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CRICOS Provider No. 00120C

Dear Committee Secretary

Please find attached a submission on behalf of the ANU Gender Institute to the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into 'Human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean – Asia Pacific region'.

We stand ready to give evidence or assist the Committee further in its deliberations on this important topic.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Harris Rimmer".

Dr Susan Harris Rimmer

Director of Studies/Fellow

Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy

## **Human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean – Asia Pacific region**

The ANU Gender Institute welcomes the opportunity to comment on the terms of reference for this inquiry. We will comment on the terms of reference briefly below and offer further detail in relation to three case studies: Indonesia and Myanmar. We aim to address the terms of reference in order:

- barriers and impediments to enhancing the human rights of women and girls in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region, especially regarding the impact of family and sexual violence, women's leadership and economic opportunities;
- achievements to date in advancing women and girls' human rights in these key areas;
- implications for economic and social development in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region of promoting women and girls' human rights; and
- the effectiveness of Australian programs to support efforts to improve the human rights of women and girls in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region.

We define the Asia-Pacific Indian Ocean region to cover the following key regional groupings: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). This submission focuses on women's economic empowerment.

We support the submission of the Women Peace and Security Academic Collective.

### **About the ANU Gender Institute**

The Gender Institute is an exciting initiative at ANU. A cross-campus virtual Institute, it provides a focus for existing activity on issues of gender and sexuality and a catalyst to develop and deepen them.

The Gender Institute tries to support and deepen research, education and outreach on gender and sexuality across the University, in particular promoting collaboration and linkages in this area across the seven Colleges.

Relevant to this submission, the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific hosts the largest assembly of scholars dedicated to working on Asia and the Pacific in the English-speaking world. This unrivalled concentration makes us the foremost centre in Australia for learning and research on the region.

Our strength lies in the breadth and depth of our research, encompassing more than a dozen disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, and covering a geographical range from Polynesia in the east to Pakistan in the west and from Australia in the south to Mongolia in the north.

### **TOR 1 Barriers and impediments to enhancing the human rights of women and girls in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region, especially regarding the impact of family and sexual violence, women's leadership and economic opportunities**

Australian foreign policy towards our region should take matters of gender inequality seriously. The gendered opportunity gaps in the region could prevent many of Australia's broader objectives being realised or sustained. For example:

- Close to 100 million women in Asia are estimated to be 'missing' because of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition, pure neglect, or pre-birth sex selection.
- Gender inequality in wage differentials remains entrenched, with women typically earning 70%–90% less of the male wage (50% in Bangladesh and 80% in Mongolia).<sup>1</sup>
- Many food insecure countries also exhibit low Gender Inequality Index rankings - Afghanistan (135), Bangladesh (116), and PNG (133), Cambodia (88) and the Lao PDR (95).<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 50% of women in South Asia and over 60% in the Pacific Islands are still concentrated in agriculture. Unpaid work on family agricultural enterprises accounts for 34% of informal employment for women in India.<sup>3</sup> Only 30% of women in Asia and the Pacific are in non-agriculture wage employment, with only 20% in South Asia—the lowest among the world's regions.
- In South Asia, the gap between female-male enrolments grows sharply as girls and boys move upward through the education system.
- 85% of women in the Solomon Islands do not have access to a bank account.<sup>4</sup>
- Only 2.7% of seats in the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea are held by women, and several Pacific nations have no parliamentary representation of women at all.<sup>5</sup>
- 400,000 Cambodian women garment workers contributed to US\$4.15 billion in export revenue.

Our submission includes as an attachment the information pack from the UNDP Asia Pacific Human Development Report 2010 *Power Voices and Rights*,<sup>6</sup> and urges the Committee to consider the full report.<sup>7</sup> Another useful resource is the World Bank 2012 video and report *Towards Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific*.<sup>8</sup>

The argument is that the international community should address the multiple and intersecting factors contributing to the disproportionate impact of poverty on women of and girls' over the lifecycle and intra-household gender inequalities in allocation of resources, opportunities and power by realizing women's and girls' civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Women in the region should be able to claim their own right to development and rights related to participation, education, equal access to full and productive employment and decent work, full integration in the formal economy, equal pay for work of equal value, unpaid work, rights to inheritance and property, access to health care and services including sexual and reproductive health, access to justice, social protection, and an adequate standard of living, including nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation, energy and fuel resources and housing.

<sup>1</sup> ADB & ILO, Women and labor markets in Asia: Rebalancing for gender equality

<sup>2</sup> UNDP Human Development Report 2010

<sup>3</sup> ADB, Paths to 2015 MDG Priorities in Asia and the Pacific; FAO, IFAD & ILO, Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.iwda.org.au/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

<sup>6</sup> [http://asiapacific-hdr.aprc.undp.org/press-kit-files/gender-equality?field\\_category\\_tid=36](http://asiapacific-hdr.aprc.undp.org/press-kit-files/gender-equality?field_category_tid=36)

<sup>7</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rhdr-2010-asiapacific.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2012/06/17/slideshow-toward-gender-equality-in-east-asia-and-the-pacific>

The World Bank found that eliminating inequality of opportunity in economic participation for women in the region could increase worker productivity by 7 to 18 percent, with large implications for economic growth and poverty reduction.<sup>9</sup>

### **Violence against women and girls in our region<sup>10</sup>**

A United Nations report released in September 2013 confirmed what most women's rights advocates already knew — that violence against women and girls in the Asia Pacific region is occurring at staggering rates with no solutions in sight. Out of the 10,000 men surveyed in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka, nearly half reported using physical and or sexual violence against a female partner, and nearly a quarter admitted to rape.<sup>11</sup>

The study was conducted by Partners for Prevention, a regional joint programme of the UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV programme in Asia and the Pacific. It used some very clever methods, including iPod Touch devices with custom-made apps and audio tracks in local languages, to ask men about highly sensitive behaviour such as rape in a totally anonymous manner, even in communities with low literacy. The male views were contrasted with women's views.

The study found that in most sites, the prevalence of violence against women was 30–57 per cent, ranging from 26 per cent in rural Indonesia to 80 per cent in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. It also confirmed that rape within marriage and intimate-partner violence (domestic violence) is a huge issue; in all sites except Bougainville, partner rape was more common than rape of a non-partner. Of the men who had committed rape, 72–97 per cent were never punished.

A key finding of the report was that '[p]reventing violence requires the sustained involvement of socializing institutions at the community and state levels, including schools, faith-based organizations, media and popular culture'. The question for governments and donors is how to invest in this process.

At present, demographic and social analysis is often chronically underfunded and ignored by elite decision-makers. Women's rights advocates have tried a variety of tactics to push the issue into the realm of high politics of economic growth and global peace and security, including calculating the loss of economic productivity from sexual violence. For example, a recent CARE study found that the total cost of domestic violence in Bangladesh in 2010 amounted to over US\$1.8 billion. This was the equivalent of 12.7 per cent of government spending that year and close to the total government expenditure for health and nutrition. The majority of this cost is borne by survivors and their families.

Regional advocates have also tried to link so-called 'private' violence to the failure of sustainable peace-building efforts in post-conflict states, and to focus regional diplomacy on this issue by lobbying for an Ambassador for Women and Girls. And yet, the clear policy recommendations adopted by external

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2012/06/17/active-policy-required-close-remaining-gender-gaps-east-asia-pacific>

<sup>10</sup> Susan Harris Rimmer, Efforts to stop violence against women must focus on social, cultural norms, East Asia Forum, 27 October 2013.

<sup>11</sup> 'Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It? Quantitative Findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific' 2013 - <http://www.partners4prevention.org/node/515>

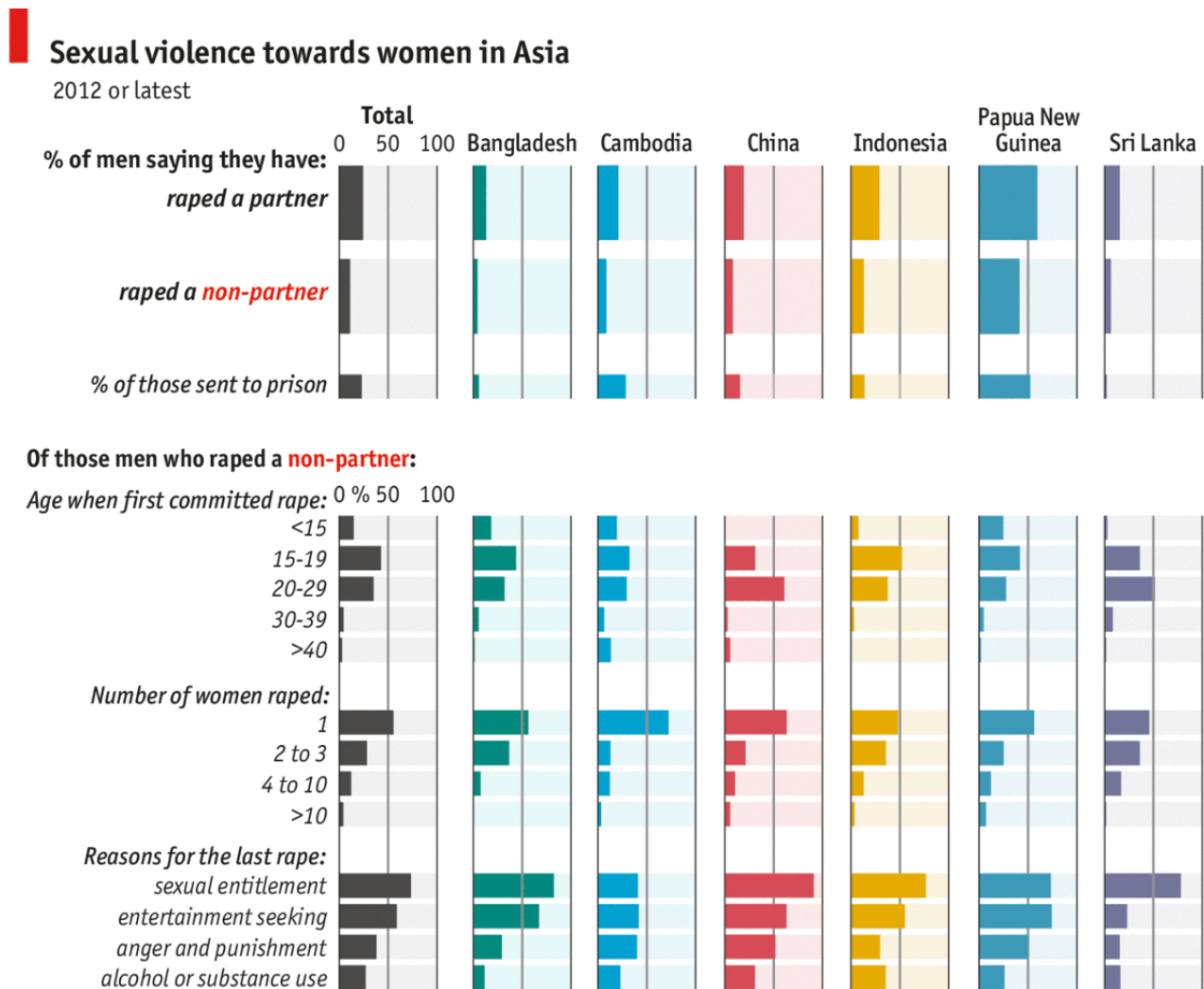
agencies, including Australia's previous Agency for International Development, have never been properly funded.

What the survey indicates is that we need more insight into the motivations and social circumstances of men and boys who commit violent acts against women, especially teenage boys. A common motivation of men who have admitted to rape is the belief that they are entitled to sex even without the female partner's consent. The report also found that perpetrators were more likely to have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse as a child. A large proportion of men also suffered from work-related stress, depression and suicidal tendencies.

These findings are particularly important given that current responses from international donors focus on providing services to victims (though not at levels that are remotely enough to meet demand) rather than on preventing structural violence by working with men and boys to change their behaviour. Refuges, counselling and health services are crucial, but it is even more vital to ensure that violence does not occur in the first place and that laws both exist and are enforced by the security and judicial sectors. Legal norms are important but they are moulded by social and cultural practice.

Donors therefore need to apply more pressure to dominant social institutions. But they have so far deferred to the cultural norms expressed by male-dominated governments and faith-based organisations to an extent that would not be tolerated in relation to 'traditional' security threats. If the violence outlined in the report instead consisted of men describing the spread of a health pandemic or terrorist network, alarm bells would be ringing in foreign ministries. As it is, the worst and most familiar aspect of this survey is the casualness and seeming inevitability of brutality against women, and the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators.

The global reaction to the culture of sexual violence in India is perhaps finally beginning to shift these issues into the realm of 'high politics'. In the meantime, it's worth noting that constructions of masculinity are crucial to understanding but not excusing violence. There needs to be a deep societal conversation about alternate ways to 'be a man' apart from using violence against women and girls. Those who care about understanding the region should be focused on gender equality.



[Economist.com/graphicdetail](http://Economist.com/graphicdetail)

Graph from The Economist, 10 September 2013

## TOR 2 Achievements to date in advancing women and girls' human rights in these key areas;

The MDGs represented an achievement of sorts, because they finally sought to measure across every nation and region, uniform data on women's empowerment. It was also a way to make clear that the region was failing many of the minimum standards of human development for female citizens. In the debate surrounding the post-2015 framework, the Australian Government should keep focus on the collation of quality data across a range of proxy gender equality indicators in our region.

The UNDP prescriptions for our region were as follows:

1. Make international commitments a reality
2. Craft economic policies to support gender equality
3. Make the content of education more gender-equal

4. Boost political participation and women's role in government
5. Pursue better laws
6. Close gaps between laws and legal practices
7. Collect better data and strengthen capacity for gender analysis
8. Foster new attitudes

It is our view that Australian foreign policy acknowledges these reform goals, but has not always given these issues high Ministerial priority or requisite funding/staffing across the DFAT portfolio. The Commonwealth parliament can and should play more of a role. This is an area where track two diplomacy and public-private partnerships are appropriate and effective to show the region a 'whole of community' approach to values of gender equality.

### **TOR 3: implications for economic and social development in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region of promoting women and girls' human rights**

The world of economics is increasingly talking about the impact of inequality on economic growth at a national and regional level, spurred by the global interest in the work by French economist, Thomas Piketty. The World Economic Forum in 2013-14 focused on inequality as a key systemic risk to global financial stability.<sup>12</sup> Of the types of inequality to have national economic impact, gender inequality is one of the most pervasive types of inequality leading to gaps in opportunity across the globe (often intersecting with other kinds of discrimination, such as disability, age or ethnic minority status). The United Nations Secretary-General states that investment in girls translates into an average GDP growth of 0.3 percentage points for each per cent increase in female education.<sup>13</sup> The World Bank, OECD, ILO and the IMF have all released reports pointing to the economic case for promoting equitable economic opportunities to both men and women.

These arguments generally rely on two bases, that investments in gender equality are both good things to do (a human rights and moral argument), and the smart thing to do (an economic productivity argument). As the World Economic Forum noted recently; '[p]romoting more women to leadership roles and creating environments more conducive to women's input makes good sense from the perspective of business, politics and ethics'.<sup>14</sup>

The productivity arguments rely on market forces, in that the promotion of women can boost businesses' bottom lines if they can reflect the views of the dominant female consumer in that industry. Economists might argue for executive team diversity that it may ameliorate risk and promote better decision-making, avoiding 'groupthink'. The organisation Catalyst found that although 24% of senior management roles globally are filled by women, the G7 group of nations, which includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, reached only 21%.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GlobalRisks\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalRisks_Report_2014.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/events/2014/wefdavos1/en/index3.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.weforum.org/news/closing-gender-gap-requires-better-policies-and-proactive-businesses?news=page>

<sup>15</sup> [www.catalyst.org/system/files/firststeps\\_womenintheworld.pdf](http://www.catalyst.org/system/files/firststeps_womenintheworld.pdf)

Or the economic argument might rely on productivity and labour market issues—a recent study concludes that increasing the levels of female employment could help raise GDP 9 percent in Japan; 12 percent in the United Arab Emirates, and 27 percent in India.<sup>16</sup>

These conventional economic approaches to inequality also accept that there are additional cultural and structural barriers that have held women back, including perceptions of competence, entrepreneurial flair and leadership.

The moral and legal arguments are slightly different but still stresses that investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth and that women's economic independence is vital to their role as full and equal partners for development and essential to the achievement of peace and the eradication of poverty. The full recognition of women's human rights require the full integration of women into the formal economy, in particular, into economic decision-making, which means changing the current gender-based division of labour into new economic structures where women and men enjoy equal treatment.

In terms of the international human rights framework, the position is set out in general terms in several instruments, namely, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as certain non-discrimination obligations in other relevant conventions and treaties. International obligations are often incorporated into domestic legislation relating to equal opportunity or prohibitions on sex discrimination, such as the Australian *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

The Convention contains a broad definition of discrimination in Article 1, covering both equality of opportunity (formal equality) and equality of outcome (de facto or substantive equality):

*[D]iscrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.*

The Convention requires states to take legal and other measures to ensure the practical realisation of the principle of sex equality (Article 2). The Convention covers a broad range of areas where state parties must work to eliminate discrimination, including political and public life (Article 7), international organisations (Article 8), education (Article 10), employment (Article 11), health care (Article 12), financial credit (Article 13b), cultural life (Article 13c), the rural sector (Article 14), the law (Article 15) and marriage (Article 16).

This is a key point of difference with the SDA, which focuses primarily on participation in the formal paid workforce, rather than other aspects of the life cycle.

CEDAW allows for progressive realisation but requires results in securing substantive gender equality under Article 2a. Notably, Article 4 allows for affirmative action, in the form of temporary special measures designed to accelerate de facto equality such as quotas in employment, education, financial services and politics to overcome historical barriers. The core organising principles of CEDAW are therefore equality, non-discrimination and state obligation. CEDAW, notably, obliges governments to take proactive measures to prevent sexual stereotyping and address violations of its terms.

<sup>16</sup><http://economia.icaew.com/news/march-2014/gender-inequality-holds-back-economic-growth#sthash.covlv0Or.dpuf>



In 1999, CEDAW was supplemented by an Optional Protocol. The Optional Protocol creates a mechanism allowing individual claims of violations under CEDAW to be made to the CEDAW Committee, and a procedure enabling the committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights. As of 2013, 104 states were party to the Optional Protocol. Australia acceded to the Optional Protocol on 24 November 2008 under the then Rudd Government, and Australian women could make complaints from March 2009.

There are also regional conventions, instruments and initiatives and their follow-up mechanisms, in respective regions and countries. One important example in our region is the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

Soft law is important in this area, and includes:

- the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
- the international commitments made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including
  - the Programme of Action at the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation.
  - the Millennium Summit; the 2005 World Summit; the 2010 high-level plenary meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, and the 2013 Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals.
  - the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", which recognized, inter alia, the vital role of women in achieving sustainable development
  - relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in particular the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, as well as relevant resolutions of the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, and recalls relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council, in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This rights approach tends to focus on several different issues to the economic approach:

- The need to value and address the social and economic impact of informal work;
- The political economy of violence; and
- The need to urge more collective social responsibility for care work, by reducing the burden of unpaid work through better infrastructure – principally electricity, water, sanitation, mobility and school access.

However, the approaches can be blended in a strategic manner. Most recently, the Agreed Conclusions of the fifty-eighth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women held from 10 – 21 March 2014 on

the theme of ‘Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls’<sup>17</sup> states:

*(II) Implement macroeconomic policies that, together with labour and social policies, promote full and productive employment and decent work for all and gender equality and the empowerment of women, in order to enhance economic efficiency and optimize the contribution of women to economic growth and poverty reduction, and increase awareness among decision makers, the private sector and employers of the necessity of women’s economic empowerment and their important contribution*

Australia’s leadership of the G20 Summit is an excellent opportunity to pursue this goal.

**TOR 4: the effectiveness of Australian programs to support efforts to improve the human rights of women and girls in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region.**

The ground-breaking work of Ambassador for Women and Girls Natasha Stott Despoja, and her predecessor Penny Williams is to be commended. The integrated and long-term program Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development is a model to be emulated for fragile countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar. The focus of Minister Bishop on women’s empowerment through economic diplomacy in regional and bilateral fora is to be commended, and proving to be very effective. These efforts should be further resourced.

Australia is known for our focus on inclusive quality education. This is a reputation that should be strengthened by our diplomatic representations and development investments.

**Recommendations**

- 1. The work of the Ambassador for Women and Girls should be commended and further resourced by DFAT, with the inclusion of Special Envoys where appropriate (such as female entrepreneurship, or women in SMEs, or women in trade)**
- 2. Promote the goal of gender equality in global economic governance through its G20 leadership role**
- 3. Australia should use all diplomatic efforts with the region to urge states to consider the following gender reforms:**
  - 3.1 ratifying or acceding to, as a particular matter of priority, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their respective Optional Protocols, limit the extent of any reservations, formulate any such reservations as precisely and as narrowly as possible to ensure that no reservations are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Conventions, review their reservations regularly with a view to withdrawing them and withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the relevant treaty; and implement them fully by, inter alia, putting in place effective national legislation and policies**
  - 3.2 Assisting countries in the region to engage in the Beijing Plus 20 review process and the post-2015 framework, and to consult with civil society in a robust manner**

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw58-2014>

## **Appendix A - Briefing on Women's Rights in Indonesia**

Ayu Wahyuningroem, ANU

In Indonesia, the situation of women's rights reflects an example where democratic change can be both emancipating and repressing especially for vulnerable groups such as women. In one side, there have been significant improvements on the promotion of women's interest and protection since the new democracy started in 1998. Both at national and local levels, policies and mechanisms have been established to ensure the protection and fulfilment of women's rights. More women work at formal sectors and have well education. Indonesia even had, for the first time, its woman president in 2000-2004, and more women take important roles in politics and decision-making. Women's rights groups have also been developed, and Indonesia now has an independent commission working on women's rights called the National Commission on Women (Komnas Perempuan) established in 1998.

However, along with the democratization processes, there have been some dynamics in changing relationship of power within in many levels. In every change, women experience the most impact in their personal and social lives, and often their rights are being violated.

In regional autonomy context, where local governments have more authority to rule their own territories and local citizens, there are no less than 342 discriminatory policies against women's rights (Komnas Perempuan, 2012). In these places, local authorities justify their control, restriction and criminalization of women by using religion and morality arguments. These include restrictions on freedom of expression and dress, freedom of movement at night, criminalization of women in public lives, and restrictions on freedom of religion. As the implication, women experience violence, both in public and private, and loss of access to livelihood resources for women. Many of these local policies are violating national laws, but the central government has been slow in responding to this problem.

In the context of religious and ethnic relationship, the changing pattern of power also implicate to violation of women's rights. In years following the political transition, there have been various cases of social and communal conflicts occurred in Indonesia, between religious and ethnic groups, and cases where religious minority groups have been attacked for their believes. In all of this violence, women suffered no less than their male counterparts. Not only they suffer physically, they also have to lose their rights as citizens including access to public services etc.

The interests over natural resources and conflict that arise between corporates, state authorities and local people also implicate heavily on women. Women small-scale farmers have to also work as street vendors, retail merchants, travelling salespeople, market porters, washerwomen, and so on. Community victims including women are forced to leave the village, take on odd-jobs, become plantation/farm labourers, industrial workers, market porters, domestic workers, domestic migrant workers and sex workers. This change in profession makes women vulnerable to violence and exploitation (Komnas Perempuan, 2011). One of the most serious case to represent the situation is in Papua, where massive investors on mining and plantation, both domestic and international, took over the lands from indigenous people for their benefits. Papuan women had to lost access to their mother nature, causing more hardship for daily survival of their children and themselves.

What remains stable in the changing democracy in Indonesia, is the patriarchal culture. In many ways, patriarchal culture functions as the basis for subordinating and oppressing women through various policies and mechanisms chosen by male-dominated decision makers. Local communities in various places are strongly holding the belief that women are their property, the producers of children and family caregivers. There have been cases where cultural beliefs and practices are violating women's rights, including on inheritance, forced marriage, and female circumcision.

Moreover, there have been more and more cases of sexual violence taking place even in public areas such as in public transportation, public space, or police station, committed by ordinary local people, police, politicians, and local officials. The handling of these cases has been inappropriate, suggesting the low response and attention of state authorities and decision makers.

Within the areas where political conflicts are taking place, all of these situations are happening and women experience much heavier repression. Two particular areas of conflict and post conflict settings are Papua and Aceh, in which Australia through the Australian aid program has been given significant support to civilians.

a. Papua

In Papua, there have been resistance by local groups on Indonesia's exploitation over natural resources and marginalization of the Papuans that have been taking place for over five decades. Instead of responding Papuans call for peace dialogue to settle the ongoing conflict, Indonesian government insisted to solve the conflict through development and military security approaches. There have been many inconsistencies by Jakarta on handling the two provinces in Papua since Special Autonomy was granted in 2001. As the result, indigenous Papuans are becoming even more marginalized in terms of social economic and demographic lives, the levels of corruption are amongst the highest one in Indonesia, and ongoing human rights abuses are taking place.

Within that conflict situation, and with the already existing socio economic and cultural disadvantages, women experience multidimensional oppressions in their lives. Violence against women are widespread in many forms, including physical and sexual violence by state apparatus especially in areas where the military are operating, deprived access to food and economic resources, risks on reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS, poverty, and discrimination in many aspects of socio political lives. Moreover, with the implementation of special autonomy, Papua and West Papua received sizeable development funding which changes the structure and ways of lives of the locals, including increased alcohol consumption, which causes significant numbers of domestic violence for women and girls.

b. Aceh

Conflict between central government and separatist groups Free Aceh Movement occurred in year 1998 to 2004. Tremendous effects and international involvement after 2004 tsunami forced both conflicting parties to settle it through peace agreement on 16 August 2005. The former resistance group is now ruling the province in special autonomy scheme granted since 2001. However, peace has been in peril since then. The conflict has transformed into local conflicts for political and economic resources. Since Special Autonomy granted Aceh the authority to implement Islamic Syariah Law, the local elites and

leaders, including religious leaders, are competing to gain political legitimacy through insisting to implement the Law by producing and implementing local bylaws.

The interpretation and practice of Syariah Law has been degrading women and violating many aspects of women's rights. Last year, sixteen organizations in Aceh worked with Komnas Perempuan recorded 561 cases of violence against women in the period between 2011 and 2012. The majority was domestic violence (74%) and the rest (26%) are violence in the community. This excludes no less than 319 cases of violence against women during the conflict that has not been settled until today. Since last year, there have been more and more cases of sexual violence and gang rapes against women were exposed in media. Within the already existed bylaws, some of the victims were proven guilty and thus had to be punished by canning.

#### References:

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## **Appendix B - Briefing on women's rights in Myanmar**

Analysis provided by the Gender Equality Network (GEN), based on the first Myanmar Women's Forum on 21 November 2012, regarding the most important issues affecting women in Myanmar records the following priorities:

1. Participation and Leadership in Public Life.
2. Social practices and cultural norms.
3. Domestic Violence and rape.
4. Law, policies and rights - eg. no domestic violence law.
5. Poverty and Livelihoods.
6. Sexual and Reproductive Health including HIV/AIDS.
7. Education and vocational skills, especially for former prisoners.
8. Trafficking and migration.
9. Conflict, violence and displacement.
10. Environment, climate and disasters.

Attached is a report from a delegation of Australian Women Leaders to Myanmar in December 2012, which assessed the prospects for Australia to assist gender equality through our diplomatic and development activities.