



## REPORT

### *Regional Parliamentarians' Meeting on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*



**Vientiane, Lao PDR**

**4-5 July 2019**

**The Asian Population and Development Association (APDA)**

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The contents of this report are based on the presentations, speeches and remarks made by participants at the Regional Parliamentarians' Meeting on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls, and do not necessarily reflect positions of APDA.

## **Acronyms**

<b>ADWLE</b>	<b>Association for Development of Women and Legal Education</b>
<b>APDA</b>	<b>Asian Population and Development Association</b>
<b>APPC</b>	<b>Asia Pacific Population Conference</b>
<b>BPfA</b>	<b>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action</b>
<b>CEFM</b>	<b>Child, Early and Forced Marriage</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Civil Society Organization</b>
<b>DV</b>	<b>Domestic Violence</b>
<b>EVAW</b>	<b>Elimination of Violence Against Women</b>
<b>GBV</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>
<b>ICPD</b>	<b>International Conference on Population and Development</b>
<b>LWU</b>	<b>Lao Women's Union</b>
<b>LYU</b>	<b>Lao Youth Union</b>
<b>LAPPD</b>	<b>Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development</b>
<b>MTR</b>	<b>Mid-Term Review</b>
<b>NA</b>	<b>National Assembly</b>
<b>NCAWMC</b>	<b>National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children</b>
<b>PFHA</b>	<b>Promotion of Family Health Association</b>
<b>PoA</b>	<b>Programme of Action</b>
<b>RH</b>	<b>Reproductive Health</b>
<b>SDGs</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>
<b>SRH</b>	<b>Sexual Reproductive Health</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	<b>United Nations Population Fund</b>
<b>VAWG</b>	<b>Violence Against Women and Girls</b>

## **Background**

Violence against women and girls is an issue that has long been debated by parliamentarians and other stakeholders. It is a serious violation of human rights that occurs within a broader context of gender-based discrimination and of unequal power relations between men and women in both public and private spheres. The Asia-Pacific region records high levels of various forms of violence against women and girls, although there are significant variations between countries. High percentages of women reported experiencing at least one act of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. Also, about one-third of men surveyed reported having perpetrated physical violence against a woman during their lifetime. In times of emergency and humanitarian settings, which Asia and the Pacific experience frequently, women and girls are more exposed to the risks of violence.

Parliamentarians play an important role in advocacy, policy-making, and monitoring with regards to national laws and policies related to the prevention of violence against women and girls, and other women-related laws and policies. They can hold governments accountable for the implementation of laws and policies and can influence how budgets are allocated. It is essential that they have the data, knowledge and advocacy skills they need to play their role effectively. They need to be sensitized and updated on the issues of violence against women and girls, including issues such as child marriage and trafficking, so that they remain at the forefront of discussion and policy-making. Although progress has been made in terms of the development of laws and policies, there is also a recognition that some of them are not fully implemented in practice. There is a need to understand the current situation and explore how best to improve and advance the situation of women and girls, especially in the context of ICPD+25, Beijing+25, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leaving no one behind.

With this background, the conference was organized by the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and hosted by the National Assembly of Lao PDR (NA) with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in order to:

1. learn about progress made and challenges faced, and to share expertise, experiences and good practices for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls across the region;
2. understand the level of parliamentary engagement in implementing actions and accelerating achievement of the objectives set out in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the SDGs as regards to the situation of women and girls; and
3. commit to the regional action plan to advance efforts in addressing multisectoral aspects of the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls.

The conference consisted of four sessions which examined progress made and challenges faced in the prevention of violence against women and girls in the region, good practices by the countries and organizations, gender equality and accelerating the ICPD PoA implementation, and discussions on the Regional Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Women

and Girls. The conference programme also included study visits to the Lao Women's Union's Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children; ADWLE's Legal Aid Clinic for Vulnerable Women; and the Promotion of Family Health Association (PFHA), and the Lao Youth Union (see ANNEX 1: Conference Agenda).

Conference attendees consisted of 74 representatives from parliaments, government authorities, international organizations, and civil society organizations (see ANNEX 2: List of participants).

## **Opening Session**

### ***Address***

**Hon. Dr. Somphou Duangsavanh, MP, Chair of Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Social Affairs / Chair of the Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (LAPPD), Lao PDR**

On behalf of the National Assembly of Lao PDR, the Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (LAPPD) and the Lao Women Parliamentarians Caucus, he welcomed all parliamentarians from the Asia-Pacific Region, and expressed his appreciation to the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for organizing this meaningful conference on the “Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls” in Vientiane. He explained that violence against women and girls is a deliberate action which inflicts physical, mental, and emotional harm, and is a consequence of many factors, such as custom, traditions, beliefs, poverty, social attitudes toward women, levels of education, selfishness, and social norms.

### ***Address***

**Ms. Mariam A. Khan, UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR**

She expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to be present and congratulated the Lao National Assembly for hosting this event. She acknowledged the conference as a good opportunity for parliamentarians across the region to engage in discussions on taking action to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. She went on to discuss the ICPD+25 Summit and commended the leadership of APDA and their commitment to promoting learning and ensuring the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG5 (5.2) to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. Lastly, she noted the key priorities in this endeavor, namely shifting social norms, advancing gender equality, preventing violence against women, addressing sexual harassment, and promoting women’s economic empowerment.

### ***Organizer’s Address***

**Dr. Osamu Kusumoto, Executive Director/Secretary General of APDA, Japan**

He conveyed his sincere gratitude to the honorable delegates from the Asia-Pacific Region, the Lao National Assembly, and everyone involved in hosting this important conference, and noted that this year marks the 25th anniversary of the ICPD. He explained that the topic of the conference was timely and necessary for addressing the unfinished business of the ICPD related to the prevention of all forms of violence, including gender-based discrimination. He went on to highlight that in order to create a truly equitable, sustainable society, it is important to achieve not only the elimination of violence against women and girls but also to build respect

for each gender. He noted that effectively addressing these issues requires a commitment to prioritize them and hoped to see the impact that this regional meeting will have in future.

### *Opening Address*

#### **H.E. Mr. Sengnoul Xayalath, Vice-President of the National Assembly, Lao PDR**

In his address, H.E. Xayalath thanked APDA and UNFPA for selecting Lao PDR as a venue to host this regional meeting. He also expressed his appreciation to all representatives from the Asia-Pacific Region for their participation in this meeting. He explained that violence against women and girls is a universal issue caused by many factors, but it is most notably a consequence of harmful cultural practices, beliefs, poverty, people's attitudes, low education and so on. He acknowledged that integrating solutions to prevent violence against women and children is one of the biggest challenges facing the region, and he hoped this regional meeting would provide a platform to share good practices, particularly in overseeing the implementation of laws, policies and resolutions, and to further discuss potential solutions.



## **Session 1: Current Situation Surrounding Women and Girls: Progress and Challenges in the Region**

**Session Chair: Hon. Ms. Akenese Loheni Loreta, MP New Zealand**

### **Ms. Mariam A. Khan, UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR**

She started her presentation by showing a video titled *From ICPD on the SDGs: Leaving No One Behind* (see the link: <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/video/icpd-sdgs-leaving-no-one-behind>). She then presented an overview of the current situation of gender-based violence in the region, explaining that the fundamental point of both ICPD and SDGs is to ensure the rights of women to make decisions, and to ensure their ability to claim their rights as individuals, but this is yet to be achieved and is a reality we should look to attain in future. She shared the outcome of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Asian and Pacific Declaration on Population and Development in Bangkok and informed the audience that UNFPA is preparing to submit a new report to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICPD in Nairobi in November 2019.

She emphasized that despite progress made across the region, inequality is rising, and the vulnerability of those who are not employed and those who cannot access social safety nets is of particular concern. Youth unemployment remains a challenge, especially among young women. Moreover, women's participation in decision-making remains low. Increasing migration flows, especially of female domestic workers crossing the border, pose a challenge that is yet to be addressed.

She also stressed the need to first ensure women's rights to make decisions within the family, then in the community, and finally in society. Recently, women's contribution to society has increased through their participation as parliamentarians and as leaders. She noted that women parliamentarians have played an important role in accelerating the ICPD PoA implementation. Since Cairo, laws and policies have been enacted to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. By respecting, protecting and fulfilling reproductive rights, we can address population mega trends including that of ageing populations.

### **Mr. Viengprasith Thipphasuda, Safe and Fair Program (ILO/UNWOMEN), Lao PDR**

Mr. Thipphasuda made a presentation on the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+25) and suggested what parliamentarians can do in terms of preventing violence. He posed three essential questions - First, "Do we have a National Action Plan on Ending VAW, and do we have funds dedicated to the action?"; secondly, "Is there anyone speaking out clearly and loudly on this topic?", "How can we work with the media?" – it is very important to promote voices on the subject of preventing VAW; and lastly, "Do we have policies which insist and ensure workplaces are safe for women?"

He then talked about the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) which outlines commitments for all Member States in 12 critical areas: women and the environment, women in power and decision making, the girl child, women and the economy, women and poverty, violence against women, human rights of women, education and training of women,

institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, women and health, women and the media, and women and armed conflict. He hoped that every stakeholder would commit to this as well.

Furthermore, he highlighted how the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. He explained that the 2030 Agenda focuses on the “transformative shifts” which are associated with an agenda of gender equality and women’s empowerment. We could see that SDG5 (gender equality) is recognized as having a catalytic effect on the achievement of human development, environmental sustainability, good governance, and sustainable peace.

He concluded that the UN inter-agency framework, which is an evidence-based prevention initiative, works to prevent violence. Also, that the ecological approach is an effective intervention that uses multiple, complementary methods to promote new norms through the use of a media campaign combined with group training on gender equality.

**Ms. Sai Jyothir Mai Racherla, Program Director, ARROW, Malaysia**

After introducing the Asian-Pacific Resources and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), which works towards an equal and equitable world that enables all women and young people to be equal citizens in all aspect of their lives, she presented the key findings from the Violence against Women section of the ICPD+25 review. She reiterated that violence against women is a ‘global epidemic’, a gross human rights violation and a pernicious reality in the region where two in three women experience violence in their lifetime. She also talked about new forms of violence that are emerging such as cyber harassment and online sexual exploitation.

She pointed out that an analysis of VAW in the region showed that culture seems to perpetuate gender-based violence, and that younger married women are more at risk. She also stressed other forms of violence against women, such as Adolescent Female Genital Mutilation, intimate and non-partner violence (in South-East Asia the lifetime prevalence of physical intimate partner violence was 37.3%), trafficking, and sexual violence. After reporting the results of this analysis, she recommended that all forms of VAW, including marital rape, should be criminalized and that these laws should be enforced by police and judicial institutions. She also recommended that comprehensive sexuality education should be promoted and that progressive laws and policies around all forms of VAW should be enacted and implemented.

**Dr. Henriette Jansen, Technical Advisor, Violence against Women (VAW) Research and Data, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO)**

She presented “Measuring prevalence of violence against women in Asia-Pacific” with an overview of ‘kNowVAWdata’ — a project which was started in 2016 with funding by the Government of Australia, in order to strengthen data collection in the region. This project aimed to provide technical support in the measuring of national VAW prevalence, by developing, implementing and rolling out a curriculum on VAW data collection, and by

building a network of practitioners for support and mentoring, and for knowledge capture and sharing.

She underscored that the overall prevalence rates hide huge variations, that the variations demonstrate that violence is not inevitable, and that it is important to know the data and understand the context and the story behind it in order to develop effective policies, preventive measures and responses. She noted that most countries have only one data collection point, and prevalence data and surveys never capture the most severe cases.

#### **Comments made in the discussion:**

**Hon. Ms. Viplove Thakur, MP India, Vice-Chair of IAPPD** asked Dr. Jansen what the solution for violence against women is.

**Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, MP Thailand, Secretary-General of AFPPD** commented that Thailand is completely committed to gender equality and has done pretty well in improving access to reproductive health (RH) care and services. He was quite surprised to see the findings presented by ARROW which showed that the practice of adolescent female genital mutilation was prevalent and on the rise in Thailand. He asked for more information, as it is not widely practiced throughout the nation but limited in its use to certain areas of southern part of Thailand.

**Dr. Nguyen Van Tien, former Vice-Chair of VAPPD, Vietnam** commented that recently in Vietnam issues regarding women and children are receiving increasing attention, because both victims and media are very active in reporting and discussing the issues. The media has a lot of influence in shaping public opinion.

**Dr. Henriette Jansen, Technical Advisor, Violence against Women (VAW) Research and Data, UNFPA APRO** replied that there is no one solution for all countries. However, what usually works is a multilateral sectoral approach with multi-level efforts. She stressed that we need to work on education, service, law, and policy implementation. She also agreed with what the representative of Vietnam said. In the past, people did not speak about this, but now they



have been given a voice. Violence against women is a violation of human rights. That is why she wants everyone to understand the violence data.

Conclusion: In spite of progress, there is still a lot that needs to be addressed. Widening inequality, culture and traditions that condone gender-based violence, new forms of violence and the lack of data to inform effective action require special attention. Also, law enforcement and policy implementation need to be improved. There is a need to promote sexuality education in school and safe workplaces in order to reduce the risk to violence. We should encourage all countries to work together to address the violence issues.

## ***Session 2: Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Empowering Women: Lao PDR's Experience***

**Session Chair: Hon. Mr. Damry Ouk, MP Cambodia, Secretary General of CAPPD**

**Hon. Mrs. Bandid Pathoumvanh, MP Lao PDR, Vice-President of the Lao Women's Union**

Hon. Pathoumvanh discussed two priority issues: First, the progress of implementation on gender equality, and second, work towards preventing violence against women and girls. The Lao PDR has three structures addressing gender equality: 1) The women parliamentarians caucus under the leadership of Hon. Mrs. Pany Yathotou, President of NA of Lao PDR which is tasked to protect women's human rights and contribute to the process of implementation; 2) The Lao Women's Union as a representative of social-political participation; and 3) The National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children which works as a secretariat of the Lao government, and the network of all women in community. These three structures protect and support women's empowerment and enhancing gender equality within the household and in society at large.

In terms of laws and policies, the Lao constitution, the law on women protection development, the law on child jurisdiction, the law on anti-human trafficking, the law on child right protection, and the draft law of gender equality, which is under the consideration of the National Assembly, all protect women's rights and promote gender equality. In addition, there are other relevant laws such as the national social-economic development plan, the women development plan, and the development plans that cover all levels in the country, from the national level to the village level that mainstream gender equality in compliance with international laws and conventions, and the vision of the 2030 agenda,.

**Ms. Sisouvanh Vorabouth, UNFPA Lao PDR Office**

In her presentation, Ms. Vorabouth talked about gender-based violence in Lao PDR and reviewed the implementation of the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children in 2015, the national mechanism for Gender Equality and GBV, the family law, and Noi framework to empower adolescent girls through equipping girls with necessary education and life skills to delay early pregnancy and marriage. Despite the good

policies and institutions that Lao PDR has mandated, violence still persists. According to statistics, one in three women (32.7 %) aged 20-24 were married before age 18. Also, one in five girls aged 15-19 were already married illegally (the legal age of marriage in Lao PDR is 18). Moreover, one in three women experience physical, sexual and emotional violence, and three in four women who experience physical or sexual violence do not seek help. Only 3.8 % of women seek help from the police, and 2.6% seek help from the health center. Only 0.4% seek help from social services, legal advice services, and the court.

She described the challenges and barriers that survivors face: a lack of knowledge about their rights, the fear of being re-victimized, a lack of sensitive and capable staff in health, police and justice and social sectors to deal with GBV cases, a lack of available services, and the poor quality of what services are available. Therefore, in order to remove the challenges and barriers, UNFPA partners with Lao Women's Union and other sectors to implement essential health, justice and police, and social services. In addition, she provided some principles of services such as a rights-based approach, a victim/survivor-center approach, advancing gender equality and empowering women, culturally- and age-appropriate and sensitive services, and perpetrator accountability.

**Ms. Tanya Barnfield, Assistant Country Director – Programs, CARE International, Lao PDR**

Ms. Barnfield presented the long-term programme in Lao PDR named Life Free from Violence (LFFV), which focuses on ethnic minority women and marginalized urban women. CARE International works to strengthen gender equality and women's voices, promote inclusive governance and increase resilience. This programme in Lao PDR was aligned with the National Action Plan to End Violence against Women 2020, and the SDG5.2, in partnership with government, donors, UN, CSO and the community.

She introduced one of the toolkits that are used in the region: the Community Dialogue Toolkit (CDT) on preventing violence against women and girls. The objectives of the toolkit are to enable a community to increase knowledge and understanding about gender-based violence (types, root causes, consequences), to create a space for dialogue on changes in attitudes, behavior and social norms that contribute to gender-based violence in the community, and to support relevant stakeholders in strategic thinking and in the implementation of initiatives to change social norms.

The toolkit assists the process of raising awareness on these problems, gathering information and learning new positive ideas and behaviors, taking action for change, and seeking support to sustain the change. All these processes result in positive behavior change. The target group of CDT consists of community leaders and those who have the responsibility for working with the villagers from diverse backgrounds at the community level. She indicated that LWU's village and district officers as well as community change agents have been equipped with a roadmap to use in the prevention of violence against women and girls, and they have built greater solidarity amongst the community for the Life Free from Violence (LFFV).

### Comments made in the discussion:

**Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, MP Thailand, Secretary-General of AFPPD** asked how social and health services are provided. He was concerned about the findings on violence against women since the data might not be accurate. He shared a practice in Thailand called One-Stop Service Center, which puts various services together. In his view, this is a good way to provide needed services to people and Laos may want to consider doing the same.

**Dr. Nguyen Van Tien, former Vice-Chair of VAPPD, Vietnam** shared the experience of Vietnam, which provides health services for GBV at target district hospitals. He then asked to which ministry the issue of violence against women belongs in Lao PDR.

**Ms. Sisouvanh Vorabouth, UNFPA Lao PDR Office**, said that it is good to learn from other countries, particularly the One-Stop Service Center in Thailand. Lao PDR is trying to set up the one-stop approach as well but has not started it yet. There is a consultation meeting to adopt social services in line with the Lao context, and officials from various ministries discuss what they have done so far in terms of providing services to those who face violence against women and girls.

**Hon. Mrs. Bandid Pathoumvanh, MP Lao PDR, Vice-President of the Lao Women's Union** mentioned that ending violence against women is the responsibility of many ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health, and Ministry of Justice, while women's rights protection is under the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children.



### ***Session 3: Sharing of Good Practices in Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls and Male Engagement***

**Session Chair: Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, MP Thailand, Secretary-General of AFPPD**

**Mr. Raša Sekulović, Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships, Plan International Asia Regional Hub, Thailand**

Mr. Sekulović presented different aspects of the very complex phenomenon of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) — its prevalence, consequences, and root causes. In order to reduce, prevent and eliminate CEFM, it is essential to provide a more comprehensive framework. The key is to accelerate efforts to make this a global commitment under SDG5 to eliminate harmful practices in girls and child. CEFM is a human rights violation, harmful due to traditional practices, it is affecting women, girls and boys, and society. CEFM is often followed by early pregnancy, sometimes involving sexual assault.

Among combined and deeply rooted causes of CEFM are family expectations and traditions including religious traditions, economic scarcity, conflict and instability. More than anything else it underlines gender inequality and leads to a lot of harmful consequences. Gender transformation approaches, strengthening policy frameworks and related budget investment, changing social norms, attitudes, behavior, relations, and social and economic resources and expanding the social safety net are needed to address CEFM. The three key messages for parliamentarians are to pass laws setting a minimum age for marriage, to engage with traditional and religious leaders, and to promote dialogue with young people to hear what they say and how they want to be assisted.

**Hon. Ms. Viplove Thakur, MP India, Vice-Chair of IAPPD**

Hon. Thakur started her presentation by describing many types of violence against women: physical, emotional, economical and others. In India, there are many good practices in law as national initiatives to combat violence against women, to promote preventive measures, to engage men and boys in violence prevention, and to secure effective implementation of legislation. It is important to bring men into the process, to engage with them and make them understand this issue starting from an early age in order to overcome this issue, because it is related to men's perspectives on how they should respect women and girls as human beings.

She then stressed that men need to be educated and without their understanding it is difficult to change and that empowerment has only been achieved on paper.

**Hon. Ms. Elvina Sousa Carvalho, MP Timor-Leste**

In her presentation, Hon. Carvalho talked about how men can be engaged to resolve the issue of violence against women. She presented on parliamentary resolutions on promoting the participation and representation of women in politics; on gender-responsive budgeting; on the

introduction of a law against domestic violence; on the national action plan against gender-based violence 2017-2021 (amended); and on the national action plan 2016-2020 with its four key pillars of prevention, protection, participation and peace building. She also described the impact and consequences of violence against women and girls as physical, sexual and mental health issues.

As part of a comprehensive approach, she pointed out the need for the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, social mobilization to change social norms and behaviors, awareness-raising campaigns, and support for the women's civil society movement.

**Hon. Ms. Jiang Lihong, MP; Member of Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China**

In her presentation, Hon. Lihong introduced China's legislation to prevent violence against women. First, the anti-domestic violence law requires setting up of a mandatory reporting system and issuing a personal safety protection order. Second, China adopted measures to prevent violence against women through publicity campaigns, counseling services and anti-domestic violence education for parents and students, and building a security mechanism. Public security offices actively handle domestic violence cases, and work together on these with judicial and prosecution offices.

Third, China's achievement in preventing violence against women is evidenced by the reduction in the number of complaints about domestic violence. Complaints received by the Women's Federation network decreased by 11% in 2018, compared to 2017. She reiterated that the country is committed to the common goal of preventing violence against women and reducing harm to women's physical and psychological health, even though it is a long-term and arduous task.

**Comments made in the discussion:**

**Ms. Nobuko Horibe, Interim Executive Director of AFPPD, Thailand,** asked if there are any concrete cases of success with male involvement, as many programmes have tried to engage men and boys, but it is not clear what actually worked successfully and what did not.

**Hon. Ms. Viplove Thakur, MP India, Vice-Chair of IAPPD** commented that they have started with educating boys and girls together from the start of their schooling, so they can understand each other. They also provide educational workshops on existing laws, so that men and boys can understand what happens if they commit violence against women and girls.

**Mr. ViengprasithThiphasouda, Safe and Fair Programme (ILO/UNWOMEN), Lao PDR** referred to the presentations that talked about social mobilization, and getting young men and women, especially girls, to take action, and asked how to ensure the safety of young activists and what kind of environment is needed, especially in the context of Asia?

**Hon. Ms. Elvina Sousa Carvalho, MP Timor-Leste**, commented that the National Parliament strongly encourages the participation of all members of society in fighting against violence against women and girls. Timor-Leste is a young democratic nation and freedom of speech is very important. She added that there are civil society organizations working very hard to promote the important issues related to women and girls and gender equality.

**Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, MP Thailand, Secretary-General of AFPPD**, asked if there is any good practice in any country, with regard to the engagement of local religious leaders to combat child, early and forced marriage as well as female genital mutilation.

**Mr. Raša Sekulović, Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships, Plan International Asia Regional Hub, Thailand**, answered that there are a lot of good practices in engaging religious leaders across the region. Regional consultation aimed at ending violence against women and girls has created strong regional platforms of faith-based leaders for global dialogue and if we examine holy scripts well, they are promoting the same values, values such as mutual respect and non-violent behavior. Therefore, interfaith dialogue is very important, because religious leaders have a lot of power in countries such as Indonesia and India. He pointed out that these practices are not really well known, so each country should make efforts to engage with powerful and influential religious leaders.

**Mr. Enkhuvshin Urtnasan, Mongolia**, suggested two measures to reduce domestic violence in the context of Mongolia. The first is to raise the age of consent and the second is to engage not only the government but the entire society, especially multimedia which can affect young people in a negative way.

**Mr. Raša Sekulović, Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships, Plan International Asia Regional Hub, Thailand**, commented that there is a need to look at the reality of young people and at root causes behind the issues. In South East Asia, there are a lot of unwanted pregnancies and helping young people gain more knowledge about and the skills to engage in responsible, healthy, and respectful relationships is essential. He argued that just increasing the age of consent does not provide adequate protection and that we need to look into different complex issues.

**Hon. Ms. Elvina Sousa Carvalho, MP Timor-Leste**, asked India about the reaction of men when they started men's engagement.

**Hon. Ms. Viplove Thakur, MP India, Vice-Chair of IAPPD**, replied that there are many laws to prevent violence against women and to implement them they need men to engage by educating them and making them aware of the situation.

**Dr. Nguyen Van Tien, former Vice-Chair of VAPPD, Vietnam**, noted that many presentations proposed long-term solutions and asked if there are any short-term solutions to reduce violence against women and children.

**Mr. Raša Sekulović, Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships, Plan International Asia Regional Hub, Thailand,** answered that we need to work on both short- and long-term approaches in a step-by-step manner. He explained that if we look for short-term, we need to start from the level of the family, working with parents, men, boys from an early stage, using existing platforms such as school, community and media.

**Hon. Ms. Jiang Lihong, MP China, Member of Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee of the NPC,** recommended that we should combine in our efforts to make progress in legislation, law enforcement, and the administration of justice. She added that it is especially important to strengthen education for women on what is the rule of law so that women's ability to protect themselves is improved.

**Dr. Osamu Kusumoto, Executive Director/Secretary General of APDA, Japan,** pointed out that violence against women is culturally persistent. There is some research that this is closely related to population issues. The population is reproduced by women, and therefore, back in the days when there was no family planning, malnutritional status and discrimination against women was ingrained into social systems and justified in order to control the population within the carrying capacity of that region. In that sense, violence against women is fundamentally related to population issues.



#### **Session 4: *Violence, Gender Equality and Accelerating ICPD PoA Implementation***

**Session Chair: Hon. Mr. Pisan Manawaat, MP Thailand**

**Hon. Mr. Damry Ouk, MP Cambodia, Secretary General of CAPPD**

Hon. Ouk presented on efforts Cambodia has made towards the legal protection of women and girls in compliance with the Cambodian Constitution, the Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, and most especially the Ministry of the Interior's Safety Village Commune/Sangkat Policy Guide. Due to efforts to promote women's involvement at all decision-making levels and gender mainstreaming in national policies and programmes, the number of female members of the National Assembly increased from 5% in 1993 to 20% in 2018, and women now comprise 30% of leaders at the village level.

He also shared Cambodia's good practices towards the empowerment of women through the creation of jobs for women and girls in the tourism and garment sectors, through the promotion of formal and informal economic activities for women, through the enhancement women's and girl's education, through the improvement of health for women and girls, and through the provision of universal access to reproductive health.

**Mr. Francis Marus, Former Minister, PNG**

He explained that many gender-based violence cases are not reported, and there is no national database for such cases, although data are collected separately by different organizations depending on the nature of work of these organizations. According to him, the Law Reform Commission published a comprehensive study in 1982, which found that among 715 married people, 66.5% men and 56.6% women accepted that a husband may hit his wife. In 2014, up to 80% of women in the surveyed areas experienced some kind of abuse, which means two in three women were affected by gender-based violence. Many international commitments and conventions to address gender-based violence have been ratified and enacted as policy, but unfortunately, many of these policies are only on paper and are not effectively implemented. He then explained that the country recently established the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC), which has proven to be a successful model with many good practices that can be replicated by providing counseling, a referral pathway, and providing the tools for people to have access to justice and carry out advocacy. There are, however, challenges in terms of the low representation of women at sub-national levels of government, social norms, lack of knowledge of the law, and so on.

**Dr. Nguyen Van Tien, former Vice-Chair of VAPPD, Vietnam**

In his presentation, Dr. Tien shared some alarming figures in Vietnam: 58% of women who have been married have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime; 5% of women have experienced physical violence; 87% of women have experienced physical or sexual

violence; and only 43% of disclosed domestic violence cases come to the attention of the police. According to studies, 89% of the time the primary reason for domestic violence is alcohol and drug abuse. With regards to human trafficking, 90% of the victims are women and children. Vietnam has been paying much attention to these issues through to the current day and has enacted laws to protect women and girls in order to overcome these issues step by step. He recommended to the parliamentarians that they try to understand the issues of gender-based and domestic violence, enact bills with clear, detailed regulations to deal with the issues, create mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of these bills, develop strong advocacy activities, and work towards having policy-making and budget allocation that is evidence-based.

#### **Comments made in the discussion:**

**Hon. MP, Lao PDR** expressed her interest in Cambodia's policy of providing pre- and post-delivery care for female workers, and asked whether this policy applies to everyone and if Cambodia has enough of a budget to implement it.

**Hon. Mr. Damry Ouk, MP Cambodia, Secretary General of CAPPD**, replied that the social fund of the government supports this system, and it is managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

**Mrs. Inthana Bouphasavanh, Director of ADWLE, Lao PDR**, shared some experience in terms of resolving gender-based violence and raising awareness on gender equality, such as disseminating laws, policies and other acts that protect women, and educating villagers especially women in ethnic minority groups, in order to change attitudes and behaviors. ADWLE works to make sure that women and men understand the laws; encourages them to report cases to the village community and to legal aid clinics; assists women in efforts to achieve justice and to exercise their rights; and helps them raise their voices to end violence against women in the community. These efforts have helped reduce the number of cases year by year.

**Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, MP Thailand, Secretary-General of AFPPD**, commented that tackling problems of gender-based violence and gender equality requires time. Comprehensive sexuality education is very important but they are facing difficulty in implementing it. The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Solution Bill was passed by the House in 2016, but to date, nearly three years after the passage of the law, it is still hard to change the attitudes of teachers and the Ministry of Education. He emphasized that if comprehensive sexuality education is in place in the school curriculum, many problems related to unwanted pregnancies, adolescent pregnancies, gender inequality, and sexual reproductive health can be solved.



## **Adoption of the Regional Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls**

**Session Chair: Hon. Ms. Akenese Loheni Loreta, MP New Zealand**

The draft Regional Action Plan was reviewed and some suggestions were made by the participants. The adopted outcome document called Commitment to Action is attached (see ANNEX 3: Commitment to Action).

## **Closing Session**

### *Address*

**Ms. Mariam A. Khan, UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR**

Ms. Khan was pleased to see the consensus on the topics that were discussed and hoped for a better future for women and girls. Over the past 25 years since the adoption of the ICPD PoA, many countries have made progress in policy development and implementation and in data collection. There are also new actions from civil society. We can learn from and build on each other's efforts. She emphasized that in order to reach the SDGs, parliamentarians' support is important in decision-making, budgeting, and in implementing decisions domestically, regionally and globally.

### *Closing Address*

**Hon. Mrs. Thatsadaphone Saengsouliya, MP, Chair of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus, Lao PDR**

In her closing remarks, Hon. Saengsouliya highlighted the key discussions among the participants, in particular, on SDG5, to achieve target 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against

all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. These key areas are the responsibility of the Laos Women Parliamentarians Caucus, and therefore, she is committed to developing and applying policies and putting plans into action to advance these targets. Lastly, she emphasized the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality in cooperation with parliamentarians in the Asia-Pacific Region, and to “Leave No One Behind”.

## **Study Visit**

**5 July 2019, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR**

### **Visit to the Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children (CPCWC) with Lao Women Union (LWU)**

The CPCWC is the first shelter in Lao PDR that protects and provides comprehensive assistance for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation. The CPCWC provides three types of assistance — legal, health and psychological assistance — for free.

The representative of the CPCWC gave a briefing on the main roles of the center. It provides safe shelter, legal aid, medical care, educational and vocational training programmes, economic support, repatriation and reintegration assistance. In addition, the shelter also offers basic services and rehabilitation programmes for women and children who are victims of human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual exploitation.

Dr. Osamu Kusumoto, Executive Director/Secretary General of APDA, expressed special thanks for allowing all parliamentarians to visit the center. He was so impressed by and very appreciative of what the LWU has been doing to protect the rights of women and children.



Hon. Viplove Thakur, MP India, Vice-Chair of IAPPD, also expressed her appreciation to the CPCWC. This is the place where women and children can ask for help when they face problems. This shelter really works to help them, protect them, and assist them in gaining justice. Therefore, she hoped for more support from countries such as Japan so that the center can continue to support women and children.

Later, the parliamentarians had the opportunity to see the center's activities, including vocational programmes for the victims.



### **Visit to the Legal Aid Clinic of Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE)**

The legal aid clinic opened very recently, on 4 July 2019, as one of the main activities of ADWLE. ADWLE also provides training programmes on Gender, CEDAW women's rights, Anti-Violence against Women, and disseminates laws related to women in the target villages.

Mrs. Inthana Bouphasavanh, Director of ADWLE, expressed special thanks to all participants for visiting the clinic that day. She then presented the overview of the association and the legal aid clinic. She reported that of the 170 cases requiring their assistance, 50% were divorce cases, and the others were related to domestic violence and gender-based violence. They processed these cases effectively by offering legal advice to women and girls. The legal aid clinic is supported by the EU and Helvitas.

Dr. Osamu Kusumoto, Executive Director/Secretary General of APDA, congratulated ADWLE on the opening of the new legal aid clinic, and commended them for their impressive work.

Hon. Akenese Loreta Loheni, MP New Zealand, thanked ADWLE for welcoming the delegation and expressed her appreciation for the work of the legal aid clinic to help women, especially those who have been victims of violence.

Hon. Viplove Thakur, MP India, Vice-Chair of IAPPD, asked if their advice service is free of charge. Also, she asked if they have to find attorneys on their own or if the government helps to find them.

Mrs. Boupphasavanh replied that all lawyers in Lao PDR are mandated to provide a certain portion of their services free of charge. And to find attorneys, the legal aid clinic can only give advice on how to find the attorney in the case of a person wanting to take legal action.



### **Visit to the Promotion of Family Health Association (PFHA)**

The Promotion of Family Health Association (PFHA) was established in 2012 to serve vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. However PFHA has a long history since 2004, supported by IPPF.

Dr. Chansy Phimmachanh, Chair of Governance Board of PFPA, gave a brief description of the background and what services the association provides. Their services cover counselling and training for adolescent and young people, training for workers on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), mother and child health, adolescent/youth health, HIV/AIDS, family planning, safe abortion, gender equality, nutrition, and so forth. Moreover, they work closely with local partners such as the Lao Women's Union (LWU), mass organizations, INGOs, and Lao CSOs. All in all, PFHA's activities are in line with the child policy, gender equality policy, anti-fraud policy and other relevant policies.

On behalf of the delegation, Mr. Francis Marus, Former Minister PNG, expressed his appreciation to PFHA for welcoming the delegation and explaining their work, particularly their activities that relate to preventing violence against women and children. He went on to say that PFHA's work is very important and greatly impressed the participants.



## **Visit to Lao Youth Union of Lao PDR (LYU)**

The purpose of the visit to LYU was to understand its role and strategy toward supporting the youth.

Mr. Alounxay Sounyalath, Head of Lao Youth Union (LYU), warmly welcomed all the delegates and gave a briefing on the roles and the responsibilities of LYU. As young people are the next generation and in future will develop the country, they were put in the center of the development plan. The LYU is a mass organization in the Lao PDR dedicated to mobilizing young people for national development.

Hon. Jiang Lihong, MP China, expressed her gratitude for the meeting and for learning of the progress in Lao PDR. She appreciated Lao PDR's work towards combatting violence against women and children and also supporting the youth, and wished for their continued success.

Hon. Damry Ouk, MP Cambodia, Secretary General of CAPPD, asked what the difference is between the structures of youth in school and youth in the village.

Mr. Sounyalath explained that the structures are similar but what is different is the system of operation, duty and roles.

Hon. Viplove Thakur, MP India, Vice-Chair of IAPPD, asked about the rate of youth unemployment and his recommendation for improving employment.

Mr. Sounyalath pointed out that this is a global issue. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the youth unemployment rate is not clear, due to the unique lifestyle of Lao youth. For instance, some young people are unemployed but they did not identify themselves as unemployed because they still engage in subsistence farming. As for recommendations, he listed three priorities. The first is to communicate and influence young people to get an education, provide them with employment opportunities, and train them with entrepreneurial skills. The second is to focus on technical expertise and vocational training, and the third is to emphasize the development of industry 4.0 with a balance between technical and physical skills.



## ANNEX 1:

### AGENDA

#### **Regional Parliamentarians' Meeting On the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls**

**4-5 July 2019**

**Vientiane, Lao PDR**

**3 July 2019**

Arrival of delegates

**4 July 2019**

**Day 1: Meeting**

MC: **Mrs. Siriphone Southammavong**, Deputy-Chief of  
Inter-Parliamentary Relation Division

08:30-08:50 Registration (Venue: In front of Luangprabang Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Muoung Thanh Luxury Vientiane Hotel)

09:00-09:40 **Opening Session**

Welcome Remarks

**Hon. Dr. Somphou Douangsavanh**, MP, Chair of Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Social Affairs, Lao PDR/Chair of the Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and development (LAPPD) [10 min]

Address by UNFPA

**Ms. Mariam A. Khan**, UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR [10 min]

Address by the Organizer

**Dr. Osamu Kusumoto**, Executive Director of APDA, Japan [10 min]

Opening Remarks

**H.E. Mr. Sengnouan XAYALATH**, Vice-President of the National Assembly, Lao PDR [10 min]

09:40-10:00 Group Photo/Coffee Break

10:00-11:15 **Session 1: Where are We? – Current Situation surrounding Women and Girls: Progress and Challenge in the Region**

Session Chair: **Hon. Ms. Akenese Loheni Loreta**, MP New Zealand

1. Regional Review of the ICPD PoA after 25 years of implementation and Nairobi Summit (ICPD+25) – **Ms. Mariam A. Khan**, UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR [10 min]
2. National and Regional Review of the Beijing Platform for the Action after 24 years of implementation (towards Beijing+25) – **Mr. Viengprasith Thiphasouda**, Safe and Fair Programme (ILO/UNWOMEN), Lao PDR [15 min]

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Violence against Women and Girls: What has progressed, what has not changed, what are new phenomena? – <b>Ms. Sai Jyothir Mai Racherla</b>, Programme Director, ARROW [15 min]</li> <li>4. “kNOwVAWdata: Measuring prevalence of violence against women in Asia-Pacific”, <b>Dr. Henriette Jansen</b>, Technical Advisor, Violence against women (VAW), Research and Data, UNFPA APRO [20 min]</li> </ol>
11:15-11:45	Q&A/discussion [30 min]
11:45-12:30	<b>Session 2: Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Empowering Women: Lao PDR’s Experience</b> Session Chair: <b>Hon. Mr. Damry Ouk</b> , MP Cambodia <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Hon. Mrs. BandidPathoumvanh</b>, MP, Vice-President of the Lao Women’s Union, Lao PDR [15 min]</li> <li>2. <b>Ms. Sisouvanh Vorabouth</b>, UNFPA Lao PDR Office [15 min]</li> <li>3. <b>Ms. Tanya Barnfield</b>, Assistant Country Director – Programs, CARE International, Lao PDR [15 min]</li> </ol>
12:30-13:00	Q&A/discussion [30 min]
13:00-14:00	Lunch (Place: Dokchampa Restaurant, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor)
14:00-14:50	<b>Session 3: Sharing of Good Practices in Presentation of Violence Against Women and Girls and Male Engagement</b> Session Chair: <b>Hon. Mr. Jetn Sirathranont</b> , MP Thailand (TBC) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mr. Rasa Sekulovic</b>, Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships, Plan International Asia Regional Hub [10 min]</li> <li>2. <b>Hon. Ms. Viplove Thakur</b>, MP India, Vice Chair of IAPPD [10 min]</li> <li>3. <b>Hon. Ms. Elvina Sousa Carvalho</b>, MP Timor Leste [10 min]</li> <li>4. <b>Hon. Ms. Jiang Lihong</b>, MP, Member of Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC), China [10 min]</li> </ol>
14:50-15:20	Q&A/discussion [30 min]
15:20-15:40	Coffee Break (Place: Outside of the Venue)
15:40-16:40	<b>Session 4: Violence, Gender equality and Accelerating ICPD PoA Implementation</b> Session Chair: <b>Hon. Mr. Pisan Manawaat</b> , MP Thailand <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Hon. Mr. Damry Ouk</b>, MP Cambodia [10 min]</li> <li>2. <b>Mr. Francis Marus</b>, Former Minister, PNG [10 min]</li> <li>3. <b>Dr. Nguyen Van Tien</b>, Former Vice-Chair of VAPPD, Vietnam [10 min]</li> </ol>
16:40-17:10	Q&A/discussion [30 min]
17:10-17:40	<b>Discussion/Adoption on the Regional Action Plan for the Prevention of the Violence against Women and Girls</b> Session Chair: <b>Hon. Ms. AkeneseLoheniLoreta</b> , MP New Zealand

17:40-18:00     **Closing Session**

Address

**Ms. Mariam A.Khan**, UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR

Closing Address

**Hon. Mrs. ThatsadaphoneSaengsouliya**, MP Chair of the Women Parliamentarians  
Caucus, Lao PDR

**5 July 2019**

**Day 2:            Study Visit**

08:45-09:00     Meeting at the hotel lobby

09:00-09:30     Travel

09:30-10:30     Visit to and briefing at *Lao Women's Union's Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children*

10:30-11:00     Travel

11:00-12:00     Visit to and briefing at *Legal Aid Clinic of ADWLE*

12:00-12:30     Travel

12:30-13:30     Lunch (Place: New Rose Hotel)

13:30-14:00     Travel

14:00-15:00     Visit to and briefing at *Promotion of Family Health Association of Lao PDR (PFHA)*

15:00-15:30     Travel

15:30-16:30     Visit to and briefing at *Lao Youth Union's Youth Friendly Clinic / Youth Information Centre*

16:30-17:00     Travel back to the hotel

**6 July 2019**

**Day 3            Departure of delegates**

**Organized by: Asian Population and Development Association (APDA)**

**Hosted by: The National Assembly of Lao PDR**

**Supported by: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**



**ANNEX 2:****Participants' List**

No		Name	Country	Position
Participants from Asia and the Pacific Countries				
1	Hon. Dr.	Damry Ouk	Cambodia	MP
2	Hon.	KeChanmony	Cambodia	MP
3	Mr.	EngVannak	Cambodia	CAPPD Coordinator
4	Mr.	YounTithkakada	Cambodia	Assistant to Hon. Damry Ouk
5	Hon.	Jiang Lihong	China	MP
6	Mr.	Xie Xiaoping	China	Director-General, Office of Parliamentary Committee
7	Mr.	LyuXianhai	China	Director, Office of Parliamentary Committee
8	Ms.	Li Jingyi	China	Senior Staff Member, Office of Parliamentary Committee
9	Hon.	Viplove Thakur	India	MP
10	Hon.	ChhayaVerma	India	MP
11	Mr.	Manmohan Sharma	India	Executive Secretary of IAPPD
12	H.E.	SengnoungeXayalath	Lao PDR	Vice-President of the National Assembly
13	Hon. Dr.	SomphouDouangsavanh	Lao PDR	MP, Chair of Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Social Affairs / Chair of the Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (LAPPD)
14	Hon. Mrs.	ThatsadaphoneSaengsouliya	Lao PDR	MP, Chair of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus
15	Hon. Mr.	VienthavisoneThephachanh	Lao PDR	MP, Vice-President of the Foreign Relations Committee
16	Hon. Mrs.	VanphengKeonakhone	Lao PDR	Vice-Chair of the Ethnic Affairs Committee
17	Hon. Mrs.	BandidPathoumvanh	Lao PDR	MP, Vice-President of the Lao Women's Union
18	Mr.	BounsavadBoupha	Lao PDR	Vice-Minister of Justice
19	Hon. Mrs.	SomchanhChitvongdeuan	Lao PDR	MP, Vice-Chair of Oudomsay Province People's Council
20	Hon. Mrs.	KhamfongPhoumvongsay	Lao PDR	MP, Vice-Chair of Vientiane Capital People's Council
21	Hon. Mrs.	KetmanyBandasak	Lao PDR	MP, Chair of Social-Cultural Committee of Vientiane Capital People's Council
22	Hon. Mrs.	SomchanhSingthabouth	Lao PDR	MP, Member of the Economic, Planning and Finance Committee of Vientiane Capital People's Council
23	Hon. Mrs.	ThavisayPhasathanh	Lao PDR	MP, Vice-Chair of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus
24	Mr.	Bounlert Loungdouangchanh	Lao PDR	Director-General of Mass Media Department, the National Assembly

25	Mr.	PhosayPhetphouthone	Lao PDR	Director-General of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus
26	Mr.	SengthongThammathava	Lao PDR	Director-General of the Public Security Department
27	Mr.	AlavanhPhanthavong	Lao PDR	Acting Director General of the Education and Culture Department
28	Mrs.	VansayChanthala	Lao PDR	Deputy Director General of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus
29	Ms.	SiriphoneSouthamamvong	Lao PDR	Deputy-Chief of Inter-Parliamentary Relation Division of the National Assembly
30	Mr.	AnousoneSilaphet	Lao PDR	Parliamentary Officer
31	Mr.	SoulichanhXengvong	Lao PDR	Protocol of the National Assembly
32	Ms.	PhonthidaLathanavong	Lao PDR	Parliamentary Officer
33	Mr.	XengthongThammatheva	Lao PDR	General Director of Security Department of the National Assembly
34	Mr.	SomnukKeoysayachak	Lao PDR	News Reporter of the National Assembly
35	Mr.	SonsukVanvisa	Lao PDR	TV Cameraman of the National Assembly
36	Mr.	KhonsavanhVongdala	Lao PDR	National Assembly
37	Mr.	KatthavongKipmany	Lao PDR	National Assembly
38	Mr.	KeoOraichit	Lao PDR	National Assembly
39	Mr.	SengthongPhonethavong	Lao PDR	National Assembly
40	Mrs.	InthanaBouphasavanh	Lao PDR	President of the Association of Development Women and Legal Education
41	Mr.	ViengprasithThiphasouda	Lao PDR	Safe and Fair Programme, ILO/UNWOMEN
42	Ms.	PhonsavanhSouvannasy	Lao PDR	Safeguarding and Training Coordinator, Plan Laos
43	Mr.	NoyPromsouvanh	Lao PDR	Communication Manager, Plan Laos
44	Ms.	Tanya Barnfield	Lao PDR	Assistant Country Director – Programs, CARE International in Lao PDR
45	Ms.	PimpisaSriprasert	Lao PDR	Gender and GBV Coordinator, CARE International in Lao PDR
46	Ms.	ManivanhSuyavong	Lao PDR	Director, Gender Development Association (GDA)
47	Ms.	ChanthidaRatanavong	Lao PDR	Project Officer - Women Voices Project, Gender Development Association (GDA)
48	Ms.	VanhvisaVongsouthi	Lao PDR	Gender Development Association (GDA)
49	Ms.	Sai Jyothir Mai Racherla	Malaysia	Programme Director, ARROW
50	Mr.	EnkhtuvshinUrtnasan	Mongolia	Parliamentary Advisor
51	Hon.	AkeneseLoretaLoheni	New Zealand	MP
52	Mr.	Francis Marus	PNG	Former Minister

53	Ms.	SenanayakeLumbiniDharshana	Sri Lanka	Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
54	Ms.	Manu Tissera	Sri Lanka	Country Communication Manager, Plan International
55	Hon. Dr.	Jetn Sirathranont	Thailand	MP
56	Hon.	Pisan Manawaat	Thailand	MP
57	Mr.	RašaSekulović	Thailand	Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships, Plan International Asia Regional Hub
58	Ms.	Horibe Nobuko	Thailand	Interim Executive Director of AFPPD
59	Hon.	Elvina Sousa Carvalho	Timor Leste	MP
60	Ms.	Angelina de Araujo	Timor Leste	Gender and Inclusion Advisor, Plan Timor Leste
61	Dr.	Nguyen Van Tien	Vietnam	Former Vice-Chair of VAPPD
The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)				
62	Ms.	Mariam Khan	Lao PDR	UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR
63	Ms.	SisouvanhVorabouth	Lao PDR	UNFPA Lao PDR Office
64	Ms.	Sara Sekkenes	Lao PDR	Resident Coordinator
65	Ms.	Moe Ando	Lao PDR	UNV Midwives Officer
66	Dr.	Henriette Jansen	Thailand	Technical Advisor, Violence against Women (VAW), Research and Data, UNFPA APRO
The Asian Population and Development Association (APDA)				
67	Dr.	Osamu Kusumoto	Japan	Secretary General/Executive Director of APDA
68	Ms.	HitomiTsunekawa	Japan	
69	Dr.	Farrukh Usmonov	Japan	
Interpreters/Photographer/Videographer				
70	Mr.	DethmahinSouphanh	Lao PDR	Interpreter
71	Mr.	HatsulithSaysena	Lao PDR	Interpreter
72	Ms.	Toomkham Silvia Luanglath	Lao PDR	Interpreter
73	Mr.	BobsmkThanousak	Lao PDR	Photographer
74	Mr.	Lou Phounpasird	Lao PDR	Videographer

## **ANNEX 3:**



### ***Regional Parliamentarians' Meeting on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls***

4 July 2019

Vientiane, Lao PDR

#### **Accelerating Efforts to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls in Asia-Pacific Region Commitment to Action**

##### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. While certain progress has been made in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, eliminating violence against women and girls has not seen considerable advance. Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today and it occurs irrespective of income, age, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, disability or other background. It is also a major obstacle to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 1.2. Violence against women and girls is a political and social issue. Women and girls continue to be affected by many forms of violence including physical and/or sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, and various forms of sexual violence, as well as child early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation, honour killings and the trafficking of women. Too many women and girls have been beaten, raped, killed, sexually abused and exploited, harassed, psychologically mistreated, all of which could have been prevented. All countries have the obligation to ensure safety and integrity of all women and girls, including their bodily integrity, and respect, protect, promote and fulfill women's and girls' rights in all settings.
- 1.3. This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1994 International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) and its Programme of Action (PoA), which brought about the importance of reproductive health and rights and its link to gender equality, equity and women's empowerment, highlighted comprehensively the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and called for the protection, promotion and fulfillment of the rights of women to live a life free from violence. This year also sees the national and regional reviews of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) and its Platform for Action, which strongly affirmed women's rights as human rights. Life free from violence is one of the 12 critical areas identified.
- 1.4. Parliamentarians, experts, civil society organizations from 13 countries and the United Nations in the Asia-Pacific region gathered in Vientiane, Lao PDR, hereby agree to commit themselves to the Plan of Action to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including child early and forced marriage, unwanted pregnancies and human trafficking, and take all measures to continuously empower women and girls.

## 2. Preamble

- 2.1. Recognizing the unique and important role of parliamentarians in bringing attention of the governments and communities to violence against women and girls as well as gender equality and women's empowerment and the need to network and collaborate with other parliamentarians and civil society organizations at the national, regional and inter-regional levels to strengthen exchange and cooperation.
- 2.2. Taking note of the complex and deeply rooted causes of gender-based violence and obstacles in preventing it, securing women's equal rights to access and manage economic resources such as land and property, and achieving gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in each country, and ways to accelerate progress in the legal and policy frameworks, human and financial resource allocations, access to essential services and resources, and social norms and attitudes;
- 2.3. Recalling the past parliamentary commitment, namely the Kathmandu Declaration of the South Asian Parliamentarians on Child Marriage entitled "Accelerating Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage", March 2016, and the Statement of Commitment at the Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Combating Human Trafficking, March 2017.
- 2.4. Cognizant of the outcome of the regional review of the ICPD Programme of Action after 25 years of implementation in November 2018 and the report of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women in February 2019.

## 3. Action

We are committed to:

- 3.1. Significantly reducing the number of women and girls who are married before the age of 18, who suffer from female genital mutilation and other harmful practices and who experience physical, sexual and/or psychological violence by 2030.
- 3.2. Enacting progressive laws and policies that protect women and children from all forms of violence in public and private spheres where such laws do not exist, and where such laws exist, reviewing them to make sure they address domestic/intimate partner violence such as marital rape, child abuse, or culturally accepted practices such as so-called "honour killings", and emerging forms of violence such as cyber violence.
- 3.3. Promoting and adopting inter sectoral response to addressing violence against women including education, media, communication sectors to transform societal attitudes leading to behavior change of law enforcement, judicial and social protection agencies, women and child agencies, health agencies, faith based groups.
- 3.4. Engaging husbands, men and boys in advocacy and campaigns for the prevention of violence against women and girls and gender equality at the community level; ensure that national leaders are part of the engagement.
- 3.5. Supporting comprehensive sexuality education of young people, both boys and girls, in and out of school, on the value of girls and their equal rights to education and employment and economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and life skills in order to change the social norms and reduce women's dependence on abusive relationships.
- 3.6. Paying special attention to vulnerable women and children in humanitarian and conflict settings, as they are at higher risk of being subjected to exploitation, violence and trafficking, and making sure to provide safe facilities, gender responsive services and

protection. Women and girls in the context of migrations, undocumented migrant women, refugee women and asylum seekers, women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, homeless women are also increasingly vulnerable and at heightened risk.

- 3.7. Increasing and tracking budget allocations that promote gender equality and response to violence, and supporting one-stop crisis centers, counseling services, safe spaces and training of relevant personnel.
- 3.8. Strengthening disaggregated data collection to assess the realistic scope of the situation, monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness of interventions.
- 3.9. Upholding the political commitment with fellow parliamentarians in each country and reaching out to civil society organizations for data and advocacy and community work, while engaging them in policy making.
- 3.10. Learning what works in other countries and exchanging knowledge and good practices among parliamentarians at the regional and global levels, and contributing to the regional and global policy and norm settings.
- 3.11. (for parliamentary networks) Working in partnership with advocacy entities, UN organizations, Civil Society Organizations and other stakeholders in meetings, advocacy and programme work and sharing information and knowledge.

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Key activities, events, meetings and campaigns for the interest of parliamentarians in the coming years include:

October 2019

Regional Parliamentarians Preparatory Meeting for the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, 26-27 October, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, organized by APDA with UNFPA

November 2019

Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 – Accelerating the Promise, 12-14 November, Nairobi, Kenya, organized by UNFPA (accelerating action to end violence against women and girls is one of the signature session at the Summit)

Beijing+25 Regional CSO Forum, 24-26 November, Bangkok, Thailand, organized by UNESCAP and UN Women (ending violence against women is one of the 12 critical areas of action in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action)

Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+25 Review, 27-29 November, Bangkok, Thailand, organized by UNESCAP and UN Women (participation of parliamentarians as part of the Government delegation is encouraged)

March 2020

64<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): Beijing +25, 9-20 March, at the United Nations Headquarters, New York

May 2020

Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights, 26-29 May, Siem Reap, Cambodia, organized by the APCRSR secretariat

Initiatives and Campaigns supported by Plan International:

- **Regional initiative “Time to Act!”** on accelerating efforts to eliminate child, early and forced marriage in Asia: focusing on engagement and activism of young people through inter-generational dialogue with parliamentarians, traditional and religious leaders, policy-makers etc.
- **Global campaign “Girls Get Equal”:** **Girls Get Equal** is the global campaign demanding power, freedom and respect for girls and young women (<https://plan-international.org/girls-get-equal>)
- **Asia Girls Leadership Index (GLI):** The GLI will be composite index that measures opportunity for adolescent girls and young women in South and SE Asia to develop and demonstrate leadership capabilities. It will not be a standalone resource but will be published as part of a broader Asia girls’ leadership report, which will be based on the index as well as qualitative research
- **Continuous involvement with ASEAN and SAARC** in efforts to eliminate CEFM in Asia
- **National level initiatives to prevent, reduce and eliminate CEFM**