

Asia Regional People's Assembly 2022

Declaration

ASIA REGIONAL PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY 2022

DATE & TIME
September 20, 2022 | 1:15 pm - 3 pm Bangkok time

REGISTRATION LINK
<https://bit.ly/3Boy55L>

COMMUNITY VOICES

RESPONSE FROM THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

THEMATIC DISCUSSION

Logos: Global Call to Action Against Poverty, Asia Dalit Rights Forum, APSD, ADN, ADA, act:onaid, THE PEOPLE'S VACCINE, OXFAM, PRRM, pda, INCLUSIVITY, ONE SINGAPORE, MAKE POVERTY HISTORY, NRDS, act:onaid, Aide et Action

[This charter has been prepared based on the discussions held in the Asia Regional People's Assembly on 20th September 2022 and other declarations which were earlier adopted e.g., declaration of South Asia Association for Poverty Alleviation (SAAPE) (adopted on June 3, 2022)]

Introduction: The Covid-19 pandemic has tremendously impacted the wellbeing of people - worsening the food crisis, increasing the poverty levels and widening inequalities. A healthy, peaceful, just and climate resilient society is becoming a far cry with fast dwindling commitments of the governments towards a just and equitable recovery. Undeterred rise in global temperature due to anthropogenic activities defy all claims of achieving a net zero emission. Russia's war against Ukraine is threatening to destabilise the global order. Furthermore, it has impacted the survival and livelihood of the poor, especially their food and energy who have already been affected by the disasters and COVID-19 pandemic.

The threat from the COVID-19 virus looms large with a highly unequal rate of vaccination between the rich and the low- and middle-income countries. The continuous opposition of the demand for a TRIPS waiver of vaccine test and treatment at WTO by the rich countries

till the last Ministerial Conference 12 (MC12) led to vaccine inequality and massive loss of lives in the global south. The decision by the WTO members in the MC12 on Covid vaccines is unlikely to lead to mass production and distribution of the vaccine. During the pandemic the health infrastructure crumbled exposing its fragility. Right to Health ought to be the framework for revitalising the sector.

The worsening debt situation in Latin America, Africa and Asian countries has forced their governments to take austerity measures cutting spending on social protection, health and education. The Right to Public Services and fully functional social protection ought to be in place instead of taking austerity measures.

Older people, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, communities discriminated by work and descent, migrants, women, transgender people, and children are suffering in multiple ways.

Human rights activists, civil society and media have taken a severe beating during the pandemic and after due to unreasonable restrictions on these actors of democracy. The human rights of the most marginalised groups like the indigenous communities, Dalits and CDWD (Communities discriminated by work and descent), persons with disabilities, women and girls have been violated with impunity.

The issues and concerns and demands have been developed on five following theses:

1. Right to health, privatisation of health and vaccine inequality
2. Food, hunger, poverty crisis and income inequality
3. Universal social protection and right to public services
4. Democracy, civic space and human rights
5. Climate justice and Disaster Risk Reduction DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction)

1. Right to health, privatisation of health and vaccine inequality

Issues and concerns:

- Vaccine inequality is artificial. This is due to the Pharma greed and support to the greed by the rich countries. The proposal for TRIPS waiver of Covid-19 vaccines test and treatment at the WTO was defeated by the European countries
- The decision of the MC12 of the WTO is very limited in nature and not an intellectual property waiver in real sense. It will not lead to mass production and distribution and ending vaccine inequality among the rich and the developing countries.
- Marginalised peoples, LGBTQI, DWD communities, indigenous communities and other marginalised communities are having limited access to basic health services
- Lack of public investment in primary health care
- Increasing privatisation of health sector by countries
- Trade and intellectual property barriers to production of COVID tests and treatment

Demands:

- We demand the review of MC12 decision and a full TRIPS waiver of Covid-19 vaccines, test and treatment.
- We demand national policies on free and universal vaccination with a priority to the most marginalised communities adhering to the principles of 'Leave No One Behind'
- We demand the adoption of the Pandemic Treaty
- We demand Universal Health Protection mechanism in place funded through public investment
- Decentralised production of COVID-tools, setting up tech transfer hubs
- Strengthen community-based systems by increasing public investments in primary health care through improving human, physical infrastructure (human resources, medical equipment, facilities etc.
- Transparency and civil society voices in decision-making in relation to financing and governance of global pandemic preparedness, prevention and response (PPPR) including the Financial Intermediary Fund at the World Bank and the pandemic treaty negotiations at the World Health Organisation

2. Food, hunger, poverty and income inequality

Issues and concerns:

- Inequalities are at an all-time high. The vulnerability of the health system, the lack of food pricing to protect people from the volatility of inflationary pressures, and the monopoly of a few food companies have reversed the gains in these areas.
- Poverty, hunger, unemployment are on the rise during and post pandemic period. Child labour, gender violence, exclusion and discrimination have increased. Various marginalised groups are struggling to meet their both ends meet.
- Grabbing of land and natural resources from the communities has led to loss of people's right to natural resources and livelihood forcing them to poverty and hunger - their right to live with dignity
- The marginalization and structural exclusion of women from governance, economic and political participation has reinforced the feminization of poverty, discrimination, and violence against them.
- The exclusion of women and other sexual minorities from politics and governance is a violation of fundamental human rights as it breaches the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- We appreciate the Sustainable Development Goals' affirmation to reduce inequality, combat climate change, and strengthen labour rights. However, the efforts to eradicate global poverty only through economic growth, export-oriented models,

trade liberalisation, etc. would be counterproductive and perpetuate poverty as well as increase greenhouse gases.

Demands:

- We demand adequate public resources to address the issues of poverty, hunger, unemployment, loss of livelihood, etc.
- We need agrarian reforms and food sovereignty
- We demand community rights over the land and other natural resources.
- Land grabbing should stop immediately. Any diversion of natural resources from the communities to the corporate should be based on community's consent.
- Ecological planning through the involvement of the communities of the use of land, water and other resources should be done and implemented for community's benefit
- We should ensure women's meaningful engagement in politics and governance that can contribute to reducing inequalities while promoting peace and dignity for all

3. Universal social protection and right to public services

Issues and concerns:

- As of 2020, only 46.9 percent of the global population were effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit leaving out a large percentage out of any safety net.
- The new international economic order brings in more stringent privatisation measures, more flexibilities in labour standards at the production end, and foreign direct investment, which has stringent forms of labour extraction attached to them. In the medium and long run indebtedness occurs, and self-reliance is lost.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on almost every aspect of our lives and exposed the dismal state of our social protection system. The COVID-19 death toll remained four times higher in lower-income countries than in rich ones.
- The situation of social protection in low-income countries is poor, so also the scale of investment
- The worsening debt situation in Latin America, Africa and Asian countries has forced their governments to take austerity measures cutting spending on social protection, health and education

Demands:

- We demand universal social protection funded by the government exchequer
- Minimum living wages and job security across the Asia region by the Asian governments should be ensured

- Ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants providing them citizenship rights regardless of migration status
- The governments should explore various means of resource generation e.g., imposing wealth tax etc
- The illegitimacy of the public debt should be exposed and the government should make everything in relation to that transparent
- The debt repayment policies should not force austerity measures and reduce funds for universal social protection.

4. Democracy, civic space and human rights

Issues and concerns:

- We are alarmed by the increasing warmongering and hostility among countries in south Asia
- There has been rise of religious fundamentalism and majoritarianism adversely affecting the minorities in the region.
- The region has witnessed electoral authoritarianism and lack of accountability by the governments
- There are increased restrictions of fundamental freedom especially freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of peaceful assembly.
- The rights of women with disability have been violated during and post pandemic
- There has been exclusion of youth from the decision-making process
- The role of civil society has become crucial in raising voice against suppression of democratic freedom. But civil society is facing the state aggression
- In the pretext of controlling the spread of Covid-19, many governments have taken measures to restrict civic space

Demands:

- We demand the south Asian countries to delink from terrorism, war mongering and religious fundamentalism
- We demand safeguard of democratic values including freedom of expression and speech, freedom of press, and protection of the minorities in whole of Asia
- We demand the governments to respect and protect the freedom of the civil society organisations and democratic institutions
- Urge the government to fulfil its obligations under the human rights covenants and conventions which the government ratified
- Collaboration and partnership in order to bring the inclusive society

- There should be civic Education to address and expand the civic space

5. Climate justice and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Issues and concerns:

- The climate crisis is a result of the overconsumption of some at the cost of many
- Climate change – for which rich and developed countries are to blame – has increased vulnerabilities and disasters in low-income countries, and poor and marginalised communities
- The climate crisis is closely linked to the greed-based development model adopted by the government. Unless consumption is controlled in the rich countries and also by the rich people in the developing countries, climate crisis cannot be addressed

Demands:

- Communities for decades practised sustainable development and governments need to promote and scale-up community successes.
- End use of fossil fuel in a time bound manner
- In the spirit of global partnership, the rich countries should support the low- and middle-income countries with technology to cope up with climate change
- The rich countries should do climate financing for the loss and damage caused in low- and middle-income countries
- Every country in Asia should develop a roadmap for mitigation and adaptation.
- There should be long term plan to transform every sector of economy toward the path of sustainability
- Divesting from climate harming industries and investing in green alternatives

We commit ourselves as civil society actors to work together to make the demands a reality on the ground in a spirit of global solidarity with the people who are struggling for peace, justice and human rights in Asia and beyond.

The Undersigned:

1. Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) (Coordination)
2. Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF)
3. The Inclusivity Project
4. Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development (APSD)
5. Asia Democracy Network (ADN)

6. Asia Development Alliance (ADA)
7. ActionAid India
8. People's Vaccine Alliance (PVA), Asia Chapter
9. OXFAM Asia
10. South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE)
11. Wada Na Todo Abhiyan
12. NGO Federation of Nepal
13. Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)
14. Noakhali Rural Development Society, Bangladesh
15. Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA)
16. ONE Singapore
17. Africa Japan Forum
18. Coordination Committee of Cambodia (CCC)
19. ActionAid International - Asia Region
20. Aide Et Action – International