

UTMUN 2023



United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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Equity Disclaimers

Throughout this committee, delegates will be engaging in complex debates and discussions covering a wide array of topics. As UTMUN seeks to provide an enriching educational experience that facilitates understanding of the real-world implications of issues, our committees' contents may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter strictly for academic purposes. We ask for delegates to be respectful, professional, tactful, and diplomatic when engaging with all committee content, representing their assigned country's or character's position, communicating with staff and other delegates, and responding to opposing viewpoints.

This Background Guide presents topics that may be distressing to some Delegates, including but not limited to: Discussion of the violation of human rights, physical and emotional gender-based violence—including rape and sexual assault, intimate-partner violence, physical and emotional discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community, as well as child marriage.

UTMUN recognizes the sensitivity associated with many of our topics, and we encourage you to be aware of and set healthy boundaries that work for you. This may include: refraining from reading certain parts or all of the background guide, preparing yourself before reading this background guide, doing some self-care or seeking support after reading the background guide, or anything that can help make you feel more comfortable. We ask that all Delegates remain considerate of the boundaries that other Delegates set. When writing position papers and when in committee, please be mindful to use the language used in the background guide and avoid terms that contribute to harmful stereotypes.

Please avoid using “the East” to refer to the APAC region and refrain from use of “the Third World” and “the First World” — terms such as “the Majority World” or “the Global South” are expected. Also, remember to be mindful of the limits of using “underdeveloped” and “developed” to describe nations. We have tried to use the most respectful language possible and would like to see delegates do the same in committee. In committee, there will be absolutely no tolerance for questioning the validity of the LGBTQ+ community and the many sexualities and gender identities it encompasses. Debate must only be centred on issues facing the community.

If you wish to switch committees seeing the content warnings for this committee, please:

- a) Contact your Faculty Advisor/Head Delegate with your request if you are a part of a group delegation
- b) Email our Director of Academics, Karrie Chou, with a brief explanation of why you would like to switch committees if you are NOT a part of a group delegation.

Model United Nations at U of T Code of Conduct

The below code of conduct applies to the behaviour of all attendees of UTMUN for the entire duration of the conference, while engaging in any conference-related activities, including but not limited to committee sessions, conference socials, committee breaks, and the opening and closing ceremonies.

1. Harrassment and bullying in any form will not be tolerated, the nature of which includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity, colour, religion, sex, age, mental and physical disabilities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression,
 - a. Harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, insulting and/or degrading language or remarks; threats and intimidation; and intentional (direct or indirect) discrimination and/or marginalization of a group and/or individual;
 - i. The above prohibition on harassment, bullying, and inappropriate behaviour extends to any and all behaviour as well as written and verbal communication during the conference, including notes, conversation both during and outside committees, and general demeanour at all conference events;
 - ii. UTMUN reserves the right to determine what constitutes bullying and/or inappropriate behaviour toward any individual and/or group;
 - b. Attendees must not engage in any behaviour that constitutes physical violence or the threat of violence against any groups and/or individuals, including sexual violence and harassment, such as, but not limited to,
 - i. Unwelcome suggestive or indecent comments about one's appearance;
 - ii. Nonconsensual sexual contact and/or behaviour between any individuals and/or groups of individuals;
 - iii. Sexual contact or behaviour between delegates and staff members is strictly forbidden;
2. UTMUN expects all attendees to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times during the conference. Specific expectations, include, but are not limited to,
 - a. Attendees must, if able, contribute to the general provision of an inclusive conference and refrain from acting in a manner that restricts other attendees' capacity to learn and thrive in an intellectually stimulating environment;
 - b. Attendees must adhere to the dress code, which is Western business attire;
 - i. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the attendees' ability to adhere to the previous sub-clause;
 - ii. Attendees are encouraged to contact Director of Equity, Aidan Thompson, with questions or concerns about the dress code or conference accessibility;
 - c. Attendees must refrain from the use of cultural appropriation to represent their character

and/or country, including the use of cultural dress, false accent, and any behaviour that perpetuates a national or personal stereotype;

d. Delegates must not use music, audio recordings, graphics, or any other media at any time unless approved and requested to be shared by the Dais and/or the Director of Equity, Aidan Thompson;

e. Attendees must abide by instructions and/or orders given by conference staff members;

- i. Attendees are exempt from this above sub-clause only if the instructions and/or orders given are unreasonable or inappropriate;

3. Delegates, staff, and all other conference participants are expected to abide by Ontario and Canadian laws and Toronto by-laws, as well as rules and regulations specific to the University of Toronto. This includes, but is not limited to,

- a. Attendees, regardless of their age, are strictly prohibited from being under the influence and/or engaging in the consumption of illicit substances, such as alcohol or illicit substances for the duration of the conference;

- b. Attendees are prohibited from smoking (cigarettes or e-cigarettes, including vapes) on University of Toronto property;

- c. Attendees must refrain from engaging in vandalism and the intentional and/or reckless destruction of any public or private property, including conference spaces, venues, furniture, resources, equipment, and university buildings;

- i. Neither UTMUN nor any representatives of UTMUN is responsible for damage inflicted by attendees to property on or off University of Toronto campus;

- ii. Individuals will be held responsible for any damages.

4. The Secretariat reserves the right to discipline delegates and/or attendees for not adhering to/violating any of the above stipulations. Disciplinary measures include, but are not limited to,

- a. Suspension from committee, in its entirety or for a specific period of time;

- b. Removal from the conference and/or conference venue(s);

- c. Disqualification from awards;

- d. Disqualification from participation in future conference-related events.

5. If online, additional rules apply to delegate and staff conduct, including but not limited to Zoom background usage. Delegates must use either conference-provided Zoom backgrounds, the blurred background, solid colours, or no background.

6. UTMUN reserves the right to the final interpretation of this document.

For further clarification on University of Toronto Model United Nations' policies regarding equity, questions, concerns, or for any equity violations that attendees would like to raise, please contact equity@utmun.org, or fill out this [anonymous form](#).

Letter from the Director

Dear Delegates,

My name is Finn, and it is my honour to be serving as your director of The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for this year's iteration of the annual University of Toronto Model United Nations Conference! I have been involved in Model United Nations for five years now. I have spent most of my life in Vancouver, BC—having lived in Singapore and Sydney before that. I am currently in my second year at, you guessed it, the University of Toronto. I am studying Urban Studies, Human Geography, and Political Science

My fellow dais members and I cannot wait to see you all thrive in the exciting setting of MUN. This year, our committee will consist of three important topics. Firstly, we shall have a look at social development and equality for women and the LGBTQ+. The second topic will have a more economic tint. We will explore how Asia-Pacific can support urbanization that improves economic output whilst benefiting the quality of life for residents of its urban centres.

We ask that all delegates discuss these topics in a mindful manner, especially regarding our first topic. Please take care in your research, doing your best to grasp what challenges your delegations face—and the fact that those challenges are very real for many citizens of this earth. We are so excited to see how you approach these issues.

We will be joined by Candace Chen, our Vice Director, as well as Anne Hu, our Moderator. Candace is also a student at the University of Toronto, a first year student studying life sciences with plans to double major in human biology and psychology. She is from Taiwan but spent a large portion of her life living in Shanghai. She's been involved in Model United Nations for 4 years now, participating in numerous conferences as a delegate or moderator but this is her first time as a vice director. Anne is a first year student cheerfully studying at the University of Toronto too. While she is fairly new as a first-time Moderator for a committee, she is eager to have the chance to hear the compelling speeches from each delegation. She is looking forward to moderating UNESCAP's committee sessions!

To all our first time delegates, do not fear, we understand how you feel and know that you'll do great—we're all cheering for you. Some advice to all of you would be to read the backgrounder carefully as it will guide you through our debate, but do not use it exclusively—there are many more resources out there waiting to be uncovered.

Feel free to contact me at UNESCAP@utmun.com if you have questions about anything regarding this committee. Please also send your position papers there. Good luck in your research delegates, and we cannot wait to see you in-person!

Finn Meiklejohn (he/him)

Director of The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

unescap@utmun.org

Position Papers

At UTMUN 2023, position papers are required to qualify for awards. Each committee will also give out one Best Position Paper award. Only delegates in Ad Hoc are exempt from submitting a position paper. To learn more about position paper writing, formatting, and submission, please check out the position paper guidelines. Please read through the guidelines carefully as this page will describe content recommendations, formatting requirements, and details on citations. If you have any questions about position paper writing, feel free to contact your Dais via your committee email or reach out to academics@utmun.org.

Introduction

The United Nations ESCAP, or The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, was first established in 1947 in Shanghai before moving to Bangkok in 1949. At the time, it was known as The Economic and Commission for Asia and the Far East.¹ Its initial goal at founding was to encourage economic growth in a post-colonial era towards collective rebuilding and development post-WWII. UNESCAP acts as the regional development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region. UNESCAP's main role is to guide the region through collective efforts to spur shared economic growth and greater social equity.² The commission has 53 member States and nine associate members, covering a diverse and dynamic region containing two-thirds of the world's population.³ UNESCAP is one of five regional commissions for the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The key focus of UNESCAP at the moment is in following with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, encouraging cross-border collaboration to work towards reducing poverty, improved trade, development working with the environment, scientific innovation, and social development.⁴

In our UNESCAP committee meetings we will be discussing two topics. The first topic will be more socially centred, looking at how the Asia and the Pacific (APAC) can advance social development and equality for its population, namely regarding gender and sexuality. The second topic will take a more economic perspective, delving into how APAC can support and sustain healthy urbanisation in its urban centres.

Special Note

When in committee sessions, delegates representing nations within the Global North must work to avoid a paternalistic viewpoint on development of other countries—especially those traditionally labelled as “underdeveloped”—in committee. As a committee established on the foundations of development rhetoric that believed in the dominant role of “the West” in shaping “the East”, we must work to ensure debate remains conducive to inter-country relations that

¹ ESCAP History. (2021). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/about/history>

² ESCAP History. (2021). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/about/history>

³ Population trends. (2014, December 2). UNFPA Asia Pacific. <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/populationtrends>

⁴ About ESCAP. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work>

empower countries in APAC to guide their own futures. The founding members being referred to are the likes of Australia, France, The Netherlands, New Zealand, The Russian Federation, The United Kingdom, and The United States of America.

Definitions

“Associate Member”

Associate members are members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, yet are not technically recognized/formal members of the United Nations.⁵

“Decolonization”

By the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the UN affirms the right of all peoples to self-determination, towards independence and away from colonial ruling powers.⁶

“Urbanisation”

The global shift in population to the majority inhabiting cities and towns. It is typically associated with economic growth, but also inequality in the face of ineffective urban planning.⁷

“Equity”

The state by which historically underrepresented or marginalised groups/people are given the opportunity to become equals in power, access to opportunities, and societal treatment.⁸

“Gender Equality”

Recognizing the diversity of individuals, the opportunities, responsibilities, and treatment of individuals will not depend on their gender. In other words, providing the same conditions for reaching full potential development, not necessarily treating all men and women the same, but having the non-dependence on gender as a factor.⁹

“Gender”

A social and cultural construct which creates roles and responsibilities based on the differences between men, women, boys and girls. These gender-based roles often change over time, and differ from culture to culture.¹⁰

5 ESCAP Members and Associate Members. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/about/member-states>

6 Decolonization. (n.d.). United Nations; United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/decolonization>

7 Urbanization. (2022, May 20). National Geographic Society. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/urbanization>

8 Equity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms. (n.d.). University of British Columbia Equity & Inclusion Office. <https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/equity-inclusion-glossary-of-terms/>

9 Concepts and definitions. (2001). United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>

10 Nomoto, R. (2017). Glossary of Terms and Concepts (Gender Equality, p. 17). UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf>

“Gender Norms”

Accepted societal or communal standards/expectations which characterise how males/females should act. This standard often changes as the individual grows older, and these norms are generally internalised in youth.¹¹

“Discrimination”

Distinctions, exclusions or restrictions affecting the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* where “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” as “everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, or social origin, property, birth, or other status.” In the context of this background guide, discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation is the main topic of concern.¹²

“Informal Employment”

The informal labour market is the portion of the economy and labour market which does not face regulation, taxation or monitoring in terms of health, safety, licensing and working conditions. It also is not recorded directly into a nation’s GDP. The informal labour market often contributes greatly to growing economies, but a large informal employment base is unsustainable for development. Often, women are more likely to be in precarious but low-paying categories of informal employment.¹³

“Political Participation”

The freedom to take part, speaking out and assembling, in the conduct of public affairs/decision-making. Internationally, both men and women have equal rights to participate in all aspects of the political process.¹⁴

“Child Marriage”

Any formal marriage, or any informal union, between a child (individual under the age of 18), and an adult or other child.¹⁵

Sustainable Economic Growth

According to SDG 8, the goal is to sustain 7+ % of growth in GDP per capita based on local currency. It is measuring change in productivity of a country’s labour force, and use of resources.¹⁶

11 Nomoto, R. (2017). Glossary of Terms and Concepts (Gender Equality, p. 17). UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf>

12 International and domestic human rights framework. (n.d.). Ontario Human Rights Commission. <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/cmard-booklet-call-coalition-municipalities-against-racism-and-racial-discrimination/international-and-domestic-human-rights-framework>

13 Delechat, C., & Medina, L. (2020, December). What is the Informal Economy? International Monetary Fund. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2020/12/what-is-the-informal-economy-basics>

14 Women Watch: Chapter 3. (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm>

15 Child marriage. (2022, June). <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>

16 Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. (n.d.). SDG Tracker. <https://sdg-tracker.org/economic-growth>

“Capitalist Development”

Development driven by capitalistic means, where capital assets within economies are privately owned and controlled. Labour is paid for with wages, and private companies compete with each other for the share of a market.¹⁷

“Urban Sprawl”

The expansion of a population outwards from an urban centre into low density housing, typically with a dependence on automobiles for transportation due to poor infrastructure.¹⁸

“Informal Settlement”

Residential areas where the inhabitants do not have ownership of the land, and lack access to basic city services/public infrastructure. Due to the informal occupancy nature of the housing, the living space usually does not comply with planning/building regulations.¹⁹

Abbreviations

“UN”

United Nations

“UNESCAP”

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific
(Formerly United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East)

“APAC”

Asia and the Pacific

“SDG”

Sustainable Development Goal

“ADB”

Asian Development Bank

“LGBTQ+”

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning (Plus)

“ECOSOC”

United Nations Economic and Social Council

“ILO”

International Labour Organisation

“HIV”

Human Immunodeficiency Virus

“STEM”

¹⁷ Mahmud, A. S., & Jahan, S. (n.d.). What is Capitalism? International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/basics/2_capitalism.htm

¹⁸ Swilling, M. (2016, July 12). The curse of urban sprawl: How cities grow, and why this has to change. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jul/12/urban-sprawl-how-cities-grow-change-sustainability-urban-age>

¹⁹ Informal Settlements. (2001, November 14). Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development Glossary of Statistical Terms. <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1351>

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths

“UNICEF”

United Nations Children’s Fund

(Formerly United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund)

“VAWG”

Violence Against Women and Girls

“IPV”

Intimate Partner Violence

“GBV”

Gender Based Violence

“BRI”

Belt and Road Initiative

“SUTI”

Sustainable Urban Transport Index

“UNECE”

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

“ALTID”

Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development

“OHCHR”

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

“UDHR”

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Topic A: Advancing Social Development and Equality

Introduction

UNESCAP received the name it has today in 1974 as a result of the need for further focus on social development in Asia and the Pacific after World War II.²⁰ Moving forward, one of the main focuses of ESCAP's Committee on Social Development has been to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.²¹ Gender imbalances persist across the region in many key aspects of the lives of women—at home, at work, in marriage, in education, and regarding safety. The LGBTQ+ community also experiences extensive disparities in these essential facts of life. UNESCAP's approach to the LGBTQ+ community has centred on responses to the HIV epidemic, and although this response is direly needed, the committee must also look to improving the everyday lives of the community by reforming laws and working towards inclusive norms.²²

UNESCAP recommends a four-element framework that can be followed for empowerment and inclusion. Firstly, rights and justice—which looks at access to justice and protective rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Secondly, participation and voice—which looks towards the importance of participation in civic life and the ability to contribute to decision-making. Thirdly, norms and institutions—wherein we must look at both the informal and formal embedded sociocultural rules, practices, and shared expectations of societies. Finally, resources and capabilities—focusing on access to public resources, basic services, and the ability to control those resources. When examining the subtopics, keep these four elements in mind.²³

20 ESCAP History. (2021). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/about/history>

21 Committee on Social Development. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/committee/committee-on-social-development>

22 Social Inclusion. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/social-inclusion>

23 Accelerating progress: An empowered, inclusive and equal Asia and the Pacific (0 ed.). (2019). The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank, and United Nations Development Programme. <https://doi.org/10.22617/TCS190071-2>

Subtopic A: Equity in the Workforce

Historical Background

Women across Asia and the Pacific have made spectacular contributions to its economic and social development, yet social norms and economic factors have continued to limit access to job opportunities and participation in the workforce. The entry of women into the paid labour force took place during the 20th century as one of the most important socioeconomic transformations of the region.²⁴ Moving into the 21st century, the focus has turned on the need for easier access of women to the paid labour market in rural areas and discrimination that still persists in the workplace even as labour force participation rose.²⁵ In many countries, men are more likely to be hired in large and medium scale businesses while women are more likely to be employed as home-workers—this trend being evident after many countries gained independence from colonial powers up into the 1960s and economies further developed.²⁶ In Southeast Asia, female participation in the labour market has increased since the 1980s alongside economic growth due to desires of supporting a middle-class lifestyle that many aspire towards.²⁷ However, in rural areas, women have historically held unpaid work positions—largely agricultural in nature, as well as the responsibility for the majority of child-rearing landing on their shoulders. For women to be freer to take on roles in the workforce that allow for greater financial independence, changes to patriarchal family values that persist globally must be altered to equalise unpaid labour responsibilities between men and women. These notions of the need to support women in balancing paid and unpaid work alongside encouraging men’s involvement in childcare for the first time became predominant from a policy perspective in the 1980s.²⁸ Looking at the past few decades, the participation of women workers in the labour force has declined from 70.8 percent in 1994 to 63.3 percent in 2014 in East Asia.²⁹ In South Asia it has fallen from 36.4 to 30.6 percent over the same period.³⁰ Not only does this display the need to turn the tide on enabling women to participate in the workforce, but also the regional disparities in equality and societal norms regarding women in the workforce.

24 Najafizadeh, M., & Lindsey, L. L. (Eds.). (2018). *Women of Asia: Globalization, Development, and Gender Equity* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315458458>

25 Najafizadeh, M., & Lindsey, L. L. (Eds.). (2018). *Women of Asia: Globalization, Development, and Gender Equity* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315458458>

26 Booth, A. (2016). Women, Work and the Family: Is Southeast Asia Different? *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 31(1), 167–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20780389.2015.1132624>

27 Booth, A. (2016). Women, Work and the Family: Is Southeast Asia Different? *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 31(1), 167–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20780389.2015.1132624>

28 Najafizadeh, M., & Lindsey, L. L. (Eds.). (2018). *Women of Asia: Globalization, Development, and Gender Equity* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315458458>

29 Banerjee, D. (2017, March 1). Women in Asia: High contribution, little rewards [International Labour Organization]. http://www.ilo.org/asia/info/public/newsitems/WCMS_545923/lang--en/index.htm

30 Banerjee, D. (2017, March 1). Women in Asia: High contribution, little rewards [International Labour Organization]. http://www.ilo.org/asia/info/public/newsitems/WCMS_545923/lang--en/index.htm

Past UN Action

UNESCAP's main mission within gender equality has been to enhance women's economic participation in APAC. The world's first conference on women took place in 1975, just one year after UNESCAP's renaming and shift of focus to include social development.³¹ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December of 1979.³² It is an "international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promotes women's and girls' equal rights."³³ UNESCAP would go on to host the regional preparatory meeting for The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, a conference that resulted in the unanimous adoption by 189 countries of The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.³⁴ The conference set strategic objectives towards gender equality, including looking at women and the economy in addition to women in power and decision-making.³⁵ Since then, there have been reviews of the action plan every five years.

More recently, in 2018, the committee launched the Catalysing Women's Entrepreneurship programme, which aims to advance women's economic empowerment and contribute to poverty reduction in Asia and the Pacific.³⁶ It intends to address the unique challenges that women-owned micro, small and medium-sized enterprises face in growing their businesses, including access to finance and new technologies.³⁷ The project supports the development of gender-responsive policies and programs for business development and investment. The project provides technical assistance, advisory support, training on using information and communications technologies and training for policymakers on implementing gender-responsive entrepreneurship initiatives.³⁸ Funding programs that support women entrepreneurs not only enables more women to become involved in trade and commerce, but destigmatizes working away from home. To remove gender-based structural barriers, women must have the opportunity to pursue their entrepreneurial ambitions and achieve economic independence.

In advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workforce, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) states that it is the responsibility of nations to

31 World Conference of the International Women's Year. (n.d.). United Nations; United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/mexico-city1975>

32 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979. (n.d.). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

33 Khanna, P., Kimmel, Z., & Karkara, R. (2016). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for Youth. UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/12/cedaw-for-youth>

34 World Conferences on Women. (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>

35 The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20. (2015). UN Women. <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>

36 Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/projects/cwe>

37 About ESCAP. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work>

38 Canada, G. A. (2017, January 21). Project Profile of Catalysing Women's Entrepreneurship—Creating a Gender-Responsive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. Government of Canada. <https://w05.international.gc.ca/projectbrowser-banqueprojets/project-projet/details/d004857001>

dismantle systems of oppression that label LGBTQ+ people as criminals or harmful to society.³⁹ In addition the OHCHR believes nations must create legal frameworks that protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination in employment.⁴⁰ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, stated that businesses “not only have to meet their human rights responsibilities, they must become active agents of change” regarding equality for the LGBTQ+ community in the workplace.⁴¹

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals recognize the unique challenges that women in Asia and the Pacific are facing in the 21st century. SDG 8.7, under the broader goal of sustainable economic development, seeks to “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men....[as well as] equal pay for work of equal value.”⁴² SDG 5 more intimately recognizes the challenges women face socially and culturally regarding work. Target 5.4 demands that unpaid care and domestic work be valued through the governmental provision of services and policies— including the “promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.”⁴³

Current Issues

The committee’s Catalysing Women’s Entrepreneurship programme is due to end in 2023, while the need to improve job opportunities for women will only continue. In the APAC region only 50 percent of the women in the working age populations are economically active, compared to 84 percent of the men.⁴⁴ Once in the labour market women are at higher risk of being exploited. Women are more likely to be in informal employment, with 64 percent of the working women in APAC being as such. This is on top of the fact that over 60 percent of working women in the region are in vulnerable employment.⁴⁵ With more limited support for workplace safety and healthy practices, women’s lives are unnecessarily being put at risk. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is an important entity that is seeking to enforce policies that enable women to be removed from vulnerable employment. The ILO advocates for the reduction of occupational segregation on the basis of gender, ensuring that women and the LGBTQ+ community have

39 Effective inclusion of LGBT persons. (n.d.). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/effective-inclusion-lgbt-persons>

40 Effective inclusion of LGBT persons. (n.d.). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/effective-inclusion-lgbt-persons>

41 Tripathi, S., Radcliffe, C., & Houdart, F. (2017). Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, & Intersex People: Standards of Conduct for Business (p. 52). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.unfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/UN-Standards-of-Conduct.pdf>

42 Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. (n.d.). United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

43 Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. (n.d.). United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

44 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

45 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

equal opportunity to participate in different fields of work and at the most senior levels.⁴⁶

In terms of political participation, while the proportion of women in national parliaments has risen from 8 percent in 1990 to 18 per cent in 2018, the region falls behind the global average of 24 per cent.⁴⁷ Ensuring that women have access to governmental roles and high-level corporate positions is essential to having their voices be heard. Women have been limited in entering local level politics due to the lack of finances for campaigning and time constraints needed to manage domestic responsibilities and income-generating activities.⁴⁸ In certain cultures where traditional family structures are more regimentally followed, it is stipulated that political activity is “dirty” and not for “decent” women, with husbands and families being reluctant to allow women to enter the political playing field.⁴⁹ Removing norms around the role of the “traditional breadwinner” is thus also an important goal, which goes beyond political or economic participation, but also centres on basic freedom and independence for women.

There are extensive actions that need to be taken to fight for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workforce and allow community members to be their true selves in their places of work without worry for discrimination. LGBTQ+ individuals deal with discrimination and abuse at all stages of the employment cycle according to OHCHR—hiring, advancement, training, compensation, benefits, and termination.⁵⁰ Because of these threats to their livelihood LGBTQ+ individuals resort to hiding their sexual orientation or gender identity. The United Nations The International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme found in a 2018 survey that 21 percent of respondents in China, 30 percent in the Philippines, and 23 percent in Thailand reported discriminated at work because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics.⁵¹ More than two thirds of respondents said that they had seen advertisements that explicitly excluded LGBTQ+ workers in the job requirements.⁵²

It is clear that forms of implicit and explicit discrimination in the workplace must be tackled in every nation on this planet, yet each country faces a unique situation of gender disparity

46 Global Wage Report 2018/19 – What lies behind gender pay gaps (p. 172). (2019). International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_650553.pdf

47 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

48 Ofei-aboagy, E. (2000). Promoting the participation of women in local governance and development: The case of Ghana. Institute of Local Government Studies. <https://ecdpm.org/application/files/3016/5547/2985/DP-18-Promoting-Participation-Women-Local-Governance-Ghana-2000.pdf>

49 Ofei-aboagy, E. (2000). Promoting the participation of women in local governance and development: The case of Ghana. Institute of Local Government Studies. <https://ecdpm.org/application/files/3016/5547/2985/DP-18-Promoting-Participation-Women-Local-Governance-Ghana-2000.pdf>

50 Effective inclusion of LGBT persons. (n.d.). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/effective-inclusion-lgbt-persons>

51 King, C., & Tomei, M. (2022). Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work: A learning guide. International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_846108.pdf

52 King, C., & Tomei, M. (2022). Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work: A learning guide. International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_846108.pdf

in the workforce. Varying social and cultural beliefs, as well as different political climates, will affect how the rights of women and the LGBTQ+ community can be advanced.

Subtopic B: Diversity in Education

Historical Background

In countries in Asia and the Pacific, such as China, schooling for girls was not taken on extensively by governments until the late 19th and early 20th centuries due to engrained social customs.⁵³ Before these changes began to be implemented by governments, education for women and girls was largely restricted to social ethics and family traditions that often prescribed women into exclusive categories of wife, mother, and caretaker.⁵⁴ Feminist movements that advocated for increased education for women developed in Asia and the Pacific alongside nationalist movements that sought to reform educational advancement and shape it in a way entrenched in their national cultural identities.⁵⁵ These resistance movements against Western colonialism were often led by local upper middle-class women who sought more autonomy. For example, women's organisations fought for the right to education in 1898 while in the Philippines the "Asociacion Feminista Filipino" organised for women's education and suffrage.⁵⁶ All this goes to show that countries in Asia and the Pacific have rich histories of local movements fighting for greater access to educational opportunities for women and girls. However, this is still a battle that is being fought across the region to this day. A 21st century symbol of the fight for the education of women and girls is Malala Yousafzai, who was shot by the Taliban in Pakistan at the age of fifteen for speaking out in support of the right for girls to education.⁵⁷ There are millions of girls in Asia and the Pacific that are not able to get an education. Even if girls are able to get an education, there are many cultural, economic, and social factors that may limit them from doing so for long—especially vulnerable lower income populations.

Addressing equity and equality within education remains a top priority for the United Nations. Education has been a category in which some of the most promising improvements have been being made regarding gender equality in access and participation. This makes rational sense, as education can be most directly linked to improvement in the contribution of women to economies and the development project. Gains in access to basic education in primary and secondary school have taken place across Asia and the Pacific, however ensuring "inclusive transition" between those basic levels of education into higher levels, including

53 Lee, W. (1995). Women's education in traditional and modern China. *Women's History Review*, 4(3), 345–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029500200092>

54 Lee, W. (1995). Women's education in traditional and modern China. *Women's History Review*, 4(3), 345–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029500200092>

55 Jayawardena, K. (2020, September 30). The History of Women's Movements in Asia and the Middle East. Verso Books. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4861-the-history-of-women-s-movements-in-asia-and-the-middle-east>

56 Jayawardena, K. (2020, September 30). The History of Women's Movements in Asia and the Middle East. Verso Books. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4861-the-history-of-women-s-movements-in-asia-and-the-middle-east>

57 Nations, U. (2017). Malala Yousafzai. United Nations Messengers of Peace; United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/messengers-peace/malala-yousafzai>

post-secondary education, is a much more persistent challenge.⁵⁸ Gender can play a significant role in preventing this transition, with many women ending education for work or marriage. Many poor rural communities see limited attendance at schools by female youth—in part because of social expectations that still prevent them from going to school, as well as economic pressures that require them to stay at home and help provide for their families.⁵⁹

Past UN Action

The United Nations has recognized that educating girls is required to eradicate poverty, as doing so provides them with opportunities to break the cycle of poverty, gaining financial independence and strengthening their involvement in decision making in government, business, and civil society.⁶⁰ Education empowers women to shape the places in which they live.

At the 1990 UNESCO World Conference on Education for All, improving education for girls was identified as the most urgent issue to be tackled regarding education. This conference, held in Jomtien, Thailand, was on the spur of decline in basic education during the 1980s. Literacy rates in industrialised countries were identified as also needing improvement, displaying the need for global action to increase access to education. The conference intended to “mobilise worldwide support and resources” to achieve basic education for all.⁶¹

A decade later, the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) was founded at the World Education Forum in Dakar.⁶² UNGEI is a global partnership hosted by UNICEF. The initiative promotes collective action to develop coordinated strategies for solving the disproportionate illiteracy and innumeracy of girls and women. The UNGEI would later launch the Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence in 2014, recognizing the relevance of preventing GBV against students in educational environments. The UNGEI also created an initiative specifically targeting the APAC region known as The East Asia Pacific Regional UN Girls’ Education Initiative (EAP UNGEI). This initiative focuses on strengthening advocacy, data collection and knowledge sharing on gender in education—supporting countries in their efforts to achieve gender equity in education.⁶³

Currently, all relevant United Nations organisations are working towards Sustainable

58 Bergstrom, P. (Ed.). (2015). Asia-Pacific regional Education for All report: A synthesis of the national EFA reports. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_0000233236&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_338e9ac4-2b74-4586-bb56-1175f3a518a8%3F_%3D233236eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000233236/PDF/233236eng.pdf#29_May_Synthesis.indd%3A.30869%3A938

59 Gender equality in Asia-Pacific education: International Women’s Day 2018 statistical snapshot. (2018, March 8). UNESCO Bangkok. <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/gender-equality-asia-pacific-education-international-women%E2%80%99s-day-2018-statistics-snapshot>

60 Educate Girls, Eradicate Poverty—A Mutually Reinforcing Goal. (n.d.). United Nations; United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/educate-girls-eradicate-poverty-mutually-reinforcing-goal>

61 World Conference on Education for All. (1990). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000085625>

62 Our story. (2020, July 24). UNGEI. <https://www.ungei.org/who-we-are/our-story>

63 UNGEI : East Asia and the Pacific. (2021, April 20). UNGEI. <https://www.ungei.org/eap>

Development Goal 4.0, with the goal of providing quality education across the globe. Goal 4.5 is especially pertinent to this committee, with the desire to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.”⁶⁴ Regardless of how likely completing this goal by 2030 is, it guides the actions of nations around the world.

Current Issues

The right of girls to proper education is a key component of almost every aspect of development. The more educated girls are, the greater autonomy they have, the more access they have to job opportunities and economic activities, and the higher their ability of self-reliance becomes when they’re adults. Each additional year of schooling can boost a girl’s earnings as an adult by up to 20 per cent.⁶⁵ Even as girls—especially wealthier ones in urban centres—become more educated, it is essential that they are afforded the respect they deserve in higher education and, as mentioned before, careers they choose. Many male-centric and inflexible professions are higher earning STEM positions.⁶⁶ APAC currently still has 61 million out-of-school female children, adolescents and youth.⁶⁷ Education must be seen as a right, accessible for all. Whilst UNESCAP focuses on the economic advantages of gender equality in education, economist Amartya Sen displays that illiteracy and innumeracy are forms of insecurity for women in their own right.⁶⁸ Limited access to schooling for women prevents them from being able to choose their own fates, thereby “distancing the deprived from the ways and means of fighting against [their] deprivation.”⁶⁹ When women and girls have access to education, they often experience benefits of improved maternal health and reduced infant mortality.

Gender-based violence is still found in schools across the region, further preventing access to education—decreasing participation and retention of girls in school. Young LGBTQ+ people are also affected by violence, physical or otherwise, in schools. LGBTQ+ youth who may not be accepted at home often look to school as a safe space, hoping to find students with shared experiences. However, the reality across many Asian countries is that by and large educational institutions have a long way to go to prevent bullying and work to provide equitable and safe learning environments. In a report by UNESCO it is clear that students in

⁶⁴ Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. (n.d.). United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

⁶⁵ Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022. (2022). UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_0.pdf

⁶⁶ Sterling, A. D., Thompson, M. E., Wang, S., Kusimo, A., Gilmartin, S., & Sheppard, S. (2020). The confidence gap predicts the gender pay gap among STEM graduates. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(48), 30303–30308. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2010269117>

⁶⁷ Gender equality in Asia-Pacific education: International Women’s Day 2018 statistical snapshot. (2018, March 8). UNESCO Bangkok. <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/gender-equality-asia-pacific-education-international-women%E2%80%99s-day-2018-statistics-snapshot>

⁶⁸ Karam, A. (n.d.). Education as the Pathway towards Gender Equality. United Nations; United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/education-pathway-towards-gender-equality>

⁶⁹ Karam, A. (n.d.). Education as the Pathway towards Gender Equality. United Nations; United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/education-pathway-towards-gender-equality>

the LGBTQ+ community face persistent verbal, physical, and psychosocial bullying.⁷⁰ Bullying harms educational participation, performance and completion; physical and mental health; and employment and economic prospects.

Figure 5. Levels of school bullying and violence reported by LGBT learners, in select countries (%)

	Australia	China	Hong Kong SAR	Japan	Rep. of Korea	Thailand	Viet Nam
Overall Bullying	69%	77%		68%	80%	56%	46%
Verbal Bullying	61%	44%	42%	53%	29%	29%	70%
Physical Bullying	18%	10%	14%	20%	5%	31%	19%
Psychosocial Bullying	39%	21%	40%	49%	31%	36%	18%
Sexual Harrassment		8%	14%	11%	7%	24%	18%

Sources: 149, 229, 198, 201, 202, 222, 227, 436

Note: The above graphs are compiled from a variety of data sources with varying survey designs and sample populations, including age ranges. These figures are not designed to be comparative but to provide an indication of the magnitude of the problem and demonstrate that it occurs in many countries in the region. Lack of inclusion of a country does not mean that bullying does not exist there but rather indicates limitations in data availability.

71

Not only is preventing violence against girls and the LGBTQ+ community in schools important, but so is an inclusive curriculum that allows for recognition and acceptance of the challenges these two vulnerable groups face in their daily lives. Curriculum relating to the LGBTQ+ community is currently under attack in the United States, where conservative Republicans have recently proposed that “any topic involving gender identity, gender dysphoria, transgenderism, sexual orientation, or related subjects” should be banned from being taught to children under the age of 10.⁷² In Japan, students told Human Rights Watch that due to the lack of inclusive curriculum, the information received about the LGBTQ+ community was inaccurate, harmful, and based on teachers’ personal views of sexuality instead of science or human rights.⁷³ There is a clear need for further school staff training and binding guidelines on inclusive educational curriculum—especially regarding personal and sexual health for LGBTQ+ communities. Education has the opportunity to shape cultural views on the LGBTQ+ community and ensure all have equal access to learning that reflects their lived realities.

70 From insult to inclusion: Asia-Pacific report on school bullying, violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. (2015). UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235414>

71 From insult to inclusion: Asia-Pacific report on school bullying, violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. (2015). UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235414>

72 Levine, S. (2022, October 20). Republicans aim to pass national ‘don’t say gay’ law. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/20/republicans-national-dont-say-gaw-law-lgbtq>

73 Doi, K. (2016, October 12). Japan’s Chance at an LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/12/japans-chance-lgbt-inclusive-curriculum>

Subtopic C: Safety as a Human Right

Historical Background

On December 10th, 1948, the UN General Assembly drafted a document by name of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The document established all the rights and freedom a human should process, one of which is article three: “the right to life, liberty and security of person”.⁷⁴ This article refers to the fundamental right every human being has to the highest attainable standard of protection against natural and man-made hazards, including but not limited to protection from any disaster, conflict, or discrimination. Access to this human right is especially important for women and members of the LGBTQ+ community, individuals who are more vulnerable and less protected against violence, prejudice, and threats to their safety on a personal and legislative level⁷⁵. For instance, laws that are remnants of the British Empire criminalize homosexuality in four countries in Southeast Asia whereas some countries like Malaysia or the Philippines continue to enforce punitive laws against transgender individuals⁷⁶. These laws originated from Britain’s push for a “social purity” throughout the Empire in response to what it perceived as more immoral, thus more liberating, perceptions of sexuality, gender, and masculinity throughout the Empire.⁷⁷ However, other parts of the APAC region—especially East Asian countries—have established anti-discrimination laws or some form of protection against discrimination.⁷⁸ In addition to the LGBTQ+ community, women also often struggle to receive safety as a human right. From a study conducted between 2000 and 2018, women in countries across Asia and the Pacific report higher rates of experience with physical and sexual violence, the rate is substantially higher than the global average of 27 percent by anywhere between 10 to 25 percent.⁷⁹ Even though there are also policies protecting women from gender-based violence and harassment, the pace of positive change remains slow, disabling the majority of the women population from being entitled to their human rights.

Past UN Action

In September of 2015, a joint statement was released by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with 12 UN organizations as participants calling for “an end to violence and discrimination against” the LGBTQ+ community.⁸⁰ The statement’s purpose

74 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (n.d.). United Nations; United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

75 LGBT Rights. (n.d.). <https://www.hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights>

76 Root, R. (2022, September 14). LGBTI rights: Many challenges in Southeast Asia remain, despite victories in Singapore and Vietnam. International Bar Association. <https://www.ibanet.org/LGBTI-rights-Many-challenges-in-Southeast-Asia>

77 Peakman, J., Beccalossi, C., & Crozier, I. (2011). A cultural history of sexuality. Berg.

78 Cheng, N., Henry, M., & Kim, S. (2021, September 24). The Resilience of East Asia’s LGBTQ Community. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/the-resilience-of-east-asias-lgbtq-community/>

79 Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women and Girls. (n.d.). UN Women. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/end-violence-against-women/evaw-facts-and-figures>

80 The Role of the United Nations in Combatting Discrimination and Violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People. (2018, June 19). United Nations. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/LGBT/UN_LGBTI_Summary.pdf

was a call to action for member states to establish protection for the expression of sexuality from violent treatment and discrimination with the support of OHCHR. The joint statement involved tasks suggested for member states to take to work toward the goal of achieving safety for the LGBTQ+ community as well as how each UN organisation could provide assistance. The solution proposed by the joint statement includes specific policy advice, HIV prevention, and women's empowerment⁸¹. However, there are certain flaws to this statement, seeing as it merely exists as a suggestion for member states, and the impact it made wasn't significant enough to resolve the issue. Fortunately, over the past 10 years, individual UN organisations were successful at accomplishing small steps toward resolving the issue, passing resolutions, and launching campaigns to support the LGBTQ+ community and protect their human rights.⁸²

The UN General Assembly established UN Women in July of 2010. The goal of UN Women, a UN entity, is to strive for a world with gender equality and women empowerment.⁸³ That said, past UN actions done to achieve wide accessibility for women's safety primarily came from the UN Women. In the 2000s, Security Council Resolution 1325, urged member states to "take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict".⁸⁴ This clause was later reaffirmed in resolution 2493 in 2019 calling on member states to "commit to implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda".⁸⁵ Similar calls to action can be found in past UN resolutions ensuring that women worldwide have access to safety.

Current Issues

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a concern that demands swift and broad action. It has direct impacts on the quality of lives for millions of women and girls everyday across APAC, having detrimental effects on physical and mental health in addition to one's ability to engage in the economy. Much of this violence takes place at home, with intimate partner violence (IPV) being the most common form of VAWG. Take Southeast Asia, where 33 percent of women aged 15-49 will experience violence from a current or former husband at least once in their lifetime.⁸⁶ Patriarchal power dynamics dictate the safety and freedom of women within their marriages and home lives. Beyond physical, emotional, and mental harm, the economic cost of loss productivity due to VAWG can be as high as 3.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).⁸⁷

81 UN-wide work to combat discrimination and violence against LGBTI people. (n.d.). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/un-wide-work-combat-discrimination-and-violence-against-lgbti-people>

82 10 Ways the U.N. has Protected LGBTQ Human Rights. (2017, September 18). Human Rights Campaign. <https://www.hrc.org/news/ten-ways-the-united-nations-has-protected-lgbtq-human-rights>

83 About UN Women. (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

84 Resolution 1325 (2000). (2000). United Nations Security Council. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement>

85 Resolution 2493 (2019). (2019). United Nations Security Council. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/339/37/PDF/N1933937.pdf?OpenElement>

86 Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates. (2021). World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240022256>

87 Accelerating progress: An empowered, inclusive and equal Asia and the Pacific (0 ed.). (2019). The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank, and United Nations Development Programme. <https://doi.org/10.22617/TCS190071-2>

It cannot be overlooked that gender-based violence (GBV) includes the victimization of lesbian, gay, transgender, and gender non-conforming people. Homosexual acts are banned in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore. These laws can motivate harmful actions against the LGBTQ+ community within these countries. Across Asia, violence against LGBTQ+ family members is not a rarity—with many being beaten to make them conform to societal norms.⁸⁸ This pressure to “maintain social balance” even sometimes results in marriages of convenience, where LGBTQ+ persons are forced to marry into what are masked as heterosexual, cisgender relationships.⁸⁹ Same-sex marriage and partner recognition are still key rights that are being fought for across Asia and the Pacific.

Case study: Taiwan and South Korea

Taiwan was the first nation in the APAC region to legalize same-sex marriage. It is a journey that took 31 years since the petition for same-sex marriage was first rejected in 1986.⁹⁰ It's a journey that followed Taiwan's transition from one-party authoritarian state to liberal democracy. Before legal recognition could take place in May of 2017, LGBTQ+ advocates had to fight cultural and religious conservatives to achieve fundamental social and political changes that caused tolerance for sexual minorities.⁹¹ South Korea saw a similar overall transition of political liberalisation coinciding with economic growth. Yet, right-wing opposition included religious, economic, and social conservatives who had the collective strength to prevent legalization of same-sex marriage. It's clear that no two countries are faced with the same set of challenges in battling for LGBTQ+ rights—all require extensive grassroots and political efforts to undo social stigma and gain recognition.

Child marriage is still commonplace in many societies. It is an especially important issue for UNESCAP as 44 percent of all child brides are from South Asia.⁹² South Asia has the highest rates of child marriage. The act of child marriage vehemently violates the rights of children, putting them at higher risk of violence and exploitation. It is estimated that 650 million girls and women alive today were younger than the age of 18 when they were married. However, the prevalence of child marriages is indeed on the decline, with 25 million child marriages having been prevented due to progress over the past 10 years. It is a complex problem to solve as the reasoning for its occurrence is often the result of social norms that stem out of the lack of respect for the autonomy and rights of women and girls.⁹³ The challenges of child marriage, same-sex marriage, and violence against women demonstrates that many countries in Asia still need to implement laws to minimize unethical actions (like forced child marriage or discrimination

88 Asia's LGBT people migrate to escape violence at home. (2015, April 9). Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gay-rights-asia-idUSKBN0N000D20150409>

89 Asia's LGBT people migrate to escape violence at home. (2015, April 9). Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gay-rights-asia-idUSKBN0N000D20150409>

90 Ho, M. (2018). Taiwan's Road to Marriage Equality: Politics of Legalizing Same-sex Marriage. *The China Quarterly*, 238, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741018001765>

91 Ho, M. (2018). Taiwan's Road to Marriage Equality: Politics of Legalizing Same-sex Marriage. *The China Quarterly*, 238, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741018001765>

92 Arora, A. (2018, July 5). Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects. UNICEF DATA. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-latest-trends-and-future-prospects/>

93 Child marriage. (2022, June). <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>

for women going through the justice system) and protect the exercise of some activities (like legalizing same-sex marriage).

It is extremely crucial to understand this challenge isn't exclusive to APAC regions. A survey conducted in 2018 by WHO pointed out that globally, an estimated 736 million women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetimes.⁹⁴ For instance, in 2010, UK and Wales reported that death as a result of domestic abuse is more common among women, having a ratio of 100:21.⁹⁵ The LGBTQ+ community in the Global North also face discrimination. The Russian government holds a disapproving view toward homosexuality, having no anti-discrimination law protection and banning members of the LGBTQ+ community from serving in the military.⁹⁶ In 2013, Russia established a federal law preventing the spread of "information advocating a denial of traditional family values" to protect Russian minors from exposure to such information. The government states this law is primarily to protect children from exposure to homosexuality. Other countries often refer to this law as the "anti-gay propaganda law" as it condemns homosexuality and regards it as an idea that contradicts "traditional family values."⁹⁷ The issue of safety as a human right must be considered an international challenge that countries have to come together and resolve as a collective.

⁹⁴ Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates. (2021). World Health Organisation. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240022256>

⁹⁵ All domestic abuse deaths to have multi-agency review. (2011, April 13). BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-13058300>

⁹⁶ The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia. (n.d.). The Council for Global Equality. <http://www.globalequality.org/component/content/article/1-in-the-news/186-the-facts-on-lgbt-rights-in-russia>

⁹⁷ No Support: Russia's "Gay Propaganda" Law Imperils LGBT Youth. (2018). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/12/12/no-support/russias-gay-propaganda-law-imperils-lgbt-youth>

Topic B: Supporting Healthy Urbanisation

Introduction

The year of 2010 marked the first time in history that more of our population lived in urban rather than rural areas.⁹⁸ As of today, more than 4.4 billion people live in cities—which is 56% of our earth’s population.⁹⁹ In developed countries, approximately 80% of the population is urban, wherein underdeveloped nations, approximately 30% of the population is urban.¹⁰⁰ It is clear that with economic growth comes greater urbanisation. In Asia, the rapid urbanisation of the last three decades has manifested itself in many different forms. From dense informal settlements contrasted with rising luxury condominiums in Mumbai to large-scale underused private developments in China, it is clear that the urban forms of today are not enriching the lives of those who live within them to the extent they should. Urban settlements in poorer countries have often been impacted by colonial legacies and today face conditions of hyper-congestion and resource scarcity.¹⁰¹ Urbanisation reflects economic growth, aka capitalist industrial development, and vice versa. Urbanisation materialises capitalist development within places, territories, and landscapes.¹⁰² Cities are seen by many of the central locus of change in this century. They are both the cause and answer to many of the problems we face today. How can we ensure that as the economies of the APAC region continue to develop, their physical form creates equitable cities that will last?

Case study: The Four Asian Tigers

Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea can all be looked towards for inspiration. All four of these nations experienced significant industrial growth between the 1960s and 1990s. A large portion of the economic growth these four nations experienced was city-led, with exports being prioritised to deliver consumer goods to the world market.¹⁰³ The nations also prioritised educating their population and developing stronger social and physical infrastructure. Their capital cities—Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, and Seoul—experienced urban growth and increased connectivity in global markets that catapulted them into world cities.

The Four Asian Tigers are economic growth stories that can be learnt from, but it must also be recognized that they face unique political, cultural, and social challenges. Their growth has disproportionately benefited the already wealthy. In accordance with geographer David

⁹⁸ Urbanization trends in Asia and the Pacific. (2013). <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SPPS-Factsheet-urbanization-v5.pdf>

⁹⁹ Urban Development. (n.d.). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

¹⁰⁰ Urban Development. (n.d.). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

¹⁰¹ Brenner, N., & Schmid, C. (2015). Towards a new epistemology of the urban? City, 19(2–3), 151–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2015.1014712>

¹⁰² Brenner, N., & Schmid, C. (2015). Towards a new epistemology of the urban? City, 19(2–3), 151–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2015.1014712>

¹⁰³ Yeung, Y. (2011). Rethinking Asian cities and urbanization: Four transformations in four decades. Asian Geographer, 28(1), 65–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10225706.2011.577975>

Harvey, many countries show that “accumulation” is only possible through “dispossession.”¹⁰⁴ While this concept is most acutely represented by settler colonialism in UNESCAP’s Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom, it is still important to remember in conceptions of economic development everywhere.

Some scholars list Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam as the “next” group of four.¹⁰⁵ Thus, as countries in Asia and the Pacific continue to develop economically, it is essential that it benefits all rather than just a select few.

Subtopic A: Climate Change and Urban Living

Historical Background

Many cities in the APAC region are at high risk of natural disasters, risk levels that are only increasing due to climate change. Historically, cities around the world have been formed on waterways, putting them in danger of sea-level rise, hurricanes, and tsunamis. With greater urbanisation comes more vulnerability. Without extensive support from governments, the creation of dense, unchecked settlements has put the citizens of urban centres at even greater risk. Encroaching on wetlands, oceans, and unsafe landscapes beyond initial municipal boundaries. Cities play a key role in tackling our planetary ecological crisis. They are both the front line of approaching the crisis and often the main cause due to industry and large populations that pollute and degrade the environment.¹⁰⁶

Climate change as we know it today began during the industrial revolution as industrialization and capitalist production took control of societies, coinciding with increased population growth. With these changes, greenhouse gas emissions began to rise. Since the mid-18th century, as our societies have continued to develop and industrialise, detrimental effects on the earth’s environment have only worsened. However, cities have still been able to adapt, plan, and take action to improve climate resilience and limit harmful contributions to climate change. Take coastal cities in Japan—which have historically faced tsunamis more frequently than coastal cities elsewhere in the world due to Japan’s unique geographical location. Starting in 1896, Japan has been developing scientific methods and countermeasures to respond to and prevent tsunamis.¹⁰⁷ The nation has developed intricate disaster mitigation techniques, from breakwaters to tsunami-resistant town development.¹⁰⁸ The World Bank explains that out of Japan’s track record with tsunami mitigation and responses comes three lessons—lessons that the entirety of

¹⁰⁴ Harvey, D. (2004). The “New” Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 40. <https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5811>

¹⁰⁵ Yeung, Y. (2011). Rethinking Asian cities and urbanization: Four transformations in four decades. *Asian Geographer*, 28(1), 65–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10225706.2011.577975>

¹⁰⁶ Cities and climate change. (2017, September 26). UNEP - UN Environment Programme. <http://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/cities/cities-and-climate-change>

¹⁰⁷ Shuto, N., & Fujima, K. (2009). A short history of tsunami research and countermeasures in Japan. *Proceedings of the Japan Academy. Series B, Physical and Biological Sciences*, 85(8), 267–275. <https://doi.org/10.2183/pjab.85.267>

¹⁰⁸ Shuto, N., & Fujima, K. (2009). A short history of tsunami research and countermeasures in Japan. *Proceedings of the Japan Academy. Series B, Physical and Biological Sciences*, 85(8), 267–275. <https://doi.org/10.2183/pjab.85.267>

Asia and the Pacific should keep in mind moving forward.¹⁰⁹ Firstly, it is clear that planning is the most important aspect—if we’re aware of the possible effects of climate change, we must plan to respond. Second is that resilience is strengthened when it is shared—which means the sharing of responsibility between different domestic actors as well as the sharing of knowledge across the APAC region. Third is that resilience is an ongoing process, and that nations should always be expected to adapt to new circumstances.¹¹⁰

Past UN Action

UN-Habitat was mandated in 1978 to manage and address issues of urban growth. It has sought to support human settlements of all sizes, from remote villages to dense urban centres.¹¹¹ The 1970s was the first time that substantial action was taken to deal with rapid urban growth. With time, the importance of handling urbanisation has increased. At the time of its founding, two-thirds of humanity was still rural.¹¹² The organisation struggled at first, but from 1997 to 2002 UN-Habitat revitalised its agenda and began working towards sustainable urban development in a more effective manner, elevated within the UN system. UN-Habitat’s scope today includes climate risk management. UN-Habitat seeks the creation of participatory planning processes that allow for community-led adaptations to climate, which can include improving settlements.¹¹³

UNESCAP’s environment and development division is actively working to create greener futures in nations within Asia and the Pacific. One of the commission’s goals is to create “cities for a sustainable future” through intergovernmental support, the development of knowledge products and tools, and technical assistance.¹¹⁴ UNESCAP has partnered with UN-Habitat in fighting for more sustainable cities, organising the Asia Pacific Urban Forum, which acts as the largest regional gathering of urban stakeholders. Through this forum, UNESCAP hopes to empower nations to collaborate in tackling unsustainable consumption patterns, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, exposure to air pollution and disasters, and vulnerability to climate change.¹¹⁵

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 is to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.”¹¹⁶ In an effort to fulfil this goal the UN Secretary-

109 Takemoto, S., Shibuya, N., & Sakoda, K. (2021, March 11). Learning from Megadisasters: A Decade of Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/03/11/learning-from-megadisasters-a-decade-of-lessons-from-the-great-east-japan-earthquake-drmhubtokyo>

110 Takemoto, S., Shibuya, N., & Sakoda, K. (2021, March 11). Learning from Megadisasters: A Decade of Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/03/11/learning-from-megadisasters-a-decade-of-lessons-from-the-great-east-japan-earthquake-drmhubtokyo>

111 Learn more about us. (n.d.). UN Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/about-us/learn-more>

112 Learn more about us. (n.d.). UN Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/about-us/learn-more>

113 Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk – A Guide for Community Assessments, Action Planning and Implementation. (2020). UN Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/climate-change-vulnerability-and-risk-a-guide-for-community-assessments-action-planning-and>

114 Environment and Development. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/environment-development>

115 Cities for a Sustainable Future. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/environment-development/urban-development>

116 Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. (n.d.). United Nations Sustainable Development. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change/>

General, António Guterres, recommended that governments must engage in “green transition” to accelerate the decarbonization of all aspects of our economy, support “green jobs” and sustainable growth, support those who lose their traditionally-held jobs through this transition, invest in sustainable solutions, and hold polluters responsible.¹¹⁷ The overarching message from the United Nations is that cooperation is key in the context of combating climate change and transitioning into more sustainable economies, societies, and built environments.

Current Issues

If urban centres in Asia continue with existing growth patterns, they are likely to continue a trend of unsustainable consumption and production models.¹¹⁸ Cities in APAC must work to mitigate environmental issues such as poor air quality, lack of clean water, and the management of waste. One way that cities will be kept out of harm’s reach from natural disasters that climate crises may bring is by limiting unencumbered sprawl. This way, important buffer environments at the outskirts of urban centres are protected and development does not take place in more at-risk areas. However, it would be essential that this takes place without further harming those living in such areas.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found that human emissions of greenhouse gases have already warmed the climate by 1.1 degrees Celsius since before the industrial revolution. In addition, the global average temperature is expected to reach or exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius within the next few decades.¹¹⁹ Rising temperatures affect every area of this planet by intensifying weather conditions, with dry areas becoming drier and wet areas becoming wetter. They also contribute to glacial loss which subsequently leads to sea-level rise.¹²⁰ Globally, it is estimated that global mean sea levels would rise by at least 30 centimetres above 2000 levels by 2100.¹²¹ Cities must prepare for the dire forecasts of sea-level rise and global warming ahead, as mitigating measures are by no means guaranteed to be successful. Take the examples of Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City, and Bangkok. All of them are densely populated metropolitan areas built below sea level where land subsidence has resulted in increased risk to flooding, damage to buildings and infrastructure, and disruption to water management tools.¹²² Deltares, a Dutch independent knowledge institute for research in water, outlines groundwater extraction to be one of the main contributors to subsidence.¹²³

117 Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. (n.d.). United Nations Sustainable Development. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change/>

118 Urbanization trends in Asia and the Pacific. (2013). <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SPPS-Factsheet-urbanization-v5.pdf>

119 Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. (2022). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SPM.pdf

120 Lindsey, R. (2022, April 19). Climate Change: Global Sea Level. <http://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-sea-level>

121 Lindsey, R. (2022, April 19). Climate Change: Global Sea Level. <http://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-sea-level>

122 Sinking cities: An integrated approach towards solutions. (2013). Deltares - Taskforce Subsidence. <https://www.deltares.nl/app/uploads/2015/09/Sinking-cities.pdf>

123 Sinking cities: An integrated approach towards solutions. (2013). Deltares - Taskforce Subsidence. <https://www.deltares.nl/app/uploads/2015/09/Sinking-cities.pdf>

Thinking ahead, cities will eventually have to develop ways to help those who have been displaced by climate change related crises. Regional collaboration will also be increasingly pertinent in response to climate crises as cross-border disaster displacement may become more frequent.¹²⁴ The prime minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, stated in October of 2022 that he should not have to request help for the recent horrific flooding in the nation with “a begging bowl.”¹²⁵ This sentiment is understandable in response to the calamity and the challenges of providing an accurate response, demanding greater collaborative effort to tackle climate change in rural and urban communities.

Climate change is inherently a class-based issue, with the wealthy able to better shelter themselves from its detrimental effects even though they are the ones contributing the most to the crisis. The desire for urban resilience in the eyes of the powerful—elites and politicians, has often taken the form of the enclavisation of settlements to ensure their survival. The World Bank states that poor people face greater challenges regarding “extreme events, health effects, food security, livelihood security, migration, water security, cultural identity, and other related risks.”¹²⁶ Climate change is intertwined with patterns of global inequality, and in urban areas where inequality is so frequently at its most austere, these disadvantages are most apparent.

Case Study: Indonesia

At the highest level, the separation of protection of the wealthy from the poor has looked like a complete move of a nation’s capital. This process has recently begun in Indonesia, wherein the capital city of Jakarta is being abandoned as the administrative capital in favour of the creation of a new one in sparsely populated rainforest.¹²⁷ Motivating factors for moving the capital include congestion, overcrowding, and the fact that the city is sinking. Now, moving the capital may avoid these issues affecting the government, but the lived realities of millions are still at risk. The nation’s president, Joko Widodo, states that the capital will promote “economic equality and inclusivity.”¹²⁸ On UNESCAP’s interactive webpage outlining pathways to sustainable urban growth, The relocation of Indonesia’s capital is cited as an example of “green and resilient urbanisation.”¹²⁹ However, many locals view it as the abandoning of lower income, at risk communities and worry it will disrupt economic growth. Are there not better ways to respond to the risk of climate change at the scale of the city?

124 Climate change and disaster displacement. (n.d.). UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html>

125 Ellis-Petersen, H., & Baloch, S. M. (2022, October 6). Pakistani PM says he should not have to beg for help after catastrophic floods. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/06/pakistani-pm-says-he-should-not-have-to-beg-for-help-after-catastrophic-floods>

126 Ivers, L. (n.d.). Social Dimensions of Climate Change. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-dimensions-of-climate-change>

127 Beo Da Costa, A., & Lamb, K. (2022, January 20). Indonesia passes law to relocate capital to Borneo jungle. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/01/indonesia-relocate-capital-borneo-jungle-cities-island-asia/>

128 Mokhtar, F., & Rahadiana, R. (2022, August 2). Indonesia Breaks Ground on Its New Capital City. Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-02/indonesia-breaks-ground-on-nusantara-as-jakarta-sinks>

129 The Future of Asian & Pacific Cities. (n.d.). UNESCAP. <https://view.genial.ly/6154601b26a9b00dd6f1d097>

Subtopic B: Adequate and Affordable Housing

Historical Background

The housing situation in many countries in Asia experiences deficits in both adequacy and affordability. Millions of households are forced to reside in unsafe and overcrowded units while disbursing large percentages of their income for these substandard housing conditions. For one to fully capture the housing affordability issue in Asia, it is necessary to understand the question of when and how has adequate and affordable housing become an issue. Between the 20th and 21st centuries, the APAC region witnessed a spike in the rate of urbanisation largely fueled by intra-country migration.¹³⁰ The mass movement of the population from rural to urban regions became the primary cause of the deterioration in housing affordability and adequacy. The influx of population moving to urban regions resulted in a rapid increase in the demand for urban housing. Cities are often overwhelmed and fail to meet the demand with a sufficient supply of low-costing housing. At the same time, the aspiration to become a homeowner or property owner as a means to increase social status in certain Asian cultures, like in China, hinders the expansion of the rental market.¹³¹ Aside from urban migration, slow supply response and cultural beliefs, other minor factors such as construction cost, land use regulations, inadequate planning system, and economic status of different countries all contribute to exacerbating the housing crisis.¹³² Among the APAC region, countries in South-Central Asia tend to experience unaffordable and inadequate housing at its worst. For instance, India's shortage of urban housing (comprising households without housing, households in overcrowded houses, and households in temporary housing) was estimated to be 5.1 million units in 1991 but increased to become 7.1 million units by 2001.¹³³ The consequence of unaffordable housing is severely damaging on an individual level, leaving it unresolved will eventually result in a much more significant scale of impact.

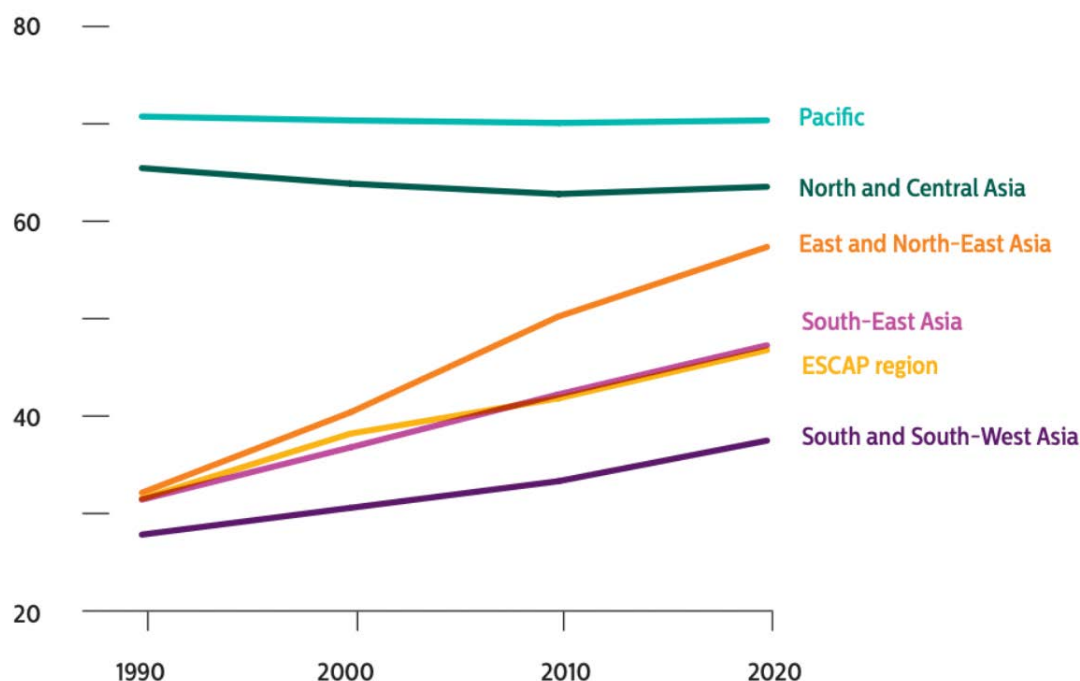
130 Fensom, A. (2015, January 30). Asia's Urbanization 'Just Beginning.' The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/01/asias-urbanization-just-beginning/>

131 Shepard, W. (2019, October 29). China Now Has An Answer To Its Housing Crisis—It's Called Rent. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2019/10/29/china-now-has-an-answer-to-its-housing-crisisits-called-rent/>

132 Helble, M., Ok Lee, K., & Gia Arbo, Ma. A. (2021). How (Un)affordable is housing in developing Asia? International Journal of Urban Sciences, 25(sup1), 80–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12265934.2020.1810104>

133 Affordable Land and Housing in Asia. (2012). UN Habitat. https://issuu.com/unhabitat/docs/affordable_land_and_housing_in_asia

Figure 1 **Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific across subregions, 1990–2020**



Note
Source

The trends for *South-East Asia* and *ESCAP region*, as a whole, are very similar.
United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2012).
World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision. CD-ROM Edition – Data in digital form (POP/ DB/WUP/Rev.2011).

134

Past UN Action

As UN habitat claims safe, secure, habitable, and affordable housing is a fundamental human right, numerous UN organisations have taken action in the past few years in an attempt to tackle and minimise the issue of housing deficit and poor habitat quality.

For instance, in 2002, UN-Habitat and the World Bank implemented an action plan for “slum upgrading,” which involved community-based upgrading programs to formalise informal and disenfranchised settlements in urban centres.¹³⁵ These two organisations initiated the Cities Alliance in May of 1999, mobilising the collaboration of cities and their development partners, with the goal of improving the living conditions of the urban poor, more specifically improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. This action plan targeted neglected parts of

134 Urbanization trends in Asia and the Pacific. (2013). <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SPPS-Factsheet-urbanization-v5.pdf>

135 Chatterjee, M. (Ed.). (1999). Cities Alliance for Cities without Slums. The World Bank and UN Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Developing%20and%20Managing%20Professional%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20.pdf>

the city with the miserable living conditions and high population density. Aside from improving the physical condition of the living quarters in slums, the plan also wanted to enhance the social, economic, organisational, and environmental aspects of the local communities. The impact was significant as the organisations were able to allow 5 million slum dwellers from 190 different cities to gain some form of benefit from the plan.

More recently, the pandemic has posed a challenge for countries to expand urban housing supply and for individuals who are forced to self-isolate in poor conditions to refrain from coming in contact with COVID-19. Hence, in 2020, UNESCAP recontextualized its policy pathways toward creating more resilient cities within the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³⁶ One of these pathways recognizes the importance of safe and dignified housing. UNESCAP states that “it is vital to reduce the vast deficit in affordable and quality housing to increase resilience to future pandemics and other disasters.”¹³⁷ With that goal in mind and 2020’s new theme for World Habitat Day “Housing for all”, UNESCAP and UN habitat collaborated to form a five-week campaign that is aimed to raise awareness of the inadequate housing crisis by seeking potential solutions to the issue from individuals and organisations.¹³⁸

UN commissions in other parts of the world also strive to resolve the issue in their regions. For example, in 2015, UNECE endorsed the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing to support member states in reaching their goal of ensuring access to affordable housing.¹³⁹ In partnership with Housing Europe and UN-Habitat, UNECE also launched a housing affordability study “Housing 2030” with the objective of exploring challenges, facilitating the exchange of beneficial methods of improving housing, and identifying the implementation of policies needed to address the issue¹⁴⁰.

Current Issues

Despite previous attempts toward resolving the issue, much of the urban population in Asian countries still lacks access to their fundamental human right to housing. The current state of the housing crisis can essentially be narrowed down to two categories of sub-issues to allow for a more precise examination and understanding. The first one is the informal settlement market and the poor standard of living for informal housing. The second one is the relationship between housing affordability and aspects of the economy. An in-depth interpretation of both sub-issues is the key to having a higher success rate in resolving unaffordable and inadequate housing.

First and foremost, as mentioned previously, cities often struggle to provide the

¹³⁶ Sustainable cities post-coronavirus disease pandemic. (2020). Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Committee on Environment and Development. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/CED6_INF5.pdf

¹³⁷ The Transition of Asian and Pacific Cities to a Sustainable Future: Accelerating Action for Sustainable Urbanization (p. 62). (2022). Environment and Development Division Economic and Social Commission for Asia. <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Regional-Partners-Forum-Outcome-Report-20220318.pdf>

¹³⁸ Launch Of The “Housing For All” Campaign | UN-Habitat. (5 October). UN Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/news/05-oct-2020/launch-of-the-housing-for-all-campaign>

¹³⁹ Affordable and Social Housing, Housing Finance. (n.d.). [UNECE]. <https://unece.org/housing/affordablehousing>

¹⁴⁰ A bit about us. (n.d.). Housing2030. <https://www.housing2030.org/about-housing2030/>

substantial supply needed to accommodate the dense urban population. As a result, informal settlements became the solution cities offer to maximise the number of households with housing when the rate of urbanisation outpaces the rate of construction of adequate housing. Informal settlements describe areas with a significant number of unplanned housing units that have been constructed illegally. The living conditions at these housing units are often highly inadequate, overcrowded, and lack access to safety and sanitation. In 1990, roughly 423 million individuals in the APAC region resided in informal settlements in their prospective countries. However, by 2012, the number had grown to 523 million.¹⁴¹ Among the APAC region, South Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam are especially vulnerable to the increase in the number of informal dwellers in their cities. The growth of informal settlements and slum areas is not only an obstacle to access to rights to housing, but it also poses a threat to urban system functioning and the environment.¹⁴² Fortunately, several states and international organisations have begun to become aware of the consequences informal settlement can cause and are working toward upgrading informal housing to ensure individuals receive an acceptable standard of living.¹⁴³

Similarly, a transition to a public housing system could also be a method to increase the urban housing supply.

Case Study: Singapore

Singapore is relatively unique in its situation as a highly developed yet minuscule city-state of 5 million. Regardless, the fact that 80% of Singaporeans live in public housing cannot be dismissed without wondering what took place to reach that level of housing security. Now, if governments are able to allocate funding towards the creation of housing for their citizens, they should contain mixed-income housing, connection to transportation, and many welcoming public spaces for interacting with neighbours. Density can be done right, as long as it takes the form of mid-level masses interspersed with green space. One of the most important, yet challenging necessities especially for many nations in APAC, is that proper public housing will require long-term and strong political commitment. Politicians need to advocate for the allocation of resources to building and maintaining homes for all.

The economy also plays an important role in the housing issue. Economic development and success were one of the main drivers of unaffordable housing, yet the economy can also be negatively impacted by unaffordable housing. Domestically, high housing costs tend to have a harmful correlation with employment recruitment, which in turn damages businesses and slows economic growth.¹⁴⁴ On an international level, foreign investment often influences domestic housing prices and the housing market. For instance, China is known for experiencing rapid growth in its real estate sector, attracting the attention of foreign investors

¹⁴¹ Mathur, O. P. (2014). Urban Poverty in Asia. Asian Development Bank, 100.

¹⁴² Msimang, Z. (2017). A study of the negative impacts of informal settlement on the environment: A case study of Jika Joe, Pietermaritzburg. [Thesis]. <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/16293>

¹⁴³ The Right to Housing for Residents of Informal Settlements. (n.d.). The Shift. https://www.make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/THESHIFT-plainreport-v2_compressed.pdf

¹⁴⁴ The impact of housing affordability on the economy. (n.d.). Habitat for Humanity. <https://www.habitat.org/costofhome/housing-affordability-and-economy>

wishing to be a part of this market¹⁴⁵. A study done in 2021 analysing the annual data on housing prices and foreign investment between 2010-2019 discovered a positive correlation between investment and price, meaning an increase in direct foreign investment results in an increase in housing prices.¹⁴⁶ In other words, if governments don't place a limit on foreign involvement and investment in domestic housing, the local urban population will struggle even more for access to affordable housing.

Subtopic C: Transportation and Networks of Commerce

Historical Background

The regional goals of Asia and the Pacific are constructed from contemporary desires to recreate the Silk Road, strengthening Asia's land transport system and continuing to grow its long-standing maritime routes. The Silk Road was active for more than 1,500 years, allowing the exchange of information, technologies, and innovations—in addition to economic growth and urbanisation for newly multicultural cities along the route.¹⁴⁷ Notions of connectedness such as these motivate many large-scale interconnected infrastructure projects in Asia today. After the Silk Road, advancements in maritime shipping caused it to become the dominant mode of global transportation, spurring the growth of many coastal regions oriented towards regional and international maritime trade.¹⁴⁸ As a result, inter-country land transport linkages were lacking across Asia and the Pacific.¹⁴⁹ After WWII, with the end of imperial occupation of much of Asia, came a new desire to reconnect countries across Asia to support regional economic growth—a process led by UNESCAP since the 1950s.¹⁵⁰ The creation of the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) project took place in 1991 as UNESCAP desired to emphasise the integration of land transport development and facilitation.¹⁵¹ The project focuses on both physical infrastructure development and policy changes for easier travel and interconnectivity between nations. The ALTID began the most recent wave of investment in the Asian Highway Network and Trans-Asian Railway Network—the two main methods for inter-nation land travel.

With increasing connectivity between nations came further economic growth for cities across Asia, escalating urbanisation and development. However, this has frequently manifested itself in unbalanced within-country development where there is a relatively high

¹⁴⁵ B, K. (2022, September 21). Chinese investors are opting to invest abroad due to a downturn in China's real estate market. New Straits Times. <https://www.nst.com.my/property/2022/09/833054/chinese-investors-are-opting-invest-abroad-due-downturn-chinas-real-estate>

¹⁴⁶ Wen, T. P. (2021). The Impact of Foreign Direct Investment on China's Housing Prices. 177–180. <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.210601.031>

¹⁴⁷ The Silk Road. (n.d.). National Geographic Society. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/silk-road>

¹⁴⁸ Zhang, J., & Feng, C.-M. (Eds.). (2018). Routledge Handbook of Transport in Asia (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315739618>

¹⁴⁹ Zhang, J., & Feng, C.-M. (Eds.). (2018). Routledge Handbook of Transport in Asia (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315739618>

¹⁵⁰ Zhang, J., & Feng, C.-M. (Eds.). (2018). Routledge Handbook of Transport in Asia (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315739618>

¹⁵¹ https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pub_2173_ah_ch1.pdf

concentration of country populations in megacities such as Dhaka in Bangladesh, Manila in the Philippines, and Tokyo in Japan.¹⁵² With this imbalance also comes disparities in access to resources and investment.

British geographer Doreen Massey reminds us that when looking at trade and commerce between nations it is important to recognize cities as nodes within a large, interconnected web of social and economic relations.¹⁵³ Cities are living and changing entities continuously being remade by ideas, social forces, and interventions. Local is not as local as we think—so when tackling localised public transit and road safety issues cities must be contextualised as located within a constantly flowing network that exists beyond their boundaries. It is clear that in terms of transportation within Asia and the Pacific, it is important to approach the issue both at the local and regional level, as well as from a perspective that takes into account both economic and social benefits. Improvements need to take place for transportation that affects the daily lives of those living in urban and rural areas, as well as in the broader networks of relations those areas exist within. Only through this multi-modal approach will economic growth fueled by transit that is sustainable, equitable, and regional be able to take place.

Past UN Action

UNESCAP has a Committee on Transport, which held its first session in October of 2008.¹⁵⁴ This session was held during the first phase—2007 to 2011—of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, which set out priorities for nations in creating an international transport and logistics system for Asia and the Pacific.¹⁵⁵ The main goal of the declaration was to encourage the growth of transportation connections inclined through the Asian Highway Network and Trans-Asian Railway Network. Essentially, further connecting the more economically active coastal port cities of APAC that have been able to benefit from globalised trade with the rest of the region. This is in line with one of UNESCAP's goals of further connection to global supply chains. Most of the funding for the Asian Highway Network, which was given the greenlight by UNESCAP in 1992, comes from countries such as South Korea, China, and Singapore—in addition to organisations such as the Asian Development Bank. These investments intend to increase domestic and international trade, however, enhancing infrastructure quality and overcoming non-physical policy barriers remain key challenges.¹⁵⁶ UNESCAP's transport policy focuses on large-scale regional transportation for economic trade, with the efficiency of transport operations and logistics being seen as key to strengthening Asian economies.

¹⁵² Zhang, J., & Feng, C.-M. (Eds.). (2018). *Routledge Handbook of Transport in Asia* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315739618>

¹⁵³ Massey, D. B., Allen, J., Pile, S., & Open University (Eds.). (1999). *City worlds*. Routledge in association with the Open University.

¹⁵⁴ Committee on Transport, First Session. (2008, October). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/events/committee-transport-first-session>

¹⁵⁵ ESCAP activities to promote transport development of landlocked developing countries in the region. (2009). 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, Astana. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/a/39686.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ Asian Highway Network. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/asian-highway-network>

At a more localised “micro” level, UNESCAP has focused on implementing programs for road safety—working with nations to develop methods of monitoring road traffic deaths, injuries, and crashes.¹⁵⁷ UNESCAP also has prioritised what it calls “inclusive transport,” for communities that are more vulnerable to the lack of government supported transit such as those living in extreme poverty or those with disabilities. UNESCAP states that sustainable and reliable transport infrastructure and services are “not only essential for economic growth...[but] indispensable for a balanced distribution of economic and social benefits.”¹⁵⁸ UNESCAP has created a *Sustainable Urban Transport Index*, or SUTI, to assess urban mobility in urban public transit systems across Asia and the Pacific. This tool has allowed for cities to identify what key policy changes are necessary in their transit systems, including rural connectivity to urban areas and the reduction of road crashes.¹⁵⁹

Looking at how this subtopic aligns with the United Nations SDGs, under Goal 11, Sustainable Cities, 11.2 states that nations should seek to “provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport.” In addition, it also states that “special attention [should be given to] the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.”¹⁶⁰ This broader goal is important when considering the benefits of transport beyond the economic ones emphasised by UNESCAP.

Current Issues

In Asian cities, public transport is the main mode of transportation. When combined with walking and cycling, it accounts for 70% of urban passenger trips.¹⁶¹ Expanding and strengthening public transportation networks within urban centres and with peripheral regions is key to ensuring residents have sufficient access to their workplace work, education, and services. Asian patterns of urban growth are so rapid in speed that governments have often had to “catch-up” with cities in providing adequate transportation.¹⁶² Western modernization rhetoric has supported the construction of massive road corridors in certain countries alongside the destruction of public transportation infrastructure.¹⁶³ Autocentric planning leads only to further congestion, further unchecked urban sprawl, and suburbanization. Rapid urban growth reliant on motorised personal vehicles has caused “clogged and expensive urban cores, dilapidated and deprived suburbs for the poor, and suburbs for the middle classes that rely on auto travel which

157 Safe and Inclusive Transport | ESCAP. (n.d.). <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/safe-and-inclusive-transport#>

158 Safe and Inclusive Transport | ESCAP. (n.d.). <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/safe-and-inclusive-transport#>

159 Environmentally Sustainable Transport. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/environmentally-sustainable-transport>

160 Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. (n.d.). United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

161 Leather, J. (2022, March 25). Asia's Cities Need Quality Public Transport. Asia Development Blog. <https://blogs.adb.org/blog/asia-s-cities-need-quality-public-transport>

162 Pojani, D., & Baar, K. (2021). Enhancing Sustainability and Inclusiveness of Urban Passenger Transport in Asian Cities. UNESCAP, 35.

163 Pojani, D., & Baar, K. (2021). Enhancing Sustainability and Inclusiveness of Urban Passenger Transport in Asian Cities. UNESCAP, 35.

clogs the roads of central cities.”¹⁶⁴

Economic growth through expanding infrastructure cannot come at the cost of equality and the environment. The machines used for this travel on roads—motorbikes, cars, trucks, lorries—contribute extensively to climate change through excessive greenhouse gas emissions. However, in many APAC countries, gasoline powered vehicles are often the only affordable transportation methods accessible to the majority of the population. This will make the transition of phasing out gasoline powered vehicles much more complex, as APAC governments will have to intervene.¹⁶⁵ The Global North increasingly exports second-hand vehicles, which are outdated and polluting, to the Global South, where the health risks as a result of pollution are then felt by local populations. Currently, APAC produces the most greenhouse gases. However, at the scale of per capita emissions, most countries in Asia and the Pacific are emitting less than the Euro-America.¹⁶⁶ However, as APAC continues economic growth and thus increases production and transportation, governments must do so in the most sustainable way possible by decarbonizing transit as networks expand.

Investment in public transit has substantial short-term and long-term impacts on economic productivity.¹⁶⁷ However, increasing investment and then sustaining that investment to follow through with transit alongside further urban growth takes large amounts of capital—capital that local and national governments often have the ability to utilise. Public transportation projects also face bureaucratic frustrations around the world, with interventions such as the Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS), which struggled with political party conflicts and administrative technicalities.¹⁶⁸ However, in spite of these difficulties and lulls of interest in which expressways were prioritised, the BTS serves an average of around 750,000 riders every weekday.¹⁶⁹ Not all countries have the ability to support infrastructure projects such as these with solely domestic investment, and foreign investment—from within the region or otherwise—has been used to accomplish positive transit goals as well as large capital projects.

Case Study: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI, was introduced by China’s president Xi Jinping in 2013 with the goal of opening up transit corridors within the APAC region, the Middle East,

¹⁶⁴ Zhang, J., & Feng, C.-M. (Eds.). (2018). Routledge Handbook of Transport in Asia (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315739618>

¹⁶⁵ Ageing cars are bogging down the battle against climate change. (2021, August 10). UNEP. <http://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/ageing-cars-are-bogging-down-battle-against-climate-change>

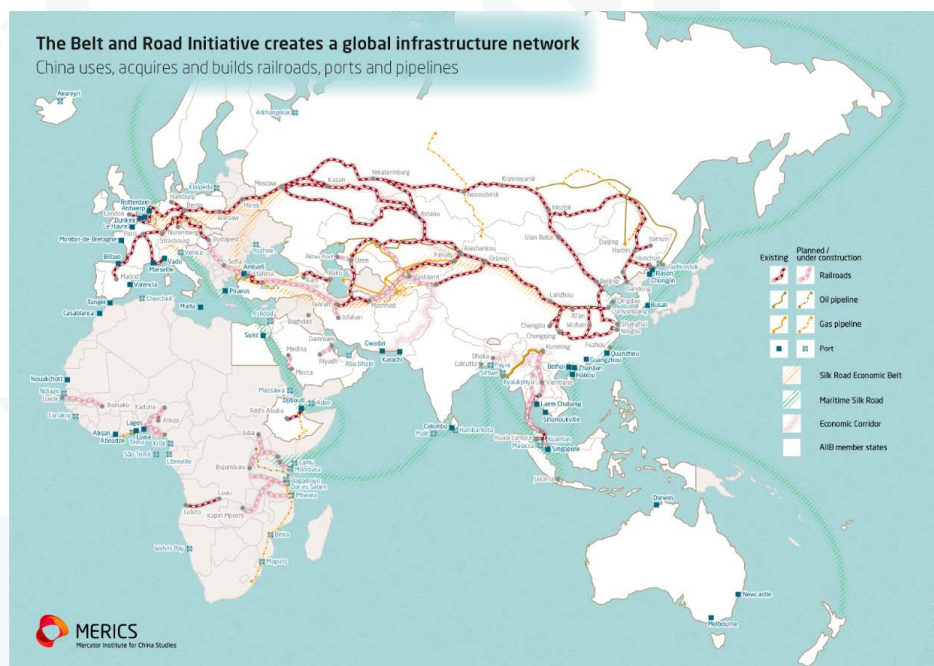
¹⁶⁶ State of the climate. (2021, November 9). UN Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/climate-action/what-we-do/climate-action-note/state-of-the-climate.html>

¹⁶⁷ Pojani, D., & Baar, K. (2021). Enhancing Sustainability and Inclusiveness of Urban Passenger Transport in Asian Cities. UNESCAP, 35.

¹⁶⁸ Unger, D. (1998). Building Social Capital in Thailand: Fibers, Finance and Infrastructure. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁶⁹ Siridhara, S. (n.d.). Sustainable Urban Transit in Bangkok and Impacts of COVID-19 on Mobility. Mahidol University. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/SUTI_and_COVID-19_Impact_Bangkok_0.pdf

and Africa.¹⁷⁰ It follows a “hub-and-spoke” model where China is positioned as the region’s hub, reaching out through large infrastructure projects.¹⁷¹ These projects follow neoliberal free trade and financial integration goals, prioritising domestic goals of Chinese economic growth. However, the cost of this economic growth includes drastic environmental damages and what have become increasingly unbalanced power dynamics between China and the rest of the region. Increasing relations of dependence are being formed between China and less powerful nations, which has caused increasing levels of debt for many.¹⁷² At the same time, UNESCAP proposes that the BRI will have positive impacts on the economy, income, poverty reduction, employment, equity and inclusion.¹⁷³ Regardless, it is important that regional trade and interconnectivity for greater economic growth benefits all of Asia and the Pacific, rather than a select few who have more power.



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James Leather, Chief of Transport for the Asian Development Bank, made the importance of public transport clear when stating that it “is so much more than simply a way to get [around]; it is a key economic driver that can improve the livability of cities across Asia and the Pacific.”¹⁷⁵

170 The Belt and Road Initiative for Seamless Connectivity and Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific Region. (2021). UNESCAP. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/BRI_report.pdf

171 Wong, J. (2022). Racial capitalism with Chinese Characteristics: Analysing the political economy of racialized dispossession and exploitation in Xinjiang. *AfJIEL*, 3, 35.

172 Carmody, P. (2020). Dependence not debt-trap diplomacy. *Area Development and Policy*, 5(1), 23–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2019.1702471>

173 The Belt and Road Initiative for Seamless Connectivity and Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific Region. (2021). UNESCAP. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/BRI_report.pdf

174 Mapping the Belt and Road initiative: This is where we stand. (2018, June 7). Mercator Institute for China Studies. <https://www.merics.org/en/tracker/mapping-belt-and-road-initiative-where-we-stand>

175 Leather, J. (2022, March 25). Asia’s Cities Need Quality Public Transport. Asia Development Blog. <https://blogs.adb.org/blog/asia-s-cities-need-quality-public-transport>

Questions to Consider

Topic A) Advancing Social Development and Equality

UNESCAP's goal of advancing social development and equality will require change in almost all aspects of society—yet delegates should focus on combating traditional views of the workforce that cause income inequities, discrimination and disparity in education, and emotional, mental, or physical violence against the LGBTQ+ community and women that is sometimes state sanctioned. Delegates must contextualise positive goals of social equality with the realities of acceptance in their nations.

Subtopic A) Traditionalism in the Workplace

- What does gender equality broadly look like regarding women's participation in the workforce?
- How have women been able to/prevented from participating in local and national governance?
- Have women and girls been identified as important contributors to your nation's economy?
- How do conservative conceptions of family prevent women from working?
- What barriers does the LGBTQ+ community face in joining the workforce in your nation?

Subtopic B) Diversity in Education

- How are illiteracy and innumeracy rates divided along gender in your nation?
- What does your nation's public educational curriculum include regarding gender and LGBTQ+ equality?
- What supports are in place for LGBTQ+ students in primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions?
- What dangers do women and the LGBTQ+ communities face in educational institutions?
- What factors are preventing women and LGBTQ+ communities from attending schooling?
- How can women be given further opportunities in schooling?

Subtopic C) Safety as a Human Right

- What laws and policies does your nation have/not have regarding the protection of women and the LGBTQ+ community from discrimination and violence?
- How can further protections be put in place?
- What are your nation's political, social, and cultural views on gender-based violence, sexual assault, and child-marriage?
- What has thus far prevented positive changes in this regard, presently and historically? How can these attitudes and practices be altered?
- What are your nation's political, social, and cultural views on gender expression, gender identity, same-sex relations, and same-sex marriage?
- What has thus far prevented positive changes in this regard, presently and historically? How can these attitudes and practices be altered?
- Do women and the LGBTQ+ community have adequate access to and protection within the criminal justice system of your nation?

Topic B) Supporting Healthy Urbanisation

In looking at how UNESCAP can support healthy urbanisation, delegates should look to answer how to ensure their nation's cities continue to grow in a way that prioritises quality of life, access to housing, protection of the environment, and regional connectivity. Delegates should pay special attention to regional interconnectivity for this topic, and what existing alliances would affect goals in economic development. Cities should be viewed as the playing fields on which positive changes can take place—yet also where economic inequities still persist.

Subtopic A) Climate Change and Urban Living

- How has climate change affected your nation so far?
- What actions has it taken, particularly in urban areas?
- What will it do to build climate resilience in crisis-prone areas, rural and urban?
- What will your nation do to protect its low income populations that are often more vulnerable to climate change?
- How can climate change be tackled across Asia and the Pacific through shared knowledge between cities and regions?
- Has sustainability and “green” innovation been considered in economic development in your nation?
- Subtopic B) Adequate and Affordable Housing
- How extensive has your nation's efforts been to provide affordable housing to all?
- What actions have its cities taken to protect, ignore, or harm populations in informal settlements? How can these be improved?
- What ways can access to adequate housing be provided to a larger proportion of the population of your nation's cities?
- How has development for wealthy urbanites influenced housing in your nation?
- To what degree can public housing be utilised effectively in your nation?
- Subtopic C) Transportation and Networks of Commerce
- What public transit initiatives have been taken in your nation's urban centres?
- What does interconnectivity between rural and urban areas look like in your nation?
- How has car-centric planning influenced cities' built environment and economy?
- Where does your nation stand on the BRI?
- What nations does your delegation have the most extensive trade relations with?
- How do these relations affect economic growth, and how can they be influenced by improved transportation?

The dais is excited to see what solutions delegates come up with to create a more equitable, healthy, vibrant, and thriving Asia and the Pacific.

Tips for Research

Well, that was a lot of information! So, how are you going to continue your research and write your position papers? Position papers should always include a general description of your nation and a summary of its feelings towards the topics, a discussion about past events related to the topic and the ways your nation has responded (look for precedent), as well as detail about possible solutions that your nation may seem as viable. When writing them, one must be done for each topic. They can be no more than one page each, not including citations. You want to be as accurate to the perspective of your nation as possible! Make this clear in the position paper so it can be rectified once in committee. When looking for information from beyond the background guide, ensure that you are looking at reputable sources such as scholarly articles or government organisation web pages.

If you have any specific questions about information that should be included or for clarification about anything in the background guide, please feel free to email your director, Finn, at UNESCAP@gmail.com!

Key Resources

The UNESCAP website—under the “Our Work” tab different UNESCAP committees and their respective focuses can be found, under the “Knowledge Products” tab you can find UNESCAP reports, documents, and publications relating to varying topics.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (n.d.). ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/home>

The UN Women website’s “Resources” tab has many useful publications.

Resources. (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/resources>

The UN Habitat website has many important documents on cities and urbanisation.

Data and Analytics. (n.d.). UN Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/knowledge/data-and-analytics>

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