

Statement from the East Asia Sub-regional Conference on Human Rights & Dignity of Asian Girls – Building Girl Friendly Cities

September 22-23, 2015

Hong Kong

1. Introduction

- 1.1 53 people from Australia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, Portugal, Taiwan, Tajikistan, the United Kingdom, and the Ukraine met in Hong Kong on September 22-23, 2015 to discuss how to create “girl friendly cities” in the framework of dignity and human rights for girls in Asia.
- 1.2 We thank the organizers and hosts of the conference, the Garden of Hope Foundation, The Women’s Foundation and Lap-Chee College.
- 1.3 We recognized the statements from the 2014 South Asia regional conference in Chandigarh, India on September 29th - October 1st, 2014 and the Southeast Asia Sub-regional Conference on Human Rights & Dignity of Asian Girls - Building Girl Friendly Cities, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, May 11-12, 2015.
- 1.4 We focused on two main themes of (1) gender stereotypes and the media, and (2) protecting marginalized girls through international treaties and local actions.
- 1.5 We also discussed obstacles to girl friendly cities including (1) gender-based violence, (2) workplace discrimination, (3) cultural constraints, (4) inadequate legislature and policies.
- 1.6 Issues that were brought up included education, the need for greater awareness, pervading stereotypes that hold girls back, problems of domestic workers, lack of representation of women at high levels of society, and lack of diverse channels to raise issues with policy makers.

2. Gender stereotypes and the media

- 2.1 We must challenge stereotypes in the media that present girls and children as powerless, voiceless and passive.
- 2.2 Media organization, advertisers and others should follow the principles of respect, responsibility, dignity, accountability, privacy, and local culture; and present positive images of girls in the media, who are empowered, real and active.
- 2.3 Inappropriate images of girls have become so common they are seen as the norm in many countries. There is a need to recognize these as child pornography, and enforce laws, implement policies and take actions to protect children and young girls at risk.
- 2.4 Girls who are involved in the sex industry should be viewed as the victims and not the perpetrators. They should not be punished but protected and helped.
- 2.5 Instead of following the norms portrayed in the mainstream media, girls should take control of their own identity, and use social media to promote girls rights.

3. Protecting marginalized girls through international treaties and local actions

- 3.1 The voices of marginalized girls, such as the daughters of migrant families, LBT girls, teenage mothers, pregnant teenagers, and other groups often go unheard, even at forums like this. We need to provide alternative ways to give marginalized girls a voice.
- 3.2 We should advocate for change, file complaints, put pressure on their governments and communities, and use human rights treaties and ordinances to push for positive change.
- 3.3 Marginalized girls should be encouraged to organize themselves and develop solutions to suit their own needs and contexts.
- 3.4 Knowledge and education, along with economic and social support, is essential to empower marginalized girls.

- 3.5 We need to come up with ways to overcome social exclusion, which denies marginalized girls access to education, social support, acceptance by their communities, sex and reproductive autonomy, and other aspects that give them control of their own lives.
- 3.6 While the situation for LBT girls is improving in some countries, there is still a need for greater acceptance by schools, media organizations (to provide good role models), governments and other institutions.
- 3.7 We should encourage diversity, and guide girls to have healthy loving relationships.