

Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board, Annual Session 2024

“UN-Women’s Operational Response at the Regional Level: Asia and the Pacific”

A. Context

In recent years, the global increase in conflicts and geopolitical tensions has affected both the national and intra-regional politics of the Asia-Pacific region; rising global uncertainty has shifted the priorities of many Member States, resulting in reductions in development financing and the redirection of funding away from social protection and services towards the security sectors.

Asia has remained the world’s most disaster hit region from weather, climate and water related hazards in 2023.¹ Floods and storms caused the highest number of reported casualties and economic losses, whilst the impact of heatwaves became more severe. The projected changes in climate expected to take place point to a need for urgent action by Member States i.e., reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and building climate resilient economies and societies. Many countries in the Asia-Pacific – such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Pacific Islands and Pakistan - are facing more frequent and intense climate-induced disasters, and a review of progress made on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) notes that there has been a significant regression in terms of measures on climate action. Although a phenomenon as complex as climate change cannot be explained by a single cause, rapid economic growth, driven by manufacturing and trade in South and Southeast Asia, as well as challenges in meeting the demands of increased populations all drive increases in resource extraction and GHG emissions. The region is producing at least 35 per cent more GHG emissions than it did in the year 2000, and only five economies (China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation) produced 80 per cent of the total GHG emissions in the Asia-Pacific region.² Additionally, the region’s overall instability continues. The unclear trajectory of specific country contexts (e.g. Afghanistan and Myanmar) remains concerning, and due to the proliferation of increasingly authoritarian and conservative governments, elections in certain countries are expected to trigger further unrest. Moreover, despite being one of the fastest growing economic regions in the world³, some countries in the region have struggled to recover from COVID 19-induced economic downturns (Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste)⁴, and recovery trends in the region point to growing gaps in social and economic outcomes both within and between countries.⁵

All of these developments have serious implications for women and girls in the region. For example, women and girls have been disproportionately affected by complex crises in the region, including climate related crises. Women leaders, women’s organizations and peacebuilders find themselves lacking financial support and being increasingly marginalized in decision-making with the representation of women in leadership, politics and decision-making in the Asia-Pacific region being among the lowest in the world. Globally, as of February 2024, women hold 26.9 per cent of seats in parliaments, yet in Southeast Asia and in South Asia, women hold 21.9 per cent and 16.3 per cent of parliamentary seats respectively, and the rate in Pacific Islands is as low as 6.9 per cent.⁶ Additionally, advances in the digital landscape have been leveraged against women and girls for the purposes of surveillance, sexual

¹ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Resilience in a Riskier World: Managing Systemic Risks from Biological and Other Natural Hazards, the Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2021*, p.14

² United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022*, p.3

³ International Monetary Fund, *Regional Economic Outlook*, October 2021

⁴ See <https://asiafoundation.org/2024/01/10/asia-in-2024-elections-economics-and-geopolitics/>.

⁵ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UN-Women, *The Long Road to Equality: Taking stock of the situation of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific for Beijing+25*, 2020

⁶ Noting a decline in the Pacific Islands from 7.1% in 2022, see <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=2&year=2024>.

exploitation and abuse, and violent extremism.⁷ Women also remain disproportionately represented in the informal work sector, where there are typically lower incomes and more limited labor and social protections for workers.

The high prevalence of violence against women and girls also remains an alarming regional trend - nine countries in the region have among the world's highest lifetime prevalence rates of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence at 40-53 per cent⁸ - and heightened sensitivities around women's human rights issues, including open hostility towards the work of women's rights movements and Women's Human Rights Defenders, have made it more and more difficult for UN-Women to advance its mandate despite the urgent need to respond to women and girls.

Notably, due to economic marginalization, political and armed violence and the increasing impacts of climate change, the number of women migrants in the Asia-Pacific region has been on the rise. However, although migration presents the opportunity for women to improve theirs and their families' livelihoods, safe and legal pathways for migrants and displaced populations - particularly women and girls - remain limited, and the region has yet to establish gender-responsive and inclusive migration governance frameworks, or adequate protection and support services for women across the stages of migration.

Unless the causes and consequences of these issues are addressed, the situation of women and girls in the Asia-Pacific is projected to deteriorate even further in the coming years. Gender equality remains largely underfinanced, and the unprecedented pushback on gender equality gains in the region is threatening to reverse decades of progress. Urgent action is required to target key areas such as harmful sociocultural norms and practices, education and skills training, access to technologies, climate justice, and essential service provision tailored to the unique needs of women and girls, among others.

B. Key priorities and Results: 2022 – 2024

1. Women's Economic Empowerment

UN-Women has focused on operationalizing the corporate [Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy](#) across the Asia-Pacific region. For example, in Viet Nam, five key laws and policy processes were influenced through work with the Public Procurement Agency of the Ministry of Planning and Investment. UN-Women also jointly worked with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank and the IFC to integrate gender mainstreaming inputs and recommendations into the revision of the Public Procurement Law of Viet Nam.

Moreover, our work to **promote the decent work agenda** has resulted in improved workplace practices. For instance, in Bangladesh in 2023, 2,200 employees (933 women, 1,267 men) from 17 Small and Medium Enterprises in five districts of Bangladesh benefitted from equality in remuneration, parental leave, protection from harassment and abuse, and access to safe working environments. This was facilitated through the adoption and implementation of gender-responsive organizational policies, standards, and practices.

Furthermore, UN-Women **improved both the skills and income opportunities of women entrepreneurs** in China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Pakistan by building their leadership and employability skills. For example, in India, the "Safe Tourism for Women" project, a collaborative initiative led by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board - with UN-Women as knowledge partner - has reached 4 million people through varied campaigns, provided training on employability skills to around 10,000 women, and placed 614 women in tourism-linked jobs.

⁷ The general trend has been calculated considering the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific subregions, based on the International Labour Organisation Labor Statistics Database.

⁸ World Health Organisation, *Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018*, see <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>.

Promoting market access has also been a key area of focus in countries such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea. For example, under the “Markets for Change” project, governance and financial literacy trainings have supported market vendors to develop their leadership and mentoring capacities, thereby increasing their confidence in doing business. Our work has also capacitated leaders with the skills and knowledge required for successful Market Vendors Association (MVA) operations, and women have now taken up 74 per cent of executive leadership positions in MVAs across 13 markets in Fiji, increasing women’s voices in decision-making and advocacy on matters related to the welfare of vendors in their markets. Moreover, the partnership between UN-Women and the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) has also led to strides in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in Fiji’s markets. For instance, the recent introduction of MOLG’s Human Resource Policy ensures that all 13 Municipal Councils implement a standardized recruitment process, creating a level playing field for women candidates and encouraging their active participation in leadership roles within market operations. This change directly addresses historical gender disparities in hiring practices that were prevalent in the male-dominated leadership positions within market operations. Moreover, in Viet Nam, 450 women entrepreneurs increased their capacity to build more resilient and inclusive business models, and to utilize networking opportunities to better access markets through training courses by UN-Women, in collaboration with the Viet Nam Women Entrepreneurs Council (VWEC).

Also, given their importance in the region, engagement with the private sector has been a key aspect of our efforts to build more inclusive economies. From 2019 – 2022, private sector entities were engaged through the **Women’s Empowerment Principles** (WEPs); private sector signatories to the WEPs have been steadily increasing, with an additional 333 companies signing up in 2023 to a cumulative 2,406 companies signed up, with the potential to impact 5.2 million employees, demonstrating a growing commitment among companies in the region to advancing gender equality and women’s economic empowerment at the highest levels of their leadership. This work has also positioned UN-Women to advance, the “Gender Action Lab: Innovation and Impact for Gender Equality in Asia-Pacific”, a first-of-its-kind programme aiming to drive practical action for gender equality within and through the private sector by convening committed companies and key stakeholders to pilot innovative solutions in ‘Innovation Labs’, each with a specific thematic focus (such as care and green economy, gender-responsive procurement and financing).

2. Inclusive Governance and Women Peace and Security

In 2023, UN-Women launched a “[Regional Framework Towards Peaceful, Inclusive Societies: Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Inclusive Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region \(2023-2027\)](#)”, outlining strategies to tackle the most pressing governance, peace and security challenges across the Asia-Pacific region. To effectively meet peace and security needs, UN-Women is working to ensure that women’s leadership is at the core of traditional and non-traditional security risks, such as climate change and cybersecurity.

2.1. Women Peace and Security (WPS)

2023 was a significant year in Asia and the Pacific for the Women Peace and Security Agenda.

In **South Asia**, with the technical support of UN-Women, **Sri Lanka**, a country still grappling with a tenuous peace and the continuing legacies of conflict, adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP) for 2023-2027. Through the NAP, the government has committed to empowering women to take the lead in national reconciliation efforts, peacebuilding, and political transitions. In **Nepal**, following the adoption of its second NAP (2022-2025) in late 2022, the government convened a national high-level and multi-stakeholder dialogue in May 2023 with UN-Women’s support and reinforced its commitment to the WPS Agenda. In **Bangladesh**, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) continued the implementation of the NAP WPS for 2019-2022 (extended till 2025). UN -omen supported the government’s active collaboration with civil society to ensure that grassroots women’s voices were integrated.

In **Southeast Asia**, UN-Women’s advocacy and engagement with governments and with ASEAN led to unprecedented momentum to localize the [ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women Peace and Security \(RPA-WPS\)](#). To support

ASEAN Member States to develop NAPs, UN-Women launched the [Localization Toolkit and Guideline for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS](#). The **Philippines** adopted its fourth NAP (2023-2033), and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines adopted its third Regional Action Plan for WPS. Additionally, countries such as **Timor Leste** and **Viet Nam** finalized their NAPs on WPS to be launched in 2024, while **Thailand** and **Cambodia** furthered their commitment to develop National Action Plans.

In the **Pacific**, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville adopted the Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, Peace and Security Policy for 2023-2027, and the **Solomon Islands** expanded the timeframe of its NAP on WPS (2017-2021) and initiated its revision.

In **Northeast Asia**, UN-Women facilitated knowledge exchange on WPS, including on non-traditional issues, with a focus on **Mongolia**, the **Republic of Korea** and **Japan**.

However, despite these advancements, the situation of women in **Afghanistan** and **Myanmar** continued to deteriorate. In **Afghanistan**, following the Taliban takeover, UN-Women has prioritized elevating the voices, experiences, and priorities of diverse Afghan women to continue promoting their meaningful participation in political and peacebuilding processes. UN-Women also provided direct and flexible funding support to women-led and gender-focused organizations, and shared critical analysis along with gender and sex-disaggregated data with Member States to illuminate the dynamics of gender inequality in Afghanistan and its impact on women and girls and advocate for political support. In **Myanmar**, the military takeover in February 2021 has profoundly affected women, particularly women leaders and activists for women's rights, who are increasingly vulnerable in conflict-affected areas. In response, in 2023, UN-Women has prioritized enhancing the knowledge, financial, and technical resources of Myanmar's women's civil society organizations, boosting women leaders' access to and capacity for influencing discussions about Myanmar's future, and ensuring that local, national, and international stakeholders have access to high-quality knowledge products on gender equality, women's rights, and socio-economic issues in Myanmar.

2.2. Women's Political Participation

UN-Women worked to **promote women's leadership - including political participation**. For instance, UN-Women's technical support and engagement with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) resulted in **increased commitment to advancing women's leadership and political participation** in the region, demonstrated by their 2023 adoption of the AIPA General Assembly 44 Resolution on Enhancing ASEAN Resilience through Women's Leadership and Gender-Responsive Parliaments; paving the way for the development of the **Plan of Action on Women's Leadership and Political Participation to be adopted in 2024**.⁹

2.3. Gender-responsive institutional reform

To ensure meaningful governance and institutional reform, UN-Women worked to **ensure that national plans, policies, practices, legislation, institutions, infrastructure, and budgets in countries across the region were designed and developed to reflect governments' commitment to gender equality**.

For instance, initiatives undertaken in Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands - implemented in partnership with the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and OHCHR - resulted in **strengthened gender-responsiveness of both the formal sector of the judiciary and community mechanisms to enhance CEDAW compliance in justice systems, and supported access to justice for women** with intellectual

and psychosocial disabilities,¹⁰ as well as for women in conflict with the law in the Philippines¹¹. UN-Women also technically assisted the Bangladesh Police and Bangladesh Policewomen Network (BPWN) to continue the implementation of their Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024, thereby improving their ability to **deliver gender-responsive services for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors**. As a result of 64 district-wide consultations held in Rangpur Range on establishing anti-harassment mechanisms within the police force, 900 women police officers gained knowledge on zero tolerance to sexual harassment mechanisms. Additionally, 60,776 women and men police officials strengthened their understanding of gender equality and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) by completing a self-paced e-course, developed by the Bangladesh Police with technical support from UN-Women. Senior officials of the Bangladesh Police demonstrated their commitment to providing gender-responsive policing services as well as ensuring gender mainstreaming within the police force by prioritizing capacity-building initiatives across all ranks.

3. Raising the Climate Ambition

In its efforts to promote **women’s leadership and gender responsive climate adaptation and mitigation**, UN-Women has partnered with UNEP to influence national and regional normative processes and actions on **integrating gender equality in climate change, renewable energy, and disaster risk reduction**.

In Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, UN-Women has focused on creating an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming in climate action through supporting the preparation of gender inclusive **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Climate Change Gender Action Plans (CCGAPs)**, promoting the production and use of gender statistics, creating opportunities for women’s visibility and leadership, and facilitating access to finance for climate-resilient activities through blended climate financing approaches. For example, in 2023, Bangladesh adopted their updated Climate Change and Gender Action Plan (CCGAP), which underscores the unique challenges of women in coping with climate change due to limited access to information, resources, finances, and technologies. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and in collaboration with other partners, UN-Women played a significant role in supporting the development of the CCGAP, providing technical and financial support to consultations and situational analyses since 2021 to ensure a comprehensive and participatory development process. Women’s access to renewable energy technology was also piloted, resulting in increased economic resources, time saving and health benefits.

On facilitating women’s access to finance, UN-Women is working towards mobilizing significant climate finance for renewable energy and low carbon technologies to be made accessible to women and other marginalized groups as well as regionally through a financing facility launched in 2023. UN-Women is also supporting coalition and constituency-building with national gender and climate change/environment focal points within either the Ministry of Environment or the Ministry of Women, depending on national priorities. For example, in the Philippines, the national gender and climate change focal point is the Commissioner of the Climate Change Commission, whereas in Fiji, the Minister of Women, Children and Social Protection is designated the national gender and climate change focal point. This work has assisted with **building women’s leadership, knowledge and expertise in the area of gender responsive climate action**, while working to **enable the civil society movement to meaningfully engage in climate action**.

4. Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW)

UN-Women’s approaches to ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Asia-Pacific covers the full spectrum from response to prevention. They are survivor-centered and inclusive of survivors from marginalized groups - noting that surviving violence itself creates risk and vulnerability - and are focused on evidence-based solutions, institutional changes, developing lasting systems for essential services, and transforming social norms.

¹⁰ UN-Women, “Closing the Justice Gap for Women with Intellectual and/or Psychosocial Disabilities”, see <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/governance/womens-access-to-justice/disabilities>.

¹¹ UN-Women, “Country Spotlight: Philippines”, see https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/UNW_Pilot-Factsheet-Philippines.pdf.

Evidence and practice-based Violence Against Women (VAW) prevention initiatives have been rolled out across the region, including in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, thereby facilitating access to key protection, service, education and economic opportunities. The EU-funded “Spotlight Initiative” is one notable programme, which has been implemented across Southeast Asia to **promote safe and fair migration** for women migrant workers - a group at particular risk of violence and discrimination.

By convening actors working on labor rights and ending violence against women, from 2018 – 2023 UN-Women’s efforts contributed towards strengthening **14 laws or policies** (9 of which have been adopted) to strengthen VAW prevention and response through providing technical input for their development and revision. The “Safe and Fair (SAF)” programme also contributed to **6 Action Plans** (4 National Action Plans, 1 Local Action Plan, and 1 Regional Action Plan) and **18 Standard Operating Procedures**. Joint task forces to address issues specific to women migrant workers have been established in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet

Nam, robust referral mechanisms have been developed – with procedures on cross-sector referrals for women migrant workers who have experienced violence - and key stakeholders such as service providers, public servants and community leaders have been equipped to **provide stronger survivor-centered information and services**. Work continues to **enhance national and regional institutional capabilities** on the prevention and response to violence faced by women migrant workers, in partnership with the ILO, UNICEF, and UNODC.

Providing support to countries that are implementing, reviewing, and drafting **National Action Plans on Ending VAW** is also a growing priority. In June 2023, as the culmination of a four-year endeavor where UN-Women played a crucial role in providing technical expertise, the Government of Fiji launched its first ever National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls (Fiji NAP) (2023-2028), establishing Fiji as the first Pacific Island country (and the second globally, alongside Australia), to develop a **whole-of-government, whole-of-society, inclusive, costed, and evidence-based national action plan, explicitly aimed at addressing the prevention of violence against women and girls**.

UN-Women has also reached out to women, girls, men and boys through **positive social norm outreach campaigns** to enhance understanding on gender-based violence and advance positive **social norms in communities**. For instance, in 2023, UN-Women promoted an enabling environment conducive to amplifying the voice and agency of women from various marginalized groups in Nepal, transforming deeply entrenched gender-biased norms at the grassroots level. Approximately 2,225 community members including interfaith leaders, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ persons, were engaged in challenging gender discriminatory social norms and harmful practices.

5. Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction

Within UN-Women, the Asia - Pacific region is one of the most advanced in terms of programming to support **gender-responsive disaster risk reduction**. For over a decade, UN-Women has focused on **advancing gender-mainstreaming in key regional and national policy frameworks**. It is supporting the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Action Plan 2021-2024 for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and shaping components of the next Action Plan 2025-2026. The Gender Action Plan heavily informs the development of the Asia-Pacific Action Plan. UN-Women - together with UNDRR and UNFPA – led consultations with Member States, across the region, and key stakeholders, including civil society organizations to inform the first [Gender Action Plan for Sendai Framework](#), globally led and launched in March 2024. Currently, efforts are underway to formulate the Gender Indicators for the Sendai GAP, which aims to create a concise set of indicators by leveraging existing indicators within the Sendai Framework Monitor (SFM) and the Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments (SFVC) platforms as foundational elements.

UN-Women has also focused on strengthening the resilience of lives and livelihoods of women and girls to disasters and threats, while also supporting local women leaders in climate and disaster resilience to participate and advocate in global and regional normative processes, for instance through our programming in the Pacific region. Initiatives such as the “Women-Weather-Watch” program in Fiji are empowering women to take on inclusive and innovative leadership roles in disaster and climate resilience efforts. For example, an advocacy video featuring female

negotiators from Fiji, Kiribati, and Vanuatu highlighted the importance of integrating Pacific women's priorities into post-UNFCCC 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) actions, and the active participation and leadership of three key female national leaders from Fiji, Kiribati, and Niue in the discussions and events at UNFCCC COP28 signified steps towards integrating gender considerations into global climate policy and action.

Moreover, UN-Women in Asia-Pacific has demonstrated its capacity to support our partners and offices to effectively **pivot our work to meet the needs of women and girls in humanitarian/crisis contexts, including climate-induced disasters and conflict situations**. For example, in Myanmar, over 16,000 women – including GBV survivors and at-risk women and girls - directly benefitted from a coordinated humanitarian response involving UN-Women, and UN-Women's support to post-cyclone Mocha emergency response efforts provided lifesaving assistance and support services to hundreds of households. Also, in 2023, as part of improving the socioeconomic resilience of women and girls in Pakistan affected by floods, a total of 236,653 individuals of 39,442 households (of which 80,461 were women and 40,232 girls) received emergency and recovery support including essential services, psychosocial support, counselling, awareness of gender-based violence assistance for survivors of violence and civic documentation. Similarly in 2023, following a magnitude-6.3 earthquake in Herat, UN-Women and its partners provided relief to ensure that women and girls had access to essential services and menstrual hygiene products. UN-Women also negotiated the participation of women humanitarian workers in rapid needs assessments with the de facto authority and promoted women's participation in decision-making processes.¹² In addition, UN-Women convened Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) partners to provide input to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment. In protracted contexts, such as the Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, multi-purpose centers have supported refugees and host communities to develop gender equality and women's rights awareness. The Regional Office deployed technical capacity to support humanitarian programming in a number of contexts, for example, for the Rohingya refugee population in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

UN-Women continues its support for scaling up and establishing GiHA coordination mechanisms, facilitating the development of gender alerts, and contributing to gender-responsive assessments in crisis-affected countries, including Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar, the Philippines, Pakistan and the Pacific. Additionally, technical assistance was also extended to the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in the Philippines and Nepal. Efforts are currently underway to establish an online database of Women and Girl-Focused Organizations in the Asia-Pacific region, scheduled for a June 2024 launch.

Across the region, UN-Women has played a critical support role in humanitarian contexts by offering technical support, contributing to gender analyses, and assisting in response measures and the evaluation of post disaster needs of the HCTs, alongside Country Offices, to ensure effective humanitarian action- including supporting the collection and sharing of gender data to guide crisis responses that better meet the needs of women and girls.

C. Cross-cutting Priorities

1. Intergovernmental Normative Support

UN-Women works with Member States and civil society to maximize the impact of intergovernmental processes at the regional level. The Regional Office partners with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to co-host regional convenings to prepare for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on an annual basis, and co-organizes expert group meetings as well as formal preparatory processes as part of the Beijing Platform of Action review process, which is the priority for UN-Women in 2024.

With ESCAP, UN-Women jointly convenes the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation for the Commission on the Status of Women regional consultations, including examining ways to accelerate progress on key frameworks including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (particularly the 2019 Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review and, currently, the Beijing+30

¹²UN-Women, "UN-Women's response to Herat Earthquake", see <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/af-c381-herat-earthquake-response-infographic-eng.pdf>.

Review), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The consultation provides an opportunity for both State and non-State actors to take stock of key trends, needs, gaps in policy responses, and good practices, as well as to consider possible areas for joint interventions (policy, programmatic) to address priority themes.

The outcomes from the CSW consultations are embedded in UN-Women's engagement with the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development, where UN-Women provides statistical input to the reports on the SDGs under review, which for 2024 includes Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger); Goal 13 (Climate action), Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and Goal 17 (Partnership for the Goals).

Further, UN-Women provided technical input to the Goal Profile for Goal 13 (Climate action), resulting in key recommendations related to Leave No One Behind, and gender-responsive action for raising the ambition. With the strong focus on reinforcing the 2024 Agenda for Sustainable Development centered on eradicating poverty, women's economic empowerment approaches were highlighted, which contributed to inputs on the CSW 68 Agreed

Conclusion section on the importance of integrating a gender perspective into financing for development commitments. Outcomes from research, policy reviews and analysis undertaken by UN-Women programs within climate, women's economic empowerment, governance and EAW were used to substantively input to the proceedings.

One of the unique normative opportunities in the region in 2023 was the G20 Presidency of India. UN-Women provided technical advisory and support to the Government of India during their presidency, partnering closely with the G20 secretariat to mainstream gender into the various working and engagement groups involved in the G20 process. UN-Women's comprehensive engagement played an important role in influencing the resulting New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which included clear commitments to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across several priority areas including education, emerging digital technologies, women's entrepreneurship and labor force participation, and gender-based violence among others; when implemented by Member States, activities aligned with this commitment will contribute significantly towards enabling women to lead dignified lives. Additionally, the creation of the Women's Empowerment Working Group will institutionalize gender equality and women's empowerment within this critically important global forum going forward. This engagement was built on momentum created by UN-Women Indonesia, as the Government of Indonesia held the 2022 G20 presidency.

2. UN Coordination

UN-Women Asia-Pacific continues to strengthen coordination and collaboration in support of gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of UN reform, both through working closely with Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators and UN/HCTs at country level and with the Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP).

Together with UNHCR and UNFPA, UN-Women co-chairs the regional Issue-Based Coalition on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Human Rights, a regional mechanism to support Resident Coordinators. UN-Women Regional Office Technical Specialists from thematic areas are substantively engaged with the Issue-Based Coalitions on Resilience, Climate Action and Economic Recovery. The commitment to the UN reform is evidenced in the active engagement of UN-Women in the RCP, and the substantive contribution to actions undertaken by the Issue-Based Coalitions. Regarding implementation of the Mutual Accountability Framework, Resident Coordinators are systematically engaged in the recruitment of UN-Women country representatives. In addition, UN-Women supports and/or leads Gender Theme Groups in 24 countries, supports the use of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and the UNCT Gender Equality Marker (GEM) as key tools for UN system accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment, and provides training and advice to UN Country Teams to support the integration of gender in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) process.

UN-Women also plays a leading role in coordination mechanisms in the humanitarian space as co-chair of the Asia-Pacific Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, one of the longest-running Gender in Humanitarian Action working groups globally, which has enabled the establishment of country level Gender in Humanitarian Action working groups in countries facing crisis, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh (Cox's Bazaar), Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. Jointly led by UNOCHA, CARE, and UN-Women, efforts in 2023 continued to support coordination, knowledge exchange, and advocacy for gender inclusion in humanitarian initiatives and disaster risk reduction across the region, enhancing coordination among partners, supporting local women's groups, and improving capacity building, and accountability.

3. Gender Statistics

The lack of sex disaggregated data renders women and girls invisible and limits evidence-informed decision-making, including to design, resource and monitor policies and programmes to meet their needs. The capacity to monitor progress against the SDGs and other global commitments is also hampered by the lack of timely and comprehensive gender statistics.

UN-Women Asia-Pacific has focused on supporting national statistical offices to ensure that National Statistical Systems are adequately skilled and resourced to generate more and better data, and has worked with other government partners to promote data use, including to inform policy development.

UN-Women has leveraged partnerships to achieve results, including long-standing partnerships with ESCAP, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UN SIAP), regional bodies such as ASEAN, the Pacific Community, and the Asian Development Bank, as well as numerous specialized agencies such as UNFCCC, IUCN, UNHCR and others to support the coordination of statistical efforts across the region, the advancement of statistical methodology, statistical training, and the joint generation of data and knowledge products. In 2023, two national surveys on gender-environment (Tonga and Samoa) were supported by UN-Women.

4. Joint Programming

UN-Women's commitment to joint programming is demonstrated by the majority of non-core-funded multi-country programmes in our portfolio being implemented as Joint Programmes with UN sister agencies. One notable example is the "EmPower: Women for Climate Resilient Societies" programme, a partnership with UNEP that has **produced results in raising ambition for climate action**, including the adoption of Bangladesh's Gender Climate Change Action Plan (CCGAP) in 2023, while simultaneously enhancing UN-Women's engagement in regional and global climate action initiatives. Additionally, the "Spotlight Initiative" was the **largest and the most comprehensive multi-stakeholder initiative to address violence against women and girls**, implemented in Afghanistan, Timor-Leste and the Pacific, including Samoa and Vanuatu, supporting national and local civil society organizations and movements pursuing social and gender justice and working to reduce violence against women and girls.

Further, in addition to Joint Programmes being implemented, strategic partnerships have been advanced with UN agencies on the technical level; for instance, a partnership has been pursued with the ILO on the digital economy, facilitating the care economy, decent work and social protection. Through the framework for women, peace and security for Asia and the Pacific, partnerships have been advanced with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and will be made with UNDP, to ensure synergies in peacebuilding fund implementation. Within EVAW, partnerships have advanced with UNICEF and UNFPA with a view of Joint Programming. Technical and strategic partnership continues with UNDRR to advance gender-responsive results towards fulfilling the Asia-Pacific Sendai Action Plan, utilizing the implementation of the Sendai Gender Action Plan as an entry-point. Within the space of bio-diversity and climate action, a collaboration with FAO has been pursued, focused on gender-responsive climate-smart agriculture. Strategic engagement with FAO and other disaster risk reduction partners on advancing anticipatory action and Early Warning for All initiative has accelerated, and UN-Women remains a partner in regional guidance development on anticipatory action and engaged in the Early Warning for All initiative.

D. Priorities for 2024 – 2025

Building on lessons learned from our previous Strategic Note reviews, programme evaluations and consultations with Country Offices and diverse partners, key strategic priorities include:

In the area of gender statistics, we will continue leading global efforts to advance the measurement of gender and environment issues - including climate change and disaster related issues - and to support countries in generating related data to inform national policies and reporting towards global commitments.

UN-Women's work in Asia-Pacific will address emerging issues in relation to new security threats such as cyber-security and climate security, while simultaneously continuing to support Member States to develop and implement National Action Plans as well as supporting the engagement of women in peace talks and peacebuilding. Building on the momentum of CSW 68, Gender-responsive budgeting will be a focus area, along with advancing feminist approaches to social norms change across all operations. EAW approaches will be accelerated to advance action on prevention and response. Women's economic empowerment programming will have a specific focus on care entrepreneurship and accelerators. These efforts are well aligned to UN-Women's newly launched Women's Economic Empowerment strategy which will be localized to the regional context. Regarding climate action and advancing disaster risk reduction, efforts will be focused on expanding the access of women entrepreneurs in at-risk communities to climate financing in order to build resilient communities. This is in line with advancing recommendations from CSW 66 on climate and disaster risk reduction.

In line with the increasing frequency and complexity of crises in Asia and the Pacific, including those caused by the increasing impact of climate change, and with UN-Women's membership of the Inter-Agency Standing

Committee (IASC)¹³, developing the readiness for crisis response and humanitarian settings continues to be a priority. This also includes building disaster preparedness mechanisms and scaling up support to women's groups to operate in crisis, including support to the Emergency Relief Coordinator Flagship initiative on the localization of humanitarian response.

In our intergovernmental work, UN-Women will continue to work closely with the Regional Commission and Member States to reinforce and support key global processes from the regional and national level, including the annual Commission on the Status of Women and the upcoming periodic review of progress against the Beijing Platform for Action.¹⁴ Creating space for the engagement of civil society and engaging with civil society movements and networks will continue to be a priority, particularly given issues of shrinking civic space and backlash against women's rights in some contexts. UN-Women is also working with the multilateral environmental agreements, namely the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to elevate the work of Asia and the Pacific Member States on gender responsive climate action and to promote women's leadership and interlinkages with the gender equality normative agenda of the CSW and the Beijing Platform for Action.

¹³ UN-Women joined the IASC in October 2022.

¹⁴ The 30-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action will take place in 2024 - 25.