

A SOUTH FEMINIST CROSS-REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF BEIJING+25



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In 2020, the global community marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) , as well as the five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The main focus of the 2020 UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was due to be around the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and global fora in Mexico and France had been set to take place to continue discussing and mobilising member states for post Beijing+25 commitments at global level to take actions at the national level. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission on the Status of

Women convened, on 9 March, for a meeting including opening statements and the adoption of the draft Political Declaration, and the session was then suspended until further notification. Similarly the Mexico and France forums were postponed.

Despite this, much progress had been made In 2019 and 2020 towards what was a pivotal year for the review of the BPfA, including national and regional convenings on Beijing+25 in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia Pacific and Europe. Building on this momentum, and recognizing also the significant impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had makes the review and recommitment to the BPfA even more urgent and relevant, RESURJ and accomplices share here analysis of the regional forums in 2019 and 2020, with an aim to informing key priorities and

highlighting emerging and urgent trends and contexts, towards the 65th Commission on the Status of Women and accelerated efforts towards Beijing+25.

RESURJ members have been tracking progress at national levels, across various countries, on the implementation of the BPfA, as well as engaging in national consultation processes and regional conferences in different regions. RESURJ supported members and allies to mobilise for meaningful participation and to bring global south feminists voices to the review process at all levels to consistently position Sexual and Reproductive Justice, and the intersections between gender equality, economic and environmental justice beyond the original 12 critical areas of BPfA of 1995 and bring to light missing, new, and emerging feminist issues that have been left out in the past 25 years of the BPfA. RESURJ convened spaces and organized and mobilized with feminist allies in the regions, to strategize around shared priorities. At the young African space, now known as Feminists Community of Care (FEMCOM) organised by RESURJ, more than 15 young African feminists from more than 10 countries convened in a space to collectively strategize, and to discuss their experiences at the regional forum and key feminist African realities they felt not being addressed at the regional forum. These included the lack of a deeper analysis of systems of oppression for women rights i.e patriarchy, capitalism, heteronormativity and, economic and ecological crises. Along with Vecinas Feministas, and other collaborators including GNB, and IWHC we hosted a meeting in LAC, that brought together activists from various movements

around priorities for Beijing+25, our group of diverse activists included young and younger feminists, indigenous women and human rights activists working on children issues. We set priorities and strategize to influence the outcome document, the current **Santiago Commitment**, and participated actively in the Feminist Forum held a day before the Conference with a **Feminist Declaration** as input for the Conference. In Europe we organized with feminist allies across constituencies, including sex workers and sex worker led organizations, to ensure their voices and realities, as well as those of various marginalized groups, were included and highlighted as within the priorities for civil society.

Similarly in 2020, RESURJ has developed various feminist analysis and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, that links closely to the BPfA. As part of understanding how COVID-19 affected SRHR across the regions, members and collaborating feminist groups **reflected** on impacts of COVID on women and girls, healthworkers, state responses and militarization. The reflections from the countries called to attention of how states were ill-equipped to deal with the health crisis, and how disproportionately women, girls and non binaries have been affected by the pandemic. Members highlighted how legal processes further impede access to basic health rights, particularly with regards to **female sex workers**, informal workers, forcing groups to choose between basic survival or healthcare. The demands from across the region reflect this analysis, emphasising why feminists' lens are important to assure "no one is left behind".

The varied analysis from members and collaborators strengthened the argument that COVID-19 has not just exposed a weak healthcare system, but how capitalism and patriarchy contributed, and continues to contribute, to the failures of meeting the needs of people, and how ostentatious “gender responsive”, or “equality” measures are. Feminists, activists and allies have long argued that without changing the oppressive structures and systems, without acknowledging and transforming socio-political and economic environments, we will continue to face these challenges and failures, irrespective of social protection, austerity measures and commitments to equality. Resurj members and contributors provided critical reflections on the significance of looking at broader implications of COVID-19, from **the politics of vaccine provisions during COVID-19 from an SRHR perspective**, or analysing **militarisation** during the pandemic and its impact on SRHR, and cement the fact that **without challenging the current status quo**, equality can not be achieved.

In this analysis, we share our experiences and analysis from south feminists perspectives and realities of the B+25 review process from national and regional processes and recommendations leading up to Generation Equality Forums in Mexico and France and the Action Coalitions commitments meant to carry forward and build upon the legacy of Beijing Platform for Action.

MISSING LINKS, ISSUES, REALITIES AND NARRATIVES IN THE BEIJING+25



Latin America and the Caribbean

RESURJ members and allies **attended the XIV Regional Conference** on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Chile January 24-31 2020, where the progress and implementation of the BPfA was reviewed, as well as side events on the Beijing+25 and Montevideo Strategy Country Reports. The conference got postponed from late 2019 to early 2020 after the social outbreak in October 2019 due to a raise in the price of transportation, unchaining a series of protests that went beyond that and developed into the current constitutional process to change the current constitution written during the infamous dictatorship of Pinochet. The Conference needed to happen in Santiago since ECLAC is based there, and the host government was Chile. The political context was still, and still is, very uneasy, with many vigorous protests as well as a very violent reaction from government and armed forces.

One of the most shocking consequences of the outbreak and the repressive forces from the Chilean State is that **many people have lost one or both eyes** from the hardened rubber bullets used to disperse the protesters.

During the Conference there were many expressions of solidarity for the social movement on the streets of Santiago, the smell of pepper spray would get to us during the evenings reminding us that Chile's struggle was happening in parallel to the this UN event, and that we couldn't stay at ease while their Ministry of Gender was pretending everything was ok. How many times is this happening? That our ministries participate in these spaces pretending everything is better than it actually is? How many times would a Ministry acknowledge the real struggle in each of our countries? This is something we all know, and we are there to make sure that they don't pretend too much.

During the Conference everyone, including speakers from ECLAC, would graciously mention their support for the social struggle that was happening in the land we were standing, Civil Society decided to wear eye patches, stand up, and leave the room when the Chilean authorities asked for the floor, but still the Conference went through the agenda.

The Santiago Commitment is very strong. Feminist and civil society participation was significant in the event, and feminists led various actions to highlight and demand accountability around some of the urgent and emerging trends in the region, including actions to highlight the issue of rape culture, and the full realization of the BPfA in the region and globally.

The Feminist Declaration set out a strong list of demands for government including calling for; access to safe, legal, and free abortion throughout the region, the classification of the criminalization and blocking of access to abortion as state violence, acknowledging that sexual rights and reproductive rights are human rights, and an end to all forms of repression against women, including the use of sexual violence as a tool for police and military control amid crises in countries; amongst many others.

RESURJ hosted a Side Event together with Vecinas Feministas and Balance where we discussed the impact of criminalization on adolescent's SRHR with partners from Equis and the Minister of Women, Gender and Diversity from Argentina. At the event we discussed the unintended or undesired consequences of punitivism and how this affects the autonomy of adolescents in the region. With examples from Uruguay, Mexico and Argentina we talked about alternatives to punitivism. With the Covid-19 Pandemic, these calls are even more urgent as we witness that the pandemic exacerbated social inequalities and the lack of social security policies. Women suffered the double pandemic of being locked in quarantine with their aggressors. Care work continued to be mostly in the hands of women. To this task was added the burden of virtual classes. Many Latin American countries applied punitive measures to enforce quarantines or social restrictions. Several States took advantage of the context to further repress historically discriminated sectors such as LGTBI people, the poor, Afro-descendants, among others. Some States even persecuted political dissidents, using punitive mechanisms to enforce sanitary measures.

Africa

The **Africa regional review** of twenty-five years of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) took place from October 27, 2019 to November 1, 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. RESURJ members and allies from different African countries including Rwanda, Zambia, Mozambique, Uganda and Senegal participated in a pre youth consultation, the main meetings at the African Union and also organised their own young African feminists space on 30th October 2019 in Addis Ababa.

At the Pre- youth consultation at the Africa Regional of BPoA, our members and allies engaged and led the development of a youth position paper which was presented at the main intergovernmental review meeting. Key issues that were clearly missing from the pre youth and main conference included the recognition and challenges faced by African LGBTQI, sex workers and gender non conforming people. There was also a clear lack of an interlinkage approach of sexual and reproductive, gender, economic and ecological justice issues that affect the majority of young women and girls in all their diversity on the African continent.

Of great concern to us was a systemic exclusion of certain voices and the civic space at the regional review. CSOs planned side events were cancelled by UN women at last minute, to not “over shadow” those arranged by UN Women, CSOs were not allowed to attend the ministerial meeting where outcome was adopted, there was deliberate refusal of organisers to speak on issues of LGBTQI and sex workers rights from the youth position paper and people

living with disabilities and their needs for accessibility were not taken into consideration which delayed and reduced time of the CSOs engagement at the regional review.

Overall, the presence and participation of RESURJ supported members and allies made a great difference and ensured that the voices of often left out identities and issues were highlighted in all discussions.

The Africa Political Declaration and key messages and priority actions on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing+25) of 28th October to 1st November 2019 highlighted critical issues that young women activists at the forum recommended including need to advance quality education and training, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, progressive taxation, mobilization of domestic resources, curbing illicit financial flows, gender-responsive budgeting, corporate accountability and social protection programs for women and girls.

However, the declaration key messages failed to put emphasis on urgent need for strengthening public quality education and training for women and girls including those that have dropped out, reversing privatisation of education at all levels, failed to state steps for ensuring structural barriers to education including unpaid care work and poverty can be eliminated. Regarding steps to implementing SDG 3 on universal health coverage and well being, the declaration was silent on what needs to be done to ensure realisation of sexual and

reproductive justice for women and girls in all their diversity including LGBTQI, sex workers and other marginalised groups on the continent.

With the Covid-19 Pandemic, these calls are even more urgent as we witness that pre existing inequalities, discriminations and injustices have become worse especially for women and girls.

Europe

In the ECE region, at [the UNECE Beijing+25 Regional Review meeting](#), the focus on VAW of the [regional discussions and outcome](#), was heavily weighted towards criminalization and punitive measures, and improving the implementation of laws as the way to improve response to and prevention of VAW. RESURJ and allies tried to address how there can be a more comprehensive approach to responding to VAW, including in the VAW and GBV factsheets developed at the civil society forum. Of concern was the omission of issues of GBV, including reference to trans and GNC people in the VAW factsheet, despite calls from RESURJ and allies to include.

Despite the priorities coming from the civil society forum and feminist activities, being aimed at highlighting current contexts and trends- there was very little mention of for example rise of the right, only some mention of neoliberalism, and only a few advocates in the room strongly voicing the need to address the rights of migrant women in the context of 'fortress Europe'. There was a concerning lack of focus on structural inequalities, or on communities facing multiple and intersecting forms of

discrimination, despite efforts from RESURJ and allies to highlight this, and despite some participants voicing this concern in the plenary of the CSO forum. We proposed including a point on the specific impacts on gun violence on black women of color and interlinkages with white supremacy and neo-conservatism, but our comments were rejected. The SRHR of sex workers was a constant issue of tension prior to and during the CSO forum and official sessions.

Asia Pacific

Feminists from the Asia Pacific region expressed their concerns on the rising extremism, facism/authoritarianism in the region and brought attention to the need to focus on climate change, a serious threat to the region. Calling out particularly to rural, indigenous, migrant, refugees, urban poor, Dalit women, including women who are ethnic minorities, stateless women, lesbian, bisexual women, people with intersex variations, trans and non-binary persons. The increase in climate concerns, the declarations outlined the need to focus on reforming policies and laws that continue to perpetuate inequities, especially against vulnerable communities, particularly those on the SOGIESC spectrum. The vital importance of recognizing unpaid domestic labor, sex work and informal labor was emphasized, while also reiterating the need to address labor exploitation. Feminists groups further demanded the dismantling of systemic oppressive structures and neo liberal capitalists systems that further these inequities against people, especially rural, indigenous, migrant, refugees, ethnic minorities, stateless women, lesbian, bisexual women, people with intersex

variations, trans and non-binary persons. Importance of creating spaces and opportunities for women and girls to access quality education, and to increase political representation was stressed upon, with emphasis laid upon investments in building data management systems to track gender outcomes, which would lead to informed and effective decision making. Most significantly, feminists and women groups from the region reiterated the rising gender based violence that the region is experiencing and highlighted the unavailability of essential health services, especially SRHR services, and emphasised the need to recognize the intersectionalities of discrimination and violence through a lifecycle approach, and urged states to ensure that national and legal frameworks are aligned with the principles set forward in the BPfA and CEDAW, to effectively address the issue.

The ESCAP outcome document reflects commitments to the asks of the region, clearly outlining actions needed to be taken to effectuate gender responsive programs, interventions and legislations. The document calls for much needed ratification of international treaties, and urges member states to make appropriate policy changes to align with these commitments. The documents, aligned with the asks, calls for the recognition of unpaid labor and contribution of women and girls to the informal and formal work spaces, and for appropriate measures to be undertaken to rectify, and further emphasizes on the need to improve situations of agriculture, fisheries, and livestock sectors. The document outlines the need for economic diversification, and puts forward the need

for strengthening policies to ensure that supportive environments are created for the improvement of outcomes for people.

Social protection and universal access to health and SRHR is covered in the outcome, outlining a strong commitment to provision of essential services for women and girls, which aligns with the asks and needs highlighted by feminist and women groups. There is emphasis laid on education, and improving response mechanisms to violence and discrimination, and furthermore, recognition of the need for improving data collection and management, from a gendered perspective.

A key gap that still persists in the silence around sex workers, and non binary communities. Inclusive language is missing, and the needs across the SOGIE spectrum is largely ignored by the outcome document. While there is positive focus on reforms and legislative improvements to respond to the needs, the focus is largely on process and legal improvements, with little movement or inclination shown towards a socio-ecological approach towards violence and discrimination faced by women and girls, which is essential in dismantling oppressive structures that perpetuate inequalities.



RESURJ is a transnational membership-based feminist alliance formed in 2010 by younger feminist activists under the age of 40 from Africa, Asia, Pacific, South West Asia and North Africa, and Latin America, grounded in national and regional social justice movements, who seek to realize sexual and reproductive justice (SRJ) for all.

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