

## Asia-Pacific countries pledge women, girl's empowerment at high-level UN forum

At a high-level United Nations regional consultation in Bangkok, senior government representatives from Asia and the Pacific committed to empower rural women and girls, to lift their standard of living and combat structural barriers impacting their human rights.

"If we do not take concrete actions we [risk leaving rural women and girls behind](#)," said. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)) in her opening statement at the regional consultation for the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) on Friday.

Achieving adequate living standards, women's economic empowerment, land rights, food security, health care, quality education, resilience and preparedness to deal with disasters and conflicts are among the main challenges rural women and girls in Asia-Pacific confront.

The High-Level meeting, *Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls*, adopted a set of recommendations that will feed into CSW62 to be held at the UN Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 March 2018.

"Development which does not empower rural women and girls is antithetical to a rights-based approach enshrined in the 2030 Agenda," Ms. Akhtar stressed.

"We must work together to create an enabling environment which supports women and girls in rural areas of Asia and the Pacific to unfold their full potential as powerful agents of change," she added.

The recommendations reflect the urgent need to strengthen normative and legal frameworks, and ensure coordinated action for their social and economic empowerment and meaningful participation in society.

Delegates further highlighted the need for improved availability of data and gender statistics to enhance evidence-based policy making.

"The 2030 Agenda is a commitment to leaving no-one behind," Miwa Kato, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific for the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women ([UN Women](#)), reminded the participants, adding that the difficulties women face are "partly due to negative gender stereotypes, harmful practices and structural inequalities that must be addressed."

For her part, Kundhavi Kadiresan, Regional Representative of the UN's [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), underscored, "Evidence shows that if

rural women had access to, and control of, the same resources as men, their contributions would increase food production by as much as four per cent," benefiting the entire family.