

Notes for Tuesday 14 February

- Thank you for that introduction and for the opportunity to be a part of this excellent panel, I've really enjoyed the interventions from my fellow panelists so far and I hope my presentation today will substantively contribute to the rich discussions we've been having over the past couple of days
- When we were discussing this panel topic within the IWRAW Asia Pacific team, one thing that seemed crucial to us was to recognize at the outset, and I think this has been teased out to varying extents across the sessions yesterday and today, is that while many of us here today have overlapping interests, our specific understandings of what 'development' means greatly colors not only our methods of realizing development but our goals as to what the purpose of development should be - this was really well articulated by Ms. Tripura in the panel before this, in terms of considering our positionalities as we engage in these definitional exercises
- IWRAW Asia Pacific's view of development is shaped by our position in the landscape of human rights, particularly women's human rights
- We are a Global South feminist organisation based in Kuala Lumpur that has worked towards the realisation

of women's human rights since 1993, mainly through the lens of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

- The work that we do is framed by the belief that the pursuit of gender equality should be prioritised and localised
- This is done through meaningful and reciprocal communication channels that have to be forged to facilitate vital exchange between local and global levels on current information on the progress on gender equality worldwide
- In our commitment to creating a platform that is both living and growing; that is organic, dynamic and symbiotic with other existing processes, we established the Global South Women's Forum (GSWF) on Sustainable Development, an annual forum that links local experiences to global processes
- We began to mobilise Global South WROs around the 2030 Agenda. The first GSWF was held in Cambodia in 2016, the second in Rwanda in 2017, the third in Jordan in 2018 and the fourth in Malaysia in 2019.
- The pandemic posed a challenge for IWRAW Asia Pacific in terms of continuing to hold this space for our partners to gather. We decided to move the Forum online in 2020, focusing first on the theme of macroeconomic justice, followed by environmental

justice, and most recently hosting a Global Tribunal of Women Workers with testimonies from 73 women workers across the Global South, representing 25 countries and over 10 sectors.

- The Forums brought together women from different parts of the Global South who addressed the conceptualisation of sustainable development as a women's rights issue and strategised to work collectively
- So this is to say that when IWRAW AP speaks of development, we are focused on in a very practical way, our role in moving the conversation away from growth-centric development that prioritizes accumulation of capital and the exploitation of people, land, and non-human beings at the expense of human rights, sustainability, and intergenerational solidarity
- Instead, as we look to rights-based or, as Ms. Navanita alluded to at the close of the previous panel, care-based/care-centric models of development, we recognize that, for example, universal health care and guaranteed free education, housing, and the right to a healthy environment are not only human rights aims but must be the ends around which development is organized - what and how labour is mobilised, infrastructure is developed, goods are produced, and services around provided must be aimed towards delivering on these rights.

- Moreover, it is not enough to simply name these rights as the goal of development but also critically assess the means of achieving those goals from a gender and human rights perspective.
- For example, if education and health services are delivered through private-public-partnerships, there are years of work by feminists available that demonstrate these agreements exacerbate inequality and leave governments (i.e., the public, and most often those most marginalized) holding the greatest financial and social liabilities, while the private sector profits.
- Likewise, development dependent on loans from IFIs and private or bilateral creditors with requirements to cut public services and prioritise repayment, will not contribute to the enjoyment of human rights. Development models must prioritise structural change at the global, regional and national level, including debt cancellation and an end to the dogma of austerity (among other things).
- The emphasis on physical infrastructure development is complicated by its potential for kickbacks and corruption, feeding increasing debt (which in turn can trigger austerity), and resulting in negative impacts on things like the environment and internal displacement etc

- The assumption that gender equality is an extraneous and incidental outcome of development must be discarded as outdated and damaging; gender equality must instead be an organizing principle in planning for development
- Development that does not foreground the experiences, needs, and contributions of the most marginalized in society will simply replicate the systemic discriminations that reify exclusionary policies and practices, denying large swathes of people their right to social, political, and economic resources
- To name a few regional organizations that are doing good work in this area: Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) - a network of feminist organisations and individual activists in Asia and the Pacific that has actively worked towards advancing women's human rights and Development Justice for over 30 years, and of course Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) - promoting and defending indigenous peoples' rights and human rights and articulating issues of relevance to indigenous peoples.
- IWRAW AP works closely with women's rights groups across the Global South to to advocate for the

integration of CEDAW's framework for women's economic justice into the sustainable development agendas

- The strategizing that occurs in these spaces recognizes that development that is centered around chasing ceaseless increases of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that does not challenge states' unfettered sovereignty to dispose of natural resources is development that is rooted in exploitation and oppression
- Comprehensive progress must be inextricable from the economic, environmental, political, and sociocultural well-being of not just a population as a whole but the individuals that comprise it as well
- Such a system that is oriented towards human rights should prioritize issues like housing for all, universal healthcare, and guaranteed free education; it bears repeating that such things should not simply be 'happy accidents' of national policies and planning but rather the primary purpose of these strategies, in order to ensure the enjoyment of human rights for everyone, and not just those with the privilege of shaping the conversation at the highest levels
- I'll also say again that there is a strong need to question the mechanisms and policies being used to deliver services like education and healthcare, and

how things like privatization or public/private partnerships result in processes and procedures that are detrimental if not altogether inaccessible to many marginalized groups

- Those who are best positioned to identify the gaps in the system are typically those who have been pushed out by those gaps, which is why IWRAW AP strongly supports, not only in our own work but that of our partners and collaborators as well, the practice of meaningful participation - we need to be accountable to people, and we need that accountability to be democratized if we are to make it so that people and planet benefit first
- Reflecting on both Yoke Ling and Dr. Debapriya's points during their presentations about implementation being what is lacking, and accountability being dependent on clearly defined and measurable/identifiable outcomes, I'd like to close my presentation with a call to reexamine potential of the Convention on the Right to Development
 - ◆ The Convention on the R2D would impose an obligation on States, individually and collectively, to enable a 'global environment conducive to just, equitable and participatory development'. This focus on a 'global conducive environment' puts the spotlight on macro structures enabling or hindering development, creating a fertile ground

to seed feminists' claims of structural change for economic justice in ways that other development agendas lack.

→ Strengthening its specificity and concretizing its demands would help ensure that the convention's potential to act as a transformative tool as we reshape the global economic and financial architecture in favour of a human-rights-centered, feminist vision of development.