

**YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025**

*Topic Descriptions*

Committee: Asia-Pacific Summit

Chair: Audrey Lin

## Topic #1: Growing Economic Inequality

### Introduction & Background

**Wealth inequality** is the uneven distribution of wealth, through paychecks/salaries, assets, and possessions. Factors that play into wealth inequality include gender, ethnicity, location, historical income and occupation. The **Gini Index**, as defined by the World Bank, is a method to measure the distribution of income amongst individuals or households within a country's economy that deviates from a perfect equal distribution. A Gini Index of 0 represents a perfect distribution of income, while a gini index of 100 implies a completely unequal distribution of income. The rapid urbanization of many Asia-Pacific nations through **technological advancements, globalization, and market-oriented reforms** has had a powerful impact on the wealth gap in the past decade. These forces have caused nations to favor capital over labor and urban areas over rural.

Many Asia-Pacific governments have recognized this problem in the past and have sought to expand the coverage of financial services for low-income households. For example, Singapore offers ComCare Interim Assistance, a program that provides support such as food rations, cash, or supermarket vouchers to low-income families who are facing challenges in making ends meet. However, unlike in other regions, any attempts to close the wealth gap in the Asia-Pacific region in the past through providing more social and education based benefits have failed. Furthermore, previous social benefits put into place have been improperly targeted and have only benefited those not in need of financial assistance.

### Current Status

In the past two decades, the gap between the rich and the poor has grown at an alarming rate. In much of the APAC region, the richest 1% of people account for about 10% of the country's total consumption of goods. Furthermore, the compounded Gini Coefficients of all of Asia as a single unit has increased from 39 to 46. The rising inequality has weakened the APAC region's ability to improve many nations' states of poverty. If inequality had remained relatively the same in Asian economies for the past few decades, economic growth would have helped 240 million people out of poverty between 1990 and 2010. This is equivalent to 6.5% of developing Asia's population in 2010. However due to the growing wealth gap, alongside the aftermath of the pandemic, any attempts to reduce the wealth gap and poverty levels have been reversed or slowed.

### Themes to Consider

The wealth gap can also be addressed not only in the labor department, but in **education**. Children old enough to attend school in low-income households are five times more likely to be unable to attend primary school and secondary school compared to their higher income peers. Prior studies have proven that **wealth and income** are distinctly important in the quality of education one receives and the path of life one may pursue in the future.

Decreasing the wealth gap would decrease political tensions as well, perhaps increasing citizen participation in politics. Many Asian nations, although democratic, have developed divergent inequality patterns that are not apparent in Western nations. Studies have shown that many **citizens do not feel the need to participate in their nation's politics due to the**

**pre-existing socioeconomic idea** that the less wealthy hold little-to-no impact on a nation's progress compared to wealthier citizens. This idea negatively impacts the possibilities of any Asian government pursuing the goal of improving the gap.

Lower incomes offered from available jobs due to a large **labor pool**, a result of influxes of immigration, have also played a role in increasing the gap between the rich and the poor, as the wealthier continue to earn capital through investments in the market and technological advancements instead of through labor. Furthermore, due to the large number of jobs available, the wage ranges for jobs have also slowly decreased.

### Discussion Questions

1. What incentives should the United Nations provide in order to support the implementation of better education facilities in rural areas?
2. What role should the United Nations play in the economies of nations in the region to increase wages according to economic growth?
3. How can the United Nations encourage people to participate in their respective nations' politics without overstepping boundaries?

### Resources

1. Gu, Yanfeng, and Zhongyuan Wang. "Income Inequality and Global Political Polarization: The Economic Origin of Political Polarization in the World." National Library of Medicine, 23 Nov 2021, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8608558/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8608558/). Accessed 17 May 2024.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: An analysis on wealth inequalities impact on political attitudes and identities.

2. Jain-Chandra, Sonali, et al. "Reducing Inequality in Asia: Sharing the Growth Dividend." International Monetary Fund, 24 May 2016, [www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2016/05/24/reducing-inequality-in-asia-sharing-the-growth-dividend#:~:text=In%20a%20number%20of%20Asian,sized%20enterprises%20access%20to%20credit](http://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2016/05/24/reducing-inequality-in-asia-sharing-the-growth-dividend#:~:text=In%20a%20number%20of%20Asian,sized%20enterprises%20access%20to%20credit). Accessed 17 May 2024.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: Summary of the wealth inequality situation in the Asia Pacific region as it rises globally in economic importance.

3. Kim, Mi-son, et al. "Economic Inequality and Political Participation in East Asian Democracies: The Role of Perceived Income Inequality and Intergenerational Mobility." Sage Journals, 8 May 2023, [journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00219096231168058?icid=int.sj-full-text.citing-articles.10](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00219096231168058?icid=int.sj-full-text.citing-articles.10). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: An in depth description of how shifts in economy, and wealth mindset of civilians impact political participation and decisions.

4. Kuroda, Haruhiko. "Asia's Challenges." OECD Better Policies for Better Lives, 2013, [www.oecd.org/forum/asia-challenges.htm#:~:text=A%20recent%20Asian%20Development%20Bank,drivers%20of%20Asia's%20rapid%20growth](http://www.oecd.org/forum/asia-challenges.htm#:~:text=A%20recent%20Asian%20Development%20Bank,drivers%20of%20Asia's%20rapid%20growth). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Illustration on the economic and living situations of civilians in Asia in response to the government's response to the current economic situation.

5. Pfeffer, Fabian T. "Growing Wealth Gaps in Education." National Library of Medicine, 1 June 2019, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5993612/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5993612/). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: An overview on how education, and surrounding of the youth can influence their economic situation later in life.

6. Zhuang, Juzhong. "The Recent Trend of Income Inequality in Asia and How Policy Should Respond." Oct. 2018. G24, [www.g24.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Rising\\_income\\_inequality\\_in\\_Asia.pdf](http://www.g24.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Rising_income_inequality_in_Asia.pdf). Accessed 17 May 2024. Working paper.

Description: Paper describing the growing trend of a wealth gap in Asia and how nations should respond as a result.

## Topic #2: Gender Motivated Crimes and Violence

### Introduction & Background

**Gender-based violence** is sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or private against someone because of their sex or gender. There are many types of violence that fall under this category such as psychological violence, forced marriages, stalking, sexual violence, or sexual harassment.

In recent years many nations across Asia have passed **laws and regulations** against gender-based violence, such as section 354 of Malaysia's Penal Code, which stipulates that any form of molestation will be subjected to imprisonment with a maximum of 10 years or whipping. Despite many of these laws being passed in the APAC region, there is a struggle to implement them due to **lack of public awareness on women's rights** which stem from pre-existing gender norms that are reinforced in the youth through school textbooks and further influenced by the beliefs of religious texts and philosophies.

### Current Status

In the Asia-Pacific region, gender-based violence is most commonly seen between intimate partners. The proportion of women who reported having experienced physical or sexual violence by an **intimate partner** in their lifetime is substantially higher than the global average of 27 %. In South East Asia alone, 33% of partnered women aged 15-49 will experience physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former husband or male partner at least once in their lifetime. Furthermore, in the past year 28% of women in Timor-Leste, 29% of women in Vanuatu, 31% of women in Papua New Guinea and 23% of women in Bangladesh experienced intimate partner violence, which is drastically greater than the global average of 13%. These statistics show the prominence of gender-based violence in the APAC region, not including forms separate from intimate partner violence.

### Themes to Consider

**Human trafficking** has become increasingly common in East Asia and the Pacific, with women and girls making up 68% of the trafficked victims and men and boys the other 32%. Oftentimes, victims of human trafficking come from **impoverished communities** that are in remote areas of their country. In many nations, human trafficking is deemed as forced labor or slavery. Malaysia, Thailand, China, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam all criminalize forced labor from human trafficking, and punishments vary drastically, ranging from two weeks to 10 years.

Across Asia, **child marriage** is common, with 44% of all child brides coming from South Asia. Globally, 650 million girls and women are married before the age of 18. It is likely that brides or other women who are victims of gender-based violence from a family member or intimate partner, as 20,000 women were killed by intimate partners or family members in Asia in 2017 alone.

Due to the lack of **social awareness** or support against gender-based harassment, women in the Asia-Pacific region are less likely to report any form of sexual abuse or harassment, fearing rejection or victim blaming. As such, it is important that nations prioritize making citizens more aware of the subject at hand. Furthermore, in Asian **media**, subjects such

as gender-based discrimination are not commonly addressed and women are constantly portrayed through stereotypical gender roles.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can the United Nations help promote and inform citizens on the topic of gender-based violence?
2. What incentives can the United Nations provide in order to encourage neighbor nations to protect their citizens who are in impoverished communities against gender-based violence.
3. How can the United Nations encourage international collaboration in the diminishment of human trafficking, between developed countries and developing countries?

### Resources

1. "About Gender-Based Violence." Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, [www.api-gbv.org/about-gbv/our-analysis/](http://www.api-gbv.org/about-gbv/our-analysis/). Accessed 17 May 2024.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: An in depth web page that describes the intricacies of many types of gender-based violence

2. Caballero-Anthony, Mely. "A Hidden Scourge." International Monetary Fund, Sept. 2018, [www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2018/09/human-trafficking-in-southeast-asia-caballero](http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2018/09/human-trafficking-in-southeast-asia-caballero). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Discusses how the poor economic situations of impoverished communities lead to an influx of gender-based violence such as trafficking.

3. "Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women and Girls." UN Women Asia and the Pacific, 2021, [asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/end-violence-against-women/evaw-facts-and-figures](http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/end-violence-against-women/evaw-facts-and-figures). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Numerous facts and statistics on gender-based violence in Asia.

4. "Gender-Based Violence." UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, UN, [www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/gender-based-violence](http://www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/gender-based-violence). Accessed 17 May 2024.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: Addresses the numerous forms of gender-based violences, and provides references as to how the UN is working to amend the situation.

5. Liberty Asia. "From Every Angle: Using the law to combat human trafficking in Southeast Asia." Human Trafficking Search, Nov 2014, [humantraffickingsearch.org/resource/from-every-angle-using-the-law-to-combat-human-trafficking-in-southeast-asia/#:~:text=Malaysia%2C%20Thailand%2C%20China%2C%20Cambodia,detainment%20to%2010%20years%20imprisonment](http://humantraffickingsearch.org/resource/from-every-angle-using-the-law-to-combat-human-trafficking-in-southeast-asia/#:~:text=Malaysia%2C%20Thailand%2C%20China%2C%20Cambodia,detainment%20to%2010%20years%20imprisonment). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Discusses the legal aspect of gender-based violence in Asia, and how governments have been working to pass legislation against it.

6. Raiser, Martin. "Standing Up to Fight Gender-Based Violence in South Asia." World Bank Blogs, 9 Dec. 2022, [blogs.worldbank.org/en/endpovertyinsouthasia/standing-fight-gender-based-violence-south-asia#:~:text=In%20South%20Asia%20specifically%2C%20the,norms%20that%20define%20gender%20roles](https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/endpovertyinsouthasia/standing-fight-gender-based-violence-south-asia#:~:text=In%20South%20Asia%20specifically%2C%20the,norms%20that%20define%20gender%20roles). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Explains the Gender-Based violence situation in South Asia and how people organizations have been working to better it.

## Topic #3: Water Scarcity

### Introduction & Background

According to the United Nations, **water scarcity** is defined as a lack of water availability due to **physical shortage**, or lack of access due to failure of institutions that can ensure a regular supply because of **inadequate infrastructure**. Scarcity due to physical shortage or local ecological conditions is called **physical scarcity**, and scarcity due to lacking infrastructure is called **economic scarcity**.

Many main water sources such as rivers, lakes and aquifers have started to dry up or become too polluted in the APAC region over the past few decades. For example, Chinese government surveys have found that 70% of China's water table is unfit for human consumption due to the overuse of pesticides and fertilizers. Furthermore, in 2022, many APAC nations faced longterm droughts which cost many nations economic loss. In the past years, nations have implemented projects in the hopes of building resilience to water scarcity, such as China's research in cloud seeding, a weather modification technique that improves a cloud's ability to precipitate, or the Philippines' proposed Kaliwa Dam, which is supposed to restrict the flow of water that can be used to meet the demand of water supply by Manila.

### Current Status

Water scarcity is expected to continue increasing in the next few years despite plans and projects implemented to decrease scarcity or build resilience against it. Primarily in South Asia, extreme water vulnerability is prominent, with about 45 million children lacking in basic drinking water as of 2022. Across all of Asia and the Pacific an estimated 500 million people are without access to basic drinking water, which is enough people to fit 5,000 football stadiums with a capacity of 100,000. With over 90% of the APAC region's population facing a water crisis of insecurity, one of the most prominent solutions to minimizing water scarcity would be to find ways to **recycle/filter** polluted water and properly utilize water **efficiently**.

### Themes to Consider

Despite **agriculture** causing further water scarcity by utilizing large amounts of water at once, but wasting large amounts due to inefficiency, agriculture is still a major sector of Central Asia's economy, consuming about 127 billion cubic meters of water annually. However, only 50% of the water set aside for agriculture is used officially, while the remaining 50% is lost on the way from the dams to the farms due to poor irrigation, seepage, evaporation or wasteful agricultural practices.

Furthermore, **climate change**, caused by industrialization and mass consumerism that is prominent in the APAC region has greatly influenced the availability of clean water to many nations. As temperatures of the earth rise and floods along with droughts, become more and more frequent, many forms of water pollution have contaminated drinking water for civilians with pathogens and pesticides. Consuming polluted water can lead to transmission of diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid. Furthermore, rising global temperatures increase the amount of moisture that the atmosphere can hold, leading to large rainfall and long dry spells.

Lastly, water scarcity has lasting impacts on the **economy** through trade, agriculture, and food shortages. Water scarcity has made it difficult for farms to plant, grow, produce, and



feed livestock, making it harder for nations who rely on agriculture to further prosper. Additionally, with agriculture struggling, prices for commodities trade and sale have been driven up over time, causing unrest amongst civilians and making nations with growing economies that are reliant on these both to expand.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can the United Nations educate agricultural workers, in participating nations, on ways to more efficiently utilize water at farms?
2. How can the United Nations collaborate with developed and developing nations in finding ways to clean contaminated water for civilians to use?
3. In what ways can the United Nations simultaneously assist communities and businesses that are facing water scarcity, in a cost effective manner?

### Resources

1. Ahn, Young-Jin, and Zuhridin Juraev. "Water Scarcity and Its Economic-Social Consequences: The Case of Central Asia." Spring Nature, 2 May 2024, [communities.springernature.com/posts/water-scarcity-and-its-economic-social-consequences-the-case-of-central-asia#:~:text=Agriculture%2C%20which%20is%20a%20major,productivity%2C%20and%20increased%20food%20insecurity](https://communities.springernature.com/posts/water-scarcity-and-its-economic-social-consequences-the-case-of-central-asia#:~:text=Agriculture%2C%20which%20is%20a%20major,productivity%2C%20and%20increased%20food%20insecurity). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: A more general explanation on the water scarcity's consequences on society, politics and the economy.

2. "Drinking-Water." World Health Organization, 13 Sept. 2023, [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water#:~:text=Contaminated%20water%20and%20poor%20sanitation,individuals%20to%20preventable%20health%20risks](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water#:~:text=Contaminated%20water%20and%20poor%20sanitation,individuals%20to%20preventable%20health%20risks). Accessed 17 May 2024.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: A webpage that addresses how water being contaminated by microorganisms, or chemicals are also decreasing the supply of clean water for consumption.

3. Guarino, Arthur. "The economic implications of global water scarcity." Global Risks Insights, 2016, [globalriskinsights.com/2016/12/economic-cost-global-water-scarcity/#:~:text=Water%20scarcity%20leads%20to%20food,impact%20on%20food%20processing%20industries](https://globalriskinsights.com/2016/12/economic-cost-global-water-scarcity/#:~:text=Water%20scarcity%20leads%20to%20food,impact%20on%20food%20processing%20industries). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Discusses the negative economic impacts water scarcity has on the economy, along with the causes.

4. Klobucista, Claire, and Kali Robinson. "Water Stress: A Global Problem That's Getting Worse." Council on Foreign Relations, 3 Apr. 2023, [www.cfr.org/backgrounder/water-stress-global-problem-thats-getting-worse#:~:text=Water%20scarcity%20is%20often%20divided,there%20is%20inadequate%20water%20infrast](https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/water-stress-global-problem-thats-getting-worse#:~:text=Water%20scarcity%20is%20often%20divided,there%20is%20inadequate%20water%20infrast)

[ructure.&text=The%20two%20frequently%20come%20together%20to%20cause%20water%20stress](#). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Talks about the relationships between water scarcity and water stress.

5. Kushkumbayev, Sanat. "Perspectives | Clock is ticking as Central Asia confronts water calamity." eurasianet, 14 Feb. 2024, [eurasianet.org/perspectives-clock-is-ticking-as-central-asia-confronts-water-calamity#:~:text=The%20future%20of%20water%20in.meters%2C%20used%20annually%20for%20agriculture](#). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Analysis about Asia's inefficient usage of water, and its impacts.

6. "Water – at the center of the climate crisis." United Nations Climate Action, [www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/water#:~:text=Water%20and%20climate%20change%20are.water%20water%20\(UN%20Water\)](#). Accessed 17 May 2024.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: Site which provides numerous statistics and facts on how climate change has influenced water availability.

7. "Water Scarcity." UN Water, UN, Sept. 2018, [www.unwater.org/sites/default/files/app/uploads/2018/10/WaterFacts\\_water-scarcity\\_sep2018.pdf](#). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: A general article on water scarcity, the challenges of it and statistics.

8. "Water: 12 Things to Know." Asian Development Bank, 24 Aug. 2015, [www.adb.org/news/features/12-things-know-about-water#:~:text=Over%2075%25%20of%20Asia%20is.facing%20an%20imminent%20water%20crisis.&text=The%20gap%20between%20water%20demand.population%20faces%20a%20water%20crisis](#). Accessed 17 May 2024.

Description: Like other articles, this source provides basic facts on the water scarcity problem in Asia.