



WEE SERVE ASIA CONFERENCE 2017 DECLARATION

We are delegates to the First Women's Economic Empowerment and Social Enterprise Regional Visioning and Engagement Conference in Asia (WEE SERVE ASIA) held at the AIM Conference Center, Makati City, Philippines on April 19-21, 2017.

We have gathered together, seeking to build upon the theme "Promoting Transformational Partnerships and Women's Empowerment in Agricultural Value Chains in ASEAN" as we recognize the urgent need to define a pathway to help resolve the development paradox of economic growth that has not effectively addressed poverty; that has increased inequality and disempowered women; that has worsened prospects for sustainable development in ASEAN.

We acknowledge that with the advent of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), such development paradox needs to be effectively addressed to reverse the marginalization of women and men small scale producers who comprise a substantive segment of the poor in the region.

We acknowledge that women's work in Asia are mostly underpaid and undervalued; that in the face of pervasive gender inequality in the ASEAN economy, there is a need to collectively and individually address and break the pervasive gender gaps and systemic constraints to women's economic empowerment such as harmful social and economic norms, discriminatory laws and lack of legal protection, failure to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and lack of access to financial and productive assets, among others.

We acknowledge further that reversing poverty and the marginalization of women and men small scale producers in the region entails a concerted effort to change current mindsets and practices in agricultural value chains (AVCs) that focus only on enterprise growth and profits; that engage small producers in purely transactional terms; that drive down the prices of agricultural produce to the lowest possible levels regardless of environmental and social impact; and that relegate women as invisible players.

As we listened, shared and discussed the various stories of social enterprises and inclusive businesses in the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia that have shown various levels of impact on women and men small scale producers in agricultural value chains,

We realized that AVC interventions have shown greater depth of impact and a higher level of sustainability when they engage women and men small scale producers in

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS that:

- **Promote appropriate, ecologically sustainable, and culturally sensitive technology and community-based/oriented innovations that are friendly to women and men small scale producers, and contribute to sustainable production and consumption.**
- **Progressively position women and men small scale producers towards reaping a bigger share of value created in the agricultural value chain over time, while building their resilience to natural, social and economic disasters.**
- **Pave the way for the empowerment of small producers, particularly women, to become actors in their own development and that of their community and sector, and to become stewards of the natural resource base that support their livelihoods.**
- **Provide a combination of transactional and transformational services among the women and men small scale producers to more effectively participate in value chain and community/sectoral development that is both equitable and sustainable.**
- **Put a premium on value chains and value chain development practices that enhance women's participation and empowerment.**
- **Produce significant, measurable outcomes of transformational change at the level of women and small scale producers, enterprise, households and communities, and value chains and subsectors**

We believe that:

- The above benchmarks are a pathway to sustainability and women's economic empowerment as they are guideposts among enterprises and other stakeholders in AVCs who aspire to make a meaningful contribution to the achievement of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The interrelated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that AVC interventions adhering to these benchmarks could contribute to are: no poverty, zero hunger and reduced inequalities (Goals 1, 2 and 10); decent work and inclusive growth (Goal 8); inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation (Goal 9); sustainable consumption and production as well as sustainable communities (Goals 11 and 12); partnerships to achieve the SDGs (Goal 17); and women's economic empowerment (Goals 5) as a cross-cutting goal.

We offer these benchmarks to raise the bar in engaging small scale producers, especially women, for agribusiness enterprises to go beyond the usual transactional way.

We encourage social enterprises, inclusive businesses and other agribusiness enterprises to develop transformational partnerships with small scale producers.

We offer these benchmarks for the consideration of policy makers, support institutions and social investors in crafting policies and programs, providing an enabling environment, and deploying investments to enable social enterprises, inclusive businesses and other agribusinesses to become transformational partners of women and men small scale producers in agricultural value chains.

We invite policy makers, leaders, and stakeholders of the ASEAN Economic Community and the United Nations to adopt the practice and mainstreaming of these benchmarks, as our contribution to achieving inclusive economic growth that promotes women's economic empowerment and sustainable development in the region.

We commit ourselves to:

- Build and grow a learning community of practitioners and advocates towards mainstreaming these benchmarks for transformational partnerships in AVCs in, and beyond ASEAN.
- Expand opportunities and increase engagement for women's inclusion, leadership and empowerment in agricultural value chains;
- Work together to develop the tools and support programs to innovate and improve our practice and advocacy of these benchmarks for transformational partnerships in AVCs.
- Initiate multi-stakeholder platforms with governments, multilateral agencies, businesses, social and impact investors and other sectors to develop enabling policies, programs and investment mechanisms to mainstream these benchmarks in agricultural value chains.