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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

Review of progress towards the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the key actions for its further implementation and the recommendations of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

In the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development people were placed at the centre of sustainable development, and individuals' rights and human dignity were recognized. With its adoption in 1994, States Members of the United Nations set out an ambitious agenda to deliver inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all. In 2013, members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific came together for the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference to discuss areas of progress regarding the Programme of Action and areas for improvement, particularly during the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals. In the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, adopted at the 2013 Conference, areas of region-specific progress regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action were outlined and policy directions and priority actions were highlighted.

Few factors shape the future global development agenda as fundamentally as changes in the size, structure and spatial distribution of the population. The present document contains a review of recent changes and progress made in implementing the Ministerial Declaration in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

* ESCAP/APPC/2018/L.1.

I. Introduction

1. In the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, it is emphasized that people are at the centre of sustainable development. Sustainable development requires that the interrelationships between population, resources, the environment, and social and economic development be fully recognized, properly managed and brought into a harmonious and dynamic balance. Population dynamics are both drivers and outcomes of sustainable development at the local, national, regional and global levels. Policies should meet the needs of current generations without compromising those of future generations.

2. The full recognition of human rights is foundational to sustainable development for all. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. Population dynamics result from individual choices and opportunities, particularly the right to freely and responsibly decide the number and spacing of children.

3. The Asia-Pacific region is home to 60 per cent of the world's population. It is undergoing a historic transition from youthful, rural populations to older, more urban populations. Regional population size, structure and dynamics influence and are influenced by economic and social development, climate change, natural disasters and conflicts. To ensure sustainable development, it is important to understand the interactions between population dynamics and these factors.

A. The International Conference on Population and Development and its follow-up and review

4. In 1994, States Members of the United Nations gathered at the International Conference on Population and Development to recognize that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. The Programme of Action has a people-centred and rights-based approach, in order to deliver inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all. The Programme of Action was comprehensive and forward-looking in recognizing that reproductive health and rights, as well as women's empowerment and gender equality, are cornerstones of population and development programmes.

5. In its resolution 65/234 of 20 December 2010, the General Assembly extended the Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation beyond 2014 and called upon the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in consultation with States Members of the United Nations and in cooperation with all relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations, to undertake an operational review of the implementation of the Programme of Action. The General Assembly also decided to convene a special session during its sixty-ninth session to assess the Programme of Action's implementation status and to renew political support for the actions required to fully achieve its goals and objectives. At that session, Member States reaffirmed the centrality of the Programme of Action and stated that the principles and objectives contained in it should be fully integrated into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the 2030 Agenda, the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Programme of Action, and the follow-up to those conferences were reaffirmed.

6. In its resolution 68/6 of 23 May 2012, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) requested that the Executive Secretary convene the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in

Bangkok in 2013 with a view to utilizing the Conference as an intergovernmental platform for the Asia-Pacific preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2014. The Commission on Population and Development, at its forty-seventh session, in 2014, conducted an assessment of the Programme of Action's implementation status. In its resolution on the subject, the Commission on Population and Development stated that the outcome documents of the regional conferences provided region-specific guidance on population and development beyond 2014.

7. In its decision 2017/101, the Commission on Population and Development decided that the special theme for its fifty-second session, in 2019, would be "Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". In view of this decision and the regional outcomes of the 20-year review of the Programme of Action, in 2018, the regional commissions, in collaboration with UNFPA and other partners, are undertaking reviews of progress regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action, its key actions and regional outcomes. These will be used to inform the 25-year review of the Programme of Action at the global level by the Commission on Population and Development, in 2019.

B. Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference

8. Since the adoption of the Programme of Action, ESCAP, in partnership with UNFPA, has supported its member States in reviewing and following up on the Programme of Action.

9. In the regional 20-year review, in 2013, ESCAP member States adopted the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development at the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference. The Ministerial Declaration contains an outline of the progress made regarding the Programme of Action and highlights of policy directions to ensure the implementation of priority actions before the seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, scheduled for 2023, and in the context of the 2030 Agenda.¹

10. The Ministerial Declaration also contains a request that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with UNFPA, conduct a regional intergovernmental review meeting in 2018 of the implementation of the Programme of Action, the key actions for its further implementation and the recommendations of the Declaration, and submit the outcome to the Commission at its seventy-fifth session.

11. The present document provides an overview of progress in implementing the Ministerial Declaration and highlights of emerging issues.

II. Priority actions

A. Poverty eradication and employment

12. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States committed to accord the highest priority to the eradication of poverty and of its root causes, by providing enabling environments, increasing access to decent and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration and protection. In addition, the 2030 Agenda is a clarion call to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in

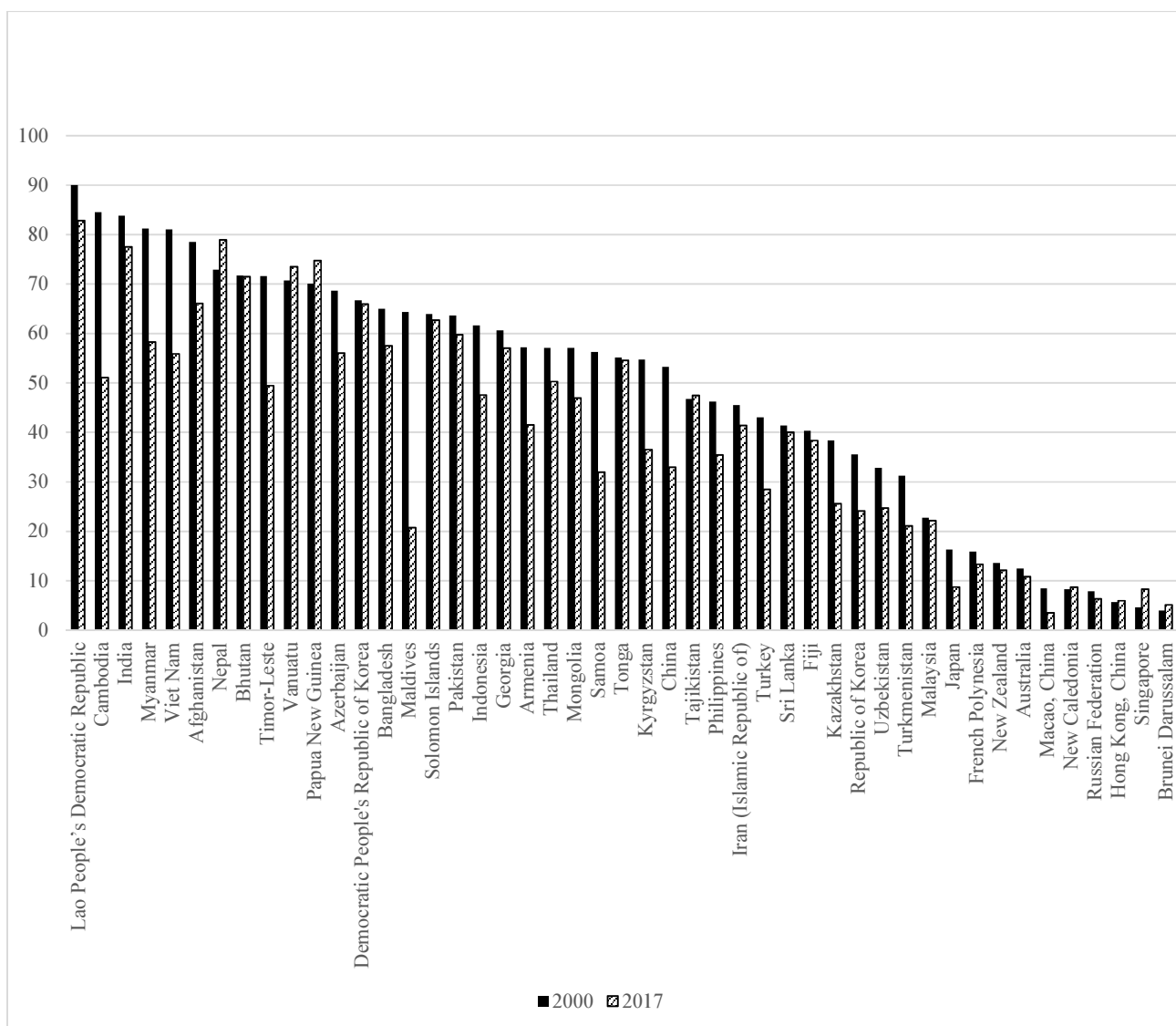
¹ E/ESCAP/70/16, section I, para. 207.

dignity, equality and in a healthy environment to achieve sustainable development for all.

13. It is well documented that the Asia-Pacific region has reduced absolute poverty. In the era of the Millennium Development Goals, most countries achieved the Goal to halve poverty. However, the Ministerial Declaration and the 2030 Agenda have more ambitious targets. While absolute poverty could be reduced by reaching population groups just below the poverty line, eradicating absolute poverty requires reaching the groups that are far below it. Much needs to be done to provide enabling environments, increase access to decent and productive employment, and eradicate working poverty and vulnerable employment.

14. Many people in Asia and the Pacific are in informal or vulnerable employment. Although the region's share of workers in vulnerable employment decreased between 2000 and 2017, for many countries this group still represents more than half of total employment (figure 1). The informal sector is characterized by low and unstable incomes and a lack of social protection, particularly unemployment insurance and pensions. Informal work is often hazardous, exposing workers to higher health and accident risks due to the absence of accident insurance.

Figure I
Share of vulnerable employment in total employment
 (Percentage)



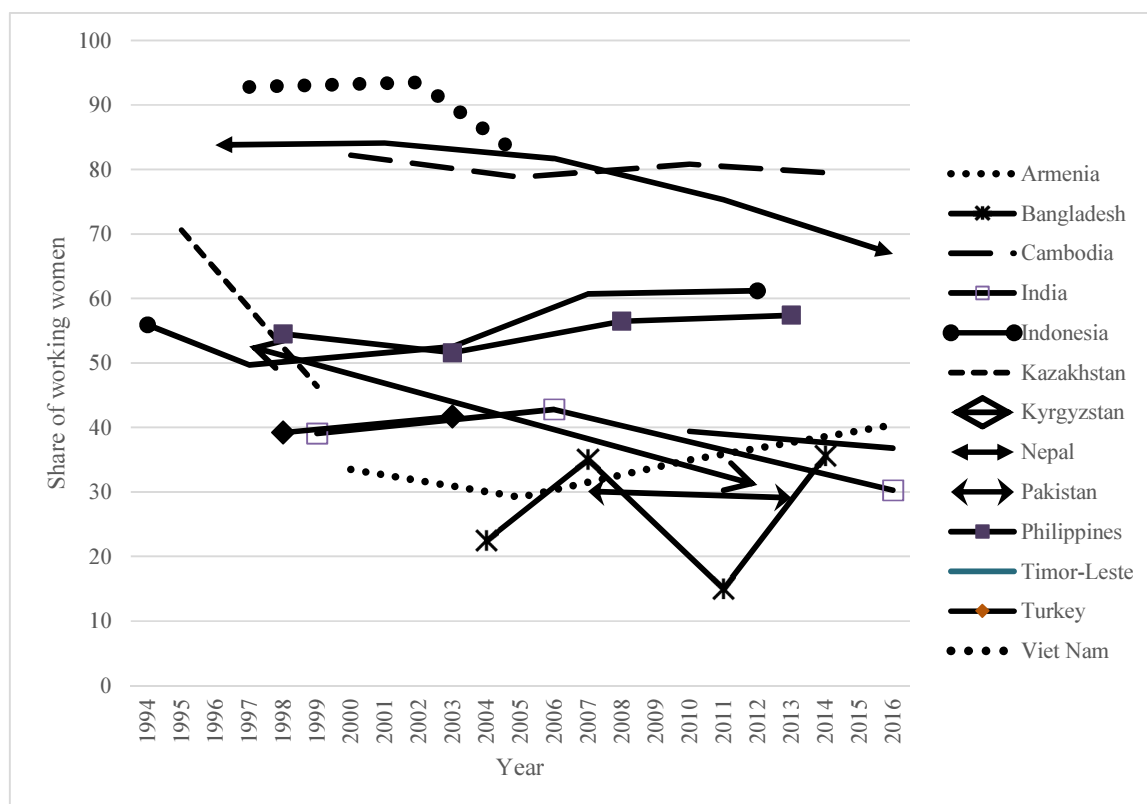
Source: ESCAP calculations based on World Bank, World Development Indicators database. Available at <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.EMP.VULN.ZS&country=#> (accessed on 21 June 2018).

15. Barriers to women’s employment and to the types of employment women can access are widespread. Women’s labour force participation has stagnated in South-East Asia and fallen in South Asia.² Labour force participation can depend on access to education and childcare and on cultural barriers. Women with access to tertiary education are more likely to do professional work, while those with limited access tend to be less active in the labour market. Women in the latter group are more likely to engage in agricultural and manual work, which typically pay less than professional work but have a high labour force participation rate (figure II). Explanations for women’s labour force participation can be complex. In India, for example,

² International Labour Organization (ILO), “Women in Asia: high contribution, little rewards”, 1 March 2017.

women’s labour force participation fell despite strong economic growth. This was in part due to job creation in sectors not favourable to female workers and a rise in overall household income, which led to a change in preferences, whereby women could “afford” not to work, in line with and reinforcing gender norms.³ Providing enabling environments for women in the labour force also includes setting up childcare facilities and creating a positive, supportive and flexible work environment that allows women to better balance work and family responsibilities.

Figure II
Change in female labour force participation rate
 (Percentage)



Source: United States of America, Agency for International Development, Demographic and Health Survey Program STATcompiler. Available at www.statcompiler.com/en/ (accessed on 16 June 2018).

B. Health

16. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States made commitments to adopt appropriate policies and programmes to achieve universal health coverage and to increase the availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability, quality and comprehensiveness of health-care services and facilities. Health and well-being for all feature prominently in the 2030 Agenda.

17. Governments in the region have made efforts with regard to universal access to health services, with many countries providing essential health-care services to more than two thirds of their population. Several countries provide basic health care free of charge, whereas others provide nearly universal

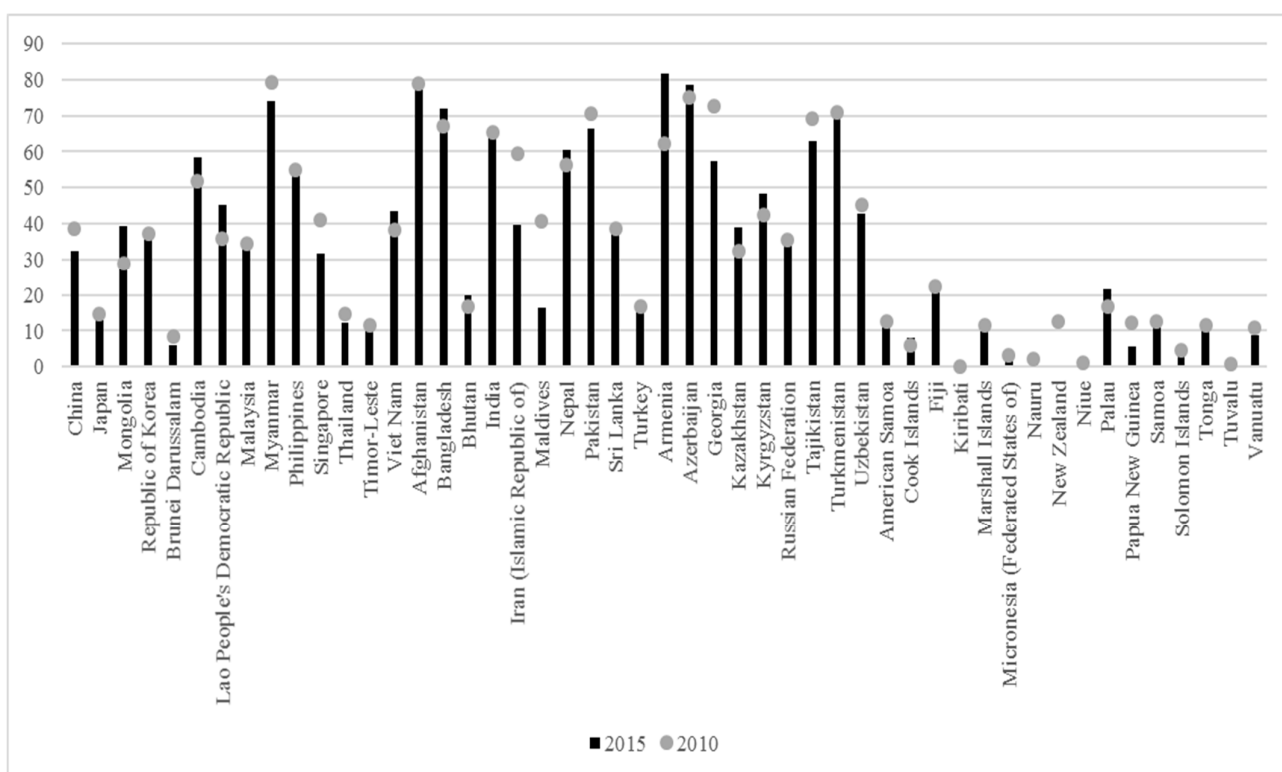
³ Sher Verick, “Women’s labour force participation in India: why is it so low?” (New Delhi, ILO, 2014).

coverage through low-cost public health insurance, such as Thailand. Yet challenges persist. In some countries, more than half of the population is still not covered by essential health services.

18. The affordability of health-care services has also improved in many countries, reflected in a reduction in out-of-pocket expenditures as a percentage of total health expenditures (figure III). However, elsewhere, out-of-pocket spending has increased despite already relatively high levels.

19. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran used to have high out-of-pocket expenditures despite high public health spending and publicly provided health services. The Government began health sector reforms in 2014. This included measures such as the reduction of co-payments for in-patient treatment and the financial protection of poor patients with incurable or special diseases.⁴ These improvements increased the use of public hospitals over private ones, which caused out-of-pocket expenditures to fall.

Figure III
Out-of-pocket health expenditures out of total health expenditures in Asia and the Pacific
 (Percentage)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on World Health Organization (WHO), “Out-of-pocket expenditure as a percentage of current health expenditure”, Global Health Observatory data. Available at www.who.int/gho/health_financing/out_of_pocket_spending/en/ (accessed 6 June 2018).

20. Member States have been working to combat communicable and non-communicable diseases. The Asia-Pacific region has many of the world’s tuberculosis high-burden countries, with India and Indonesia alone accounting

⁴ Abbas Assari Arani and others, “Iran’s health reform plan: measuring changes in equity indices”, *Iranian Journal of Public Health*, vol. 47, No. 3 (March 2018).

for 37 per cent of the global tuberculosis burden.⁵ Tuberculosis is the ninth leading cause of death internationally.⁶ Drug-resistant and multidrug-resistant tuberculosis are of growing concern in the region and worldwide. Yet there has been progress. From 1990 to 2014, the prevalence rate of tuberculosis for the region fell by 46 per cent, from 368 to 198 per 100,000 inhabitants.⁷

C. Sexual and reproductive health, services and rights

21. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States committed to universal access to comprehensive and integrated quality sexual and reproductive health services, to enhance and respect reproductive rights, to reduce maternal mortality, to integrate gender-based violence responses into all sexual and reproductive health services, and to promote, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls, and ensure the human rights of women and girls receive attention in humanitarian crisis situations. Many of these aims have since been enshrined in Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5.

22. Since 2010, fertility rates have fallen in three of five subregions, with slight increases occurring in East and North-East Asia and North and Central Asia.⁸ The adolescent fertility rate has continued to decline in almost all surveyed countries. This is most likely related to an increase in contraceptive prevalence and demand satisfied by modern contraceptive methods, since 2010, as well as a reduction in unmet needs (figure IV). Overall, the region has made great strides towards its sexual and reproductive health goals.

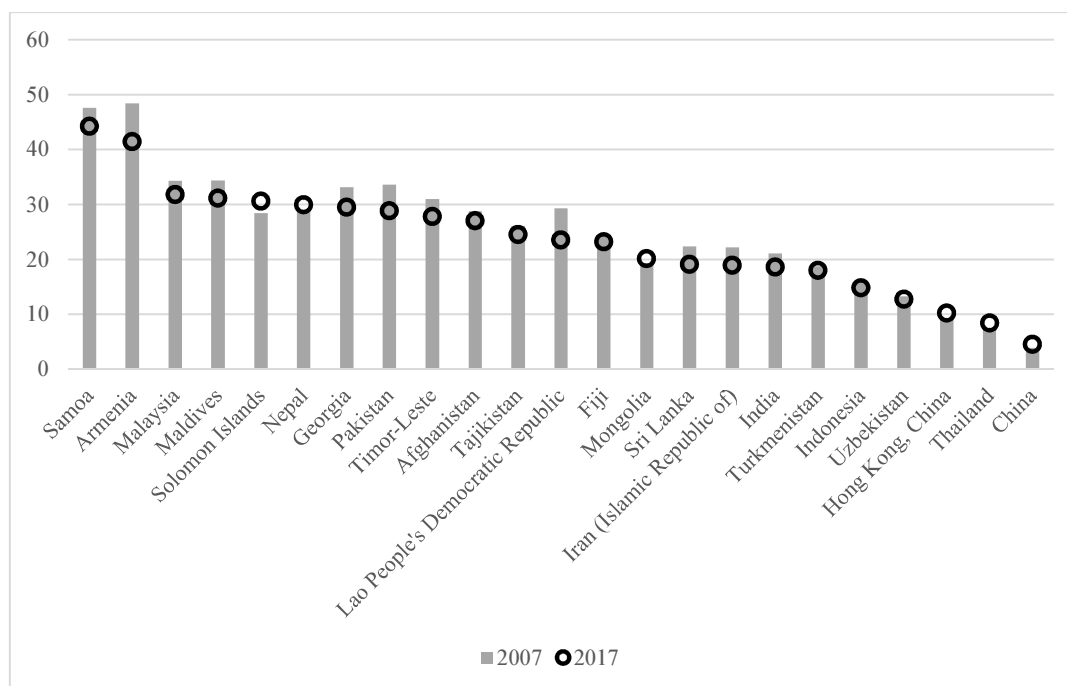
⁵ Dinesh C. Sharma, “New plan to end tuberculosis in South and Southeast Asia”, *The Lancet*, vol. 389, No. 10075 (March 2017).

⁶ WHO, *Global Tuberculosis Report 2017* (Geneva, 2017).

⁷ ESCAP Online Statistical Database. Available at http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/ (accessed on 26 July 2018).

⁸ Ibid.

Figure IV
Unmet needs for family planning, modern methods
 (Percentage)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Estimates and projections of family planning indicators 2018. Available at www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/family-planning/cp_model.shtml (accessed 21 June 2018).

23. Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights is a core component of the Programme of Action and its human rights approach. While many countries in the region have progressed in this area, disparities in access still exist, particularly between rural and urban areas and income groups. The gaps need to be closed to ensure that all women can exercise their reproductive rights, regardless of circumstance.

24. Since 2013, maternal mortality rates have decreased or stabilized in every country in the region. However, as up to one third of global maternal deaths still occur in South Asia, improvements need to be made to further lower this rate. Targeting those living in rural areas and below the poverty line, as well as pregnancies among adolescents and girls under the age of 15, will be crucial, as the maternal mortality rates of these groups are higher.⁹ Reducing maternal mortality also requires ensuring access to voluntary family planning to avoid unintended pregnancies.

25. Between 2010 and 2015, maternal care improved across the region. This includes the number of pregnant women attending the recommended minimum four antenatal care visits and the number who had assistance during delivery from a skilled birth attendant.¹⁰ These factors are widely known to improve maternal outcomes. However, as with previous indicators, disparities

⁹ WHO, “Maternal mortality”, 16 February 2018.

¹⁰ ESCAP Online Statistical Database. Available at http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/#data/ (accessed on 26 June 2018).

still exist for women in the lowest wealth quintiles and those living in rural areas.

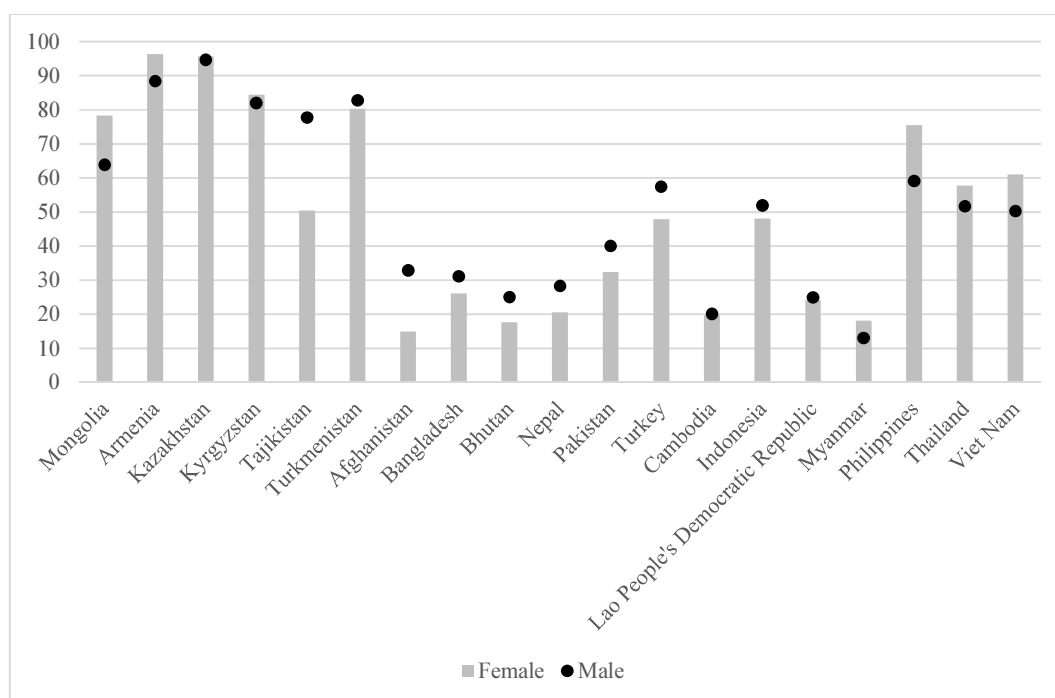
D. Education

26. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States committed to ensure the right of everyone to education and to improve access to education at various levels for all groups. As outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4, education is fundamental to realizing population and development goals, and preparation of youth for the transition from school to the labour force is an important way to reduce poverty.

27. Children and youth who enrol in school may later drop out due to poverty, education costs and the need to work to contribute to family finances. The last factor is most noticeable in secondary school, when students reach an age when they are able to work and may face family pressure to do so. The lack of a secondary education can have important ramifications for poverty, as it is an obstacle to further education and better employment opportunities.

28. There is considerable variation across the region regarding gender differences in secondary education completion (figure V). In South and South-West Asia, more boys than girls complete secondary education. This gap is particularly significant in Afghanistan, where the secondary education completion rate of boys is more than twice that of girls. In other countries, including Mongolia, Myanmar and the Philippines, girls are more likely than boys to graduate from secondary school. Policies should address these barriers and challenges, to ensure that all youth have an equal opportunity to access quality education.

Figure V
Young people aged 3–5 years older than the age of upper secondary graduation who have completed secondary education, latest available year (Percentage)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on United Nations Children’s Fund, Global databases, 2017. Available at <https://data.unicef.org/> (accessed on 1 December 2017).

29. Participation in tertiary education has improved in many countries in the region. Between 2010 and 2015, some of the largest increases were seen in China and Brunei Darussalam, where tertiary enrolment rates almost doubled. During this period, however, tertiary enrolment fell in some other countries.

E. Gender equality

30. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States committed to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment through gender mainstreaming, by strengthening legal frameworks to end gender discrimination, ensuring policies and programmes are in place to eliminate violence against women and girls and other harmful practices and encouraging women in leadership, and through the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data to inform policies. Sustainable Development Goal 5 contains a call for Member States to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

31. Empowering women entails improving their economic status, power and agency by enhancing their participation in the labour force and ensuring equal opportunities for economic and political leadership and equal access to education, health services, economic resources, financial services, technology and natural assets. It also involves increasing women's ownership of and rights to use and control land and property. Gender equality requires the creation of safe and inclusive societies for women and girls by eradicating violence and discrimination. Despite notable progress, women in the region continue to face discriminatory policies and socioeconomic and cultural barriers, as well as serious threats to their security that violate their basic rights and constrain their capacities.

32. Decent jobs facilitate social integration through economic empowerment and having a voice in the workplace and the community. Persistent exclusion of certain groups from decent jobs, however, undermines social justice and contributes to rising inequality. Gender is one of the most significant factors in determining inequality in access to full-time employment, with women less likely than men to work. Across 33 countries in the region, the odds of a woman being employed on a full-time basis are 21 per cent lower compared to those of a man, while for a woman with children they are 28 per cent lower.¹¹ Young women not in education, employment or training consistently outnumber men, implying widespread barriers to labour market participation. Women also have less access to social protection and systematically earn less for work of equal value.

33. With respect to participation in decision-making and leadership, it will take at least 14 years for women to equal 30 per cent of parliamentary representatives across the region and 30 years to achieve full gender parity in parliamentary representation. In some parts of the region, the projected time frames are even longer. For example, 60 years will be required to achieve gender parity in Pacific parliaments and 33 years in South Asian parliaments.¹²

34. Violence against women and girls is a severe manifestation of gender inequality, threatening the health, safety, freedom, and at times the very survival of women and their families. Reporting on violence is constrained by

¹¹ ESCAP, *Inequality of Opportunity in Asia and the Pacific: Decent Work* (ST/ESCAP/2822).

¹² ESCAP, *Pathways to Influence: The SDGs and Women's Transformative Leadership in Asia and the Pacific* (forthcoming).

stigma, shame, restricted access to justice and limited service provision. Available data from across the region show little change in the proportion of women suffering physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months – with more than a quarter of women in several countries reporting such violence.¹³ Violence has tremendous costs, from greater health-care and legal expenses to losses in productivity, which affect national budgets and overall socioeconomic development. In Cambodia, one third of women who experience violence lose an average of three paid work days.¹⁴ Women who are exposed to violence earn 35 per cent less than women who do not. In Viet Nam, lost productivity and opportunity costs associated with such violence represent up to 3 per cent of gross domestic product.¹⁵

F. Adolescents and young people

35. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States made several commitments to improve the livelihood of adolescents and youth, including ensuring the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health as well as respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and addressing youth unemployment and the participation of youth in decision-making. The rights of youth and adolescents are cross-cutting themes in the 2030 Agenda, and they are identified as agents of change who are vulnerable, need empowerment and require support in finding high-quality education, employment, decent work and health services.

36. The Asia-Pacific region displays significant diversity regarding the age distribution of its population. Although most countries are moving from youthful populations associated with relatively high levels of fertility and mortality to older populations associated with lower levels of fertility, there are some countries with very youthful populations. A major challenge of the demographic transition is to successfully reap its dividend. This refers to the increase in economic growth and per capita income arising from a larger proportion of workers to dependents. It is contingent on investing in young people, girls' education, and in child and maternal health.

37. The relative sizes of and changes in youth populations vary greatly across the region. The total number of youth aged 15–19 in Asia and the Pacific remained almost constant between 2000 and 2015 at approximately 60 per cent of the global youth population. There has been an increase of 14.5 per cent in those aged 20–24 in the region due to the dynamics of South and South-West Asia. The youth bulge is now moving to the older age segment, and a decline is projected for those aged 15–19.¹⁶

38. In 2000, all subregions had more youth aged 15–19. However, by 2015, the only subregion where this was still the case was South and South-West Asia, where the crude birth rate remained 20 per 1,000 inhabitants. The largest declines in youth populations were seen in Georgia, Japan and the Russian Federation, whose population aged 15 to 19 in 2015 was 52 per cent of the

¹³ ESCAP Online Statistical Database. Available at http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/ (accessed on 4 August 2017).

¹⁴ Cambodia, WHO and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Cambodia* (2015).

¹⁵ UN-Women, *The Costs of Violence: Understanding the Costs of Violence against Women and Girls and its Responses – Selected Findings and Lessons Learned from Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 2013).

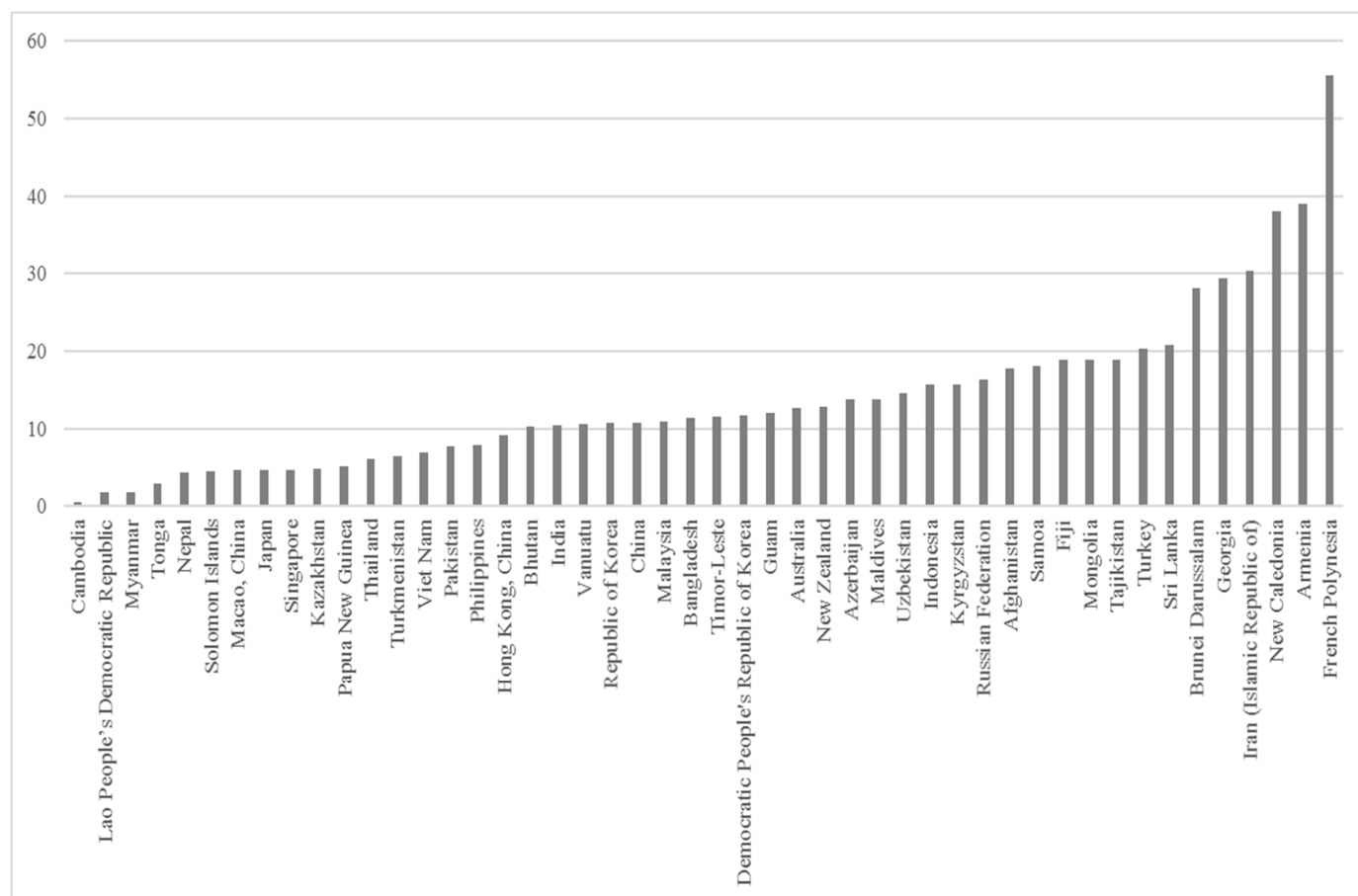
¹⁶ ESCAP, “2016 ESCAP population data sheet” (Bangkok, 2016).

figure for 2000. The highest increases occurred in Afghanistan and Timor-Leste, where youth populations have risen by more than 80 per cent.

39. The demographic dividend phase, where the working-age population grows faster than the dependent population, has ended in most countries, while those still able to benefit must act quickly. In the former category, countries like Thailand and Viet Nam will require higher productivity from those entering the labour force, and labour-saving technologies and the attributes of the fourth industrial revolution, such as artificial intelligence, will need to play a significant role. In the latter category, which includes most countries in South Asia, strategies are needed to enhance educational and skill levels to increase per capita income, while absorbing the rise in entrants to the labour market and providing decent jobs and investments in social protection.

40. Youth employment is a major concern. At 10.8 per cent, Asia and the Pacific overall has a youth unemployment rate below the world average (12.8 per cent). However, this figure masks large differences between countries (figure VI). North and Central Asia has a high youth unemployment rate, at 14.9 per cent. This subregion has countries undergoing rapid population ageing, so youth unemployment must be urgently addressed, particularly as youth populations can have rates of unemployment up to eight times higher than those of adults.

Figure VI
Youth unemployment in Asia and the Pacific, 2017
 (Percentage)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/?indicator=8.5.2> (accessed on 6 June 2018).

41. Entry of youth into the workforce is complex. Many individuals are underemployed, often in informal, vulnerable, low-paid jobs with little or no social protection. Female youth unemployment in East and North-East Asia is about 20 per cent less than for male youth; in South and South-West Asia the reverse is true. Of greatest concern are high rates of youth who are not in employment, education or training. Armenia and Pakistan have the highest rates of such youth in the Asia-Pacific region, at 36.6 and 30.4 per cent respectively; however, in Pakistan, the difference between young women and men is much larger; the rates are 53.6 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively. Social attitudes that do not value educated women or promote their participation in the labour force contribute to the exclusion of female youth.^{17,18}

G. Ageing

42. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States committed to adopt national action plans to prepare for and respond to population ageing and to establish and/or strengthen national coordination bodies or mechanisms on ageing. In the 2030 Agenda and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, it is stated that older persons need to be empowered and that governments and civil society, among other groups, need to work together to build a society for all ages.

43. Most countries in the region have transformed from ageing societies to aged societies. In Japan, 32.8 per cent of the population is currently aged 60 years and older, a figure expected to increase to 37 per cent in 2030. In 2010, there were no other members or associate members with an older population of more than 20 per cent; in 2015 there were 5 and in 2030 there will be 15. In countries with high net immigration, the percentage of older persons increases less rapidly than in countries without immigration. High emigration of the working-age population, however, contributes to rapid population ageing in countries of origin.

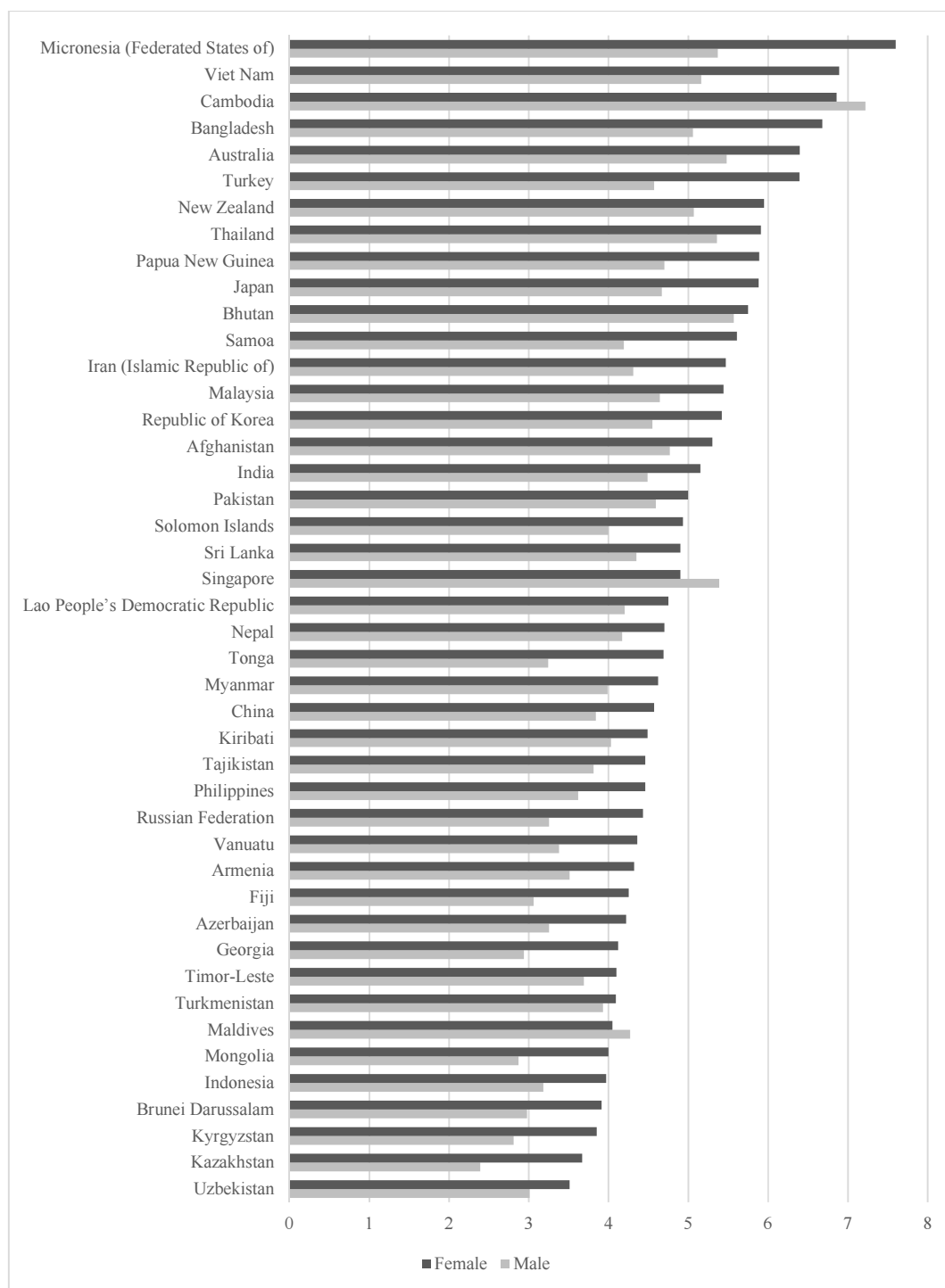
44. People are living longer and more healthily than before. Both healthy life expectancy and life expectancy increased in most of the Asia-Pacific region between 2000 and 2015. However, overall life expectancy increased faster than healthy life expectancy. This means that people spend longer periods of their life with disabilities, as seen in Cambodia for example. At the age of 60, people spend seven years with a disability, on average, about 40 per cent of their remaining life. Due to improved health care, many diseases no longer automatically lead to death, but people spend more time with chronic conditions leading to impairments.

45. Women tend to live more years with disabilities than men (figure VII). In Turkey, women at the age of 60 on average spend 6.4 years of their remaining life with impairments, as compared to 2.3 years for men. In many countries, women's life expectancy at the age of 60 grew faster than men's, but healthy life expectancy grew faster for men than women.

¹⁷ ILO, *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, 2016).

¹⁸ United Nations Children's Fund, "Barriers to girls' education, strategies and interventions" (accessed on 16 June 2018).

Figure VII
Average length of time spent with impairments after reaching the age of 60
(Years)



Sources: ESCAP calculations based on United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, available at <https://population.un.org/wpp/> (accessed on 1 June 2018); and WHO, Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy: data by country, available at <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.688> (accessed 1 June 2018).

Note: 2015 figures.

46. Population ageing affects everyone, and national legislation, policies and plans and well-coordinated government structures are needed to effectively identify, prioritize and address the needs of ageing societies. Twenty-three countries or areas in the Asia-Pacific region had coordinating bodies to respond to population ageing. These countries or areas were largely located in East and North-East Asia and in South-West Asia. Approximately 20 countries in the region had broad legislation on the rights of older persons. Several countries recently strengthened existing legislation, such as China, or introduced legislation on older persons, such as Myanmar.

47. Strengthening data collection on older persons is also important. In India, for example, concerted efforts were made by the Central Statistics Office to collect data related to older persons, culminating in a comprehensive publication entitled *Elderly in India 2016*. The Governments of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea all conduct regular surveys and provide a report on the status of older persons.

H. International migration

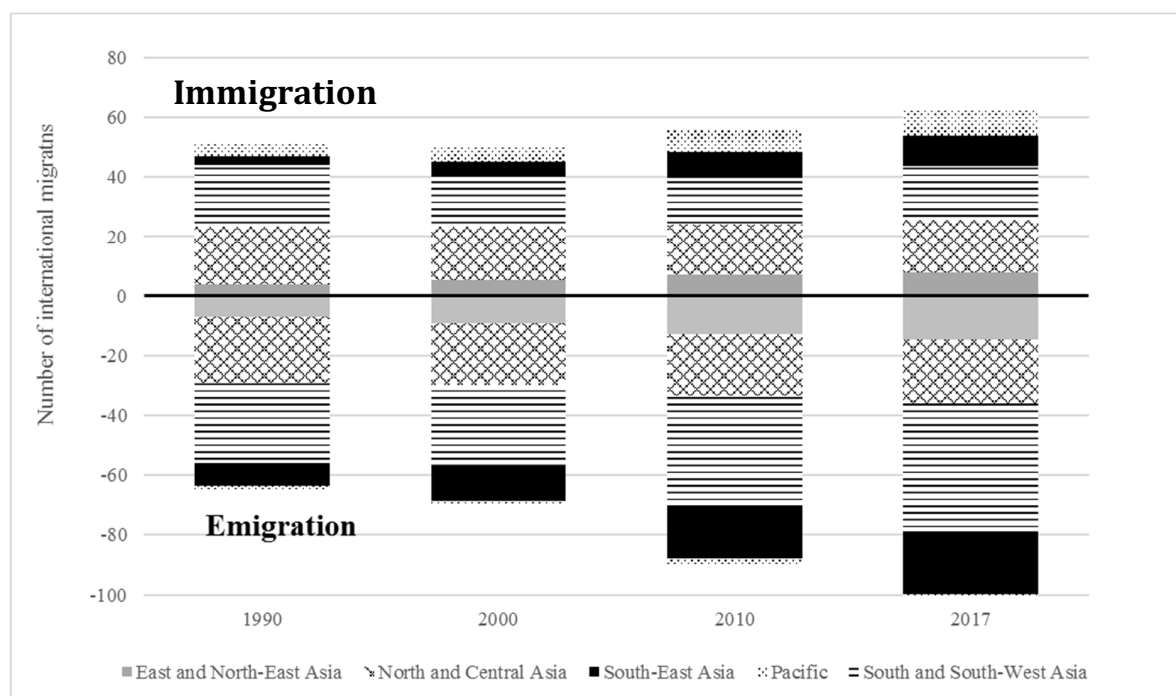
48. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States pledged to address international migration using a human rights approach through international, regional or bilateral cooperation and dialogue. The 2030 Agenda contains a call for Member States to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, and in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the first-ever negotiated global framework to address all aspects of migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner, concrete objectives to reinforce the benefits of migration and to address its challenges are identified.¹⁹

49. International migration affects all countries of the region. Almost 102 million people from the region lived outside their countries of birth in 2017. Meanwhile, countries in Asia and the Pacific hosted more than 62 million migrants, an increase of more than 20 per cent since 1990 (figure VIII).²⁰ More than half of all migrants from the region go to developing countries, either within the region or to neighbouring regions, especially the Middle East.

¹⁹ The Global Compact will be formally adopted by States Members of the United Nations in December 2018.

²⁰ ESCAP calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision* (POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2017).

Figure VIII
Migrants in Asia and the Pacific
 (Millions)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision* (POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2017).

50. Labour migration remains the predominant driver of international migration flows in the region. This is caused by factors such as differential demographic trends, the search for better economic opportunities and the demand for labour and is facilitated by policies, recruitment agencies, social networks and increased connectivity, as well as shared linguistic and historic ties between countries.

51. Forced migration of refugees remains significant, such as refugee movements from Afghanistan to Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran; Syrian refugees fleeing to Turkey; and refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. Another emerging trend relates to the link between climate change and migration, especially affecting low-lying Pacific island States. Migration for education has also increased, with two million internationally mobile students from the region living abroad in 2016, up from 703,000 in 2000.²¹

52. Both men and women migrate, although their destinations, numbers and characteristics vary, reflecting the highly gendered nature of migration. Women make up 50.6 per cent of the migrant population in the Asia-Pacific region but only 46 per cent of migrants from the region, indicating that women migrants are more likely to migrate intraregionally.²² Women often migrate as

²¹ ESCAP calculations based on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UIS.Stat database. Available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed on 10 October 2017).

²² ESCAP calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision*.

domestic workers; more than two million female migrant domestic workers live in South-East Asia and the Pacific.²³ Therefore, migration policies must be gender-responsive.

53. Migration has major development implications for both countries of destination and origin. The remittances sent by Asian and Pacific migrants in 2017 were worth almost \$284 billion.²⁴ However, the protection of migrants remains challenging, particularly in the context of limited opportunities for regular low-skilled migration and high recruitment costs. In response to employer demand, migrants often enter or remain in countries in irregular situations, which makes exploitation and abuse of their human rights easier; meanwhile surveys of migrants from Asian and Pacific countries show that they pay significant recruitment costs, ranging from an average of \$581 (for migrants from Nepal in Malaysia) to \$803 (Indian and Filipino migrants in Saudi Arabia).²⁵

54. At the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration organized by ESCAP in November 2017, member States highlighted their priorities for safe, orderly and regular migration, including increased inter-State and multi-stakeholder collaboration; the development of human rights-based, gender-sensitive approaches to migration; strengthened links between migration and development; addressing labour-related issues, including through increased regular pathways for labour migration at all skill levels; and the reduction of the factors inducing unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration, such as conflicts, insecurity and climate change, to ensure that migration is voluntary.

I. Urbanization and internal migration

55. Member States addressed internal migration and urbanization in the Ministerial Declaration and recognized the need for a holistic approach to urban development. Large flows of internal migration, mostly rural to urban, are underway throughout the region. Internal mobility, motivated by factors similar to those for international migration, such as accessing new job opportunities or displacement due to conflicts or natural disasters, has significant potential to support sustainable development, if internal migrants are able to access decent housing and decent work and to experience social inclusion. However, many internal migrants work in the informal sector of the economy, face social exclusion and poor housing conditions and are therefore disproportionately affected by natural disasters. Despite progress, the proportion of the urban population in informal settlements remains significant across the region, ranging from 11.9 per cent in Turkey to 62.7 per cent in Afghanistan in 2014.²⁶

56. The scale of urbanization, driven by internal migration, natural population growth and administrative reclassification of areas, is exceptional.

²³ ILO, *ILO Global Estimates on Migrant Workers: Results and Methodology – Special Focus on Migrants Domestic Workers* (Geneva, 2015).

²⁴ World Bank, World Bank Migration and Remittances Data. Available at www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data (accessed on 15 June 2018).

²⁵ ESCAP calculations based on World Bank, “World – KNOMAD – ILO Migration Costs Surveys 2015”. Available at <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2938> (accessed on 15 June 2018).

²⁶ United Nations, Statistics Division, Millennium Development Goals Indicators database. Available at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx> (accessed on 15 July 2018).

The number of urban residents increased from 1.5 billion in 2000 to 2.3 billion in 2018. For the first time in history, in 2018, the number of urban dwellers in the region is estimated to exceed that of rural dwellers.²⁷ Although the number of megacities has grown, with 20 of the 30 largest cities in the world in Asia and the Pacific, most growth is concentrated in small to medium-sized cities. Capturing the benefits of this transformation requires policies and planning to ensure the economic, social and political inclusion of migrants at all political and geographic levels.

J. Population and sustainable development

57. In the Ministerial Declaration, member States committed to collect data on the impact of disasters in order to promote effective policymaking, to forecasting of the consequences of climate conditions and climate change and to ensure collective efforts to halve global carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions. Under the Paris Agreement, ESCAP countries agreed to put forward their best efforts through nationally determined contributions and by regularly reporting on their emissions and implementation changes.²⁸ This is significant as this region is home to 6 of the top 10 global emitters of greenhouse gases and it is the most vulnerable in the world to the impacts of climate change.

58. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States pledged to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Reliable and affordable energy services are fundamental to everyday life. Universal access to clean energy increases productivity, reduces health disparities, and bolsters gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized people. Eliminating the use of unclean fuels has a visible impact on environmental quality, in both urban and rural settings.

59. Progress on improving access to clean fuels and technology for cooking has been relatively slow. In 2014, the regional rate of access to clean cooking reached 51.2 per cent, up from 39.8 per cent in 2000. Nearly half of the region's population still lacks access to clean fuels and technology for cooking. Governments need to prioritize clean cooking and develop policies that increase access to clean fuels and technology. For example, access rate of Indonesia rose by more than 17 per cent between 2010 and 2016, mainly due to the government-supported kerosene-to-liquefied petroleum gas conversion programme in 2007, which converted more than 50 million households and microbusinesses in the country to cleaner stoves.²⁹

60. The health consequences from unequal access to clean energy constitute a major challenge for member States. In Asia and the Pacific, every other person relies on solid fuels such as dung or wood to cook and heat their homes. Burning these fuels negatively affects air quality. There is a direct correlation between access to clean fuels and deaths caused by indoor air pollution in the region.

²⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: the 2018 Revision*, Online Edition. Available at <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Download/> (accessed on 15 July 2018).

²⁸ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "What is the Paris Agreement?" (accessed on 27 July 2018).

²⁹ Asia Sustainable and Alternative Energy Program, *Indonesia: Toward Universal Access to Clean Cooking*, East Asia and Pacific Clean Stove Initiative Series, No. 79279 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2013).

61. Climate change and the increasing intensity of natural disasters have social implications. The Asia-Pacific region is the most disaster-prone region in the world, with women and girls disproportionately impacted, including through heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence in emergencies. Compared to previous years, there were fewer disasters in the region in 2016; however, disasters still killed 4,987 people and affected 35 million people, causing estimated damages of approximately \$77 billion. Between 1970 and 2016, countries in the region lost 2 million people and approximately \$1.3 trillion in assets due to natural disasters.³⁰

62. It is estimated that between 2015 and 2030 the population in extreme-risk areas will grow by more than 50 per cent in 26 cities and by 35 to 50 per cent in 72 cities.³¹ Many cities in the region are responding to these risks by emerging as leaders in community-based disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation. In recent years, city-to-city partnerships have been used to exchange best practices and gain access to policy tools for risk-sensitive and pro-poor urban development. Between 2015 and 2016, Governments established a comprehensive global framework to address disasters, comprising six separate but interrelated agreements:

- (a) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030;
- (b) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (c) Paris Agreement;
- (d) Agenda for Humanity;
- (e) New Urban Agenda;
- (f) Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

63. Almost all countries in the region have implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies following the Sendai Framework. Mongolia, for example, adopted a law on disaster protection in February 2017 to better organize disaster risk reduction by establishing the legal environment for national and local disaster risk reduction platforms and clarifying the roles and duties of multiple stakeholders in disaster risk reduction.

K. Data and statistics

64. Data availability, including age- and sex-disaggregated data, has improved in areas covered by the Programme of Action. Data collection, as part of the 2030 Agenda, will improve the monitoring of the Programme of Action in the future. For most Sustainable Development Goal indicators, some data are already available. However, since Goal data collection was initiated only recently, available data do not allow tracking of progress over time yet.

65. The monitoring of social indicators is lagging behind the monitoring of economic indicators. Data availability on social Sustainable Development

³⁰ *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2017: Leave No One Behind – Disaster Resilience for Sustainable Development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.F.16).

³¹ *Ibid.*

Goal indicators varies across subregions, with data availability in the Pacific too limited to allow trend analysis.³²

66. Systems of civil registration and vital statistics are being improved. In at least 22 countries in the region, at least 90 per cent of all children under 5 and their births are registered. In the Ministerial Declaration “to Get Every One in the Picture” in Asia and the Pacific, members and associate members of ESCAP committed to reach specific goals regarding civil registration by 2024.³³

67. The decennial round of population and housing censuses presents an important opportunity for countries to enumerate all people in a country at a particular time and to collect data on small groups and small areas that other data sources cannot produce. Censuses are therefore essential to assess whether any group is being left behind.

68. The 2020 round of censuses, which covers the period 2015–2024, is being implemented by most countries and territories in Asia and the Pacific. Several countries and territories have already undertaken a census since 2015; others are on track to conduct it in the next few years. Overall, the 2020 round is characterized by a commitment to modernize traditional census processes. This is motivated by concerns regarding the cost of population censuses, the increasing need for updated and disaggregated census-type data, in particular in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the availability of new technologies. These will make it possible to develop innovations in census-taking, such as the collection of geospatial information or the use of handheld electronic devices.

69. While progress is being made, further efforts are needed to improve data collection and analysis, particularly disaggregated data by sex, age, and other characteristics, as appropriate.

III. Conclusions

70. The Programme of Action is the most comprehensive agreed text on population and development to date. In its resolution 65/234 of 22 December 2010, the General Assembly extended the Programme of Action beyond 2014, and its contents support and complement the 2030 Agenda. These documents contain a shared vision of sustainable development based on the achievement of universal human rights, equality, including gender equality and women’s empowerment, and dignity of all, universal access to health, including sexual and reproductive health, non-discrimination, quality education, economic opportunity, and a strong evidence base that informs decision-making, planning and monitoring so that no one is left behind.

71. In the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, a set of actions and emerging issues, such as disasters and climate change, are identified. Taken together, these documents provide a comprehensive set of objectives and actions to promote social justice, eradicate poverty, and protect the environment, in order to meet the needs of both current and future generations.

³² *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2017: Measuring SDG Progress in Asia and the Pacific – Is There Enough Data?* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.F.1).

³³ Commission resolution 71/14, annex.

72. While the region has reduced absolute poverty, many people, particularly women, are still working in vulnerable employment. More must be done to provide decent work for all, and for women in particular. Youth unemployment is a major concern in several countries.

73. Health outcomes in the region are improving due to improved availability of and access to health services. However, certain groups still encounter significant barriers to accessing health services, including sexual and reproductive health services. Women in humanitarian crisis situations have insufficient access to sexual and reproductive health services. The provision of a continuum of affordable, accessible and gender- and age-sensitive quality sexual and reproductive health services must be further strengthened, and increased attention must be paid to the promotion and protection of reproductive rights in order to ensure access to information and services by marginalized groups.

74. Although the Asia-Pacific region has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education, it lags behind in the areas of women's political participation and leadership. More focus is needed on women's political participation and economic empowerment. To support women's labour force participation, women also require flexible and supportive employment policies, as well as adequate childcare. Further efforts are needed to address violence against women, including the collection of reliable data on this topic.

75. A number of countries in East and North-East Asia and South-East Asia are rapidly ageing. Countries must prepare for ageing societies by investing in social protection and increasing labour productivity. Other countries, particularly in South and South-West Asia, can still reap the demographic dividend of a large working-age population, but only if they invest in children and youth soon and create decent jobs.

76. The region is also affected by international migration at unprecedented levels. The protection of migrants' rights remains an area of concern. Countries of origin and of destination must collaborate to respect and protect the rights of all migrants by promoting regular and orderly labour migration through international cooperation and by sharing information, documenting migrant workers, informing potential migrant workers and employers about regular migration channels, including applicable conditions and responsibilities, engaging in social dialogue, and addressing irregular migration.

77. To make further progress in implementing the Programme of Action, as well as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, greater efforts and more targeted programmes are needed to reach those groups that are left behind. Policies and programmes need to include specifications on how these groups can be reached and need to be tailored to the needs of groups left behind. To this end, new and stronger partnerships must be forged with the active participation of Governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system. Sound data collection and analysis is fundamental to inform policies and effective strategies that reach those furthest behind.