



STATEMENT OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2015

1. The First International Conference for Gender Equality (ICGE-I) was organized by the Gender Park, Department of Social Justice, Government of Kerala in partnership with UN Women between November 12-14th 2015 in Kovalam, Kerala. Participants from 35 countries were represented.
2. The theme of the Conference was Gender, Governance, and Inclusion focusing on the urgent need for a transformative agenda to move towards greater inclusion and gender equality. It has come at a time when international development institutions shift emphasis from the MDGs to SDGs as a more sustainable and resilient path of development, in response to varied dialogues involving representatives of nation states, civil society organizations and platforms, other national and international forums, Goal 5 of the 17 SDGs. “ Gender equality and the empowerment of women has also been mainstreamed into a majority of all the 17 sdgs.” and 169 targets--Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls-- is more substantial compared to previous MDGs.

3. We recognize that:

- Multiple and intersectional inequalities can compound experiences of injustice, social marginalisation and oppression. A comprehensive agenda needs to address inequalities arising from gender, caste, race, ethnicity, age, religion, health, disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and gender identities;
- Justice is done only when all, whatever their sexual identities, are equally mainstreamed into the social and economic dimensions of the country;
- We must shift to a language of development that broadens the feminist/ women's agenda to include masculinity and shades thereof, and engage men and people of different sexualities, transforming all.
- Greater gender equality in access to resources can contribute to economic growth but market led neoliberal policies have failed to generate sustainable livelihoods and have curtailed the public provision of services with profound inequalities in health and education, undermining progress on equality, particularly at the grassroots, where gains made are being lost.

- Degrading occupations, such as scavenging, must be eliminated, and 'decent' work must be available to everyone, especially those who are in the non-monetised sector.
- The category of unpaid household and care labour, performed largely by women gives rise to high levels of time poverty.
- Reallocation of budgetary resources is necessary through equity building, monetary and fiscal policies and public investment.
- Need for disaggregated by sex data collection as well as monitoring and review would add much and serve as a platform to proceed and propel progress.

5. In view of the above, we commit ourselves to working for a more inclusive world that recognizes diversity and plurality:

- A world where women, transgender, and men (particularly from marginalized communities such as dalit, scheduled tribes, people facing disabilities) have equal access to social, economic, and political opportunities, and where all policies and programs address the newer, less visible, and more complex patriarchal stereotypes about all gender identities and sexual diversities.

6. To achieve the above, we commit ourselves to ensuring the following as well as to rigorous and systematic monitoring results of all interventions:

- A participatory rights-based governance overarching framework through engendered power spaces in the structures, institutions and processes to equip and enable women and transgenders, and men from marginalized and excluded communities to dialogue, engage, confront and negotiate with patriarchal ideologies and power structures that contributed to their subordinate status and non-participatory positionality.
- Full citizenship in political, private, and developmental arenas for all genders; acceptance of and guaranteed access to welfare for all living outside heteronormative, conventional familial arrangements.

- Keeping the frame and content of poverty alleviation interventions alive to the changing needs and circumstances of the women of vulnerable social groups; and acknowledging the plurality of genders among the poor in developing policy; taking into account internal differences among them in shaping policy.
- The presence of women and TG in the labor force that empowers them and gives them access to market related resources and assets, as well as quality employment that will pay equal wages for equal work and promote greater economic empowerment and autonomy.
- Incentivization of employment for women in domestic and global labour markets, in particular at the lower levels of the skill hierarchy, through policy intervention. To enable women to participate on equal terms as labour by removing barriers to mobility, providing skills and support structures. To eliminate existing incentive structures that privilege the boy child, entrench marital identities, heterosexual norms to build gender sensitive physical and social infrastructure for the aged and differently abled.
- Comprehensive mapping of the informal economy to account for overlaps with the formal sector, exclusion from the formal sector and motivations for opting out of the formal sector. The above mapping should provide the basis for a new perspective to formulate regulation and protect the rights of informal workers.
- Highlighting the lacunae in existing institutional mechanisms to prepare women for the labour market while also suggesting ways in which efforts can be made to extend existing facilities and infrastructure to reach out to women so that productivity and marketability of existing work/skills can be enhanced while also developing innovative possibilities to provide varying skill sets to women to meet the needs of society today.
- Changing traditional concepts of masculinity that thwart women's empowerment but have an equally damaging effect on men's behaviour and psyche. Work to change masculine and feminine stereotypes expressed in the male breadwinner norm, dependent housewife and a culture of violence.
- Redistribution of women's unpaid household and care work through policies, legal frameworks, and gender-aware infrastructure designed to facilitate shared responsibilities within the household and to ensure the

participation of communities and private sector in providing friendly workplaces and public spaces.

- Addressing issues of caste, class, ethnicity, race and sexuality in formal institutions of learning so as to encourage critical engagements with gender as a social category and lived experience.
- Recognizing and addressing the safety and dignity across a woman's life course, including her sexual, reproductive health and rights, as two critical pillars in accelerating progress towards gender equality; and recognise lack of agency and choice under the enduring influence of patriarchy, further accentuated by strong son preference in the Indian sub-continent.
- Privatization and commercialization of the provision of public health care should not affect basic provision of public health services, and policies should stress the social determinants of health.
- The rights of all women, TGs, men, and children to live free from violence and violation of human rights as well as to explicitly prohibit and punish all forms of physical, emotional, and sexual violence against them- a widespread manifestation of inequality that ruptures communities and nations and has adverse implications on public well being, health, safety and productivity.
- Formally engaging and involving People with Disabilities (PwDs) in all decision-making processes, and challenging stereotypes of powerlessness and objectification of PwDs to change power relationships between PwDs and the non-disabled to allow PwDs to become fully participative as well as resourced and capacitated to take control of their own lives.
- Promotion of media-related professionals to change their language, dialogue, and depictions to support gender equality and an inclusive society, and change norms of reporting and presentation to include more women and transgender voices as well as making necessary arrangements and infrastructure to allow their employees to report from the field in safety and security.
- Finally, a special request to the Government of Kerala to ensure that gender-specific restrictions are not placed in the name of protection of women, depriving them of their basic constitutional rights.

