

GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM: ASIA-  
PACIFIC REGIONAL JOURNEY

ASIA- PACIFIC  
GENERATION EQUALITY  
JOURNEY

# CONCEPT NOTE: YOUTH ACTIVISM ACCELERATOR

JULY 2021



## BACKGROUND

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) was originally announced in 2019. Conceived as a civil society centred, multi-stakeholder global gathering for gender equality, it was to be co-convened by UN Women and the Governments of France and Mexico, in partnership with civil society. Its aim was to celebrate the power of activism, feminist solidarity, and youth leadership. The GEF sought to represent a culmination of the Beijing+25 review process, and the launch of a powerful movement to galvanize transformative action for gender equality, women's empowerment and women's human rights. Following principles of co-creation, the GEF was designed to create opportunities for intergenerational, intersectional, and cross-movement dialogue; for supporting the sharing of best practices and strategies; for building solidarity among different stakeholders, and to catalyse bold, transformative, and ambitious action to achieve gender equality.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global shift in attention to managing the containment and impacts of the pandemic, the GEF was postponed to 2021. Since its postponement, the co-conveners of the GEF have been working on re-defining the GEF, to focus on supporting efforts by member States and diverse stakeholders in building back better and differently, informed by lessons learnt in the COVID-19 context. It was also agreed that along with the key moments in Mexico City (March 29-30) and in Paris (June) in 2021, which will be a combination of physical and virtual gatherings, the GEF will also have a strong regional footprint - through the Regional Journey. By strengthening and deepening the mobilization of broad, diverse, civil society and stakeholders in countries and regions to inform the Forum, the Regional Journey will help the GEF effort toward fostering an inclusive, vibrant, and strengthened movement for gender equality that is responsive to building back better and differently from the COVID-19 crisis. The Forum will now give special attention to addressing the challenges that the COVID-19 global pandemic raises in terms of women's rights and empowerment, while also recognizing the critical role of partnerships, solidarity, and movement building for social transformation.

The GEF Regional Journey will serve as a modality for reviewing lessons learnt from the global and regional review and appraisal of progress on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, from the twentieth anniversary of UN SCR 1325, from the fortieth anniversary of CEDAW and most importantly, lessons learnt in the context of responding to COVID-19. On the latter, it will provide an opportunity for identifying lessons and strategies for strengthening the gender responsiveness of the regional and national COVID-19 pandemic recovery plans and actions, especially as relates to particularly marginalized and hard to reach groups. It will also highlight the centrality of feminist women's, youth and grassroots organizations and solidarity networks in the COVID-19 response and their leadership and contributions in times of crisis and recovery period, and the need for their support in this regard.

## GLOBALLY DEFINED OUTCOMES

- The Regional Journey will allow the **mobilization of multiple stakeholders from across sectors in response to gender inequalities and discrimination to advance the 2030 Agenda - and the Decade of Action, including actions towards the COVID-19 response and recovery**, at the regional and national levels.
- It will **highlight the work that women (traditional/experienced and youth activists) including from marginalized and grassroots communities and solidarity networks**, are doing to promote the acknowledgment of the leadership, agency, voice, needs and priorities of diverse women and girls in the context of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts- at national levels.
- In recognizing the leadership and aspirations of these civil society organizations, the Regional Journey will **strengthen a sustainable generation equality movement that is transformative, and that focuses on GEWE related SDGs agenda enforcement in links with building back better and differently from the COVID-19 crisis**.

## GLOBAL PRINCIPLES

- **Flexible, Demand-Driven Modality**

The Regional Journey will be a "flexible, demand-driven modality" to reflect the context and specific needs of each region. In this regard, it will be a platform for:

- Contributing to, and building on, the gathered evidence and consultations related to how gender inequalities and discrimination in pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 contexts affect the overall people centred development, and how the needs of women and girls are being addressed in the crisis response and recovery plans.
  - Allowing more in-depth and strategic intergenerational engagement, including through the creative use of technology, and improving their accessibility for those who left behind.
  - Providing safe and inclusive spaces to facilitate discussions that centre stage the issue of intersectionality, including by ensuring the engagement of LGBTQI+ groups, groups of stateless persons, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, refugees and migrants, and any other marginalized groups as well as the grassroots and community-based organizations.
  - Elevating and amplifying the work that solidarity-based networks are doing while also recognizing their contribution to the crisis response and promoting their engagement in the forward-looking recovery agenda.
- **Nothing About Us Without Us:** The Regional Journey will build on the civil society-led mobilization initiatives that have been articulated around the COVID-19 response while also securing genuine multi-stakeholders' engagement and commitment to gender equality transformative actions.
  - **Leave No One Behind:** apply a human rights-based approach that focuses on the most underserved and disadvantaged groups of women and girls and ensure that the Regional Journey initiatives are inclusive of women and girls in all their diversities (e.g., LGBTQI+, with disabilities, rural and indigenous women, living with HIV, refugees and migrants, etc.).
  - **Multi-Sectoral Approach:** Apply the GEF's unique principles of multi-stakeholder leadership and engagement:
    - Multi-stakeholder nature of its leadership. The members of the GEF governance shall be engaged in the leadership of the initiatives: the local representations of France and Mexico must be included in the leadership of the initiatives or at least be on board and get some visibility, in addition to UN Women, civil society and youth groups. Member states and partners selected as leaders for GEF Action Coalitions and potential members from the region are encouraged to participate and contribute.
    - Multi-stakeholder engagement principles. While the GEF is civil society and youth-centered and mobilizing "support for civil society, women and youth grassroots organizations" is part of one of the GEF's outcomes, the effort must always seek to convene all GEF stakeholder categories to work together towards this end. Thus, the Regional Journey initiatives should convene representatives of Member States (governments, democratic institutions, and other authorities), civil society, private sector, and others, to break down the silos and build new partnerships and alliances for gender equality and women's empowerment.

## ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM (GEF) JOURNEY

For the Asia-Pacific GEF Regional Journey, the proposal is to mirror the global objectives, but to have these informed by regional specificities, in terms of approaches and priorities as relates to the GEF and the Action Coalitions. The proposed GEF Regional Journey will seek to focus on the following four objectives:

1. Providing a platform for the **convening of diverse national and regional stakeholders to facilitate collective learning and exchange of lessons learnt and good practices** based on key global and regional review processes and in the context of COVID-19, **to inform strategies for promoting political engagement and collective action** to address gender issues in the context of the regional and national COVID response and recovery processes. This will include strategies to support the promotion of the leadership, agency, voice, needs and priorities of diverse women and girls, for the advancement of gender quality and women's empowerment.
2. **Broadening, deepening, and enhancing outreach and mobilization** of new and existing partners across the region to promote the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as strengthening vertical (country-regional linkages) and horizontal/intra-regional linkages and collaboration.
3. **Amplifying the leadership and roles that different actors** i.e. Government leaders/representatives, feminist movements, youth and grassroots organizations, private sector and individuals (including influencers) have played and continue to play in strengthening the gender-responsiveness of the COVID-19 response and recovery process. The objective will be to draw attention to the work of diverse actors in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, and to provide a platform for them to express their needs and priorities, to support their effective engagement at the front lines of the COVID-19 response, in crises-affected communities.
4. **Advocacy capacity strengthening, networking and organizing** of civil society actors at regional and national levels among civil society, with a specific focus on youth and grassroots organizations, through collaborative initiatives, and multi-sectoral thinking and approaches – building on the Action Coalition themes and Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action Compact (WPS&HA Compact).

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE YOUTH ACTIVISM ACCELERATOR SESSIONS:**

Focused on advancing the **objectives 2 and 4** of the Asia-Pacific GEF Journey, and on building on the initiatives that have been led by different field presences, these sessions will focus on the capacities of our national Youth Gender Activists (NYGAs), youth activists and youth-led organizations and aim to:

- Develop the capacities of our NYGAs and other youth activists on principles of feminist leadership and activism, and good practices for promoting safe and inclusive spaces (including disability-inclusive processes);
- Build understandings of relevant normative frameworks and related inter-governmental and informal processes, and opportunities for engagement in these processes and influencing policy-making and legislative processes;
- Build advocacy and communication skills i.e. both online and offline, to drive activism, and content creation;
- Capacities for organizing and movement building and good practices;
- To support their networking and to strengthen intra-regional collaboration and the collective voice of A-P youth in global and regional processes.

The following constituencies will be key to this initiative:

- Generation Equality Youth Task Force members: The Generation Equality Youth Task Force (GE YTF) members are young people aged 14 to 30 years, recommended by their youth-led, adolescent-led, youth-focused or youth-serving organizations, networks or civic movements. They represent young people in all their diversity and across intersectional complexities including marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, indigenous and ethnic identities, caste affected identities and refugee or migrant status. They also have a track record of driving change in their communities and mobilizing young people for the empowerment of young women and girls all over the world.

- **UN entities Action Coalition Leads:** These are UN entities that Youth Leaders who were selected to be part of Action Coalitions. The AC are Gender Based Violence, Climate Justice, Economic Justice, Bodily Autonomy and SRHR, Feminists movement, Innovation and technology.
- **Action Coalition Youth Leads:** These are Youth Leaders who were selected to be part of Action Coalitions. The AC are Gender Based Violence, Climate Justice, Economic Justice, Bodily Autonomy and SRHR, Feminists movement, Innovation and technology.
- **National Gender Youth Activists (NGYAs):** The NYGAs represent a cohort of youth activists selected by UN Women offices to collaborate with them in moving the needle in their local communities and pushing an agenda to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women. They also represent young people in all their diversity and across intersectional complexities including marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, indigenous and ethnic identities, caste affected identities and refugee or migrant status.
- **Youth-led organizations + activists:** These are youth-led organizations/movements and networks who have had connections with UN Women through meetings, discussions, applications or shown an interest in working with UN Women.

## ORGANIZATION

In line with the guiding principles, this initiative will be designed in collaboration with the region's National Youth Focal Points and co-led by the NYGAs, as well as members of the Gender Equality Youth Taskforce. To the extent possible, these sessions will also seek to engage civil society and youth organizations that are Action Coalitions (ACs)/WPS&HA Compact leads. Throughout this initiative, the aim will be to promote learning from individuals who have led successful movements, networks, advocacy movements, in the areas covered by the ACs and WPS & HA Compact.

The co-design elements will include:

- Identification of areas for capacity building, and knowledge exchange;
- Design of capacity building 'workshops' i.e. formats for the sessions;
- Identification of the resource persons i.e. trainers, moderator(s), and inspiring speakers and/or examples of movements, advocacy campaigns to be showcased- across the AC and WPS & HA Compact
- areas ;
- Mapping and mobilization of invitees;
- Contributing to the Outcome Document.

These efforts will seek to leverage existing and/or complementary initiatives<sup>1</sup> and to collaborate with existing youth-led networks and collectives. These could include: Asia-Pacific Inter-agency Youth Network, Y-Peer, Y- Map, N-Peace, UNESCO's Associated Network of Schools, Boys and Girls Clubs and Youth Clubs, as well as partnering with such organizations as the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, sports associations. etc. Strategies for engaging UN agencies at the country level, and for mobilizing youth for these virtual events, will be discussed and agreed with our National Youth Focal Points and NYGAs.



Anticipated outputs will include:

- A cohort of NYGAs and youth activists equipped with tools/resources and information to enable them to more effectively engage in activism regionally, using feminist principles;
- Better understandings among NYGAs and youth activists of global, regional and national normative process and opportunities for engagement and collaboration with other youth to strengthen member state accountability on their normative commitments;
- Increased understandings of priority areas for action to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the Asia-Pacific region- by ACs/Compact areas, and strategies for promoting linkages between the same;
- Components of a strategy for strengthening multi-stakeholder intra-regional collaboration and collective action.

The mobilization and process of inviting participants will be undertaken – at regional and country levels i.e. a registration process will be facilitated by UN Women regional and field presences, in collaboration with civil society (including NYGAs), private sector and UN partners on the coordination (between country and regional levels) and on the communications components.

## FORMAT AND TIMELINES

The proposal is to have this series of accelerator virtual 'workshop-type' sessions between June 2021, based on the timelines of the Mexico and Paris Forums. The youth activism accelerator sessions will be hosted on a virtual platform and with social media live streaming. The virtual space is designed to allow for vibrant and active interaction, and sessions will take diverse formats (storytelling, ideathons, etc.) and allow participants will have the ability to interact in Q&A segments, chat, answering polling questions, join networking opportunities and where supplemental resources will be posted.

**Language:** English with simultaneous interpretation to Chinese, Bahasa, Khmer, Nepali, International Sign Language and closed captioning. Costs of this will be shared with field presences (based on language needs).

**Target participants:** National Youth Focal points. NYGAs, youth-led and young feminist organizations. The focus will be on individuals aged 18-35 year from Asia and the Pacific and will target a total of 100-120 participants for the accelerator sessions.

## TIMELINES

Following consultations with National Youth Focal points the proposal is to convene these: Youth Activism Accelerator Sessions as follows:

**Dates:** The proposal is to convene the sessions over a period of 3 days i.e. 13-15 July 2021.

**Duration:** These sessions will run for 3 hours each, with foundational sessions to take place on day 1 i.e. on Principles of feminist leadership and activism; and on unpacking normative processes and opportunities for engagement and strengthening member state accountability at global, regional and national levels.

**Days 2 and 3,** will allow youth activists to 'deep dive' into areas covered by the ACs/WPS & HA compacts, to better understand key priorities for A-P youth, in addressing gender disparities (day 2) and to see examples of successful strategies (movement building, advocacy, youth mobilization) with different speakers and leaders in these areas, including: youth organizations that are Action Coalitions (ACs)/WPS&HA Compact leads, NYGAs, as well as members of the Gender Equality Youth Taskforce.