



Christian Conference of Asia

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CCA Statement on International Women's Day–2022 'Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow'

International Women's Day is commemorated on 8 March every year and is an important opportunity to highlight and recognise the invaluable contributions of women and girls around the world. The theme for the year 2022 is 'Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow,' focusing especially on the unique role and leadership of women in the fight against climate change and in developing and furthering climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response strategies for a more sustainable future.

Gender inequality and climate change are closely linked. Tackling gender inequality is critical for climate adaptation. Climate change has severe and lasting consequences, affecting not only the environment, but also the economic and social development of individuals and communities. Climate change is a phenomenon that impacts all human beings with calamitous consequences but worsens the disparities for the most vulnerable among us. A growing body of evidence suggests that climate change has a differentiated impact on women and men due to structural inequalities and the gendered division of labour and is also the greatest contributor to hunger, malnutrition, disease, and displacement. Women and girls may bear the brunt of environmental, economic, and social shocks as they face greater health and safety risks due to compromises on water, food, and sanitation, and their care burdens increase in the face of dwindling and scarce resources.

Given especially the post-COVID-19 pandemic context, a larger number of people are likely to face hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. The dependence of women on natural resources, which face the most direct impacts due to climate change, also place them in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. Women in Asia's rural areas are highly dependent on natural resources for their energy needs and livelihoods, but their ability to obtain these indispensable resources is reduced; thus affecting not only their material welfare but also their livelihood security, resilience, health, and dignity. Women, who tend to be responsible for water management at the household level, face the far-reaching effects of the erratic availability of freshwater, either due to floods or droughts. Additionally, climate change compounds the challenges of mobility and migration, with the past few decades giving rise to the emergence of climate refugees in the Asia region, who are displaced due to severe coastal weather events, the erosion of shorelines, and flooding.

The task at hand is to continue to boost the adaptive capacities of women and their communities, and promote the full participation of women and girls in all decision-making and action pertaining to climate change. The ever-worsening situation warrants us to examine current models of unchecked economic growth that maximise profit over wellbeing and result in the benefit of a few while relegating the vulnerable to lives of very poor quality. There is an immediate need for gender-sensitive responses to the effects of climate change. Women and girls are powerful and effective agents of change in the pushback against climate change. At the grassroots, they tend to be the first to adopt green technologies and develop resilience strategies, promoting sustainable means of production and distribution of resources, and are also usually engaged in those sectors that have the least carbon footprint or greenhouse gas emissions.

On the occasion of International Women's Day-2022, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) calls for the full eradication of all forms of gender-based inequalities as an integral component of effective climate action. The Church in Asia is called to support strategies of mitigation and adaptation that effectively and systematically address the gender-specific impacts of climate change. Modern models of extractivism and a predatory relationship between humans and the environment that undermine the agency of women directly contravene this divine mandate.

Our lives are intimately connected to our ecosystems, and as custodians of the planet, our common home, we cannot ignore the interdependence and interconnectedness of all life. It is the imperative of the Church in Asia to continue to raise its prophetic voice by highlighting the gendered impacts of climate change and ensuring the empowerment of women as an essential pre-condition for the promotion of sustainable development. The key involvement of women and girls in sustainability initiatives around the world heralds more effective climate action and a sustainable future for all.

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