366 kilometres of road in two city wards.

Pakistan’s first Women’s Safety Audit was conducted in the city of Lahore, with a focus on bus services. Over 900 women commuters and 100 bus drivers and conductors shared insights. Other perspectives came from safety walk evaluations. The audit pinpointed a number of reasons that harassment on public transport goes unchallenged, including inadequate security and discriminatory social attitudes. The restrictions on women’s mobility have far-reaching consequences, limiting their options to work and get an education, among other concerns. Learning from the pilot audit is now being used for developing similar exercises in three provinces of **Pakistan**.

With a major infrastructure boom on in the country, the process has encouraged the federal and provincial governments to take measures to make transport safer for women, including on the intra-city train in Lahore and the Bus Rapid Transit system in Peshawar. Two provinces have initiated a women’s safety app that offers instant updates on safety in different locations, as well as quick links to emergency hotlines and transport control rooms.

4 Rs to Stop Street Harassment

Realize
Know your rights. May karapatan ang lehat ng babae na hindi ma-harass.

Respond
Only if you feel safe enough, sabihin sa harasser na siya ay nakakabastos at hindi ito okay.

Report
Share experiences with friends, family, colleagues, and in social media. Pwede rin i-report sa pulis o barangay hall: bawal sa CAD Code and lehat ng uri ng harassment kahit verbal o visual.

Reform
Change the culture that tolerates kabastusan. Speak out against street harassment.

We want Safe Cities: Women #FreeFromFear!

UN WOMEN SAFE CITIES

SAFE CITIES
QUEZON CITY
FREE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS
UN WOMEN

We want Safe Cities: Women #FreeFromFear!

Expected Impact for Women:

- Increased sense of security/ Less fear among women
- Greater freedom to move around the city
- Less sexual harassment and violence in public spaces

Have you experienced Street Harassment? Take our Facebook poll: fb.com/UNWomenSafeCitiesFreeFromFearCampaign

UN WOMEN AECID



L-R: Ms Shamima Ali (Coordinator, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre) and Mrs Marilyn Tahī (Coordinator, Vanuatu Women's Centre and Pacific Women Advisory Member). Photo: Pacific Women Support Unit/Shazia Usman

Shamima Ali

"The most effective solutions come from listening to women"

Shamima Ali is one of the founding members of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women and has been a Coordinator at the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre for the past 31 years. Active in partnership with UN Women in advancing national guidelines for responding to gender-based violence, she talks about what's driving high levels of violence and how it can be prevented.

"In the Pacific, we are a patriarchal and religious population. Both culture and religion are used as an excuse to condone violence against women. Men are seen as leaders, and there is a strong preference for male children. A woman may continuously reproduce to have a boy child, and when resources are limited, boys will get more education.

Boys grow up with a sense of entitlement and girls grow up believing that women are there to cater to men's needs. Women are expected to follow strict social norms, and when they step out of those norms, they are punished.

Combine that with structural discrimination and violence - girls and women are denied education, lack ownership of land and assets, and are therefore poorer - and you have the perfect conditions for violence against women.

Every woman in **Fiji** is expected to get married to a man and, once married, it's her responsibility to make that marriage

work. If anything goes wrong, it's seen as her fault.

Women don't see violence as something wrong... it's seen as normal. If she complains, other women around her tell her it's what they all went through. If she reports the abuse to the family or the faith leaders, their priority is to keep the family together. If she reports to the police, they may not take her complaint, even though the law says that as soon as a woman reports violence, the police must charge the abuser and let the court decide.

The norms around men-women relationships are the hardest to change. That's why we have [started] to work with young girls and boys [so that they don't grow up believing this is normal]. How we bring up girls and boys must change.

Two other approaches are also showing promising results - we engage religious and traditional leaders, since they have a lot of influence; and we have set up a model programme, Male Advocacy for Women's Human Rights, where men undergo a learning and awareness programme to change themselves first and then influence change in other men.

It takes time to change mindsets and it's hard work, but our work has put ending violence against women on everybody's agenda.

The most effective solutions come from

listening to women. For instance, when we were holding community consultations about the domestic violence law, the women explained that the only way they could get a restraining order was from the court and that could take days, or weeks. They could be killed by that time! We advocated for the law to provide easier ways of obtaining a restraining order against an abuser. Now the restraining order paperwork is available at the police station. When a woman reports a case, the police can call the magistrate, even on a weekend, and the paperwork can be faxed and approved, so that the survivor doesn't have to wait for a court date.

I am a survivor, my mother was a survivor, and I had a strong sense of justice within me. That's what propelled me to do this work. Once I joined, there was no looking back. The hardest thing for me is seeing women and girls continually violated. When women don't get justice, it's heartbreaking, but it makes us advocate even stronger.

I am working on this issue for more than 30 years now, and the violence itself has not reduced drastically. But we see more women are coming forward to report violence - and this gives me hope. The male advocacy programme [also] gives me hope - I have seen men change. These little wins need to be celebrated. The alternative is unacceptable."

MEETING WOMEN'S NEEDS IN CRISES

Parts of Asia remain entrenched in severe humanitarian crises. Some are driven by worsening climate impacts, while others stem from rising civic unrest, among other factors. Humanitarian action has a long and proven track record in tackling crises once they erupt, but not in ways that consistently reach women. Even a woman who has sought sanctuary in a refugee camp may find that she still faces violence if she ventures outside a temporary shelter, or that she cannot obtain health care or other essential services.

As the UN entity charged with coordinating gender equality advances across the UN system, whether related to peace, development or humanitarian crisis, UN Women has taken a lead in transforming humanitarian action so that it upholds women's rights and responds to their specific needs. Recognizing that not all crises are avoidable, we also help countries account for gender differences and engage women on an equal footing in all aspects of preparedness and risk reduction.



Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce



Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce

I am the face of change:
Minara Begum, Refugee and advocate

She once had a large wooden house nestled amid trees and thriving fields of rice. Cows and goats grazed nearby; chickens pecked in the yard. There was always enough to eat. But **Myanmar's** conflict took it all away.

Soldiers burned the house and the nearby village, and Minara Begum, 22, was forced to leave everything behind and flee with her parents, siblings and four-year-old daughter. They walked for five days without food, finally trading Minara's gold nose pin so they could cross a river and find safety in **Bangladesh**, near the town of Cox's Bazar. The impoverished area now holds the world's largest population of refugees - almost a million.

Like many there, Begum and her family have struggled to piece together a new life, crowded in a small shelter in the Balukhali refugee camp. The daily routine centres on the collection of food and other relief items. Fear and restrictive sociocultural norms mean few women venture into the crowded lanes of the camp, even to use communal toilets, much less to participate in camp meetings to identify and act on the needs of residents.

Begum refuses to stay confined to her temporary home and bridle her spirit, however. She has become a face of change, one of 30 community outreach volunteers dedicated to helping other refugee women and girls regain hope despite the turmoil in their uprooted lives.

An essential refuge is the camp's Multi-Purpose Women's Centre, which Begum and the other volunteers encourage refugee women and girls to visit. Supported by UN Women, it offers a place to learn new skills and socialize, breaking the isolation that so easily feeds despair. Women can seek psychosocial assistance, along with essential information on nutrition, health and sanitation. Art therapy helps gently initiate a process of coming to terms with trauma. Centre staff speak to women about intimate partner violence, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, child marriage and trafficking.

Begum's first experience at the centre was to learn tailoring skills. Empowered by plans to someday transform what she has learned into income, she began volunteering to share information with other women about how they could do the same. "I talk to the parents of adolescent girls and encourage them to send their daughters to the Centre so that they learn new skills," she says.

She's also known for carrying relief items for pregnant women and helping them reach relief distribution points. She has become a visible, vocal presence in camp meetings, where she speaks forthrightly on women's problems. Her overriding aim is simple but compelling: "I want (my daughter's) future to be better than this," she says.



Minara Begum, 22, is seen in Balukhali camp on 5 March 2018, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce

The severity of gender-based violence coupled with restrictive social norms have marked the Rohingya crisis as particularly devastating for women. The majority of women and girl refugees in Cox's Bazar have either survived or witnessed some form of sexual violence. An estimated 16 per cent of Rohingya families are headed by single mothers. This stark reality has propelled UN Women's concerted actions to scale up support for women and girls. As the number of refugees swelled in 2017, amid escalating violence, early efforts focused on the immediate distribution of dignity kits of soap, clothes, menstrual hygiene products and other essential items, including solar lamps and cleaner cooking fuel to reduce exposure to smoke from indoor cooking fires.

Equally important has been a drive to make humanitarian mechanisms in **Bangladesh** as a whole more responsive to gender, lowering the risk of leaving women and girls behind in a situation where survival is at stake. UN Women led the establishment of the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group as an essential part of the humanitarian coordination mechanism to help the refugees. When a

concern was raised in the group about humanitarian workers, including midwives and doctors, not being allowed to remain in the camps after 5 p.m. due to security measures, UN Women successfully negotiated with the police for some female doctors and midwives to access the camps even at night, a potential life saver for women giving birth or requiring emergency medical care.

Another measure has been gender training for camp managers. This has led some to recruit women volunteers to go door-to-door to collect information on how women are faring. With this information in hand, one camp manager has taken steps to encourage men to help women collect the heavy compressed rice husks used for fuel. He issues permits for constructing mosques only when there is a commitment to providing equal space for women and men.

Begum and hundreds of thousands of other Rohingya women and girls are far from home and will be for the foreseeable future. That makes it all the more imperative that the assistance they need and deserve be close at hand.



Elsie agreed to take on the role of secretary of Ikurup's Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee, and has worked alongside CARE to translate information for the community on how to get ready for and respond to disasters in Vanuatu. Photo: UN Women/Matt Abott/PACAM

REDUCING RISKS IN DISASTERS

Disasters in Asia upended the lives of nearly 67 million people in 2017. With their lower social and economic standing, women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable to risks. Compounding that vulnerability is the still limited recognition of their needs and contributions in humanitarian responses.

The 2018 Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction presented an opportunity to rectify the imbalance. UN Women joined civil society groups and other United Nations organizations in successful advocacy persuading 50 countries to commit to giving more women leading roles in reducing natural disaster risks. They also agreed to improve collection of data broken down by sex, age and disability; design specific programmes to stem gender-based violence during crises; and ensure the continuity of services for sexual and reproductive health. Conference outcomes map the way forward for the region to implement a major global agreement, the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In the Pacific, where low-lying islands make it among the world's most vulnerable places in the era of climate change, **the Solomon Islands** is part of a joint flagship

programme of UN Women, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to tackle gender inequalities in climate risks. The programme integrates measures to assess and act on gender discrepancies in national plans and budgets, while also mobilizing women to take an active role in local disaster preparedness. In **Samoa**, UN Women is partnering with the Samoa Red Cross Society, the country's largest humanitarian organization. With over 2,200 volunteers, it is moving to involve more women in planning and providing humanitarian assistance.

In 2017, UN Women brought together government representatives, police, civil society organizations and women's crisis centres from **Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga** and **Vanuatu**. Together, they agreed to develop measures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in emergencies, including national plans dedicated to the issue. The meeting, involving different actors from within countries and across the region, was the first of its type. Among other key issues, it drew attention to how gender and other intersecting forms of marginalization can make vulnerability even more acute in times of crisis, including among people living with disabilities, and LGBTIQ communities.



Matcha Phorn-in

“If you are invisible in everyday life, your needs will not be thought of, let alone addressed, in a crisis situation”

Photo: UN Women/Pathumporn Thongking

Matcha Phorn-in is the Executive Director of Sangsan Anakot Yaowachon, a civil society organization working with young people from marginalized communities, many of whom are indigenous, in disaster-prone Thai villages along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Her organization supports women to become leaders and raise their communities' awareness regarding human rights, gender equality, and issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). With UN Women and other partners, Phorn-in supported the organization of the first "Pride in the Humanitarian System" consultation in 2018. Civil society organizations working for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) rights convened with humanitarian actors to discuss integrating diverse SOGIESC perspectives in humanitarian crisis prevention and response.

“In the villages where I work, the conflict between ethnic minorities and the military has been going on for more than 30 years, and a lot of people are suffering from both sides. The conflict has left a lot of people stateless and undocumented - they are not recognized as citizens, and their illegal status de facto excludes them from society. The law bars them from

travelling, working and owning land. In this context, women and girls are particularly vulnerable, because they suffer from a patriarchal society that oppresses them, especially if they are young, indigenous, lesbian, bisexual and queer.

A lot of cultures and societies blame people of diverse SOGIESC for “causing” disasters because their sexual orientation and expressions are seen as sins that make the gods angry and unleash natural disasters. Thus, persons of diverse SOGIESC, including lesbians, bisexual and queer women become targets of direct violence, physical and verbal, and their diverse needs are forgotten in the aftermath of disasters. If you are invisible in everyday life, your needs will not be thought of, let alone addressed, in a crisis situation. Humanitarian programmes tend to be heteronormative and can reinforce the patriarchal structure of society if they do not take into account sexual and gender diversities. For instance, if you are a woman and have a husband and children, you get access to relief structures as a family. But if you are a lesbian couple, you don't get recognized as a family, and are deprived of such assistance.



LGBTIQ persons were represented in the march as well. Photo: UN Women/Felix Maia

In disaster settings, women are a lot more vulnerable to gender-based violence, harassment and rape, and that vulnerability is aggravated for lesbian and bisexual women. They are not recognized as part of the village community and not accepted as equals. So not only are they discriminated based on their gender, they are also harassed on the basis of their sexual orientation, and they don't have any mechanisms in place to protect them.

The villages where I work often face landslides, floods and fires. Every year, some people die, and survivors are left traumatized. I listen to their stories again and again, but I never had the knowledge or experience to properly help them in any way. The "Pride in the Humanitarian System" consultation opened a door to change that. It was unique because it allowed community members and humanitarian actors, as well as government representatives and donors, to meet and discuss this issue together for the first time. I had never experienced any consultation like this, where all the complexities, the multiple identities and the barriers that the people I work with are facing, could be addressed. No topic, and no one, was left behind in the conversation.

The conclusions of the consultation were summarized in a "Call to action", that takes on a holistic approach

in the recommendations provided by community members, taking into account intersectional vulnerabilities, including a feminist perspective. The goal is to see how we can all move forward together and make these issues a priority in many countries.

Humanitarian actors are often not properly trained to understand and address our issues as communities of people with diverse SOGIESC. Humanitarian programmes are rarely even gender-sensitive and mainstreaming people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics is never mentioned. If humanitarian actors can't recognize persons of diverse SOGIESC identities and what their problems are, they can't help them in crisis. That's why we want to share our knowledge, to train them on these issues while they train us in humanitarian action.

A lot of lesbian, bisexual and queer women who are usually left behind, came away feeling empowered to engage and facilitate change. We benefited from the discussions at the consultation, and now we come back home to our community with a strong purpose, new tools, and a new commitment."

PREVENTING EXTREMISM, BROKERING PEACE

Asia and the Pacific remains a region where many countries are vulnerable to conflict; pressures have intensified from violent extremism and terrorism. The nature of conflict, increasingly local and long-lasting, takes an ongoing toll on human rights, and sets back hopes for development, equality and justice. Women and girls face specific concerns that must be addressed, and have a right to equal participation in brokering peace.

While some progress has been made, and women are often on the vanguard as champions of peace, their roles and the visibility of gender issues are still limited in efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts. Much must still be done to realize the landmark UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. UN Women continues to press for commitments countries made in the resolution, including through national action plans. We help open room for women in all peace and security processes, and assist them in cultivating skills as empowered, effective advocates for peace. Increasingly, we work with women in their communities, where they are attuned to the potential for radicalization and violent extremism, and well placed to thwart its spread.



Photo: UN Photo/Harandane Dicko



Photo: UN Women/Iwan Kurniawan

*I am the face of change:
Ibu Elen, Community leader and peace advocate*

Situated in the lush forests of **Indonesia's** West Java province, the village of Tajur Halang is richly diverse, with a mix of indigenous people, Chinese descendants, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. Traditionally, the different groups got along, yet more in the spirit of tolerance than active engagement. It was easy enough to make a comment about "others" that could be misinterpreted in the wrong way.

Peace prevailed, but lived on shallow roots challenged by poor economic prospects, in a country where tensions simmer below the surface and violent extremism is a threat. In a nearby village, a communal conflict that erupted ended in a school being burned to the ground.

Women in Tajur Halang decided they did not want this future, and so they stood up and showed another way forward.

Ibu Elen is one of these faces of change. As part of a cooperative providing access to small loans and training to improve her livelihood, she learned about how her community could declare itself a "peace village". The declaration would be a substantial public commitment, requiring the agreement of local authorities, police and all the different communities. Success would rest on people adopting new behaviours, such as refusing to indulge in harmful gossip. They would need to collaborate on common tasks, such as fixing community buildings and setting up early warning systems. New ideas about women's

role as leaders in the community would have to be embraced.

Ibu Elen and the other women went door-to-door to explain the concept to their neighbours. At first, they met a steady stream of objections. Political leaders balked at times. But the women prevailed. The public ceremony to declare the "peace village" marked a shift towards greater social cohesion that has progressed steadily ever since. People have encouraged each other to participate in the activities of other communities, such as by contributing funds to funerals. New sports facilities and a breast-feeding room at the local town hall are in place. Plans call for renovating the local school.

"Some people said 'why waste time on this? We just need to earn money,'" Ibu Elen recalls. "I said the benefit is huge. If we have peace, we can do every activity with no concerns."

She adds: "There is a lot of potential here for people to be better and do more. But it requires someone taking the first step and showing the way forward. A woman who is determined - no one can stop her."

Tajur Halang is one of nine villages in **Indonesia** that have been declared peace villages by local residents and authorities. The effort falls under a regional UN Women programme to help countries curb growing threats from violent extremism. It is the first such initiative to empower women as shapers of values that can make societies more cohesive and peaceful.



A women's cooperative group in Depok, supported by the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme, gathers every week to update each other on their business progress and they also received training to address financial literacy, economic empowerment, leadership, peace and gender equality. These meetings have resulted in increased confidence for all the women when managing and expanding their businesses and increased trust among different communities in the village. Photo: UN Women/Iwan Kurniawan

In villages where the programme has been active, early assessments found that 45 per cent of women participants strongly agree that they now know more about what to do in order to prevent violent extremism in their families, compared with only 29 per cent of women in villages outside the programme. Similar results were found in their communities, signaling women's capacity to influence public opinion.

Central to the programme is a process of women's economic empowerment, which positions women to have a greater voice in community affairs. Both men and women have said this has noticeably decreased tensions in families and communities. Women's microfinance groups meet weekly, encouraging women of diverse religious and social backgrounds to support each other while acquiring business and leadership skills.

The regional programme is also active in **Bangladesh**, involving 1,200 women in six districts. Women members have lobbied schools to include information in their curriculum on how to identify and prevent violent extremism, and nearly 133,000 people have

attended theatre productions raising awareness about the importance of social cohesion to curb extremism. "Before, no one knew much about violent extremism or considered the actions they could take to prevent it in their communities," says Shuvashis Chandra Mahanta, Manager-Capacity Building and Communication, BRAC, a UN Women partner. "Now we see that women are very outspoken about this issue, and they are talking to others about what they can do to prevent radicalization."

Other efforts under the regional programme entail working with governments to ensure that national and regional counter-terrorism policies and strategies are informed by women's experiences. Sustained UN Women advocacy and technical support in 2017 led to the first-ever ASEAN joint statement on women, peace and security, which refers to the multiple forms of exclusion that can fuel violent extremism. Among the champions of measures like these is the President of **Indonesia**. Commemorating the International Day of Peace in 2017, he declared, "Women are the key to sustainable peace. From family, to country, to the world."

EMPOWERING WOMEN AS ADVOCATES

The siege conducted by violent extremist groups in Marawi in the **Philippines** in 2017 was horrific. Lasting over five months, it devastated the city and displaced nearly 400,000 residents. UN Women and civil society partners conducted an innovative Listening Process to document women's experiences and perspectives on how the conflict began - and what could be done so that such a tragedy never happens again. Women revealed, for example, that not only is there growing recruitment of young men by violent extremist groups, but young women are also increasingly joining in combat roles. With financial burdens having become extreme, women stressed that decent livelihoods and income are crucial to stemming further radicalization.

The findings are feeding into ongoing efforts to prevent violent extremism and support a peace process that fully incorporates women's rights and needs. Marawi is located in Mindanao, where a 2014 peace agreement included establishing an autonomous region called the "Bangsamoro". In 2018, with a bill to establish the Bangsamoro finally winding its way through the last parts of the legislative process, UN Women drew on its network of women leaders trained on gender, peace and security issues. They successfully advocated for the law, which was subsequently passed, to include provisions reserving seats for women in the new Parliament and Cabinet, along with dedicated resources for women in future public budgets. Through a Speakers Bureau, the women also travelled to mosques and other venues to hold conversations with communities of people displaced by the conflict, building awareness of the bill and the growing potential for peace.

A crucial element of the new law is a formal transitional justice mechanism to address human rights violations. UN Women has already helped Bangsamoro women leaders come together with key government entities, civil society organizations and international development organizations to shape a gender-responsive transitional justice agenda taking up the issues where women suffered the most grievous harm, including sexual and gender-based violence, and the loss of land.

As the Autonomous Region of Bougainville of **Papua New Guinea** heads towards a 2019 referendum that will decide its future, UN Women has partnered with the Bougainville Department of Community

Government to ensure that 33 constituencies are ready for a peaceful vote. Training has helped 1,650 people, including elected community government leaders, other officials, ward members and women leaders better understand the key functions of community government and requirements for the referendum. Special workshops have encouraged women trainees to build confidence by sharing their leadership experiences, and male community leaders to acknowledge women's key roles in the referendum and broader peacebuilding.

UN Women's efforts also helped broker the first meeting of the Bougainville Women's Federation and the **Papua New Guinea** National Council of Women since crisis erupted in Bougainville 30 years ago. In a reconciliation ceremony, the heads of the two organizations agreed on a joint declaration committing both organizations to work together on the referendum. UN Women's support for a fact-finding mission by senior church leaders helped them identify how they can support the referendum as well. Some have now joined the call for gender equality in political participation, and committed to opening leadership opportunities for women in their communities.

In **Thailand's** southern border provinces, UN Women is working with a coalition of allies like Patimoh Sadiyamu, the first Muslim woman to hold the key position of vice provincial governor, and the Women's Civic Network to empower women to foster trust in their communities. For the first time, women, including from marginalized backgrounds, have an active role in peace and security. "Even when we saw a single woman in a group of peace negotiators, that was progress from the usual absence of any women," says Sadiyamu. "The government will benefit by engaging women in the peace process and by creating safe spaces where they are protected and empowered during crisis situations."

Consultations involving security officers, provincial government officers, leaders from southern border province women's groups, civil society organizations and the media have established regular spaces for dialogue to help resolve tensions within communities. Having learned new advocacy skills, some women have assumed roles as peace communicators who promote social cohesion and build bridges between their neighbours and with local authorities. Around 750 women and young people have developed strategies for local peacebuilding, mediation and business development to improve livelihoods.

A portrait of Saba Ismail, a woman with long, dark, curly hair, wearing a blue top. She is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. The background is a solid, muted red color.

Saba Ismail

“Everyone needs to contribute to build peace”

Photo: Courtesy of Angela Catlin

Saba Ismail started working on peacebuilding in **Pakistan** when she was 15 years old. The perceptions about young people is a major barrier to their engagement in peacebuilding, she says, as their work is not taken seriously. Heightened insecurity makes it even harder for young women. Still, she hopes to see diversities celebrated and everyone contributing to peace. As a member of the Advisory Group for the Youth, Peace and Security Progress Study of the UN Secretary-General, Ismail spoke at an event organized by UN Women at the 2017 UN Commission on the Status of Women.

“I come from Peshawar, a province in north-west **Pakistan**, where extremist and radical groups are very active. I went to a private school, but still, often religious intolerance was part of the narrative there. We were taught that it was a sin to eat from the same dish or even shake hands with non-Muslims.

I would have grown up believing in that narrative, that jihad is about justice, if not for my father. He always taught us to celebrate diversity. He started taking me and my sister to progressive meetings when we were teenagers.

In one such meeting, I heard the testimony of a mother who had received the dead body of her missing 13-year-old son. He had been taken away to join the jihadis, without her consent. That day, the truth sunk in - this is not a fight for justice!

My sister and I started Aware Girls when we were 15 and 16 years old, so that young people could be engaged in a different narrative of peace and coexistence. We established the Youth Peace Network and using a peer education model, taught young people peacebuilding and conflict resolution skills. We also worked with young people who were at risk of being recruited by extremist groups.

The hardest thing for me is the continuous threats and lack of security that I face, and which extend to my family. We encountered so many threats, because we worked on peacebuilding...The whole family had to move from Peshawar to Islamabad. Now I live in New York, but the threats continue.

The space for young women to work on peacebuilding is shrinking as we speak. They are not part of any peace negotiations. Women administering polio vaccinations have been attacked and killed by militant groups. Imagine that!

Peace is not an overnight miracle. Everyone needs to contribute to build peace. For me, peace means people feel safe in their homes, on the streets, in the markets, in their mosques and their temples. It means celebration of all our diversities.”

MOBILIZING BEHIND THE CALL FOR EQUALITY: OUR PARTNERS

Realizing gender equality, especially by the globally agreed deadline of 2030, requires everyone to step up action. UN Women encourages and coordinates collective efforts to act on and across the many concerns critical to realizing gender equality.

Women, men, governments, businesses, civil society, international organizations and others all have roles to play. They bring high levels of expertise, influence, commitment and funds necessary to accelerate change. In partnership, they make links to unlock the multiple inequalities that intersect in women's lives, and reach those otherwise left behind.



Students from Aman Foundation chanting the sustainable development goal for gender equality. Photo: UN Women/Anam Abbas

洞见未来

2016中国年度最佳雇主百



I am the face of change:

Guo Sheng, CEO, Zhilian Zhaopin

Photo: Courtesy of Guo Sheng

Women have both gained from **China's** long economic boom and driven its course, but still lag behind men in what they are paid and their share of leadership positions. Smart corporate leaders like Guo Sheng realize that if this pattern persists, it will not only deny women equality, but weigh down **China's** hopes for the future. A shrinking overall workforce, an ageing population and a competitive global economy mean that **China** needs to make the most of women's talents - and soon.

As the CEO of Zhilian Zhaopin and a champion of gender equality, Guo is a face of change. He oversees a web platform that has become one of **China's** largest job boards, connecting 160 million job seekers, half of whom are women, to 6.3 million enterprise users in search of new hires. Under his leadership, Zhaopin has become a pioneer of corporate social responsibility, still at a relatively nascent stage in **China**. As a partner of UN Women, the company has positioned gender equality as an early corporate social responsibility (CSR) priority and corporate imperative.

"Treating women and men equally is a necessity for achieving social progress, which everyone will

benefit from," Guo says. "Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment shows enterprises take responsibility to promote a belief and activities that can benefit hundreds of millions of people. It is a positive attitude to give back to society."

Zhaopin is well known for its China Best Employers Awards, coveted by companies to attract the best employees. Until 2017, a subset of awards for the Best Employers for Female Employees were given based on voting by female Internet users. Through partnering with UN Women, Zhaopin in 2017 decided to base selection on the globally recognized Women's Empowerment Principles.

Jointly developed by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, and adopted by over 1,800 companies around the world, the seven principles offer practical guidance to businesses on promoting gender equality and empowering women in the workplace, market and community. Applying them makes the awards more accurate and rigorous in singling out companies that have created women-friendly workplaces and empowered female employees—and can serve as models for other businesses to follow.



Photo: Courtesy of Guo Sheng

To draw further attention to gender gaps and make a case for change, Zhilian has sponsored research focused on the corporate sector. A study of its award winners found that those with a high share of women employees and an emphasis on fair compensation and benefits enjoy a 23 per cent higher profit growth rate than companies in general.

Zhilian's "2018 Report on Women in the Workplace", released to much media attention at the China Women Leadership Forum, emphasized that women's income is still 22 per cent lower than that of men, primarily because fewer women attain higher-paying leadership positions. The annual forum, jointly organized with UN Women and CCTV (China Central Television), draws leading figures from diverse industries to shine a spotlight on advances in women's leadership.

UN Women's partnership with Zhilian is one part of a broader programme of support for putting gender equality at the heart of corporate social responsibility in **China**. In collaboration with government entities, companies and academic institutions has backed annual gender and corporate social responsibility conferences that provide opportunities for companies to learn and exchange ideas.

In 2017, over 300 participants flocked to the conference, which was jointly organized in Shenzhen by UN Women and the Shenzhen Women and Children's Development Foundation.

Zhu Shunhua, president of the Shenzhen Watch & Clock Association, was one of them. For 30 years, he had been struck by the many dynamic women entrepreneurs in his industry. Yet little had been done to bring them together. After the conference, the association, which represents businesses in a leading global manufacturing centre for timepieces, established a women's committee to offer more focused support to women entrepreneurs. One early step: At a major annual forum for the industry, women were deliberately put forward as speakers on leading topics such as artificial intelligence.

"We wanted to give women more opportunities," Zhu says. "This is not just a slogan. It requires a whole package of actions and a systematic approach."



At the end of the day, performers and expert participants in the evening event pose with PIKOTARO's signature move while backstage at a press conference with Japanese and international media. Photo: UN Women/STORY CO., LTD

ARTISTS

Across the region, artists have partnered with UN Women to captivate new audiences in creative ways, building an ever-widening circle of people who are aware of, and committed to, gender equality. Timed with International Women's Day, and coinciding with similar events in capitals around the world, the week-long HeForShe Arts Week Bangkok celebrated gender equality achievements while stressing gaps such as the burden of unpaid care work. More than 4,000 people attended and related social media reached 1.9 million potential users.

Highlights included a contemporary dance performance on ending violence against women and girls by New Cambodian Artists. Xyza Cruz Bacani, a Filipina street photographer and former domestic worker in Hong Kong who is now the Magnum Foundation's Human Rights Fellow, showcased her work. A film festival featured award-winning documentaries on hot-button topics from child marriage to unsafe labour migration.

Thailand's "Social Power Exhibition against Sexual Assault" also tapped the arts to speak for change, through an exhibition showcasing the clothing of survivors of sexual violence. It challenged the notion that women's appearance and behaviour are to blame when they are assaulted. UN Women joined diverse collaborators from the arts, government and

social activism in sponsoring the event, which was part of the #DontTellMeHowToDress campaign. Led by supermodel and actress Cindy Sirinya Bishop, other celebrities and activists as **Thailand's** answer to the #MeToo movement, the campaign has since generated international attention and spread to other countries in the region.

From the community level to the international stage, UN Women has tapped comedy to challenge gender stereotypes. In laughing at the absurdity of gender discrimination, comics invite people to imagine a better, more peaceful world.

In 2018, Japanese pop sensation PIKOTARO debuted his new collaboration with UN Women, "Gender Equal Peaceful World". With his signature dance moves on full display, PIKOTARO performed live to showcase the successes of UN Women's regional programme on preventing violent extremism. Through social media and online platforms, the new song went viral, reaching over 2.2 million people in just five days. The performance was part of a broader event on transforming gender social norms through comedy that featured a number of prominent artists and comedians. Two YouTube comedy videos were developed in partnership with Priyank Mathur's Mythos Labs. "Brainwash", made by East India Comedy, offered a satirical take on beauty product advertisements that drew over 200,000 views on social media in only 24 hours.

Ring the Bell for Gender Equality



Ring the Bell for Gender Equality 2018 March 8, 2018



The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) signaled its commitment to further promote business practices that give women greater equality and leadership in listed companies. Photo: UN Women/Roengrit Kongmuang

BUSINESS LEADERS

The bells rang out on the 2018 International Women's Day at 63 stock exchanges around the world. As part of the Ring the Bell for Gender Equality Initiative, the exchanges used their closing bells to remind investors uniquely positioned to influence capital markets to do their part for gender equality. Now in its fourth iteration, the initiative involves a partnership between UN Women, the UN Global Compact, the Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative, the International Finance Corporation, Women in ETFs and the World Federation of Exchanges.

For the first time in 2018, the Stock Exchange of Thailand took part. While the numbers of women in leadership positions in the public and private sectors have increased, much still needs to be done, including to accommodate the aspirations of both women and men to balance a career and family life. After the bell ringing, more than 150 people took part in a panel discussion on the "Future of Work". Kesara Manchusree, the President of the exchange, stressed, "The progress of female participation must be addressed at its roots, which is equal opportunities for education, training and recruitment."

With businesses from across the region gathered at the CSR Asia Summit 2017, an annual conference on sustainable business practices, UN Women collaborated with the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment to catalyse business action for women's empowerment. Representatives from governments, civil society groups and businesses agreed that this can boost women's well-being and companies' bottom lines. The event provided scope to

begin engaging with business leaders to shape a regional strategy for working with the private sector on women's economic empowerment.

Companies in Asia and the Pacific, including Unilever Pakistan, have continued to sign onto the Women's Empowerment Principles. As a signatory since 2013, Unilever's headquarters has made gender equality and the improvement of opportunities for women into a global priority across its business. An expanding partnership with UN Women covers initiatives in **India, Indonesia, Pakistan** and **Viet Nam**.

FASHION DESIGNERS

She moved carefully down the ramp of a fashion show, a child dressed in a school girl's neat uniform - except trimmed in the elaborate gold embroidery normally associated with a marriage. Audience members gasped or stood silent. At a show dedicated to bridal couture, the moment sent a stark and compelling message: child marriage is a violation of human rights, not a moment for celebration. Bridal Uniform, an advocacy campaign fielded by UN Women in **Pakistan** in partnership with Ali Xeeshan, a renowned clothes designer, as well as BBDO Pakistan, has used the show and social media to demand attention to the fact that 20 per cent of Pakistani girls are still married off before age 18. A petition to Parliament and on-the-ground activism are other measures. They are aimed at upholding laws that make child marriage illegal—and shifting the social norms that still allow it to happen regardless.



The record number of women players at the Oceania Rugby Sevens Championships, held in Suva, Fiji from 10-11 November 2017, reflects a global movement to achieve equal participation of women and men in rugby. Photo: UN Women/Caitlin Clifford

MEDIA PERSONALITIES

Through media partnerships, UN Women can send messages about gender equality far and wide. In **Pakistan**, for instance, a joint radio project by UN Women and United Nations Volunteers empowers those who create programmes as well as the women and youth who tune in to them.

Broadcasting in the southwestern province of Balochistan, the shows reach marginalized Hazara and Khaizi communities, offering entertainment, information and education grounded in progressive gender perspectives. Radio Pakistan Quetta airs the programmes, while the provincial Media Department and Radio Pakistan joined forces to train 30 volunteers on presentation, production and broadcasting skills. “I got a chance to express myself beyond the bounds of my home,” said Nighat Michael, one of the volunteers. “Today, I feel driven to stand up for women’s rights as I have realized the importance of having a voice.”

In **China**, UN Women and its prominent media partner Netease sponsor the Women’s Media Awards, which recognize women role models in different fields. With a special ceremony and a splash of media attention, the 2017 awards paid tribute to 15 women pioneers in the arts, the Olympic Games, construction, film, philanthropy, local government and aerospace engineering, among other professions. Awards also went to men, including for notable achievements in balancing careers and families.

SPORTS CHAMPIONS

Sports put on vivid display how much women can achieve, through grace, grit and well-honed skills. As a sports organization and partner of UN Women, Oceania Rugby has become a catalyst for change in the Pacific region. Its appointment of women board members opened scope for them to champion equal opportunity recruitment, while a new family-friendly emphasis includes lower ticket prices. A record number of women players took part in the 2017 Oceania Rugby Sevens Championship in **Fiji**, where for the first time the Women’s Championship Final served as the tournament’s grand final.

UN Women collaborates with Oceania Rugby as well as the European Union and Australian Government on Get Into Rugby PLUS, a programme training coaches to provide a safe, equal and inclusive environment for young players, male and female. Coaches learn to teach life-skills, and challenge gender stereotypes and harmful social norms. The partnership is also backing regional research to better understand the barriers women and girls confront in sports; the interplay between sports and gender-based violence, and effective social marketing strategies that use sports to prevent violence.



Photo: UN Women/Putra Djohan

GLOBAL ADVOCATES

The global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence has become an annual hallmark of the UN Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women by 2030. Managed by UN Women, the campaign rallies people around the colour orange as a vibrant symbol of hope and a violence-free world.

In 2017, people from all walks of life across Asia and the Pacific took part in marches, exhibits, concerts and sporting events. Iconic buildings were bathed in orange light. In **Bangladesh**, UN Women joined 20 other organizations to host poetry readings, and dance and musical performances. For the first time, the People's Committee Building in Ho Chi Minh city, **Viet Nam** was illuminated in orange. In **Vanuatu**, the Shefna/Port Vila Challenge Netball Tournament gave centre-court attention to messages around ending violence.

In **Japan**, the City Hall of Bunkyo-city was lit in orange, and local universities, women's organizations and police joined actions to raise awareness. At Nagoya University, young activists spoke up about the issue of gender-based violence on campus and held inaugural Global Ideathons to workshop new strategies to stop it. Local police in **Japan** distributed information flyers together with their adorable orange mascot, "Pipo-kun".

MEN AND BOYS

UN Women's global HeForShe campaign mobilizes men and boys as partners and agents of change for achieving gender equality. In 2017, ASEAN kicked off a regional HeForShe Campaign with a call for a culture of respect, and recognition that men and boys benefit from gender equality. "The proactive involvement of men and boys in settings such as family, school, community – including those in leadership positions – is pivotal in promoting greater gender responsiveness in the ASEAN Community," said ASEAN Secretary-General Le Luong Ming.

Just before International Women's Day in 2018, 5,000 runners gathered in Jakarta for the HeForShe Run 2018, sponsored by the Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment in partnership with UN Women. Starting at the crack of dawn, men and women ran, jogged and walked together to call for ensuring women can realize their full potential. Seven murals emblazoned with messages on gender equality in the workplace were displayed along the running track.

In **Pakistan**, UN Women, White Ribbon Pakistan, the National Commission on the Status of Women and the Ministry of Human Rights mobilized thousands of men and boys from 70 districts across the country. On the eve of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, they poured into the streets calling for an end to violence, and pledged to make their districts "violence-free zones" for all women and girls.

The year 2018 saw the culmination of the 10-year Partners for Prevention Programme, which operated in **Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea** and **Viet Nam**. Through the combined expertise of UN Women and three other UN organizations, it developed evidence on the causes of men's violent behaviours, using insights gained for innovative initiatives with youth and men in communities with high rates of violence. The programme challenged harmful masculinities, promoted caring attitudes and practices, and developed skills for non-violent communication.

In **Viet Nam**, male advocate clubs backed by Partners for Prevention worked with men and boys on changing their own behaviours and those of their friends and neighbours. A proud member of a club in Da Nang, Tam Kim says, "Now I go to the market to buy food, clean my house and cook, which was unthinkable for me before. Through the training, I have learned how to manage and restrain my anger. I would never ever use violence against my wife anymore. It's never a good choice!"



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Hikmah Bafagih

“Our vision is to create an inclusive Islam”

Hikmah Bafagih, from East Java, **Indonesia**, is a university professor, community organizer, peacebuilder, counsellor, mother and wife. She is also a religious leader, steering the women’s wing in her region of Nahdlatul Ulama (commonly known as NU), a traditionalist Sunni Islam movement considered to be the biggest Muslim organization in **Indonesia**. She has guided community discussions on how women contribute to peace in their communities as part of UN Women’s regional programme on preventing violent extremism.

“At NU, we do a lot of programmes to prevent radicalization and intolerance. We try to develop preachers who can advocate for anti-radicalism in all districts of East Java. Our vision is to create an inclusive Islam.

I do face a lot of opposition, as we take on various cases. This year, I handled cases of some male Islamic leaders who impregnated their students, and cases of a priest who molested some kids in Sunday school. When we tried to bring them to justice, people thought we were dishonouring those religious leaders. Well, once they committed the crime, for us they become people who should no longer be

respected as religious leaders.

We face opposition because we also work with LGBTIQ and transgender people. I am known as the mother of the gays and the transgendered. They don’t have identity cards, and face problems getting health insurance and treatment at local clinics. I also make friends with those who are HIV positive, women who are the wives of drug users, and these women suffer from a lot of domestic violence. Sometimes their husbands deliberately make their wives junkies so that it’s easier for them to get the IV drugs. We have 250 families of drug addicts, and we are thinking of how the women of these families can come together and empower themselves.

On Sundays, I convert my house into a centre for skills training for women who were terminated from their work, and also for women whom we have assisted at the Centre for Women and Child Protection. They gather in my house, they have their own cooperative unit. We also meet with different groups of people, such as - gay and transgender people and people living with HIV. My children are okay with this, and my husband is the most supportive,

because this is what we think: if we help as many people as we can, us and our next generation will be helped, wherever they are.

A woman is a solidarity-maker, so this is something that we must do. Women are discriminated [against and stigmatized]; they suffer injustice because of improper religious interpretation and the patriarchal culture. This often disrupts their potential of building solidarity. What is most important is to empower women and to ensure they are not experiencing violence, so that women can return to being solidarity-makers.

When I grow old, I want to have a house – a house with psychologists and psychiatrists – which can accommodate people who feel unwanted, for example children, victims of violence, babies born out of wedlock, poor people who suffer from diseases such as HIV, and transgender and gay people for whom others may not care...people who just wait until they die. That’s the dream, that one day we have a rehabilitation house.

But of course, we can’t just expect that to happen, we must do something today.”

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

List of Donors from the Regional Annual Report 2017/18

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