BEIJING
+30

CHARTING NEW PATHS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT: ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL REPORT ON BEIJING+30 REVIEW

CHAPTER 1

ESCAP
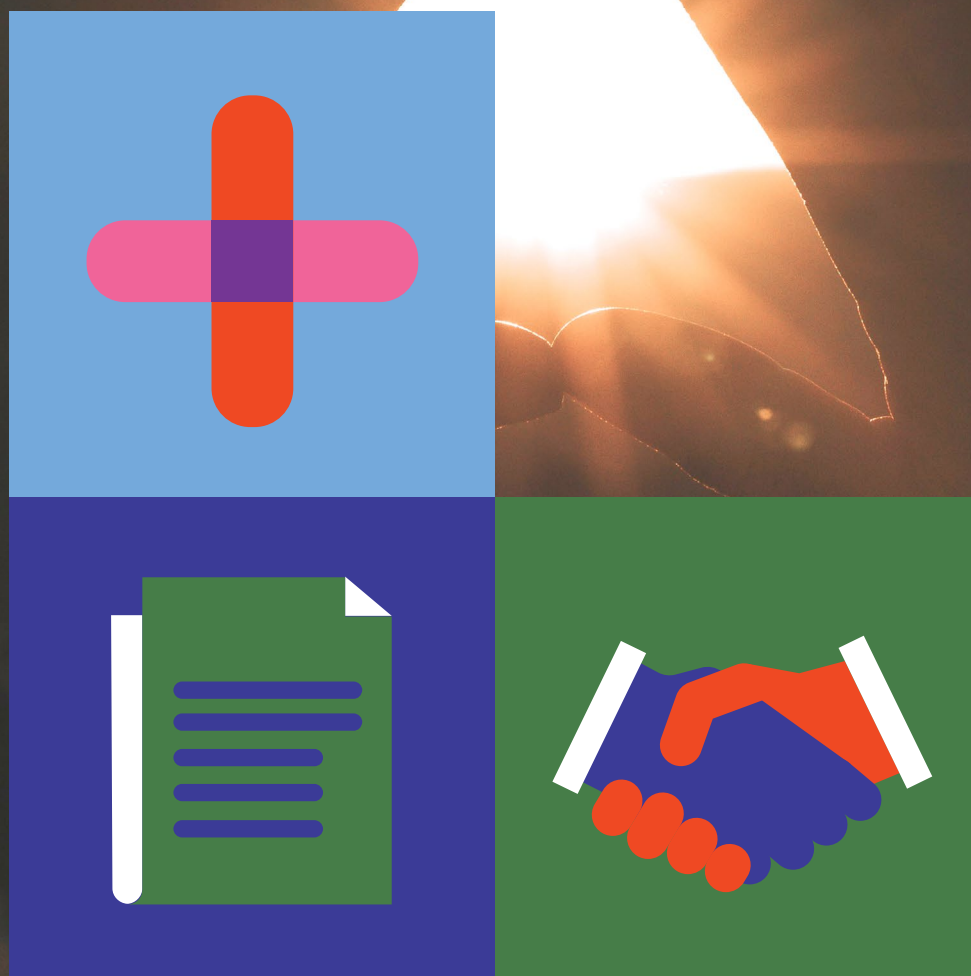Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific

UN WOMEN

The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.*

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

The ESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

CHARTING NEW PATHS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT: ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL REPORT ON BEIJING+30 REVIEW

CHAPTER 1

Towards transformative change: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Chandra Kala Thapa, one of many smallholder women farmers from Ranichuri village in Sindhuli district. © UN Women/Narendra Shrestha

The regional synthesis report is an analysis of the progress made towards implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in Asia and the Pacific. This assessment has been framed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[1]

Underpinned by data and statistics, secondary research and information submitted by member States, this synthesis report assesses the current state of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific. The report showcases actions taken by member States to implement the BPfA as well as identifying remaining challenges. It identifies promising practices which counter discriminatory norms and practices, catalyse gender-transformative change, demonstrate strong political will and contribute to closing the knowledge gap on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The findings of the report are intended to inform the strengthening of such policies, the prioritization of relevant actions and increased funding for gender equality. The ambition is to promote partnerships among governments and key stakeholders, particularly civil society organizations such as women's organizations, academia and the private sector, for gender-transformative actions in Asia and the Pacific.

1.1 THE BEIJING+30 REVIEW

1.1.1 Background and objective

The BPfA was adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women and is the most comprehensive and significant framework for advancing the global agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.[2] It covers 12 critical areas of concern: women and poverty; education and training of women; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; the human rights of women; women and the media; women and the environment; and the girl child.

The understanding of these areas of concern has evolved since the adoption of the BPfA in 1995. Poverty is now better understood from a multidimensional perspective. Our understanding of the economy has been expanded to encompass issues of empowerment. Discussion on the environment now recognizes the important role of women and girls in climate action. The concept of peace and security has evolved beyond armed conflict in the light of new threats, such as cybersecurity risks and climate-induced security risks. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has brought greater attention to the disproportionately high amount of unpaid care work and domestic responsibilities

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1   For more information, see the event website: https://www.unescap.org/events/2024/asia-pacific-ministerial-conference-beijing30-review.
2   *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

shouldered by women. Digitalization and the transformative evolution of technology including Artificial Intelligence (AI), and demographic shifts such as rapid population ageing, are emerging issues which were not foreseen when the BPfA was drafted. The importance of financing for gender equality is also better understood as the critical lever for change.

Reviews of the BPfA have been conducted regionally and globally every five years since 1995 to facilitate the tracking of its implementation.[3] The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, adopted in 2015, also provide a framework for accelerated action.[4] The most recent global review of the BPfA in the context of the 2030 Agenda took place at the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2020. The Commission adopted the Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.[5] Immediately preceding the global review, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) convened the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review in November 2019 at which ESCAP member States adopted the Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review.[6]

ECOSOC Resolution E/RES/2022/5 on the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women called upon Member States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the BPfA. Within this context, the regional commissions of the United Nations are undertaking regional reviews to inform the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level and feed into the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.[7] ESCAP is leading the Asia-Pacific regional intergovernmental review of the implementation of the BPfA in collaboration with UN-Women and in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. This regional review directly engages ESCAP member States and a broad range of stakeholders in the stock-taking of progress and the identification of priority actions to accelerate the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region.

1.1.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this synthesis report is informed by the vision of the BPfA for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the 2030 Agenda's pledge to "leave no one behind". The report is prepared to present an up-to-date picture of the state of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific to inform future-oriented strategies and actions.[8]

To assess progress towards the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA in the context of the 2030 Agenda, six thematic areas that highlight the alignment between the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda are conceptualized as follows:

- Poverty reduction and human capital development covers BPfA critical areas of concern A (women and poverty), B (education and training of women) and C (women and health), as well as SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality).

- Shared prosperity and decent work reviews BPfA critical area of concern F (women and the economy) in alignment with SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and inclusive growth).

- Freedom from gender-based violence integrates BPfA critical areas of concern D (violence against women) and J (women and the media) in alignment with SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

- Meaningful participation and gender-responsive governance corresponds to BPfA critical areas of concern G (women in power and decision-making) and H (institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women), as well as SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

- Peaceful and just societies covers BPfA critical area of concern E (women and armed conflict) and has been expanded to cover emerging forms of security issues that encompass cybersecurity and climate security; BPfA critical area of concern D that focuses on violence against women; and BPfA critical area of concern I (human rights of women) that concerns access to justice. It is also aligned with SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

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3   A/RES/S-23/2.

4   Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), *25 years after Beijing: A review of the UN system's support for the implementation of the Platform for Action, 2014-2019* (2020).

5   United Nations, Economic and Social Council, "Political declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women", E/CN.6/2020/L.1.

6   United Nations, ESCAP, "Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review", ESCAP/MCBR/2019/2/Add.1*.

7   United Nations, Economic and Social Council, "Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 8 June 2022, Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women", E/RES/2022/5.

8   It is beyond the objective and the scope of this report to account for every nuance and the full complexity of each thematic area and provide comprehensive recommendations for the transformation of each area. To this end, the bibliography which contains a vast range of latest available resources from reliable sources provides opportunities for acquiring extensive discussions in various issue areas.

➕ Gender and the environment looks into BPfA critical area of concern K (women and the environment) in alignment with SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 14 (life below water) and SDG 15 (life on land).

BPfA critical area of concern L (The girl child) is mainstreamed, where appropriate, throughout the thematic areas.

1.1.3   Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a key element of the conceptualization of this report. Women and girls represent a diverse group, with experiences that vary significantly based on a range of intersecting identities such as age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, and refugee, displacement or migrant status. Where possible, this report includes intersectional analysis to better understand the distinct needs of women and girls of different identities, as well as their agency and representation in different areas of decision making. However, the extent of such intersectional analysis has been limited by the availability of robust data disaggregated by sex and other determinants. Where data limitations are most acute, accounting fully for a particular group of women and girls facing intersectional forms of discrimination is challenging. In these areas, there is an urgent need for governments and other stakeholders to support further data collection and research.

1.1.4   Use of data, statistics and literature

Employing a broad research approach, the synthesis report draws on five main sources of information: i) official data and statistics; ii) reports and publications published by United Nations entities and other international organizations, as well as peer-reviewed secondary literature; iii) national reports and survey responses submitted by ESCAP member States for the Beijing+30 review; iv) States Parties' reports submitted for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee); and v) General recommendations by the CEDAW Committee and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). While the report discusses progress over the previous three decades where possible and relevant, the main focus is placed on the progress made and actions

taken since the Beijing+25 regional review took place in 2019.[9] As far as possible, efforts have been made to ensure a wide subregional and country representation across the analysis and discussions.

(a) Official data and statistics

The data and statistics used in this report include official SDG indicator data and other development indicators compiled by relevant custodian entities, consisting of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other intergovernmental organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Principle sources of data and statistics highlighted in this report include the ESCAP Statistical Database, the SDG Global Database, the ILOSTAT of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Women, Business and the Law 2.0 Database of the World Bank and the IPU Parline Database (see Annex 1 for more information).

Considering the aim of highlighting recent progress and gaps towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region, priority was given to identifying the most up-to-date, sex-disaggregated statistics covering as many Asia-Pacific countries and territories as possible. A general challenge and limitation in this regard is that the most recent observed data, such as SDG indicator data, may be outdated or contain only one data point for a given country. This makes it difficult to accurately account for the latest situations or current trends. Furthermore, while the picture varies from indicator to indicator, country-level data availability is an overall challenge as each indicator generally only includes values for a subset of ESCAP members and associate members, creating challenges for regional and subregional aggregations. Where data availability allows, the aim is to assess regional and subregional trends over time. However, challenges with data availability sometimes limit the analysis to country snapshots of a subset of ESCAP members and associate members. Where available and appropriate, existing modelled estimates developed by the World Bank and United Nations entities such as ILO have served to bridge some of these data gaps.

(b) Published reports by the United Nations system and international organizations, as well as peer-reviewed literature

Reports and publications of United Nations entities and international organizations are a second source of information underpinning this report. These include annual and thematic reports, working papers, policy briefs and other types of publications

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9   Please see the 2019 regional review report for more information: United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UN-Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, "The Long Road to Equality: Taking stock of the situation of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific for Beijing+25" (Bangkok, 2020).

issued by entities within the United Nations systems or by other international organizations, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and IPU. In this regard, a comprehensive literature review was conducted for each of the thematic areas with the aim of identifying the most relevant and up-to-date literature that could bridge information gaps and contribute to the narratives of the report. An emphasis was placed on recent publications issued after 2019. In addition, peer-reviewed secondary literature, such as studies and policy reports from other recognized sources, has been used, albeit to a limited extent.

(c) National reports and survey responses for the regional Beijing+30 review

To gain the perspectives and national contexts of member States, ESCAP member States were invited to complete a survey and produce national reports on progress made and gaps in the implementation of the BPfA since the Beijing+25 regional review conducted in 2019. Among the 49 ESCAP member States which were invited to participate in the regional review, 37 member States submitted a national report (as of 23 August 2024) and 40 responded to the survey (as of 18 July 2024).[10] Findings of the quantitative assessment of the survey responses and the qualitative analysis of the national reports are included throughout this report.

(d) States Parties' reports for the Universal Periodic Review and to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The report refers to States Parties' reports submitted for the UPR and to the CEDAW Committee for identifying country-level promising practices and recommendations from the respective review bodies. Focus has been given to States Parties' reports submitted since the year of 2019.

(e) General recommendations by the CEDAW Committee and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women

The report references general recommendations by the CEDAW Committee and agreed conclusions of the CSW, especially those adopted in the past decade, to provide strategic insights and recommendations on issues affecting women and girls that require urgent attention and action.

1.1.5 Countries and territories covered by regional and subregional groupings

With the intention to capture progress and gaps across all 58 ESCAP members and associate members geographically located in the region and highlight regional and subregional trends and patterns that could pinpoint actions and investment going forward, efforts have been made to analyse and present data and statistics in line with ESCAP's definition of the Asia-Pacific region[11] and five subregions: East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia, the Pacific, South-East Asia and South and South-West Asia.[12] However, given the vast range of topics covered and the large volume of data and statistics used and literature cited, different regional and subregional groupings may be used. It is important to note that the Asia-Pacific region may include a list of different countries and territories according to definition by different United Nations entities or international organizations. The division of subregions may also vary, despite significant overlaps (see Annex 2 for detailed information).

1.1.6 Report structure

This report is divided into three parts.

Part I. Setting the context includes this chapter (**Chapter 1**) that introduces the BPfA and the objectives of the global and regional Beijing+30 reviews, the conceptual framework and methodology, as well as the structure of the report. It then provides a brief overview of progress, gaps and challenges pertaining to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific. It examines three key megatrends that shape the agenda in the region: climate and environmental crises, demographic shifts, and digital and technological transformation. When discussing these megatrends, emphasis is given to both the compounding challenges faced by women and girls that would require mitigation and the "silver linings" these megatrends present, including new opportunities and solutions that could be made possible to mitigate pre-existing risks and/or boost investment towards gender-transformative outcomes.

Part II. The pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific contains a detailed review of the implementation of BPfA in the Asia-Pacific region as per the six thematic areas presented under

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10   Only ESCAP members were invited to participate in the survey and submit national reports while the 9 associated members were not. Due to time constraints, only survey responses received by 18 July 2024 and national reports submitted by 23 August 2024 were included in the analysis for this report. See Annex 1 for the lists of countries that submitted survey responses and national reports by the respective cut-off dates.

11   See ESCAP members and associate members at https://unescap.org/about/member-states. ESCAP statistical compilation excludes four members which are not geographically based in the Asia-Pacific region, including France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

12   See countries and territories covered in each subregion at https://unescap.org/subregional-office.

section 1.3 **Conceptual framework and methodology**. Key analysis and findings across the six thematic areas are presented in chapters 2–7 listed below. Each chapter examines progress, gaps, challenges and promising practices from the Asia-Pacific region.

Chapter 2. Poverty reduction and human capital development focuses on efforts to eradicate poverty, both monetary and multidimensional, and to bolster women and girls' access to social protection by addressing gaps in access, coverage and benefit level. In addition, chapter 2 also covers the topics of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as well as quality education and skills development.

Chapter 3. Shared prosperity and decent work covers the advancement of gender equality in the world of work, placing an emphasis on addressing gender gaps in access to the labour market, decent work, the care economy, and women's entrepreneurship.

Chapter 4. Freedom from gender-based violence addresses different forms of violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, femicide, child marriage, trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, technology-facilitated violence, and other harmful practices with a view towards preventing and responding to violence.

Chapter 5. Meaningful participation and gender-responsive governance covers women and girls' representation in leadership and decision-making, focusing on women's representation and leadership in all three branches of the government and in the private sector. It also covers the roles of national women's machineries and women's civil society organizations in advancing the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, the state of gender-responsive budgeting in Asia-Pacific countries is reviewed and discussed.

Chapter 6. Peaceful and just societies encompasses the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, considering emerging security threats, such as cybersecurity risks and climate-induced security risks. It includes a review of national action plans and policies on WPS in the region; the participation of women in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding throughout the full cycle of conflicts; the protection of women and girls from conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence; and access to justice for women and girls in all their diversity.

Chapter 7. Gender and the environment centres on the gender dimensions of access to natural resources and the gender-differentiated impacts of disasters and climate change. It highlights the necessity of strengthening the integration of gender perspectives and women's participation in natural resource management, disaster risk reduction and climate action.

Part III. The way forward includes the concluding chapter (**Chapter 8**) which proposes three sets of regional strategies to address areas where major gaps persist. The strategies focus on women's economic empowerment and resilience; women's representation, participation and leadership; and gender-based violence and access to justice. They identify means of harnessing key transitions – the just (green) transition, digital and technological transformation, and the care economy – in ways that support gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Due consideration is given to how progress can be accelerated towards transforming gender social norms, bridging gender data and statistics gaps, boosting gender-smart financing, and fostering innovative partnerships.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS, GAPS, CHALLENGES AND TRENDS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

1.2.1 The state of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific

In the 30 years since the adoption of the BPfA, the Asia-Pacific region has progressed towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Several countries have eradicated or substantially reduced extreme poverty and expanded access to social protection and affordable health care, as well as other public services which benefit all, including women and girls. The region has made commendable strides in closing gender gaps in education across primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels. Some countries stand out for the work they have undertaken to prevent, respond to and eliminate gender-based violence and harmful practices. In all subregions, there has been a notable increase in women's representation in legislatures and parliaments. The active involvement and leadership of women and girls in environmental and climate action has driven transformative change towards the green and blue economies.[13 , 14]

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13   A green economy aims at reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, while promoting sustainable development without degrading the environment. It is an alternative to the dominant economic model and focuses on improved human well-being, social equity, and reduced carbon emissions, pollution, and loss of biodiversity. See UNEP webpage: About green economy. Available at: https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/green-economy/about-green-economy (accessed on 19 July 2024).

14   The blue economy is used to describe the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, while preserving the health of marine and coastal ecosystem. See World Bank webpage: What is the Blue Economy? Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2017/06/06/blue-economy (accessed on 19 July 2024).

Nonetheless, women and girls in the region continue to encounter numerous challenges and experience marginalization. Gender poverty gaps persist, and effective social protection coverage remains low and inadequate for most and particularly for women and girls. Limited progress has been made towards expanding the coverage of sexual and reproductive health services since 2015 and the region is not on track to meet SDG target 3.1 focused on reducing maternal mortality rates. In the past three decades, the gender gap in labour force participation has widened substantially in Asia and the Pacific. The consistent decline in labour force participation rates for both women and men are a result of reduced poverty, young people staying in education for longer and population ageing. However, the widening gender gap in labour force participation demonstrates women's particular vulnerabilities in the labour market due to reproductive and unpaid care responsibilities, perpetuated by persistent, biased gender social norms.

More young women and men in the region are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Women are benefitting less from the structural transformation of the region's economies from agriculture to manufacturing and services.[15] When employed, women are often confined to precarious, informal, low-skilled and labour-intensive work under unfavourable conditions. Moreover, women and girls face significant exclusion from science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) educational opportunities and careers. Rooted in gender inequality, the prevalence of violence and harmful practices against women and girls is alarmingly high in the region. Women's representation across all three branches of government still falls short of achieving gender parity, while their engagement in the peace and security agenda and in the increasingly pressing climate action is also largely constrained. The gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls.

National review reports from 37 Asia-Pacific countries and survey responses from 40 Asia-Pacific countries on the Beijing+30 review[16] reflect a combination of achievements and challenges. Some of the achievements highlighted in national reports over the past five years include advancing women's economic empowerment by supporting women entrepreneurs; supporting woman in employment through expanding parental leave and promoting flexible work arrangements; providing accessible childcare services; addressing gender-based violence through national action plans, legislative measures and support services; increasing women's political participation and leadership through the implementation of temporary special measures; and strengthening gender mainstreaming across government sectors, including through gender-responsive budgeting. In terms of challenges, 95 per cent of Governments that responded to the survey reported that the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted the implementation of the BPfA. The climate crisis was also reported to have affected the implementation of the BPfA by 60 per cent of Governments. Gaps in gender equality and social inclusion highlighted by reporting Governments include prevalence of gender-based violence, economic exclusion, gender pay gaps, limited access to reproductive health rights and services, low representation in leadership and STEM fields, and limited social protection. National review reports noted challenges relating to the limited mainstreaming of gender into policies and legislation, poor coordination among government ministries, weak implementation of programmes in rural areas, the lack of gender-disaggregated data, limited resources and capacities, and harmful cultural norms and practices.

The progress has been uneven across subregions.[17] **South and South-West Asia** stands out as the subregion that requires tremendous investment and support to accelerate progress across thematic areas. This is necessary to address gender poverty gaps and labour force participation, social health protection coverage, access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, public expenditure on education and foundational learning outcomes, large gender gaps in labour force participation and youth NEET rates, child marriage, women's representation in national parliaments, gaps in legal protection of women and girls, and women and girls' access to safe drinking water and clean fuels. **South-East Asia** faces particular challenges in relation to pension coverage for older women, stagnant maternal mortality rates, adolescent fertility rates, women and girls' access to safe drinking water, and women's representation in environmental sectors such as the water resources management. **The Pacific** faces

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15   ILO (2022). Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2022: Rethinking sectoral strategies for a human-centred future of work. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_862410.pdf; and ILO and ADB (2023). Where women work in Asia and the Pacific. Available at: https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/916051/where-women-work-asia-pacific.pdf.

16   Only survey responses submitted by 18 July 2024 and national reports submitted by 23 August 2024 were analyzed. See Annex 1 for a list of countries that responded to the survey and/or submitted a national report.

17   Data and statistics used for analysis of progress and gaps across chapters 2 to 7 may follow different regional and subregional groupings (see Annex 2). In this paragraph, ESCAP subregional division is used, by their general convergence with other regional/subregional groupings, for the sake of depicting general subregional gaps.

particular challenges such as high prevalence of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence, human trafficking, high levels of maternal mortality, insufficient access to family planning means, low public expenditure on education, low representation of women in parliaments, and low access to clean fuels. **East and North-East Asia**, despite positive progress in many areas, continues to underperform in effective coverage of child benefits, improving legal protection of women and girls, combatting human trafficking, and increasing public expenditure on education, especially in addressing the negative implication of the COVID-19 pandemic. **North and Central Asia** is challenged by a high prevalence of human trafficking while the analysis of progress and gaps in many areas in this subregion is constrained by limited data.

It is nonetheless important to note that some subregions where certain gaps remain the widest have made significant progress. For instance, South and South-West Asia has contributed the world's biggest decline in child marriage since 1997, even though it remains the subregion with the highest prevalence rate in the region. It is important to understand what factors have underpinned positive change, in order to overcome the remaining challenges and to accelerate progress across the whole region.

Differences are also found among different groups of women and girls. Women and girls are not a homogenous group. The BPfA recognizes that: "Many women face additional barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights because of such factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or socioeconomic class or because they are indigenous people, migrants, including women migrant workers, displaced women or refugees." This remains true for women and girls in Asia and the Pacific today. For instance, women of working age who have young children are more likely to experience poverty. Adolescent girls and older women tend to face more stigma, stereotypes and gaps in accessing sexual and reproductive health services. Women with disabilities tend to experience higher levels of multidimensional poverty, less access to social protection benefits and lower labour force participation. Both women with disabilities and indigenous women are even less represented in politics. Women migrant workers are more likely to be denied maternity protection among other social protection benefits. Accounting for intersectional forms of discrimination and the distinct realities of different groups of women and girls, and where possible those of persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, is another cross-cutting approach in the analysis across chapters under Part II.

1.2.2 Structural barriers for women and girls in Asia and the Pacific

Given the intricate linkages between critical areas of concern, the achievements made in some areas are at risk of being offset by stagnation and even regression in others. To ensure that the investments that are being made can be translated into positive outcomes for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, **the region must employ a holistic approach to tackle structural barriers** – systemic, institutional and/or political barriers – that underlie the individual realities of over two billion women and girls across Asia and the Pacific. For example, women in the region make a disproportionate contribution to unpaid care work. The time they dedicate to this unremunerated work prevents them from equal participation in the labour market. Even when women are active in the labour market, contributory social protection schemes do not cover a large portion of women because they mostly work in the informal economy. Another example concerns women's lack of ownership of property and assets. This restricts their access to credit which often requires collateral. Therefore, any effort to ensure the economic empowerment of women in the region would not be successful, unless the barriers concerning their unpaid care and domestic work burden and their access to land, property and assets are recognized and systematically addressed through appropriate policies.

Legislative frameworks provide a crucial foundation for addressing structural barriers but remain largely inadequate in the Asia-Pacific region. Legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex (SDG 5.1.1) exist in only 26 out of 58 ESCAP members and associate members geographically located in the region. Laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education (SDG 5.6.2) exist in only 29 countries. Only 11 countries have legal frameworks that guarantee women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control (SDG 5.a.2).[18] More countries and territories – more than half of ESCAP members and associate members geographically located in the region — provide legislative support to women's agency and freedom of movement, equal rights in marriage and divorce or parenthood. But few countries have put in place laws that address gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child marriage, employment, equal pay for work of equal value, access to credit or corporate leadership.[19] Laws that explicitly protect the rights of women and girls with an intersectional and inclusive lens are even rarer. For example, the specific rights of women with disabilities are explicitly recognized in non-discrimination or gender equality laws in only six Asia-Pacific countries,

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18   ESCAP Data Explorer. Available at: https://dataexplorer.unescap.org (accessed 3 June 2024).
19   World Bank "Women, Business and the Law 2.0 Data for 2024," Available at https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl-data (accessed on 3 June 2024).

and in 16 countries in laws on persons with disabilities. Laws that support women with disabilities to exercise their parental rights and responsibilities exist in only six countries. Laws that protect women with disabilities from sexual harassment exist in only three countries. And only in three countries in the region do laws against domestic violence stipulate accessibility of survivor services for women with disabilities.[20]

The absence of comprehensive and strong legislative support and legal protection across sectors, coupled with institutional mechanisms and procedures that do not consider the unique circumstances and needs of women and girls of diverse backgrounds, impede women and girls' access to equal opportunities, meaningful participation and leadership. The impacts of structural barriers are further amplified in the context of megatrends such as demographic shifts, digitalization and technological transformation and climate change as gaps in regulatory frameworks lead to widening of gender divides.

1.2.3 Gender social norms in Asia and the Pacific

Gender social norms refer to social beliefs in capabilities and rights in relation to gender. When gender social norms reinforce unequal gender roles, biases, prejudices and stereotypes, they reproduce and perpetuate gender inequality in access to resources and opportunities. The United Nations Development Programme's Gender Social Norms Index monitors the evolution of gender social norms based on data from the World Values Survey. The latest data indicate that **biased gender social norms are deeply ingrained among the world population including in Asia and the Pacific, regardless of their gender, with only minimal changes over the past decade.**[21]

Biased gender social norms still prevail in Asia-Pacific countries. Among the 28 ESCAP members and associate members with data on the most recent index published in 2023,[22] the share of population who hold at least one biased gender norm in relation to political, educational, economic or physical integrity dimensions[23] is nearly or above 90 per cent in 23 countries. The share is only below half of the population in two countries, Australia

and New Zealand (Figure 1.1). Both women and men hold biased gender norms, with only a small gender difference in most countries.[24] People most frequently hold biases about **physical integrity.** Within the exception of Australia, Japan and New Zealand, the majority of people in all other countries with data believe that it is justifiable for a man to beat his wife or that abortion is never justifiable. The majority of people (more than half of the population) also hold biases in the political and economic dimensions. In the **political dimension**, except in Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Singapore, more than half of the population have biases about women having the same rights as men and/or men making better political leaders than women do. In the **economic dimension**, except in Australia; Hong Kong, China; Japan; New Zealand; and Singapore, more than half of the population believe that men should have more right to a job than women, or that men make better business executives than women. Biased gender norms are less commonly observed in the **educational dimension**. With only the exception of four countries, less than half of the population in all other countries believe that university is more important for men than for women.[25]

Gender social norms have not always changed for the better across Asia and the Pacific. In the 16 countries and territories with data from the two most recent waves of data,[26] positive changes – meaning increase in the share of population holding no biased gender norm in any dimension – have been observed in nine countries. But regression has been observed in six countries, and no noticeable change has been observed in one country. The countries where the share of people holding biases has increased include high-income, upper-middle-income and lower-middle-income countries.[27] In most countries where positive changes have been observed, these changes often occur in more than one dimension. This suggests the interlinkage of the effects of gender norms in different dimensions, and hence the importance of multi-sectoral, concerted interventions to transform gender norms. More countries have shown increase in the share of people with bias in the educational dimension, as compared to other dimensions. In three countries, the share of people who are biased has increased in all four dimensions (Figure 1.2).

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20   World Bank, "Women with Disabilities", database. Available at: https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/disability (accessed on 3 June 2024).

21   UNDP, "2023 Gender Social Norm Index: Breaking down gender biases: Shifting social norms towards gender equality" (New York, 2023). Available at: https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/gsni202303.pdf.

22   The 2023 Gender Social Norms Index is based on wave 6 (2010-2014) and wave 7 (2017-2022) of the World Values Survey. Not all countries have data available from both waves. See "Technical note: Gender Social Norms Index", available at: https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/publications/additional-files/2023-06/gsni_2023_technical_note.pdf.

23   See "Technical note: Gender Social Norms Index", available at: https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/publications/additional-files/2023-06/gsni_2023_technical_note.pdf.

24   See Annex 3, GSNI data tables: by sex.

25   See Annex 3, GSNI data tables: by country and by dimension.

26   The two most recent waves of data used in the 2023 Gender Social Norms Index include wave 6 (2010-2014) and wave 7 (2017-2022) of the World Values Survey.

27   See Annex 3, GSNI data tables: change in biased gender norms. No low-income country from the Asia-Pacific region is covered in the index.

FIGURE 1.1 **Share of population with at least one biased gender norm by ESCAP member or associate member (latest available period) (%)**
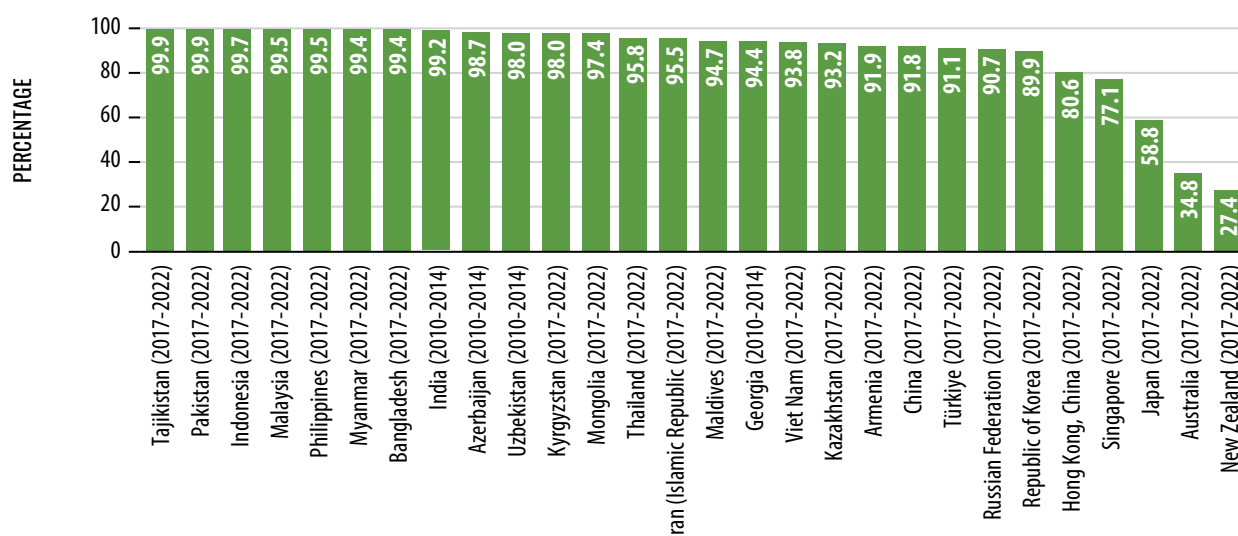
Source: ESCAP elaboration based on UNDP (2023). 2023 Gender Social Norm Index: Breaking down gender biases. UNDP, New York. Based on data from 28 ESCAP member or associate members extracted from GSNI Tables, available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fhdr.undp.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublications%2Fadditional-files%2F2023-06%2FGSNI2023_AnnexTables2.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK. Data originate from wave 6 (2010-2014) or wave 7 (2017-2022) of the World Values Survey depending on the latest available year of data.

FIGURE 1.2 **Change in the share of people with no bias ESCAP members and associate members and by dimension (2010–2014 versus 2017–2022, in percentage points)**
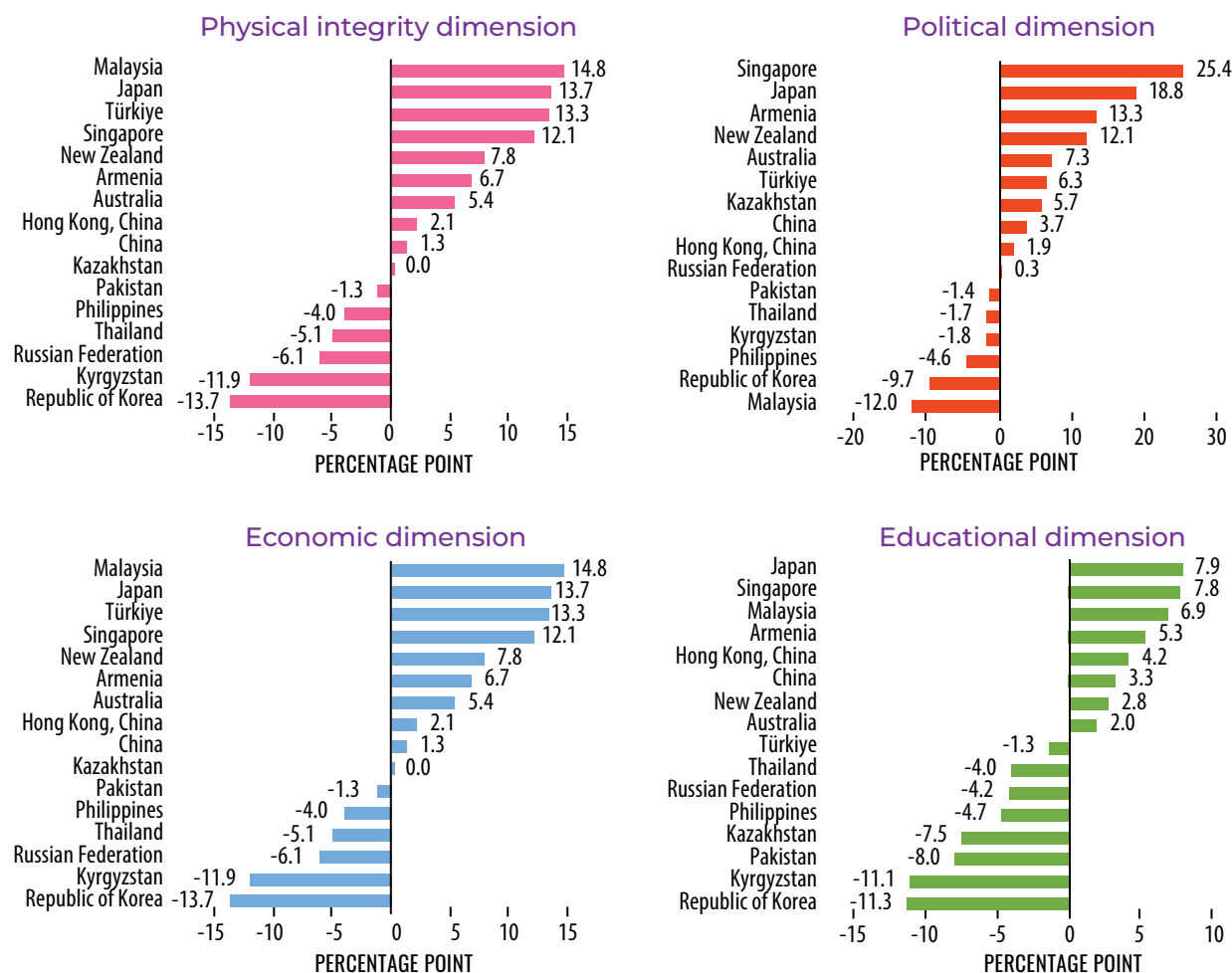
Source: ESCAP elaboration based on UNDP (2023). 2023 Gender Social Norm Index: Breaking down gender biases. UNDP, New York. Based on data of 16 Asia-Pacific countries and territories extracted from GSNI Tables, available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fhdr.undp.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublications%2Fadditional-files%2F2023-06%2FGSNI2023_AnnexTables2.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK. Data originate from wave 6 (2010-2014) and wave 7 (2017-2022) of the World Values Survey.

Part II of the report considers the ways in which gender social norms affect progress in each of the six thematic areas, acknowledging that addressing gender social norms should be part of the essential actions to accelerate progress in all areas. Overall strategies and approaches to address harmful gender social norms are discussed under Part III.

1.2.4 Megatrends shaping gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific

The world, including the Asia-Pacific region, is at a critical juncture in the face of critical transitions related to three inter-connected megatrends, namely climate change, demographic shifts and digitalization.[28] While these megatrends have the potential to worsen inequalities, they also present manifold opportunities to initiate and accelerate gender-transformative progress.

Climate and environmental crises

The consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, ranging from food insecurity to health impacts, loss of livelihood and forced displacement, are severe and unevenly distributed, with those least responsible for the current deterioration often bearing the greatest burden. Women have higher rates of livelihood and job loss, in part because women are overrepresented in sectors that are particularly impacted by climate change.[29] For example, in regions such as South Asia where the agriculture sector is dominated by women, more women are likely to be pushed into poverty due to climate-related pressures. Existing gender-based discrimination has constrained the capacity of women and girls to adapt to, and recover from, climate-related shocks and long-term environmental changes. In a worst-case climate path scenario, where average temperature will rise by 3–4°C by 2100, approximately 160 million more women and girls worldwide, including 29 million in Central and Southern Asia, 7 million in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and 0.6 million in Oceania, will be pushed into extreme poverty as a direct result of climate change by 2050.[30] Furthermore, disaster risk exposures are fundamentally different among men and women, due to differences in their social roles and responsibilities, living environment, communication channels and perceptions of risks, among many other factors.[31]

Climate change, environmental degradation and disasters also exacerbate gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, trafficking, exploitation and child marriage, due to increased poverty and economic insecurity among women and girls, displacement, and the breakdown of essential services and justice systems. Moreover, climate stressors such as droughts and floods heighten the risk of conflict as competition for scarce resources intensifies and some join armed groups to secure income after losing their livelihoods.[32] These stressors lead to climate change-induced displacements, including among Indigenous Peoples, leading to substandard living conditions and a heightened risk of gender-based and other forms of violence.[33]

As the world adapts to climate change, implementing a gender-responsive just transition[34] provides an opportunity to develop new systems that promote gender equality and foster the empowerment of women and girls. Natural resource management policies must evolve to safeguard natural environments and the habitants from the impacts of climate change, such as increased droughts and wildfires, and facilitate the shift to sustainable energy. Given their frontline roles in responding to climate-related disasters, their primary responsibility for gathering water and fuel, and their active participation in the agricultural sector, women and girls possess invaluable insights and contributions that must be incorporated into policy discussions and actions in response to climate change. As climate-induced security risks (e.g., social unrest and forced displacement) emerge as a new peace and security issue, women and girls could play an instrumental role in relevant conflict prevention and resolution as peace agents, contributing their climate and environmental knowledge and experiences.

Successfully integrating women and girls into a just transition and providing them with training for green jobs and business has the potential to enhance women's economic empowerment and narrow the gender income gap. Investing in women as green entrepreneurs and leveraging their unique knowledge of climate change impacts could lead to innovative and sustainable solutions.

Moreover, social protection schemes must be redesigned to effectively mitigate shocks and address the repercussions of climate change, such

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28   These megatrends are identified by the Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary: Shaping the Trends of Our Time (September 2020). The report focuses on these three megatrends as they have broad impacts across the BPfA critical areas of concern.

29   ESCAP, Policy brief: *Gender Equality and Climate Change* (2022). Available at: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/gender-equality-and-climate-change.

30   UN-Women, "Data-driven insights: The effects of climate change on gender and development", brief (New York, 2023).

31   Fothergill, A. (1998). The neglect of gender in disaster work: An overview of the literature. The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes, 11-25.

32   United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, *Weathering Two Storms DPPR Practice Note Gender and Climate in Peace and Security* (2022).

33   ESCAP/APPC (7)/3.

34   The concept of "just transition" may be defined differently by different organizations and in different countries. Generally, it refers to strategies, policies or measures to ensure no one is left behind or pushed behind in the transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies. See UN DESA, "A just green transition: concepts and practice so far", Policy Brief No.14, November 2022. Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/PB_141.pdf (accessed on 23 July 2024).

as food insecurity, loss of livelihood, adverse health consequences, displacement and the increased risk of gender-based violence. Simultaneously, social protection systems can be restructured to improve non-contributory schemes and cater to gender-differentiated needs. It is imperative that these schemes respond to the impacts of climate change and disasters on women and girls, which are compounded by their disproportionately high unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities, as well as their higher representation in the informal economy.

Demographic shifts

The Asia-Pacific region is ageing rapidly, with projections indicating that by 2050, one in four people will be 60 years or above, reaching 1.3 billion people, while the share stood at 18 per cent in 2023.[35] East and North-East Asia is ageing the fastest while the population ageing trend is common to all subregions.[36] Women currently make up 54 per cent of the region's older persons — a higher share over men that can be largely ascribed to women's longer life expectancy.[37] **Gender-based discrimination and disadvantages that women face span throughout the life cycle are often compounded as they age.** Throughout their lives, they encounter unequal access to social protection and health care, gender bias and discrimination in education and career options, as well as lower labour force participation, reduced income and less land ownership compared to men. This increases their vulnerability to poverty and income insecurity while compromising their resilience to shocks throughout the life cycle, particularly in old age and once widowed. Moreover, they are more often affected by health problems in old age than men, due to a lack of access to health care and social health protection. Recent World Health Organization (WHO) studies found that older women, along with women with disabilities, are vulnerable to violence, and they are too often underrepresented in prevalence measurement and relevant studies. While intimate partner violence and sexual violence may continue in old age, older women and women with disabilities are vulnerable to abuses and violence perpetrated by caregivers and family members. They face specific barriers to seeking assistance and services due to their often-isolated living status.[38]

The gendered poverty persists into old age, partially as a consequence of women spending a disproportionate amount of time on unpaid care and domestic work, a pattern that starts when they are still children. Women, including older women, fulfil most unpaid and paid caregiver roles for young children and older persons, sometimes caring for grandchildren and older family members at the same time.[39] As unpaid caregivers, they typically manage multiple responsibilities, including attending to dependent children, older family members or persons with disabilities; overseeing household tasks; and sometimes engaging in income-generating activities. Overburdened caregivers may compromise the quality of care they provide and/or be forced to give up income-generating activities or further education opportunities. This in turn reduces their income and access to contributory social protection benefits, thereby leading to a persistent risk of poverty for caregivers. Consequently, many women lack income security and the ability to afford the care they need in old age. Paid care services represent an important source of care provision, with a rising demand for them as the population ages. As women remain the majority of paid care workers, the increasing demand for care services presents an opportunity for women's economic empowerment. However, most care workers in the region do not have access to decent work, and women care workers on average earn less than men in similar roles. The job creation brought about by population ageing would not benefit women unless decent work is prioritized in the care sector.

An increasingly large share of older persons among the region's population increases the demand for accessible and inclusive public infrastructure and facilities — both physical and digital — services and information. Such demand creates opportunities to improve and transform infrastructure and public services in the region and support growth and jobs, benefiting the broader population beyond older persons. Intersectional perspectives, that should help address gender, age and disability concerns in the design of public infrastructure and facilities, are lacking. This contributes to the continuing low level of accessibility and inclusiveness. Biases and discrimination on the basis of gender, age and disability further reinforce access barriers. This is particularly the case in older women's and women with disabilities' access to sexual and reproductive health services.[40] The inclusion of older women and women with disabilities in decision-making is important to ensure their voices are heard and their inputs are valued and incorporated. Such inclusion facilitates critical adaptations in the development

35   United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (2023). *"Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report"* ESCAP, Bangkok.

36   ESCAP, "Population Datasheet", available at: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2023/escap-population-data-sheet-2023 (accessed on 05 May 2024).

37   ESCAP, *Asia-Pacific Report on Population Ageing 2022: Trends, policies and good practices regarding older persons and population ageing* (ST/ESCAP/3041).

38   WHO, "WHO calls for greater attention to violence against women with disabilities and older women", news, 27 March 2024. Available at: https://www.who.int/news/item/27-03-2024-who-calls-for-greater-attention-to-violence-against-women-with-disabilities-and-older-women (accessed on 08 July 2024).

39   ESCAP, "Older Women and Men as Providers and Recipients of Unpaid Care Work in the Asia-Pacific Region", report (Bangkok, 2020).

40   ESCAP, *Disability at A Glance 2019: Investing in accessibility in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 2019).

of accessible and inclusive physical and digital infrastructure, as well as public services in the context of population ageing.

Shifting the perception of population ageing to recognize the positive influence it can have on economic and social development is necessary to challenge ageist stereotypes and biases. An example of potential positive impact is the so-called "demographic metabolism" process, experienced by several countries in the region. As part of this process, while the population ages, a rise in educational attainment is observed, along with improved health and, in certain cases, increased wealth. Additionally, the persistent prevalence of large cohorts of youth in different countries opens a window of opportunity for bridging the generational gap, thereby fostering harmonious co-existence and promoting equitable and sustainable societies in the future.[41]

Although the Asia-Pacific region is ageing rapidly, in South-East Asia and South and South-West Asia, the number of youth (aged 15–24) still outnumbers the older adult population (aged 60 and older). It is important that in shifting resources and policies to focus on population ageing, the needs of youth, including young women and girls, continue to be met and their perspectives heeded.[42]

Digital and technological transformation

Digital and technological transformation presents new economic, educational and social opportunities, particularly for those most marginalized, by providing digital and technological solutions. For instance, digital technologies help people to continue learning and access various services during pandemics; enable persons with disabilities to learn and work by reducing physical barriers and providing innovative solutions to ensure accessibility needs are met; and allow people to receive early warnings, essential information and social protection benefits at times of public health crises and disasters. Generative artificial intelligence (AI)[43] has opened up vast opportunities ranging from enhanced work productivity and learning efficiency to new forms of jobs.

However, digital and technological transformation could also deepen existing inequalities. An underlying factor that requires change is the digital

divide based on gender, age, disability and other identities that make some population groups more vulnerable to the risks and less likely to benefit from the opportunities presented by this megatrend. Available data indicate that the percentage of women using the internet stands at 63 per cent compared to 69 per cent of men in Asia and the Pacific.[44] The gender gap in mobile ownership is 2 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific and 15 per cent in South Asia.[45] Globally, cross-national skills assessments suggest that women are 25 per cent less likely than men to possess the knowledge of using technology for basic activities, such as creating simple formulas in spreadsheets.[46] This divide stems from entrenched gender biases and discriminatory social norms, which prioritize resources for men's access to technology, such as smartphones and data.

Gender biases and discrimination against women and girls are often perpetuated in the algorithm and the design of digital products and technologies. Due to gender inequalities in the labour market, women are often overrepresented in job sectors and functions that are more likely to be replaced by computerization,[47] automation and Generative AI technologies. Furthermore, various forms of offline gender-based violence are replicated or exacerbated in digital spaces, severely impacting the health, well-being and safety of women and girls. The gender digital divide and violence in digital spaces further hinder women's public participation and leadership, exacerbating socioeconomic and political gender disparities.

Gender-based segregation in education and occupation contributes to widening the digital divide, if not mitigated. Education systems perpetuate stereotypes, discouraging girls from pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects which are not only crucial to the information and communications technology (ICT) sector but also essential for developing innovative solutions for transforming the economy and addressing climate change. Even if women and girls do obtain skills and degrees in STEM fields, the persistent gender-based occupational segregation continues to prevent them from obtaining and excelling in STEM-related jobs. As a result, women are underrepresented in high-value STEM-related sectors and job functions (except for some roles in health care), reinforcing the gender pay

41 ESCAP, *Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023* (Bangkok, 2023).

42 Ibid.

43 Artificial intelligence (AI) is an umbrella term for a wide range of methods and tools, including machine learning, facial recognition, and natural language processing.

44 ITU, *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2023* (Geneva, 2023).

45 The gender gap refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a mobile phone than a man. It is calculated using the following formula: (male owners as a percentage of male population female owners as a percentage of female population) / male owners as a percentage of male population. GSMA, *The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023* (London, 2023).

46 UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Girls' Digital Literacy in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Spotlight on Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR Timor-Leste and Viet Nam* (Bangkok, 2023).

47 UNIDO, *Industrial Development Report 2020: Industrializing in the Digital Age* (Vienna, 2019).

Women engineers in Türkiye. © UNDP Europe and Central Asia

gap and leading to innovations that fail to address gender-differentiated needs. The significant gender digital divide hampers the region's ability to leverage the untapped talent of women and girls.

However, if digital and technological transformation is leveraged to address existing inequalities, substantial progress towards gender equality could be achieved. Girls in Asia and the Pacific have shown remarkable educational achievements in recent years, often outperforming boys when they are in school. Ensuring that all girls complete primary and secondary education, providing women and girls with quality STEM education and digital skills, especially at the higher education level, and facilitating the transition from school to STEM careers for women could increase their involvement in technological development. This would help ensure technologies are designed to meet women's needs and transform the male-dominated leadership and decision-making patterns in high-value sectors.

Policies addressing the computerization and automation of jobs offer an opportunity to re-train women in the digital skills and technological innovations they may have previously missed out on in formal schooling and skills training, as well as informal learning opportunities. Digital labour platforms, when promoting decent work practices, also offer new opportunities for women who require flexible working locations and hours to join the labour force. [48] Digitalization creates new opportunities for women owners of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to expand their businesses. Additionally, digital technologies have increasingly been used in the booming green economy. When women are provided with the necessary skills, there are opportunities for them to more proactively participate in the green economy.

Part II of the report will examine the implications of these megatrends on women and girls and explore their potential as opportunities for advancing gender equality in the various dimensions and issue areas to be discussed.

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48   ESCAP, "Leveraging Digital Innovation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific", technical paper (Bangkok, 2023).

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Gender equality is key to sustainable development and a prerequisite to achieving peaceful and just societies and a healthy planet. But what progress has been made toward upholding this human right and empowering women and girls in Asia and the Pacific? What challenges remain and how should these be addressed in the light of climate change, demographic shifts and digital transformation?

Charting New Paths for Gender Equality and Empowerment: Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review provides an in-depth analysis of the progress and gaps in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a global framework for advancing the agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The report identifies opportunities and forward-looking strategies to accelerate progress in a rapidly changing region.