

## **ICPD30: Policymaking initiatives to address gender-based violence in Central Asia**



**Dushanbe, Tajikistan,  
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## **A. Background**

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) affirmed support for investments in the capacities of adolescents and youth that uphold their rights, and create the necessary conditions in which they can realize their potential by ensuring access to quality education and appropriate skills at all levels. The responsible exercise of these rights for all is the cornerstone of policies and programmes supported by government and society.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is deeply rooted in gender inequalities and it is important that the essential services must continue to be provided even in times of emergency, such as the spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) while gender-based violence services must be classified as essential services.

Recovery efforts must focus on the principle of leaving no one behind and building a more equal, just, inclusive, and sustainable society, within the framework of action for the future after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Central Asian countries have a large population of young people. The future of sustainable development and demographically resilient societies is directly linked to fulfilling the aspirations of adolescents and youth. Young people should receive the right information on family life education so as to lead a healthy and productive life during their sensitive growing years. It is, therefore, important to understand the issues adolescents and youth are facing and ensure that young people are aware of various schemes and programmes available to them including SRH services maintaining complete privacy and confidentiality.

Although populations of Central Asian countries have almost achieved universal access to SRH services, the quality of SRH remains low. Sustainable supply and access to Reproductive Health Commodities is uneven between the countries, which impedes access to quality Family Planning services. The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected SRH outcomes and reversed gains made in the past.

Furthermore, the pandemic has widened underlying gender and social inequalities, increased violence against women and girls and exacerbated challenges in women's rights. The situation is particularly difficult for young women in Central Asia facing child marriage. Low levels of education together with the lack of opportunities to engage in economic activities, largely explain the fact that labour force participation of women is significantly lower than that of men. Some young women with children in the rural areas are unemployed or occupy low-skilled positions. Some of them lost jobs during the pandemic when employers prioritize the male labor-force.

Others did not have full access to the SRH services due to lockdowns and because those clinics mainly had to respond to COVID-19 patients.

Despite the need to capitalize on the capacity of young people, women and girls, the development policies governments put in place in response to the demographic changes are not always based on evidence. National policies on youth are not well positioned in relation to population and

development dynamics and lack robust linkages with sectors affecting youth, such as economic development, employment, education and health.

The leadership of parliamentarians is vital to ensuring that population issues are addressed using a youth empowerment and rights-based approach and a gender perspective and to secure rights and choices for all.

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) is a networking and coordinating body of parliamentary National Committees on Population and Development (NCs) of each member country, and in cooperation with UNFPA and NCs, AFPPD has long supported parliamentarians' national, regional and global engagements to promote population and development.

AFPPD, together with the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), implement a series of activities in Central Asia that strengthen the role and capacity of parliamentarians in Central Asian sub-region in "Demographic Intelligence" and its utilization for policy purposes to address youth development and gender issues. Activities will contribute to the AFPPD's new Strategic Plan (2023-2025).

## **B. Objectives**

The in-depth intervention will be made in some countries in the region as the countries have a particular interest in revising and reviewing legislation on GBV. Parliamentarians and national stakeholders learn to support the collection, analysis and use of data for policy development and decision-making in the area. Through this exercise, it is expected that parliamentarians in the target countries have shared experience in developing and supporting national policies based on data.

To strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians, AFPPD would like to see them more active domestically, collaborating with UNFPA COs, the civil societies, and other international organizations to address the important aspects of demographic resilience, in particular issues around youth development and gender equality.

Such consultation and knowledge-sharing opportunities are important for parliamentarians because this is when they hear the success and failure examples of other countries' policy-makers and learn from each other.

## **C. Venue, date and agenda**

The meeting "ICPD30: Policymaking Initiatives to address Gender-Based Violence in Central Asia" was organized in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 19 September 2023.

The agenda of the workshop consisted of the introduction part, 4 main sessions and closing part.

Welcoming remarks were delivered by high-ranking officials during the opening part: Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan, Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth; Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, AFPPD Chair (online); Ms. Parvathy Ramaswami, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan; and Ms. Julia Vallese, Deputy Regional Director, UNFPA EECARO (online).

The four main sessions of the workshop included:

**Session 1:** “ICPD30 and regional perspectives on addressing against gender-based violence”, where the key speaker was Mr. Yu Yu, UNFPA Representative in Uzbekistan/Country Director in Tajikistan.

**Session 2:** “Importance of data collection for policy development and implementation for addressing gender-based violence”, where the key speaker was Ms. Nilufar Bahromzoda, Programme Analyst on Gender, UNFPA Tajikistan.

**Session 3:** “Parliamentarians’ role in elimination of gender-based violence” featured three speakers: Mr. Romeo Dongeto, Executive Director of the Philippine Legislative Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), Hon. Aroma Dutta, Member of the Parliament of Bangladesh and Hon. Angela Warren-Clark, Member of the New Zealand Parliament, Co-Chair of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.

**Session 4:** “Prevention of GBV in Central Asia region: perspectives and challenges”, which featured three speakers: Hon. Elvira Surabaldieva, Member of the Parliament of Kyrgyz Republic, Hon. Surayo Dustmurodzoda, Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan and Ms. Guljahon Bobosodikova, CSO Representative, Republic Tajikistan.

The closing of the workshop and wrap-up session was facilitated by Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan, Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth.

The agenda of the workshop can be found in Appendix 1.

## **D. Participants of the meeting**

The meeting on “ICPD30: Policymaking initiatives to address gender-based violence in Central Asia” was held in a hybrid format, which was attended by members of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan, UNFPA representatives, gender experts, representatives of civil society, the AFPPD Secretariat and representatives of member countries (online).

The full list of participants can be found in Appendix 2.

## E. Presentations and discussions

In the **Opening Ceremony**, high-ranking officials delivered welcoming remarks: Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan, Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth; Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, AFPPD Chair (online); Ms. Parvati Ramaswamy, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan and Ms. Julia Vallese, Deputy Regional Director, UNFPA EECARO (online).

Moderator: Dr. Farrukh Usmonov, interim Executive Director of AFPPD.

Highlights of the speeches:

- Gender inequality is still a problem in the world. According to surveys, every 3 women in the Central Asian region and every 4 in European countries are subjected to violence. Girls' rights to receive education and access to healthcare are still violated, and there are obstacles to gaining access to economic resources necessary for entrepreneurial activities.
- From the first days of gaining state independence, the leadership of the Republic of Tajikistan showed political will in implementing effective gender policies aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women. Significant achievements have been made in implementing gender equality related policies, improving the legal framework and institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality. Issues related to the position and status of women and the reduction of gender inequality are introduced into all strategic documents related to the development of the country. The constitutional principle of equality of men and women and constitutional guarantees of equality of human rights are enshrined in all legislative acts of the Republic of Tajikistan
- However, the persistence of discriminatory attitudes, cultural stereotypes and social norms that tolerate violence and the lack of a unified system for responding and reporting on cases of GBV, are an obstacle to a timely and effective response to GBV and the promotion of gender equality.
- AFPPD places great importance on addressing issues of gender equality. This area is a priority area of activity for the AFPPD national committees. Today, the issue of reducing vulnerabilities of women and girls through various mechanisms and reviews is an important task. With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the burden on women, and global disasters, natural disasters are negatively affecting the situation of women and girls in the world.
- In this regard, an important step is to create new laws or improve existing ones to ensure the protection of women's rights.
- The UN structure in Tajikistan has established strong partnerships with the Government of the country, with representatives of civil society in Tajikistan and is working together to protect the rights of women in the country. It is gratifying that this event is taking place on

the eve of the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Programme of Action, adopted in Cairo in 1994 and which has become a promising document in the area of human development.

- At the same time, existing GBV in society, problems in access to education, quality healthcare and services are an obstacle to the development of women and prevent the active involvement of women in society. In Tajikistan, 30% of the population are young people, and special attention should be paid to this category of the population, especially girls, to actively involve them in all spheres of life in the country.
- It is necessary to unite the efforts of all interested parties in this direction. The role of country parliaments in creating a new and improving the existing legislative framework to create conditions for the full and equal participation of women in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of society is very important.

**Session 1: “ICPD30 and regional perspectives on addressing against gender-based violence”,** where the key speaker was Mr. Yu Yu, UNFPA Representative in Uzbekistan/Country Director in Tajikistan.

Moderator: Dr. Farrukh Usmonov, interim Executive Director of AFPPD.

Key highlights from session 1:

- At the ICPD in Cairo in 1994, which was attended by 179 states, as already mentioned, the Programme of Action aimed at sustainable development was adopted. It was said that sustainable development is impossible without ensuring gender equality and eliminating GBV. Ensuring gender equality was one of the main goals of this conference and one of the seven key activities within the framework of this event. Also, states and governments were obliged to ensure that equal access for everyone, including vulnerable groups of the population, to education, healthcare, economic resources, loans, etc.
- In modern society, despite efforts in this direction, GBV remains a problem not only for developing countries but also for developed countries. The sad case of FP 2020 Ms. J. Schlecht, who was killed in her apartment in New York, by her husband.
- According to the research conducted in five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, GBV remains an alarming problem; some types of violence, such as kidnapping, are prevalent in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan due to the tradition of “bride kidnapping” existing in these countries.
- All Central Asian countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). 4 out of 5 republics provide a report on the implementation of this Convention. There are several gaps in Central Asian countries: in policy and legislation, quality and cost of services, existing harmful social norms and data collection on GBV, especially at the level of service and digitalization of this data.

- By 2030, US\$3.2 billion will be invested in states to prevent GBV and early marriage. This investment could save \$5.1 trillion.
- There are also concerns about new emerging types of violence, such as cyber violence, which is becoming very common.
- Often GBV instances are not disclosed and are kept silent. For example, during a survey on GBV with employers in Uzbekistan, while the managers did not note any cases of violence and harassment in their companies during interviews, employees indicated that such incidents had taken place over the last 12 months. Therefore, it is important to keep a record of GBV cases, especially among vulnerable populations, strictly adhering to the principle of “leaving no one behind”.
- It is necessary to develop effective mechanisms for recording cases of GBV, take preventive measures with the involvement of traditional leaders of society, including using the potential of religious leaders and clergy.
- Collaboration with men and boys, their involvement in addressing GBV issues to change social norms and eradicate GBV is important for complete elimination of violence in society.
- UNFPA, from its side, is ready to support initiatives in this direction and will continue to cooperate with all stakeholders, including Members of Parliament.

#### *Discussions:*

- UNFPA is impressed by the results of cooperation with the Government, parliament and civil society in Tajikistan.
- The Joint EU-UN Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan has shown good results in terms of preventing GBV, implementing preventive measures, collaborating with government agencies and broadly involving CSOs.
- This project contributes to ending sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) by responding to the needs of women and girls, and addressing the root causes of violence against women and girls using a multi-sectoral and intersectoral approach. Activities reaching the most vulnerable women and girls (from rural areas, with low-income, disabled) at higher risk of SGBV, and groups facing multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination, accelerated Tajikistan’s progress towards achieving its goals within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.
- However, three years is not enough to fully realize the ambitious goals of the project. It would be advisable to continue the project in the Central Asian region, given that working with stereotypes and harmful practices, changing thinking and cultivating an intolerant attitude towards violence requires more time.
- SGBV is exacerbated by high tolerance towards violence, with low levels of official reports by the survivors. Although polygamy and unregistered, forced and child marriage are illegal and



harmful and are often associated with domestic violence, these practices remain vastly underreported.

- Tajikistan has a Law “On the prevention of domestic violence” (since 2013), but there are issues with its implementation, financing and strengthening the capacity of service providers.
- Comprehensive involvement of men and boys is essential to change social norms and eliminate GBV.
- It seems appropriate to use the potential of Members of Parliament to establish working groups for conducting gender assessment of the existing laws.
- It was proposed to expand the platform for discussing the efforts on addressing GBV in Uzbekistan and study the experience of this country in criminalizing domestic violence.

**Session 2: “Importance of data collection for policy development and implementation for addressing gender-based violence”**, where the key speaker was Ms. Nilufar Bahromzoda, Programme Analyst on Gender, UNFPA Tajikistan.

Moderator: Hon. Parvina Malikzod, Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Key highlights from session 2:

- The collection and dissemination of data on the prevalence and frequency of various forms of violence against women, as well as on the causes and consequences of such violence, is a starting point for development of effective mechanisms at the policy level to minimize and further eradicate the phenomenon.
- Accurate and complete data is required to increase public awareness of violence against women and draw attention to the responsibilities of the Government to take measures against such actions.
- International standards for data collection on GBV have been developed. In 2009, a working group named “Friends of the Chair (FoC)” of the United National Statistical Commission identified a core set of statistical indicators for measuring violence against women (VAW), consisting of nine core indicators for collection of GBV data, which every country is required to report on.
- Tajikistan has a sound legal framework on regulation of domestic violence against all family members. A regulatory framework on collection and use of statistical data on cases of domestic violence and violence against women and girls has been created as well.
- Currently, statistics on GBV are collected from the following sources: official statistics on GBV from ministries and departments, which is submitted to the Agency on statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan; administrative data from ministries and departments

that deal with cases of violence on a daily basis; data on from CSOs and data based on separate surveys results.

- All sectors collect administrative data on GBV, including characteristics of the survivor and, although less frequently, the perpetrator. However, this data is not provided to the Statistics Agency for compilation.
- Statistical data is often collected based on such characteristics as sex, age, place of residence and the relationship between the survivor and the offender. In the context of domestic violence, cases of physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner or other persons are more often reported than cases of psychological or economic violence. Unfortunately, the data is not always disaggregated by type of violence.
- Harmful cases of traditional practices are recorded less frequently. Age of the first marriage is often not recorded. There is also information from crisis centers and shelters at NGOs, but at the moment they do not have the ability to transfer their data for compilation into general statistics.
- There are also statistics on the results of various studies, but they are conducted every few years and are selective and not regular.
- There is lack of accurate statistics that shows the actual number of women subjected to violence.
- To improve the situation with data collection on GBV, the speaker offered a number of recommendations:
  - Review SGBV laws and policies to bring a stronger focus on data collection, with the constitution of working groups to work on such matters (including representatives from all sectors and non-governmental organizations), and the allocation of specific budgets for the development of data management strategies.
  - All professionals from the relevant ministries and agencies should receive specific training on SGBV data collection, storage, and analysis, with a special focus on data protection procedures and data exchange during referrals.
  - Multisectoral coding system (e.g., identification number) should be developed to allow the victim to be tracked over time and across different services, while assuring data protection protocols are in place, as well as to avoid double counting when data is compiled from different agencies and sectors into a single database.

#### *Discussions:*

- The presentation provided important and key information on UNFPA's work in this direction.
- The collection of statistics on GBV in Tajikistan remains imperfect; statistics from crisis centers are not centralized and are very fragmented.

- In this regard, it would be advisable if the UNFPA Regional Office is sought to explore best practices in collecting statistics.
- Support is also needed in studying the legislation of other countries on issues related to violence against women and girls, including addressing cyber violence.
- It is necessary to strengthen GBV prevention related initiatives among the younger generation, starting from the primary levels of education. Focus on the best traditions of the people in respecting the rights of family members, especially women, wives, mothers, sisters, and partners.
- Strengthen work with religious leaders on the correct interpretation of Islamic canons regarding prevention of violence against women.
- Cultivate universal human values of respect for individual rights; instill zero tolerance for violence against women and girls.
- Implementation of its obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and other international obligations on protection of women's rights ratified by Tajikistan should be comprehensively promoted.
- It is necessary to take into account the recommendations of the presenting expert and include them in the general recommendations of this event.

**Session 3: "Parliamentarians' role in elimination of gender-based violence"** featured three speakers: Mr. Romeo Dongeto, Executive Director of the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), Hon. Aroma Dutta, Member of the Parliament of Bangladesh and Hon. Angela Warren-Clark, Member of the New Zealand Parliament, Co-Chair of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Moderator: Dr. Farrukh Usmonov, interim Executive Director of AFPPD.

Key highlights from session 3:

Mr. Romeo Dongeto, Executive Director of the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD):

- According to the Global Gender Gap Index, the Philippines ranks 16th out of 164 countries. Last year, the Philippines adopted a number of important legislative acts to protect women's rights, against violence and combating GBV, human trafficking, ensuring a safe space, banning early marriages and child marriages, and raising the age of marriage. The Philippine Parliament is considered as "champion" according to a PLCPD survey in developing legislation and taking action to protect the rights of women and girls and ban early marriage. Before the enactment of the law, the Philippines ranked 12th in total number of child marriages.

- The speech provided detailed information about the Philippine law banning early marriages. Prior to the adoption of the law, the Parliament of the Philippines, in close cooperation with government national structures, experts, representatives of civil society, and development partners, conducted a number of important activities, including a baseline study to determine the negative impact of this situation on the population. During the COVID-19 pandemic, an online platform for discussions was provided. Particular attention was paid to the concept of protecting children and increasing the potential of children themselves, and the issue of physical autonomy of children was promoted. As a result, legislation and policies were passed to prohibit child marriage. The expert believes that the cohesive joint work of all interested parties played an important role. In the Philippines, because of such well-coordinated work of government agencies, partners, civil society, experts, parliamentarians and the inclusion of the population, it was possible to organize a powerful multi-sectoral platform - Girl Defenders Alliance.
- Mr. Romeo Dongeto shared future plans to advocate for the issue of preventing and eradicating early marriage: conducting information campaigns among the population, including among children themselves, organizing social programmes for the population from low-income communities and women living below the poverty line (there are 10 million such women in the Philippines) , conducting campaigns on access and awareness of reproductive health and educational programmes on sexuality education, promoting social protection of parents of adolescents, informal employment of women, unpaid domestic work of women, decreasing the high rates of divorces. Parliamentarians are ready to reform policies to address these issues.

Hon. Aroma Dutta, Member of the Parliament of Bangladesh:

- The Parliament of Bangladesh has set the goal of changing the situation of violence through the adoption of relevant laws. The activities of the committee of parliamentarians are coordinated by UNFPA and consider all types of violence. In Bangladesh, 50% of young women get married at a very young age. For this reason, the country is experiencing a high increase in maternal mortality.
- Although psychological violence prevails over physical violence, the existing figures remain quite alarming. Due to the high level of domestic violence, one-fifth of the country's GDP is spent on combating crime. Also, 27.8% of police officers are involved in the fight against GBV. The Bangladesh Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (BAPPD) is headed by the Speaker of Parliament; 22 deputies are involved in the work of the commission. The commission cooperates with various parliamentary committees, government agencies, and local government representatives. A multisectoral committee with participation of the Minister of Health and the director of the Research Institute of Reproductive Health was created to effectively address the issues of maternal mortality. The activities focus on raising awareness of all structures about violence, the problems and consequences of early marriage. For effective work, a Forum has been created to bring together representatives of various government structures, local communities, school leaders, and students. The key point of the

activity of this group is to conduct information events on reproductive health, prevent early marriages, and completely eradicate child marriages.

- In Bangladesh, a lot of work is being done at all levels to increase the capacity and awareness of those involved in the prevention of violence and early marriage. A Strategy has been developed to raise awareness among politicians and decision makers to ensure timely information about the situation. Trainings and seminars are conducted for specialists working to eradicate child marriage and reduce maternal mortality. In Bangladesh, transformation processes are taking place quite intensively to eradicate the problem at the community level, with an emphasis on involving more women. Although today the culture is that men remain the decision makers, the Parliament of Bangladesh is working to change the mindset of men. Member of the Parliament of Bangladesh, Hon. Datta expressed her readiness to cooperate in this direction and is ready to share the country's experience and study the experience of other countries.

Hon. Angela Warren-Clark, Member of the New Zealand Parliament, Co-Chair of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

- September 19 is a significant date for New Zealand. 130 years ago, on this day, in 1893, that New Zealand became the first self-governing country in which women had the right to vote. In October 2022, New Zealand reached 50% women's representation in Parliament, and 50% of women's representation in the Cabinet of New Zealand was achieved in April 2023. In recent years, New Zealand has adopted important legislation to combat GBV, domestic and sexual violence, strengthen the protection of the rights of survivors of violence, protect survivors from harassment, combat child exploitation, and criminalize blackmail. Almost all key ministries and departments of the country are involved in the implementation of laws but the situation with violence is still alarming.
- During the period from 2009-2019, 292 cases of death of an intimate partner were recorded. 1 in 3, or 35% of women have experienced sexual or physical violence, 87% of women who have been assaulted have not contacted the police. Between June 2021 and June 2022, 175,573 cases of domestic violence investigations were recorded. In 2020, 84% of protective orders were issued to women for protection from their male partners. New Zealand has the highest rates of violence against women, most related to sexual and reproductive health, sexual abuse and rape, compared to other Pacific countries. The country is also in greater need of modern contraception than others in the region. The speaker ended with a saying in the country's Aboriginal language, "Let peace rule the world".

#### *Discussions:*

During the discussion, the participants raised interesting questions for all presenters about the details of the laws, challenges with implementation, the minimum age for marriage established by the law, exceptions to lowering the minimum age for marriage.

- Bangladesh: The official age of marriage is 18, but early marriage is a big problem in almost all Asian countries. In Bangladesh, there are cases of marriage registered at 13 and 15 years of age. There are still people who want to change the age of consent but there is a legislative framework prohibiting early marriages, and we are going to work on this, and we plan to monitor the implementation of the law in local communities.
- Philippines: The legal age for marriage is 18 years. There are serious problems with the implementation of laws, similar to other countries. Violations of the still law take place. As previously noted, the Philippines ranks 12th in the world for early marriage. The law prohibits marriage under the age of 18, but there are still cases of early marriages. And in 2021, changes were made to the country's legislation, according to which persons found guilty of illegal marriage are now prohibited from entering the public service.
- New Zealand: The legal age for marriage is 18 years, but there are still cases of child marriage. Recently, judges have studied court cases on early marriages. It was found that most of the offenses are committed by visitors to New Zealand from other countries whose cultural traditions allow early marriage.

The participants requested to share the presentations. It was decided that all speakers would provide presentations and copies of the laws discussed electronically.

**Session 4: “Prevention of GBV in Central Asia region: perspectives and challenges”**, which featured three keynote speakers: Hon. Elvira Surabaldieva, Member of the Parliament of Kyrgyz Republic, Hon. Surayo Dustmurodzoda, Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan, and Ms. Guljahon Bobosodikova, CSO Representative, the Republic Tajikistan.

Moderator: Dr. Farrukh Usmonov, interim Executive Director of AFPPD

Hon. Elvira Surabaldieva, Member of the Parliament of Kyrgyz Republic:

- Since gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan has taken significant steps towards achieving gender equality. During this period, a number of progressive laws and national programmes were adopted, key institutions were created to implement gender policy and achieve gender equality, combat domestic and sexual violence, gender inequality, child and forced marriage. Kyrgyzstan has also made progress in ratifying international instruments and it is committed to fulfilling its international obligations. Women's full and equal participation in all aspects of life is a priority to achieve progress in protecting women's rights while strengthening the country's economy. This requires strengthening its institutions, laws, and governance to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and compliance with international commitments.
- The Council on the Rights of Women and Children and Gender Equality was created in Parliament and a Strategy and Action Plan was adopted, the agenda of which included the issue to fight against the gender-based violence and strengthening gender equality. This is an

inclusive dialogue platform for civil society in the process of developing legislation, as well as involving government agencies in the implementation of legislation on the rights of women and girls.

- Since 2020, the country's parliament has adopted a number of laws to protect women's rights, combat violence and harassment in the workplace, and also developed and introduced amendments and additions to some laws and regulations to combat sexual harassment in the workplace, in the field of ensuring protection from domestic, sexual and gender-based violence., In the field of regulation of alimony obligations and enforcement mechanisms in case of non-payment, access to free legal assistance is expanded, especially for vulnerable segments of the population. This issue is included in the educational programmes of schools and universities.
- It is gratifying that after the adoption of amendments to laws and regulations to toughen the punishment for bride kidnapping according to the ritual of "Kyz ala kachuu", the number of cases of kidnapping of women and girls has sharply decreased. Punishments are also provided for religious persons who perform the "nikah" ritual for persons under marriageable age.
- Experts analyzed 36 laws and 60 regulations, formulated specific recommendations to improve legislation and law enforcement practice in the field of preventing and combating violence and promoting gender equality. In addition, amendments to the Law "On State Guarantees of the Rights of Men and Women" were adopted. The Law "On Discrimination" has been prepared. Discussion of the laws is expected soon.

Hon. Surayo Dustmurodzoda, Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- At all times, regardless of age, weight, height, status and religion, women are more susceptible to violence than men. At the same time, the history of humankind knows many women warriors, poets, writers, artists, etc., changed the course of history. Tajik wisdom says: "You need to find a way to resolve the situation before it turns into an incident".
- According to some studies, various forms of gender-based violence affect women in Central Asia throughout the life cycle, and are often exacerbated by cultural, economic, political factors such as displacement, globalization, militarism, violent extremism and terrorism.
- Today, in the context of protecting women's rights, empowerment, and prevention of violence, it is very important to address such issues as different types of violence against women and girls, early marriage, early birth and mortality, access to economic resources, etc.
- All Central Asian countries have ratified fundamental international human rights instruments over the years, including the protection of the rights of women and girls. In Tajikistan, a good legislative framework has been created to prevent violence, protect the rights and freedoms of women and girls, benefits have been assigned in the form of quotas, grants, and a State programme for building capacity of talented women and girls is being implemented. Since 2005, the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On State Guarantees of Equality of Men and Women and Equal Opportunities for Their Realization" has been in force. In 2022, the Law

“On Equality and the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination” was adopted and is an important aspect of the legal framework on protection of women’s rights. However, the question of strengthening measures to improve the situation with addressing GBV remains relevant.

- In Central Asian countries, the commonality of traditions, foundations and way of life is undeniable. It is necessary to highlight several main trends affecting gender equality, such as the dominant role in the family of the father or grandfather, who often makes decisions alone, the preference to promote a male child into society, as well as support, promotion, and encouragement for his education as the future head of the family. A woman is given the honorable role of guardian of the house. A similar way of life, preserved for centuries and becoming an integral part within the clan, is characteristic of all Central Asian countries.
- All republics have local self-government bodies that have the ability to influence people’s opinions and attitudes. In Tajikistan, jamoats have shown themselves to be the most stable form of popular self-government. In recent years, women have been appointed to the position of chairperson of jamoats as well as secretaries who also have the right to vote and participate in the decision-making process. Jamoats consists of 5 to 10 villages in one area.
- The prospects for a visible solution to preventing gender-based violence lie in the strict fulfillment of responsibilities by all parties, clear coordinated actions of all participants, in-depth analysis of social, cultural and religious aspects, the involvement of highly qualified national experts, cultural experts, lawyers with knowledge of international criminal and civil law, activists civil society local experts, studying social relations, traditions, and their values in each of the communities.
- For effectively addressing gender issues, three main participants can be distinguished: the state, as a powerful executive body designed to protect the rights of citizens, development partners, authoritative partners such as the UN and its agencies and the OSCE, and civil society. The role of each participant must be studied and a model for effective cooperation of these structures must be drawn up, taking into account the characteristics of the region.

Ms. Guljahon Bobosodikova, CSO Representative, Republic Tajikistan

- The coalition “From de jure equality to de facto equality” was created in 2008, the purpose of which is to strengthen the contribution and influence of public associations in implementing the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and promoting gender equality in Tajikistan. The coalition unites more than 50 organizations from all regions of the country.
- Coalition members actively cooperate with interagency working groups at all levels, including lobbying for bills. Thanks to active lobbying for the adoption of the law, cooperation with government agencies and parliament and thanks to the political will of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On the Prevention of Domestic Violence” was adopted 10 years ago, despite the resistance of some men even in government agencies and in parliament.



- Along with implementers from government agencies, public organizations are actively involved in the implementation of the State Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2014-2023 contributing to increasing the efficiency of its implementation.
- To unite the efforts of civil society, the “Life without Violence” network was created, which consists of more than 50 member organizations (CSOs), and a CSO Strategy was developed, the goal of which is promote behavioral change and the implementation of initiatives aimed at preventing violence against women and girls in the Republic of Tajikistan.
- To prepare the CSO Strategy, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the activities of the subjects and the key reasons contributing to violence was carried out. The analysis showed: (1) The need to strengthen the capacity of the CSO institution itself; (2) Gender stereotypes are the basis for the reoccurrence of violent behavior against women and girls; (3) Low level of legal literacy of the population; (4) Incorrect interpretation of the canons of Islam; (5) Incorrect coverage of issues of violence in the media; and 6. Lack of access to statistics.
- There are also positive aspects in the elimination of violence against women. The Office of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan has created a working group to improve regulations to eliminate gender stereotypes, protect women’s rights and prevent domestic violence. The group is divided into 3 subgroups, but the results of the work of these subgroups, even after several years, are not visible. Coalition activists are part of these working groups.
- Experts from the CSO network “Life without Violence” have prepared the Concept of the Communication Strategy on “Promoting equal opportunities for men and women, eradicating gender stereotypes and violent behavior”. This concept will facilitate coordination of the work and efforts of all key parties. Therefore, it is important to cooperate closely with the “Life without violence” network. Also, for any regional level alliances and networks, it is important to engage all CSO organizations and networks for selection of representatives from the country’s CSOs rather than approaching individual organizations. This approach is more effective and covers the entire country.
- The achievements of the Joint EU-UN Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan to eliminate violence against women and girls were especially emphasized, especially its Pillar 6, which is dedicated to strengthening women’s movement and CSOs working on women’s rights. The significant financial contribution of the joint programme and cooperation of CSOs with UN agencies, government agencies, and local executive authorities in the pilot areas of the project greatly contributed to the achievement of many of the key results.

**Closing ceremony.** The closing of the workshop and wrap-up session was facilitated by Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan, Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth.

Ms. Nargis Rakhimova, UNFPA Head of Office in Tajikistan,

- Ms. Rakhimova expressed her satisfaction with the effective joint work with the Parliament of Tajikistan, government agencies and representatives of civil society. UNFPA in Tajikistan makes a huge contribution to ensuring the protection of women's rights and preventing violence. With the support of UNFPA, an expert group prepared and submitted for review the Regulations on the Multisectoral Coordination group under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. UNFPA also continues supplying the country with contraceptive materials; implementing a number of important activities on prevention of cervical cancer, and much more. In the future, significant events are planned as part of the joint work plan.

Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan, Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth

- Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri thanked all the participants of the event for their fruitful discussions and recommendations and expressed her confidence that the deputies of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan will make all efforts to prepare new laws and policies and strengthen existing laws to comply with international obligations of the Republic of Tajikistan. In this regard, Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri expressed her determination to continue the strong cooperation with government agencies, development partners, international organizations, and representatives of civil society.

## **F. Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- Revise GBV laws and policies to place greater emphasis on data collection, establish working groups to work on these issues (including representatives from all sectors and NGOs) and allocate separate budgets to develop GBV data collection, analysis, use and dissemination strategy.
- Establish a working group consisting of Members of Parliament for conducting gender analysis of the existing laws.
- In Tajikistan, 30% of the population is youth, and special attention should be paid to this group of the population, especially girls, to actively involve them in all spheres of life in the country.
- Continue the work of the Joint EU-UN Spotlight Initiative Programme in the Central Asian region, given that working with stereotypes and harmful practices, changing behaviors and cultivating an intolerant attitude towards violence requires long-term initiatives.
- Increase engagement of men and boys to change harmful social norms and end GBV.
- Expand the platform for discussing the efforts on addressing GBV in Uzbekistan and study the experience of this country in criminalizing domestic violence.

- All professionals from the relevant ministries and agencies should receive specific training on SGBV data collection, storage, and analysis, with a special focus on data protection procedures and data exchange during referrals.
- Multisectoral coding system (e.g., identification number) should be developed to allow the victim to be tracked over time and across different services, while assuring data protection protocols are in place, as well as to avoid double counting when data is compiled from different agencies and sectors into a single database.
- The UNFPA regional office is requested to explore the possibility of studying best practices in collecting GBV admin data statistics.
- Support studying the legislation of countries on violence issues, including addressing cyber violence.
- Strengthen work with religious leaders on the correct interpretation of the canons of Islam regarding prevention of violence against women.
- Cultivate universal human values of respect for individual rights, instill zero tolerance for violence against women and girls is achieved.
- Implementation of its obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and other international obligations on protection of women's rights ratified by Tajikistan should be comprehensively promoted.
- It is important to record cases of GBV, especially among vulnerable populations, strictly adhering to the principle of "leaving no one behind".
- It is necessary to develop effective mechanisms for recording cases of GBV, take preventive measures with the involvement of traditional leaders of society, including using the potential of religious leaders and clergy.

## G. Attachments:

### Appendix 1: Agenda

**Workshop**  
**ICPD30: Policymaking initiatives to address gender-based violence in Central Asia**  
**Dushanbe, Tajikistan**  
**19 September 2023**  
**Agenda**

For online participation please join Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81097949308?pwd=RWc0cHMxWVhRZFZGTEJWNTExWm1Wdz09>

Meeting ID: 810 9794 9308

Passcode: 499212

09:00-09:30	<b>MC: Dr Usmonov Farrukh</b> , interim Executive Director of AFPPD <b>Opening Session:</b>  <b>Welcome address by Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri</b> , Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Tajikistan; Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth  <b>Message by: Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi</b> , MP Japan, Chair of AFPPD (online) <b>Ms. Parvathy Ramaswami</b> , Resident Coordinator United Nations Tajikistan <b>Ms. Giulia Vallese</b> , Deputy Regional Director, UNFPA EECARO (online)
09:30-10:00	<b>Group Photo &amp; coffee-break</b>
10:00-11:00	<b>Session 1: ICPD30 and Regional Perspectives on GBV</b>  <b>Presentation by: Mr. Yu Yu</b> , UNFPA Representative in Uzbekistan/Country Director in Tajikistan [30 mins]  <b>Q&amp;A</b> [30 mins]

11:00-12:00	<p><b>Session 2: Importance of Data collection for Policy Development and implementation of GBV</b></p> <p><b>Presentation by: Ms. Nilufar Bahromzoda</b>, Programme Analyst on Gender, UNFPA Tajikistan [30 mins]</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b> [30 mins]</p> <p><b>Chair: Hon. Parvina Malikzod</b>, MP Tajikistan</p>
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-14:15	<p><b>Session 3: Parliamentarians’ role to eliminate gender-based violence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mr. Romeo Dongeto</b>, Executive Director of the Philippine Legislators’ Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), Philippines [15 mins] (online)</li> <li><b>Hon. Aroma Dutta</b>, MP Bangladesh [15 mins] (online)</li> <li><b>Hon. Angela Warren-Clark</b>, MP New Zealand, Co-Chair of AFPDP Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment [15 mins] (online)</li> </ol> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b> [30 mins]</p> <p><b>Moderator: Dr. Usmonov Farrukh</b>, Interim Executive Director of AFPPD</p>
14:15-14:30	<b>Coffee-break</b>
14:30-15:45	<p><b>Session 4: Prevention of GBV in Central Asia region: Perspectives and Challenges</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hon. Elvira Surabaldieva</b>, MP Kyrgyzstan [15 mins] (online)</li> <li><b>Hon. Surayo Dustmurodzoda</b>, MP Tajikistan [15 mins]</li> <li><b>Ms. Guljahon Bobosodiqova</b>, representative of CSO, Tajikistan [15 mins]</li> </ol> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b> [30 mins]</p> <p><b>Moderator: Dr. Usmonov Farrukh</b>, Interim Executive Director of AFPPD</p>
15:45-16:00	<p><b>Closing and wrap-up</b></p> <p><b>Hon. Dilrabo Mansuri</b>, Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Tajikistan; Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth</p>

Organized by:  
**The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD)**

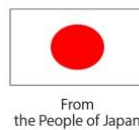
**The Asian Population and Development Association (APDA)**

Host Organization  
**Majlisi namoyandagon Majlisi Oli (Parliament), Republic of Tajikistan**

Funded by:  
**The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

**The Japan Trust Fund (JTF)**

Supported by:  
**The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)**



## Appendix 2: Participants' list

Participants' List of the Workshop 19 September 2023, Dushanbe Tajikistan					
No		Name	Country	Position	
<b>Participants from Asia and the Pacific Countries</b>					
1	Hon.	Aroma Dutta	Bangladesh	MP	online
2	Hon.	Abdua Shahid	Bangladesh	MP	online
3	Hon.	Karma Lhamo	Bhutan	MP	online
4	Hon.	Lork Kheng	Cambodia	MP	online
5	Hon. Prof.	Keizo Takemi	Japan	MP, Chair of AFPPD	online
6	Hon.	Elvira Surabaldieva	Kyrgyzstan	MP	online
7	Hon.	Angela Warren-Clark	New Zealand	MP	online
8	Hon.	Hector Appuhamy	Sri Lanka	MP	online
9	Hon.	Dilrabo Mansuri	Tajikistan	MP; Deputy Speaker of Parliament	
10	Hon.	Parvina Malikzod	Tajikistan	MP	
11	Hon.	Surayo Dustmurodzoda	Tajikistan	MP	
12	Hon	Tagoyzoda Sumangul	Tajikistan	MP	
13	Hon	Sodiqi Nasiba	Tajikistan	MP	
14	Hon	Qurbonzoda Mahmadali	Tajikistan	MP	
15	Hon	Ashurzoda Gulbahor	Tajikistan	MP	
16	Hon	Shamsidinzoda Mavzuna	Tajikistan	MP	
17	Hon.	Matrobiyon Saodatsho	Tajikistan	MP	
18	Hon	Mirzozoda Mavludakhon	Tajikistan	MP	
19	Hon	Sheralizoda Muhamadullo	Tajikistan	MP	
20	Hon.	Azizzoda Gayrat	Tajikistan	MP	
21	Hon	Gulahmadzoda Zulfiqor	Tajikistan	MP	
22	Hon	Rahmatzoda Rustam	Tajikistan	MP	
23	Hon	Shodizoda Parviz	Tajikistan	MP	
24	Hon	Rahmonzoda Zoir	Tajikistan	MP	
25	Hon.	Odinaev Hayot	Tajikistan	MP	
26	Hon.	Holmakhmadzoda Soleha	Tajikistan	MP	
27	Hon. Dr.	Jetn Sirathranont	Thailand	MP; Secretary General of AFPPD	online
<b>Resource persons and rapporteur</b>					
28	Ms.	Marhabo Olimi	Tajikistan	Rapporteur	
29	Ms.	Guljahon Bobosodikova	Tajikistan	CSO representative	
<b>The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)</b>					
30	Ms.	Giulia Vallese	Turkey	Deputy Regional Director, EECARO	online

31	Mr.	Yu Yu	Uzbekistan	Country Director for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan	
32	Ms.	Nargis Rakhimova	Tajikistan		
33	Ms.	Nilufar Bahromzoda	Tajikistan	Programme Analyst on Gender	
34	Mr.	Khondker Zakiur Rahman	Bangladesh	Technical officer	online
<b>The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD)</b>					
35	Dr.	Farrukh Usmonov	Japan	Interim Executive Director	
<b>Tajikistan Parliament officers</b>					
36	Mr.	Aziz Qahhorov	Tajikistan	Adviser to the Deputy Speaker	
37	Mr.	Jamshedzoda Komron	Tajikistan	Adviser to the Deputy of comite	
38	Ms.	Azimi Marhabo	Tajikistan	Adviser to the Deputy Speaker	
39	Ms.	Abdurahimova Muhabbat	Tajikistan	Parliament Staff	
<b>Secretariat officers of the National Committees attending online</b>					
40	Ms.	Sheila Ngoc Pham	Australia	APGPD	online
41	Mr.	Kamal Billah	Bangladesh	Parliamentary officer	online
42	Mr.	A.K.M Abdur Rahim Bhuyain	Bangladesh	Parliamentary officer	online
43	Ms.	Mithchan Linda	Cambodia	CAPPD	online
44	Mr.	Manmohan Sharma	India	Executive Secretary	online
45	Mr.	Samidjo	Indonesia	IFPPD	online
46	Ms.	Hitomi Tsunekawa	Japan	APDA	online
47	Ms.	Eri Osada	Japan	APDA	online
48	Ms.	Mio Fuke	Japan	APDA	online
49	Ms.	Ayaka Haga	Japan	APDA	online
50	Mr.	Azri Norfikri	Malaysia	AFPPD Malaysia	online
51	Mr.	Ram Guragain	Nepal	NFPPD	online
52	Ms.	Alicia Sudden	New Zealand	NZPPD	online
53	Mr.	Romeo Dongeto	Philippines	PLCPD, Executive Director	online
54	Ms.	Aurora Quilala	Philippines	PLCPD	online
55	Ms.	Nenita Dalde	Philippines	PLCPD	online