

SEAFORE Masterclass Series

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SPEAKERS

Dr Fatimah Al-Attas, Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB, Ajinder Kaur, Danny Yong, Tehmina Kaoosji, Dr. Tamara Nair

00:00

Dr Fatimah Al-Attas 00:05

I'm not even the opening act I'm the kind of warmed up filler before the main act I guess. So I did oh great Tuoi Tre is on is with us. Hi Hi hon. Glad Trung got you to come join us is that useful can suka mono from Cambodia?

00:43

Oh one from Cambodia.

Dr Fatimah Al-Attas 00:46

Yeah. Mono you can come out and say hi if you want that she's kind of shy I guess

00:54

he's fine from Vietnam. They have been something Yes,

Dr Fatimah Al-Attas 00:58

yes. Tuoi Tre is a newspaper from Vietnam to and I have my slides Adib I guess this will be a introduction to the series four. That's okay. Mon mono. Your phone is going to issue that okay. Yeah, glad you can join us. Okay, so, as I said, that's probably a pretty good brief for the rest of you as well on what this masterclass is all about. So this is masterclass number six about feminism policy and women's empowerment in Southeast Asia. Yeah, let's move on. So, let me introduce Kinney Academy. Makena Academy is a training arm of malaysiakini out of Malaysia, of course, malaysiakini is an independent news organization based out of Malaysia. And kini kini Academy is part of that group where we handle mainly training. We're very involved with investigative journalism work, including training as well as administering small grants for story projects. We've been doing that for past two

years. And now we are also working on getting ASEAN newsroom's to collaborate. We have one ongoing project together with tempo and PCI J. That works that's working on COVID-19 Financial stimulus reporting, and, of course, this range of master classes. And so, first the sponsor. Yeah, IWPR Institute of War and Peace reporting is the main is the funder for this series. Okay. They're based out of London. Yeah, the ultimate, the ultimate funder will be the the US government and they have very kindly agreed to this, this extra masterclass when we found a first five to be quite useful. Right. So please, next. Okay, so the idea here is SEAFOR. First, let me say what a SEAFOR. SEAFOR is Southeast Asia forum for reporting. So we are literally having the journalists as our main audience. Yeah. The idea is for us to have journalists engage with, with you, the expert speakers with themselves the other journalists in the group. Yeah, to write on a topic that is of interest to everybody which is ASEAN related topics, right. The idea is to improve understanding of each other and create this connections for them to reach out for anytime that they want to write stories that transcends their borders. Okay. So, there are three main things that the SEAFOR is made out of, which is obviously this master classes, then each publishing partner will come up with a reporting project. So each will come up with with will write with develop and write an article, a long form article, together with a video output on ASEAN related subjects, and finally, there's a collaboration portion. We have a forum in the website, SEAFOR.org. website as well as a WhatsApp group, where we added all the various journalists into the same group. So obviously, then they have the contact for each other's each other's contacts I mean, and they can easily reach out if they Need to. Alright, next. So, today we have the these are the speakers for today. You notice that all the speakers are ASEAN based speakers? Yeah. Tehmina looks a little bit less ASEAN but she will show you that she's very much Malaysian after 30 years being in Malaysia. Alright. Yeah, so we got Sister Mary John, we have Dr. Tara and and Dr. Fatima are all of which will I'll let Tehmina introduce to you guys. So the idea is to have ASEAN speakers ASEAN experts speak about ASEAN related issues. So what this means is these experts will also therefore be teachers for the journalists and the experts that the journalists can refer to, even as their sources. Yeah, so let's move on. Okay, we, we encourage you to leave your video on. But I suspect from the last masterclasses the the discussions were so interesting that the speakers were themselves quite and gross with the with the subject matter. So do keep your minds mics on mute. And we have a chat box. We encourage Christians so that we can really squeeze all the answers from our experts. Yeah, the idea is for the journalists who have interest to write a story on this subject matter feminism today, but they can and you know, you can ask those questions to help you plug the gaps in information you need for your article. Alright, and remember, this session is also for your learning. So ask questions also for your understanding. Okay, you agendas already mentioned that the session is being recorded. Okay, therefore, is made available on our C four.org. website. If you go in there, you will realize that you will find the previous five master classes are also in the materials been uploaded. That includes the videos, the slides, you find the profile for all our speakers, even from the master class one. All in our website. Okay. Sorry, that transcripts are also will be also be provided when they're ready. On the website. Okay, so next. Yes, we took a we took a poll. I hope we have enough. Enough respondents for the poll. Can let's show Oh, great. We got 10 responses. So when we ask the journalists, how often do you cover issues relating to women's empowerment? So 90% say sometimes and 10% say a lot. So I guess we will give them another story to cover me. How familiar are you with the history of feminism in Southeast Asia? So for them rated one. So I guess Tamina Your job is to kind of tell them some stories about this. How important are women's rights issues in your country? So this

one is quite unanimous, everybody say is pretty important to average the important side guess the selection of topic today is we'll hit the spotter in your country, which of these issues affect women the most domestic violence rank right up there, five out of 10 sexual harassment, rank four out of 10 which inequality four out of 10 rape culture three out of 10 period poverty, three out of 10. Interestingly, in in some my other work when we talk about gender diversity issues within ASEAN, we do have a situation where it's acknowledged as a fair bit of harassment that happens in within newsrooms. And you know, it is it is something that that needs to be addressed, but they're frankly not well addressed. At this moment. There are very little very few programs on gender diversity or gender sensitivity. So again, this probably is a pretty timely topic to discuss today. Yes, please. So to what degree does your country collaborate with other Southeast Asian countries to further women's empowerment? So it's right in the middle? Frankly, I'm also not sure how many Southeast Asian countries do collaborate on in this area but you know, for at least say that they they they think is high to moderately high So, this will be interesting to hear. Next, please. So, now that the opening act is over, I will introduce you to Tehmina who is our keynote speaker Tehmina Kaosji. She is independent broadcast journalists and jet agenda activist and Communications Consultant, right. She is currently based in KL Malaysia. She's been here for 30 years again, I repeat. She's virtually Malaysian inchie demeanor combined combines solid news judgment with an engaging broadcast personality. She's a versatile and highly experienced moderator of highly high level debates and conferences on a wide range of subjects, from business to economy and technology to politics and women's rights, sustainable development, public interest issues and media freedom. So in addition to her work with Malaysian media organization Tehmina also runs a boutique communications consultancy, which specializes in advocacy, and policy based outcomes for international organizations, such as the United Nations Population Fund. Her work also focuses on collaboration and strategizing with civil society, and in particular, women's rights organization. She, for instance, may be one person I'll be looking up knocking on the door to collaborate with in the coming year Tehmina or over to you.

Tehmina Kaosji 11:36

All right, awesome. Thank you so much for that, Danny. Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. Welcome to the first keynote speaker session for masterclass six on feminism. And this is, I'm really glad to be here, I have the pleasure to be with you to speak on a topic really close to my work as well as my heart media and the struggle for women's rights in Southeast Asia with a focus on Malaysia where I'm based. So I thought we would perhaps start off with the historical context, less likely. So looking at the historical context, even though we want to be focusing on media, I think it's really important to grounded in an understanding of the country itself, and how particularly women's rights, women's empowerment, how did this come into not only our everyday realizations, but as part of what the struggle is all about today. So looking at Colonial Malaya and women's emancipation, it's really important to look at how the first documents of usage or women's emancipation or women's liberation in Malaya was back in roughly 1920s. Back then, there was a political and social project by male Malay Muslim reformers, some writers including side shaycarl, Heidi, vinyl Ovid, and Ahmad or better known as zaobao. So their advocacy back in 1920s, and five by from the education of women and girls, those who the fairly limited prison of equipping the lay women with the skills to fulfill bed proceed primary role as educators of their children. In time however, the dominant narrative of women's emancipation is to call on more intersectionality women from different ethnicities mobilized against anti colonialism as well as protest

women's inferior status. And there were also of course in time prominent radical women of the post war years in Malaysia between 1946 1948 These included grades when Malaya eventually gained political independence in 1987. Both men and women actually already had the right to vote. Like to vote, so anyhow, those little quick facts on how little top political leadership at least in Malaysia is sensitized to feminism and empowerment. In 2012, Malaysia, former Prime Minister Najib Razak, he actually declared quote unquote, there is no need for them from the south, or the visual on that, from that moving on, into feminism in Malaysia. So fast forward to today 2021 And what we have is a vibrant social justice movement across East as well as West Malaysia and one that is increasingly diverse in representation of Malaysia of various ethnicities as well, which is very important, Malay, Indian, Chinese indigenous, plus also women, Malaysian women in particular advocating for refugee women and migrant women workers like so this is especially true I feel when it comes to young women leading the way to their fledgling yet super impacts. nongovernmental organizations looking at a bigger picture. Look at the recent success of only 18 which is translated as the right for 18 year olds to work in Malaysia, co founded by a young woman, here are your three. So when the 18 has just been gazetted, so we'll take sides on December 15. But implementation coming into place in January 2022. So not just speaking about women's rights, young women's rights, this actually empowers a rough figure of an average of 6 million Malaysians to potentially be able to vote if they're 18. and above by next year, you're headed once again, my young women's efforts. So overall, though, the wider landscape for women's rights NGOs also forms one of Malaysian civil society's most active sectors. And when it comes to court issues, a lot of them are hereditary. A lot of them are those that, as we saw in the poll that Danny presented to us earlier, things that have been with us for decades, institutionalized sexism and discrimination. Domestic violence, of course, is an anchoring concern, as it all societies not just in Southeast Asia right women's aid organization in Malaysia or who founded in the mid 1980s. This funded actually as a shelter for women and children seeking refuge from the domestic violence. Today, of course, who has also proven instrumental in pushing for amendments to the Malaysian Employment Act to address pregnancy discrimination ensure adequate paternal and maternal Lee, as well as moving towards Malaysia having an anti stalking bill. Besides that violence against women naturally is another fundamental issue. Champion, spearheaded by NGOs, like the all Women's Action society all along, they've been pushing very hard for almost close to 2025 years for the Tabling of Malaysia sexual harassment bill. They also work intensively in raising awareness around gender based violence in general, such as rape culture and how it connects to women's rights. On the other hand, you've got other deep seated issues, child sexual abuse, and as we deem it here, child marriage is another issue. It also gained much more momentum in recent years. Because back in 2018, there was international coverage condemnation, about an 11 year old marrying a 41 year old man here in Malaysia. Same goes for the issues of period poverty, comprehensive sexuality, education, teenage pregnancy, baby dumping, and equal citizenship laws, all of which have long been problematic in Malaysia, but have only recently been covered with any regularity in mainstream media. I do recall back when I first started off in the field of broadcast journalism around a decade ago, it was not only difficult to find spokespersons, or NGOs or academics etc, who worked in this arena, it was equally as hard to get media slots, or to have your editors approved the stories for publication or even for airing on TV. So yeah, we've come a long way from 10 years ago to today, right. But I also feel that the coverage of such marginalization issues has also increased deeply in the past two years, primarily due to a lot more social media debates around it and also COVID relatives related prevalent. COVID related prevalent, I

feel also coincides with the fact that we do spend a lot more of our time online and digital eyes, right, just as we are now here. tuning into this masterclass online. Right. So moving on from there into women's political representation. Now, this brings us to why it's called difficult for women's like girls like to be framed as human rights violations, and even being of critical importance to national development. Let's remain cognizant of these facts when it comes to Malaysia. And I do want you all listening in from Vietnam, from Cambodia, from Malaysia, of course and other countries to think about the makeup of your Parliament national parliament. So when it comes to Malaysia in 2018, the median age of Malaysian Members of Parliament was 55.5 years, only two out of 222 MPs aged below that. Also, we have six times more male than female MP or around 31 over 222 MPs. This falls way short of a 30% Women in Politics, which is globally acknowledged as being essential for fairer representation reforms to be reflected in the corridors of power when you've got a 50% female population. So when you don't have this women's political participation, the fundamental prerequisite for gender equality for genuine democracy fails to be met. And this is something which cuts across our borders when you look at ASEAN. So if you do not have female policymakers facilitating women's direct engagement and public decision making, there is no real means of ensuring better accountability for women. This democracy deficits, of course, results in lack of equal participation and representation in local and federal decision making process. So this comes to when you're talking about women's need for housing for health care, for education for transport, the economy, or basics of empowerment. Let me use a very Malaysian example to just show you this huge disparity of women's political representation. This was super interesting for me as a journalist, the recent Sabah in East Malaysia Sabah state elections in September 2020, only Did you know only 9% of election candidates were women. And that meant there were 43 women out of wait for it 447 candidates. So such breathtaking lack of political will and appointing women candidates highlights the ongoing resistance to women's political leadership in the country. It also highlights ongoing discrimination and social cultural barriers that women still face within political institutions, which also runs contrary to Malaysia's international obligations and commitments. Malaysia is actually signatory and party to article seven on the door, which is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. And Malaysia ratified this back in 1995. And part of fetal article seven that we ratified until authorities taking all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political life of the country. So that's where you see how there is a huge disconnect between practice and what we've actually signed on as our international duties and responsibilities. Right. So from there, let's move along a little bit to media ownership. Right. So when it comes to media ownership in Malaysia, a country of 33 point 5 million and how these issues affect and interact with coverage of women's rights issues. The fact of the matter is that many media outlets in Malaysia are either owned directly by the Government of Malaysia, for example, Bernama the state broadcaster, or owned by component parties of the stronghold berita national coalition party, which formed the government until May 2018. One example is the media premier group, which is owned by of course, the United Malays national organization. So what this type of concentrated media ownership means is there is eventually and enforced media monopolies. It results in the formation of one gigantic conglomerate, which controls the majority of the market. Now, this interestingly, combined with a host of repressive legislation, we have 34 laws and sub laws at last count, which restrict media freedom in Malaysia. This includes printing presses and publication at the PPCA edition act Official Secrets Act and communications and multimedia act. So moving a little bit deeper than from there, let's touch on how patriarchal norms from politics and society affect Malaysian due to how and why media covers

issues. It's time now I think, to acknowledge that the global media monitoring project GMP latest report highlighted that 73% 73 73% of management roles in media globally occupied by men, compared to only 27% by women. So when you're already dealing with a deeply patriarchal society, this means media goes on to absolutely amplify and reflect stereotypes and biases against women, rather than rectify them, due to who makes the final call for stories leaving every newsroom in the country. That Malaysia furthermore also has a mixed legal system, which includes common law, Islamic law and customary law. And this further complicate issues of sensitivity and results in a lack of progressive reporting on women's issues, such as domestic violence, even polygamy, adultery, child marriage, etc. Right from here, next slide, please. Okay, so now let's look at not only the set landscapes for Malaysia and how those things possibly also relate to the land lack of media coverage around ASEAN for women's rights issues. Let's look at the role of media in achieving gender equality. So first and foremost, we've got legacy media versus online media. And I think in our increasingly digitalized societies around around Southeast Asia, this is such a huge concern. So Malaysia, statistics from from Malaysia show that we have upwards of 80% of the population online digitalized spending anywhere between two to seven hours exclusively on their social media feeds. So that's a lot of exposure. But what does it mean when it comes to media and gender stereotypes, and even legacy media now for survival sick, they've actually gone online. So you're basically trans. You're transferring age old stereotypes that used to perhaps exist exclusively via television, certain radio channels, perhaps or even newspapers, and not use digitalized that. So instead of a newspaper that perhaps reach, let's say, 50,000 readers in a day, you now have perhaps 50,000 unique views within an hour online. So think about what that means when it comes to the multiplying of gender stereotypes and biases. Right. So going back to the GMP that I had just quoted, um, data also shows that women only make up 24% of the person's heard, read, read about or seen in newspaper, television radio. So mainstream media truly does assist, rather than desist from traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes. And even worse, 46% of news stories, they reinforces gender binary, there's gender stereotypes, and only 4% of stories clearly challenged gender stereotypes. So, which is what we're hoping will be the outcome of this masterclass in particular, that each one of you joining and participating will actually put the thought into creating gender progressive journalism and media stories, right. So all of the above, you can also see the fact that 46% of news stories are sexist for the center only for gender politics, we clearly see this displayed in our digital microcosm, our social media channels, right? Open up Malaysian Twitter, Malaysian Facebook any day everyday. And I'm quite sure it's the same if you're in if you're in Philippines, if you're in Thailand, and you're going to see a host of the centenary conversation, comments and arguments, which will uphold harmful gender stereotypes. I think it's also important to think about our role as journalists, when we come across such content, perhaps I'm so I'm definitely not recommending you engage in a direct flame war with whoever's making these comments or posting them. But think about what is the headline, or the story that everyone is responding to was so deeply patriarchal, that such a response was elicited from the audience's I think that's where ethical journalism, that's where gender progressive, good journalism comes into play. Right. So moving along from there to gender progressive journalism and news room leadership. There is actually right now at this point, 2021 customer 2022. Still in the midst of, of lethal global pandemic, with people spending more and more time online, consuming entertainment, consuming news media, it's a huge opportunity for media to take a steering role through gender progressive journalism. However, I must caution that this can happen only when newsroom leadership is also gender diverse, and actually representative. So there's also a

need for gender sensitized copy editors at each newsroom to sign off on each day's news coverage. And by and large, you will see that in Malaysian media, the outlets particularly online outlets, which cover gender based issues, even if they don't quite have the sensitization that this is agenda land, they have a copy editor, generally, a woman, perhaps one who has a bit of agenda length, and that actually results in far less mouthfuls on the daily. And also, newsrooms can work actively to address sensationalization on sexualization of headlines and content, and ensure news items actually analyze issues with a gender lens rather than just report. I'll give you a couple of examples here. So remember what I mentioned just a little bit earlier about the huge the huge disparity for male and female representation in Malaysian parliament. Well, here are a couple of gems from a couple of Malaysians, male MP or members of parliament, a certain Chabaud in Yahia. He said girls as young as nine we'll see politically and spiritually ready for marriage as the Muslim majority Southeast Asian country, Malaysia when we pass a law on sexual offenses against children without criminalizing child marriage. This issue was just reported, it wasn't analyzed, it wasn't investigated. And without that, it's sort of hang as a statement which society by and large condones. So that's the problematic area give you another one, another MP a certain Abdul Aziz, Obama told female MP Castillo reparto, who also happens to be the only Malaysian Indian female MP in the hole of Malaysian parliament to put on powder, as he could not see her, alluding to her skin tone in an offensive and discriminatory manner. Once again, the issue was merely reported by news outlets by and large, it took the citizens themselves, you know, Malaysians on Twitter, Malaysians on Facebook, the the MP in question for ourselves, speaking up about why it was so discriminatory why it was such a sexist discriminatory statement. But actually, that can be the function of news media. Take the lead, right. So there is of course, as also on Danny did mentioned earlier, there's a huge need for many organizations that conduct regular gender awareness training. So journalists, editors, managers, regardless of their own gender, have this lens which they proactively use in the news that they produce. And this moves on into production of news where there is a lack of female experts shaping public debate. So data shows only one in five experts interviewed by media are women. This translates into something I like to call and it's a pretty popular term, a man or a male on the panel or male only spokespersons for all hard news issues when we talk about hard news. Of course, we mean politics, to religion, Business Technology Science environment. So in general, these hard issues are reserved for nano or male only spokespersons and panels. And women on the other hand, they will be covering primarily us issues such as lifestyle education, beauty, wellness, childcare, motherhood, ie more neutering topics that just further afield agenda binary right is the manner in which if you see female politicians or perhaps female corporate leaders being interviewed, you will find the question that perhaps me most as a broadcaster, they will always be asked, How do you manage family? Have you ever asked a male spokesperson or a male politician that bear in mind most of them are married, most of them do have their own families. So there you go, that a little quick insight into how you can flip the script, particularly as a working journalist, don't ask this question, right. So outside of news media also, I must emphasize that the strict gender binary it continues with women frequently portrayed in stereotypical hyper sexualized roles in advertising film industry, this also has long term social consequences. And when you have such exposure to stereotypical gender portrayals and this clear gender segregation, of course, it will eventually result in the audience preferring gender appropriate media content, and the traditional perceptions of the gender roles, occupations becoming even more entrenched, and the attitudes and expectations towards how they react to gender discrimination in society. So here comes in media response media's responsibility

towards gender sensitive reporting. And this can actually be done by challenging traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes in the work which is produced. Also, media organizations need to walk the talk, have women in leadership roles have women as experts on a diversity of topics on a daily basis, not as an exception, not just on International Women's Day, or on idabelle International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, not just during pink October or breast cancer awareness habits throughout the year. How is it regularly and that small in your little black book as a journalist as an editor? Well, it's time to change time to move up. But we also got some great great into websites like 5050 that correlate women experts and women speakers in Malaysia at least. And I'm sure that there are other initiatives happening on the ground, even though they are pretty recent, which once again, points the fact that these are not institutional actions. But something would have happened as a grassroots movement, because there is a huge need to be able to highlight the female experts that we are already producing that we already have, who are already out there publishing, speaking and advocating, but yet not given much Have a space in media. So I wanted to also briefly touch here upon one of the talk shows that I produce them anchored which was on Bernama TV, the Malaysian state broadcaster. It was called Chivas Amina. And I was executive producer as well as the anchor for 50 episodes of this talk show, which focused on exclusively women, the only female spokesperson, okay, so of course, in light of the manner in which Malaysian media and landscape is shaped, I was often accused of, Hey, how come you're not representing men? So that brings up really interesting questions. Remember what I told you about the statistics that women only follow up about 24% of all, representatives are voices heard or seen in media? There you go. So there is a need for not just more female centric programming, but more programming that normalizes women's issues as part of the broader agenda for progressiveness. In society, you cannot divorce the two you cannot just be having, for example, a tea with Amina special on breast cancer awareness, month or day, it doesn't work that weight women's issues as well as how they impact the rest of it, and how the rest of society impacts us continue on relentlessly throughout the years. So let's move along from there to the next slide. Now moving deeper into COVID-19, women's rights and the media. They've been of course deep impact on women's rights and gender equality with with the fact that if we do not also address these deep fissures that have been exposed by the pandemic, pandemic, recovery is honestly going to be impossible for all societies. There's sharp economic and social inequalities, they have widened and already existing gap. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender report gap of 2021 estimates that we've actually stepped back a rough average of 39 years due to the pandemic when it comes to gender equality. Increases in abuse, violence, exploitation faced by women, girls, they're seeing any healthcare crisis. It's been observed during the Ebola outbreak some time ago, and now also during COVID. And however, during COVID, it's a much more far reaching global and of course, regional concern. Health Systems, which have been overwhelmed by COVID. On the other hand, this has also resulted in collateral damage to women's health. Many countries have also failed to keep sexual and reproductive health services available. So this has resulted in neglect and an increase in risk to women's health. In Malaysia, for example, we continue to see women's NGOs, still not classified as essential services since the first COVID lockdown that we experienced in March 2020. And this, of course, affects women's need to access to escape domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and even state run sexual and reproductive health and rights clinics, which are here run by an organization called LPP N. They provide family planning, pregnancy termination, where necessary, they will also closed during the MCO civil society, of course, protested this, especially in relation to srhr access for lower income women or B

40. Women as we classify them in Malaysia. And this brings us to the factor the undeniable one, that the pandemic has actually had a confluence with women's unpaid care work. And this, of course, increased significantly as a result of school closures and increasing needs of older people. However, when it comes to mainstream media, there is a huge lack of awareness that this is actually happening. But just log on to any social media feed, and have a look at what women are talking about women professionals, and an Academy makes women who are homemakers, all they will be speaking about in the last 2022 Odd months is the huge burden of unpaid care work. And the only organizations that in general are talking about this is think tanks and research and research programs. And they publish a report. The media covers it just as just as, you know, just as what has been published without any analysis without any further investigative approaches. And it remains that that's what I mean when I said that it takes gender sensitization on an organizational and editorial level to change the approach that we have to women's rights concerns, especially during a pandemic. So, all of these issues they not only include domestic violence, unpaid care burden, but also women's unemployment. A lot The sector's that women work in not just in Malaysia, but of course in Southeast Asia such as hospitality, retail, they are the ones which have been most deeply impacted by pandemic closures, right. There's also the fact that women more commonly work with infection risk and high contact occupations, such as, of course, the fact that nurses in most countries are overwhelmingly female 80 to 90% of nurses are females, of course, imagine the COVID risks that they have. Then, of course, there are other COVID related factors, such as poverty, and marginalization. So when it comes to all these issues, once again, it goes back to us organizations taking the lead, and media actually covering them and contextualizing how it impacts and in reality, not just reporting, right, moving on from there into the others huge, hugely important factor of online gender based violence, or GDB, which is something that has escalated over the pandemic, just as I mentioned a few times already, the fact that we spent a lot more time on our devices online. So what happens in societies where there's very little sensitization around, not just gender roles, but also how to how to interact in a healthy, respectful manner? Well, there's a lot of hate speech, unwanted sexual remarks, non consensual posting of sexual media, spreads, Doxxing cyber stalking, harassing, gender based discriminatory means pose. And this is a type of environment that women in particular women who have public public figure profiles face when they interact online over the pandemic. There's also a very minimal coverage of the socio economic impacts on women going back once again to some of the modulating factors, for example, gender responsive budgeting, which can actually help to address some of the most coordinates with regards to domestic violence. We only saw that ceded by international organizations, and by a couple of sensitize MCs, whereby it is actually the role of the former state of journalism of media to take on the mantle and to understand how to approach pandemic recovery as a budgeting issue, but in a more gender sensitized manner. So there's a need for a solutions journalism approach, not just reporting. Right. Moving along here into the next slide now, women media workers and the unequal pandemic. There are quite a few factors. And I recently did complete a research report and I'm taking these markers from their personal health and safety was deeply impacted, particularly when it came to the earlier part of the pandemic, and vaccine rollouts, which were actually delayed. And even for journalists, journalists were not prioritized initially, unlike Indonesia, where actually, journalists will prioritize and they were amongst the first to be vaccinated, considering as they rightfully are frontline workers, particularly reporters, photo journalist and camera person. So we did not have that in Malaysia. And that definitely impacted not just the personal health and safety but also the mental health because when it boils down to it, we all go back

to our home, we all go back to within our communities, our homes, our communities may also involve those we are living with who are high risk, and not being vaccinated, definitely had a huge impact. And we also do know of many journalists who have fallen ill with or have even passed on due to COVID. Then again, that comes in the gendered the gender analysis on unpaid care and domestic work during COVID-19. If I mentioned this for women, by and large, in Malaysia and Southeast Asia over the pandemic, of course, the same was true for journalists and media workers. So particularly with regards to journalists, whom I spoke to in Sabah and Sarawak on paid can domestic work completely shot up with some of them actually forced to take on much smaller roles at work, because just imagining the pace of the average newsroom and how that's actually escalated all the way up to the ceiling over the pandemic. With so many different portfolios to juggle it becomes very difficult for women in media to have a career trajectory that is uninterrupted if you are if you have children, and if you have additional domestic labor responsibilities. So increasingly, I think we have also seen media particularly, particularly current affairs, desks, becoming more of a young child free woman's game, and this is of course, disturbing because there is a huge loss of talent There is an inability of media organizations to retain female talent once they choose to, perhaps get married or start their own families. Moving on from there, the other factor is also once again, online Gender Based Violence Against Women Journalists. I'll give you a personal example when it comes to this. I generally used to tweet in both Bahasa Malaysia, as well as English. However, despite the far increased levels of traction that you get when we tweet in Malay, I also face a lot more gender based violence. I am not just that woman, I am double, triple minority, as a half Malaysian, as a half Malaysian migrants. So there are many intersections and that's what I personally face. But so I actually did stop tweeting in Bahasa Malaysia and I almost exclusively tweet these days in English because it just reduces the risk, it reduces the stress of having to see literally like a few 100 baht like accounts jump on to what you have said, because you have said something in support of or you have produced or done work with regards to women's rights. So this sort of online GBV does seriously impact female journalists rights to freedom of expression, as well as the ability to perform their jobs? Well, then you've got the added dimension of workplace sexual harassment and gender discrimination. So in 2018, the Institute of journalists Malaysia actually did have an entire have a quick survey done, which found out that from all the journalists who were surveyed who had faced sexual harassment, or who are women, which was nine out of roughly 21 actually dropped completely out of the media industry. So these are just a couple more of the types of discrimination faced by women, particularly when they work in media. Because of COVID-19. Let's very quickly go into the road ahead, which is just a summation and my last slide before we end. So of course, media has got to leave the struggle for women's rights we need because you're in policies, rules mechanisms from national media policies, like gender reporting guidelines, to media industry, self regulation, and ombudsman or perhaps even a Malaysian media Council. Safety of female media workers will of course, be the key to a progressive media landscape. And that can come through organizations being far more sensitized, and also realizing that you cannot cover women's rights without having enough women represented in the media. Thank you so much for listening in so far to my keynote session, I conclude the session now. We will be taking of course any questions more towards the end of this entire session. I would now like to move on to our first speaker for today's masterclass on feminism policy and women's empowerment in Southeast Asia. It gives me great pleasure now everyone to introduce Sr. Mary John Mananzan. And Sister Mary John is a missionary Benedictine sister, she obtained her doctorate degree in philosophy with a major in linguistic philosophy

at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy, and a degree in missiology. At Munster in Germany. She's a feminist activist has built various women's centric programs. Among them the institute a women's study, women ecology and wholeness farm. She was also the National chairperson all Gabriella, which is a broad Alliance, a women's organization for 18 years. At present she VP of External Affairs at the St. Scholastica college and executive director of the Institute of Women's Studies at the period of the Manila community of saints for classical College, Sister Mary, over to you. Yes, if you could kindly unmute yourself as well Sister Mary, thank you, you may begin.

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB 49:16

I just said that I really loved your talk. And I feel that the women in Niger here in the Philippines should listen to you.

Tehmina Kaoosji 49:25

We are very much in solidarity with the women in media and Philippines.

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB 49:29

Good you normally are so personally

Tehmina Kaoosji 49:34

well I had the pleasure of interviewing her once yes but only

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB 49:39

alright. Okay now, I am sharing Okay. Okay. So, I am going to talk about humanism in the Philippines. And you know, this is usually a one hour and a half talk, but I have only 30 minutes so, I cannot explain thoroughly each one each of the slides so You can just ask me during the, during the question and answer period. I would like to begin with the historical exposures. In in many countries, they say that the coming of the spinors to their, to their places put up the status of women, it is not so in the Philippines, it's the opposite. Because before the Spaniards came, we were an egalitarian society. It's not a matriarchal society, because that includes inheritance, etc. It is egalitarian, which I find better than matriarchal. No. And what does that mean that the boys and the girls are really treated equally. And the reason for that is because the my both parents did not have a concept of virginity. And because they have no concept of virginity, they did that make any, it is not as if the daughter is more vulnerable than the boy. Because later on, I will show you how that will domesticate the Filipino women. And so they were equal in everything, they will equal in inheritance, they are equal in housework, they they can, they can also engage in business with the Chinese when they come. So economically, politically, they can be the, the head of the of the barangay are the smallest unit of a political unit. So economically, politically, socially, they were equal with demand. But one important thing is that in the religious sphere, they are a little bit above because we have what we call Dubai land that is the, the medium between the spirit world and, and the world of humans. And it's only women who who can be bought by land, which is very much the opposite. Now, I mean, at least in the Catholic Church, only men can be preserved. But at that time, only women can be by Lance. No. So in that case, they are really an important part of society. Okay. And our later on, when the Spaniards came, when the Spaniards came, were very worried about the women is the way they they thought, the mostly the friars, they would say, Oh, how

can this women go to heaven? Because they are so free? You know, actually, at that time, there was no prostitution, there was no, there was not much rape. Because boys and girls or teenage what it was men and women, they could actually talk together. And if they, if they liked each other, they could they could have what relationship with one another. So the thing is, why will you pay somebody when you can coax her to, to, to have a relationship with you. So it's very ironic that the designers came, they are the ones who put up the first prostitution house. And it is very ironic to because it was in a college, one half of the garbage was for the orphans, so for education, and one half is what it's called, they're like the employees of the king, which means to say these are prostitutes, who have to serve the Spanish soldiers. Because the Spanish soldiers came of course with colonization, no. So, this was the before the Spaniards came and after this binary scheme, because Spain at the time was a very patriarchal society, the women cannot go out without companion, they cannot be courted without the mother present. So all the oldest patriarchal values and patriarchal structures were introduced by the by the friars, and well the Spaniards in the Philippines, and they even brought in man was, you know, man was how to educate your, your daughters. And so they really, actually domesticated that's what they called domestication of, they called mohair in the henna Indigenous women. So, I just wanted to, to make that as an introduction, because later our feminism is inspired by that, no, because sometimes people say, Oh, the feminist feminism in in Asia, they are just copying the feminism of the West, I beg to disagree, we have a legacy of equality and that is what is inspiring us to take back that equality and even go beyond No. So I wanted to say that now. After some time, of course, all the all the women's issues came forward as soon as the patriarchal values and and structures were introduced into the country. So then you have inequality in the house, inequality in society, violence against women, what they are this commercialization of women, etc, etc. So all these women's issues, began to You know, permeate the whole of society in the Philippines. Now, there were some early women's movement, but mostly this early, we must move on about in this second century. They were mostly organizations, charitable organizations, for the poor, etc. And usually they were, they were, like a counterpart of a man's organization, so they're still under demand. One exception is the suffragette movement. In the 1920s, when women really said that we have to have the same voting was the righteous demand. And I would say this is one of the first political movements of women in the Philippines, although they did not yet have a feminist analysis of women oppression, but at least they were for the Empower political empowerment of women. Okay, afterwards the second phase now, this is something about the 60s No, it was not until the late 60s that the widening gap between the rich and the poor would intensify economic distress and political instability gave rise to a national liberation movement in the Philippines, the first phase being known as the first worker storm. Now, this is important, because it will also influence our the kind of feminism we have not. Because I remember that because in the 70s, where I am much older than all of you. So, I am considered one of the of the pioneers of the women's movement, the Philippines, and we really sought to get that the feminism in the Philippines is an essential part of our national liberation movement. In other words, we cannot think of a comprehensive transformation of society, if one half of the population are being oppressed or exploited by the other half. So, it became very essential that if you want to have a truly comprehensive li liberated society, we have to include the women's issue in any national liberation movement. So, we influence the national liberation movement to have instead of a 10 point program, they have a 12 point program, because they don't include the equality of women No. So, it is very, it is very important that that is said and secondly, we were also very aware of the of the different notions, that the feminism is, this just bra

burning and, and it is, it is what they call these women who will dominate the man etc. So, what we are saying there is that the men are also are also victims of socialization, there is not a boy who, who was born and mature, you know, that is learned. And therefore, even though definitely the socialization of society, the gender socialization of society, definitely benefits the men, of course, but they are still also victims of socialization. And therefore, we cannot consider them our enemies, we considered them perspective allies or something, and then, but our, our main enemy and our focus of our struggles against patriarchy, both as a concept and as a structure and the way it is being practiced in society now, so, and also, now, I have to say this, we also learn from the Western feminist movement, of course, I have to give credit where credit is due in their feminist analysis. So, that is where we we acknowledge that we were also we also learned from the feminist movement in the West, so that our witness woman had a clear feminist perspective. Now, but I have to, I have to explain what is the meaning of feminism to us, but, before that, I have to say a little bit about the woman question for us, the woman that is a woman question Definitely no. And that woman question is defined as, the fact is that the theory is the fact that there is discrimination, subordination, oppression and exploitation of women, as women and it cuts across class race, religion, nationality in it has an ideological that is the patriarchy and stress structural aspect, and it is a global problem. That is for us the woman question. Now, what is then feminism? Well, first, it manifests itself first in inequalities of origin and discrimination of women, both in the home and society. And of course, the the, the, the terrible manifestation of this is the violence against women and children, you know the sexual harassment trafficking, the rape, the rape, incest, battery, and of course, that is now the comedy commodification of women in media and if you are a journalist and you know that the recent struggle is the cybercrime, you know, the, the recent stage of exploitation, especially of children decided by him, I belong to disciple gardens here, which is fighting against this, this cybercrime, and because it is so terrible that parents of the pimps know, so we are fighting against this, and, and, you know, I'm so ashamed to say but the Philippines is considered is considered the hub of this sexual violence against children through the major, that's why they are fighting it very much because it is so shameful that, that the Philippines who is the only efficient country in the Far East, it is the hub, it is the center of a child cyber prostitution and cyber bullying. Okay, so you have the commodification of women in media, I really like the talk. And then of course, we have prostitution, local and global, you have the male order brides before and of course, the overseas contract workers that not only the, what they call the gender they call that rape and all that, but also in work, know how they are exploited as maids as nannies in first word. So this woman question, these are the manifestations in the Philippines? And so what is our definition of feminism? It's very easy. There are two questions that we ask number one, are you aware of the woman question? And in the way I, I explained it? Number two, if you are aware of the woman question, are you willing to commit yourself to help in changing the situation? Just that, so if your answer is yes to one and two, then you are a feminist, whether you are a woman, a man, LGBTQ, whatever, that is, our basic definition of feminism. And of course, there are many kinds of feminism, there's Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, etc, etc. Now, all those are for me peripheral old, all what they are doing that, for me, the main question is, are you aware of the woman question, are you committed to changing the situation that is in the way we understood, or we understand feminism in the Philippines, and I just said this already, that we are not copying the feminism of the West, because as I said, although our the the mothers were actually captive, not they were really brainwashed by the priors. But I always say, the Filipino woman, woman, they had a subversive memory of the equality, it's subversive, because that will

is the one that will subvert the the soul, sexism afterwards. So we have a subversive memory of our equality before the Spanish times. And of course, you acknowledge what we learn from the Western feminist. Now, another phenomenon in the Philippines is that most, if not all, Filipino families were first political activist before they became feminists. I don't know anyone who was a feminist first then become political activist. No, we were all political activists first. And for me, that is a very good beginning, because then you are advanced, grounded socially. It is not just relationship with the main men and women. No, it's just, it is the whole aspect of transformation of society. So I am glad that and of course, we learned a lot from our political activism in the strategizing and so forth, when we founded the women's movement, no. So again, as I said, we made sure that we are not anti men. They declared that men are not the enemy, but because they are victims of Shell socialization. And then for every, every hour, the International Women's Day we allow demand to accompany us in our marks, you always have a mouse, but we tell them don't go to the front, you got to decide at the back, but the women has to be they have to be the ones to bring the banners and all that we do not. We do not prevent them from from going with us, but they have they will not take the principal role. Okay. So God bless Allah is the largest and most militant women's organization in the Philippines. Let's Philippines today. No, I have to tell you. It started from Women's Resource Center. Two of us started that Women's Resource Center, which was mainly reserved for vacation and conscious decision work. And then do in the 1980s when Nina Nina Akina was assassinated, there sprouted a lot of women's organization in the Philippines. So what we did in 1984, was to have a kind of seminar or a conference, which was done in my school in St. Scholastica. Skylights, no. And in that, in that, in that Congress, or whatever you want to call it. The women's organization made a resolution to establish an umbrella organization more multi, sectoral and rainbow in color. And therefore, the ones who actually established Gabriela, it's not one or two persons, but it is the consensus of women's organization that came in the Congress of women in 1984. And I became chairperson of this organization for 18 years from 1986 to 2004. But there were two chairpersons before me, and it grew to be 250 women's organization, about 15,000 women members coming from the urban poor is called the sum of money. Some Makana women persons they are Mehan the women workers, they call themselves gay, I'm gay. And then there is also a National Organization of Women Religious in the Philippines. And then of course, there's a Gabriela us and there's Gabriella professionals. Now, of course, later on, there will be a little what they call that a theological difference, because the the first chairperson, they come from the elite. And so during the, during the election, after Marcos, you know, when, after the ads, or during the ads, I'm sure you have heard that he said that that bloodless revolution that we made against Marcos, the the women persons etc. They wanted to boycott. But the the, what they call the executive committee because they are more elite women, they did not want but the thing is the peasants and the workers they they went out into, into boycott. So the daily sign the executive committee resigned, and that is when I was asked to they nominated me as chairperson No. So anyway, now, in the middle of that, not in the middle, but maybe about 10 to 20 years. Some Gabriella people form the Gabriella party list. In other words, it is no we have you have to distinguish between the People's Organization Gabriella and the political party, which is called the Gabriela party list. And it's good that they form this because now they have representatives in the in the in Congress, they're able to do some political work too. Now there's some pictures for you to see the amihar and this one is about the agrarian reform which there are these are the workers, the urban poor, and so forth. And of course, Gabriella Gabriella etc, now, if you will look at this picture, this is my school. And this school every, every February 14, we have the 1 Billion Rising I'm sure you have

that too in Malaysia know where you dance, and it is against violence against women. And in my in my school, all of us, or so you can see all the students, the nuns, the administrators chatter with dance, the 1 Billion Rising okay, you have nonsterile now this is me, when I was still 50 pounds ago I say like this because I was still very thin at the time. So all about this one. So what what did we learn in the strategies that it's used by the women's movement in the Philippines organization, we realize that have no power if you are not organized. So that's why we formed organization because it's the only organization that gives you power. The second is, but it's not enough to have an organization you have to mobilize people because some organizations they end they begin with electing the officers and then making an oath of office and nothing happens during the year and at the end they will do election. No, that is the death of the old guys. In this session, what we realize is that you have to move last year your people when there is an issue, and that's why we really did that. And that's why we say, some people, for example, Cerebella, bulgan, floor contemplation, they, they were condemned to death in, they were off the balloon or what they call this workers overseas, because they have the Cerebella, bulgan happens to kill her, her employer who was trying to rape her. So they gave her a death penalty, and so forth and so on. So we saved a lot of women, and we convicted American soldiers in the Philippines, who, who raped Filipino women, because of the mobilization and the cooperation of all organizations. Without that, it is impossible to to to come up with a solution no, then of course, what is so important for us is consciousness raising. You know, that's why I put up an institute of women studies, that Institute of women studies, we give consciousness raising, to grassroots women to religious all all aspects, all sectors of society, because I believe that you cannot have a change in essence, in any society, if we do not have two things. One is change consciousness, and the other one is change of structure. If we do not have one or the other, then you can attempt to change, but we want to change because there is something wrong with society. So we begin with consciousness raising, we give basic women orientation, we have given this to 1000s and 1000s of women, because we're all already 30 years, the Institute of women studies and we have people from Malaysia with people from all parts of Asia and also because we have what they call intercultural force for women in society now, and then, of course, gender mainstreaming in academia, or do you know that that is in 2015, the chairperson of the, of the, of the chair, that is the tertiary education. She was a feminist, and she was able to pass a memorandum that there shall be a gender mainstreaming in all tertiary levels of the of all schools in the Philippines. You know, we are the only country who has that. And when she went to the United Nations, they gave her and standing ovation. Unfortunately, again, the implementation, you know, because now the, the head of the chain are the one that's responsible for tertiary education is the man and certainly not the feminist. So even though there is such a mandate, not many schools are actually implementing it more. And when legal strategies, again, we have the best laws or gender based laws, we have Magna Carta for women, we have bouncy, that means the Violence Against Women in the home, we have been against sexual harassment, etc, etc. Again, our problem is implementation, and also consciousness raising among those people, among the men and among the, the officers of the of the local government who are supposed to have this obligation to, to arrest people and all that, but that's why I'm saying it's important to have good laws, but it's more important to implement them. Of course, cultural studies, what we found out in our practice is that drama or play in a theater is one of the most effective consciousness raising means, because when when people or students are looking at a play or a theater, they actually what do you call that internalize or they are in they have an emotional attachment to the hero or heroine of the play. And therefore the the impact of them is greater rather than just to give

them seminars that is on the intellectual, but in a play or in a theater, it goes into the side, okay. So and of course, well of crisis intervention is like Red Cross. So we have I had found women crisis center that that is what we have vertical does counseling, etc, etc. And, of course, some some sometimes one of them would like to, to sue the, the husband who is my treating them, then we give them a help by giving them a free legal service. So crisis intervention, of course, very important solidarity You know, in the 19, when was at about 200 or 2001 or 2002, the government said that they're going to make Gabriella, they they were going to, to say that it is, it should be, it should be a worthy cause abrogated, etc etc. Because it is subversive just like this. Do you know that we got as the chairperson of Gabriella, I got 100 letters from 100 organizations all over the field, not only Philippines, but Asia and Europe and all that, and telling, telling the our government if you if you abrogate Gabriella, if you you know, release them out of existence, we will tell our government not to give you a chakra, etc, we will never really, Gabriella was never what he called the abolished by the state, because they saw how much solidarity we have all over the world. Now, these are just some pictures just to show you, again mobilization, awakening awareness, and this is our institute of women's studies, nausea, and that is how we do a deep inside. And we usually have courses there. Then, of course, the mainstream in academia, as I told you, that number, memoriam number one 2015, for all, higher education, and they we have each each university must have what they call God focal point system with the head is the president of the school, but they they should have a god committee and there are four basic function one is to see to it that all administrative policies should be gender sensitive. In other words, you have to look at the disciplinary, the employment, etc, that it is not discriminating against women. The second is curriculum. Now, this is the more tedious one, because it says that all the disciplines, whether they are natural science, humanities, etc. Number one, they should be gender sensitive. But not only that, not only that, should they be gender sensitive, but they should at least offer one gender course, even as elective or as one of the main subjects now, and research. All universities have research department, and it says here that one, one should see to it that all researchers should be gender sensitive. In other words, they should use inclusive language, you know, because, as you know, in many universities, the sexist language is in all documents, you know, even us, our sisters, you know, our hymns are very sexist. I remember a sister, we were singing a song with God as our Father brothers all or we let us work with our brothers. I said, What brothers were all women here? How come they're saying, Let us work with our brothers. And I really don't like it when, when in the sermon of the place, she says, My dear brothers, let us pray for the salvation of all men. I said, What? When am I there? You know, I was, I once walked out of a of a church, when the priest was really heavy, a very sexist, homily. No. So that's why we have to be very vigilant because even even the church most of all, because it's hierarchical, also know and outreach or the university some outreach in poorer communities, we have to see to it that there is a gender sensitivity of courses in the wisdom the men, that the women are also mobilized that they have, they have income generating projects, and that they are mobilized for women causes no So, that would be the the function of the god focalpoint system in the gender mainstreaming for as you will see that the legal strategies HBM that is the reproductive we are there, that is a paralegal training, there is the Magna Carta for women, etc. And this is what they were still telling you stageplay on human trafficking, very powerful. And this is our crisis intervention. We have the household in the house by Lila refuge center and we include the children with the with the mothers and that is counseling, etc. Now because I am, belong to the church, so I have developed a feminist theology of liberation that's part of our feminism. Now, as as religious women, we have to include religion In our what the quarter in our

strategy for change not now it brought means ecumenical Association third world theologians and this is international. Our members are from Asia, Africa, Latin America and and what they call the some parts of the United States. And we are also ecumenical meaningfully Catholics and non Catholics. Now this, it was put up a, a Women's Commission in Geneva in 1981. And that is where we develop what we call the Women's Commission that should bring about what we call a theology of liberation, feminist liberation from the perspective of the Third World. And later on, as Asian women, we made it from the perspective of Asian women. And what was the task of the commission to make a structural analysis of the situation of women, economic, political, social, cultural, religious, to discuss the patriarchal element in theology today, to reformulate the theology from the perspective of the struggle for the full humanity of women, and developed an ancient feminist theology. And the reason why we said it's necessary is because of the woman question the the fact that there is discrimination etc. And number 10, because religion is used as a socializing force in perpetuating the woman question, I have always say, as a, you know, as a nun, I have to say to them, religion has two aspects, because it has a divine and a human aspect. Therefore, it has also liberating as well as oppressive aspects. And I give the example, for example, in our little house, or there was a woman that was being battered by the husband, and you know, what the husband told her and she was telling this to me, she told the wife, you, woman, do not, do not answer me back, because you're only taken from here. I don't know if you understand what taken for me, and that is from the Bible that a mistaken from the rib of Adam, you know, now, what is funny or not funny? What is ridiculous here is that, that man is not the theologian, he is that a priest is not religious, but he is using a biblical, biblical quotation. to rationalize herb is beating up of the woman can you see and that's why we religious, we have to see that religion is taught properly, because if it is not taught properly, it can be used and it is being used to perpetuate the oppression and, and the subordination of women. Okay. For example, in in men, of course, we had many of our, our study, we had many seminars, etc. And I would just like to share with you some of our, excuse me, I just want to I just want to share with you some of our conclusions. In one of our consultation which said, the oppression of women is sinful. This systemic sin is rooted in organized structures economic political, cultural, with patriarchy is an overarching reality that oppresses women, the patriarchal churches have contributed to the subjugation and marginalization of women, theology itself in its premise of traditions and beliefs has blurred the image of God, the bias against women and Christian tradition, buttress the male oriented Asian religious belief, you know, it is very important to analyze all these things, because especially in the Philippines, we are 98% Catholic, and our women are listening to the press, etc, assume they are spiritual directors, and if they are internalizing that being a secondary citizen, and when there is a trouble in the marital thing, and then the priest will say, or just be patient, you know, you have to keep your, your family family intact, and therefore you just suffer it. Now, that can be No, I mean, that's why we have to show to them that that isn't the correct Christian posture, to just say, Okay, you can beat me up so that our family will be intact. Now, the core call or corollary of this is that the full humanity of women in an authentic and inclusive community of peace, joy and freedom, based on just relationship, we have to affirm that the full humanity of women, and we connect the, the women's course with ecology, ecological, upon how to call the advocacy, the integrity of creation, we call that and then we affirm the feminine creative principle as a life giving and live enhancing. And we affirm the prophetic and alternative voice and action of women in liberation movement. And we affirm this God directed women among themselves, and with others supporting everyone's struggle as well as the people's movement. Now, one of the most important development now here, I have to tell you that it will

take me an hour to explain this. But what is so important we found out in our Women's Commission is that even you have empowered the women economically, politically, socially, if we have not empowered them, spiritually, nothing will happen, or very little will happen. And so we develop what we call a transforming liberated spirituality. And these are the characteristics. Unfortunately, I cannot, I can explain to you in one hour, but just the, the characteristic, it has to be a self affirming spirituality, because we're always denying ourselves as women, individually and communally. Now, we have to assert ourselves, it is different from being aggressive, assertiveness is different from being aggressive, and we have to mutually empower one another. In other words, we should always try to get our fellow women, we have to help them in any endeavor that they have, instead of putting them down like the crab mentality, as it is called, although clubs are not necessarily like that. So our spirituality is developing, how we can mutually empower each other. And then it is integral now what is the meaning of integral? Because sometimes we dichotomize This is our prayer, this is our world, this is heaven, this is earth and all that. Nobody does. It's all one. No. We feel that you need prayer, and you need work together. No, we have the same work as if they are dependent on you, but pray as if all dependent on God. So that is our way of looking at this. And it has to be deliberate in spirituality. You know, there are so many, slavery's, for example, we said, we have to be liberated from three things, from fear, from idols, and from bitterness and resentment. If you are free from idols, fear and bitterness and resentment, then you are going to be an empowered woman. And then it has to be prophetic, what is prophetic with us, you have to walk your talk that is you have to you have to announce the good news. But you also have to denounce the bad news. In other words, you have to be critical of society, whatever the corruption is, and you have to do it, you know, vocally, what did the prophets do? They stood up, and they spoke out. And that is what we consider a prophetic spirituality, we have to stand up and speak out against all forms of corruption or whatever violence against women, and it has to be contemporary. We say this, because lay women sometimes are so busy, they do not have time for contemplation, you know, solitude, because that is what makes them really think about themselves in a genuine way, rather than in a very emotional way or so forth. And it is a healing spirituality. What does that mean? We believe in what you call wounded healers, wherever you were wounded, that is your opportunity to help people who are undergoing the same thing. An example of that is people who are incest victims, they are the best counselors, for children who are infested with things and then it is celebrating spirituality, you know, sometimes we Christians, some some of us think that to be holy, you have to have how long faces and always sacrificing and all that No, I said, we are a celebrating spirituality that means to say that we celebrate everything that happens to alive, whether what you call positive or negative, because the negative can become positive, we have to have joy in our life. And then you know, when we finish this, actually, we had the, we had, we had the confidence in Roxtec, Mexico, where all these women in this committee, we shared with each other, what happened to the women, we have to have the spirituality and because the shading was so beautiful, we said we have to write a book, but the book has to summarize this kind of spirituality and you know, what is the title of the book with passion and compassion? Because if you summarize this, it is a passionate and compassionate spirituality. For appraisal, then we must move in in the Philippines has accomplished much in awakening women awareness of their situation and so socialization in putting the women agenda in government institution and the NGOs, in having the most women friendly legislations, in successfully campaigning for the defense of women's rights, Arabella bulgan for contemporary Chun, Jennifer Lauder, Mary Jane, etc, in making possible that the Philippines is the only country that

mandates gender mainstreaming in the academe, and in making possible the prosecution of sex perpetrators against women and children, especially now in cyber bullying. But we are far away from our goal, there is no equality in the economic, political and social sphere, as was said already, violence against women has not diminished. In fact, in the pandemic, it has increased because the perpetrators and the victims and at home, there is a poor implementation of the laws. And in these four years, we have seen the most misogynistic admonition in our administration in our history, I'm talking about a precedent Duterte is the most misogynistic precedent that we ever had in the Philippines. No. So what did we What did women organization are saying, I will say it first in Tagalog, they say deploy, meaning onward with the struggle. And with that, I would like to end my talk. Thank you very much.

Tehmina Kaosji 1:31:24

Thank you, thank you so much, sister, Mary, John, that was wonderful. I think we all learned so much from what you had to say. And everything that you had to share with us. We wish we had another hour to go. However, we do have a question that has come in. And this question is from Malaysia. Sister, Mary, John, they asked, you mentioned the proper teachings of religion in predominantly Catholic Philippines, what role does the Blessed Virgin play in women's conception of themselves? If religion is taught properly, can the Blessed Virgin be a figure of empowerment?

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB 1:31:59

For me, the Blessed Virgin Mary is the is the Shining The Shining aspect of the Catholic Church. Because I have to say, as a Catholic, and I have the right to do that, because I'm a member of the, it is one of the most higher hierarchy type patriarchal religion, I have to say that, and sometimes when people tell me are always criticizing the church for this for that, why don't you get out of the church? No, I should, I'm not going to get out of jail. Ah, my mother. I love my mother. But sometimes I'm not pleased with her. I said, I get irritated with my own mother. Why? Because she has also traits that I don't like, no. So I love my I don't love my mother. But if I see what's in her page, I have to tell that these are watching you, in your, in your face. And really, for me, the the greatest thing that I would like the our Catholic church to do is to really take seriously the equality of men and women because it is not equal in the Catholic Church. As I said, the Blessed Virgin Mary, at least brings the role of the woman very much in the forefront of, of devotion and piety. That is, that's why the Blessed Virgin Mary is for me the saving aspect of the Mr. Janus, the church that I belong to, you know, and for me, we have because now we have a synodality No, we have we have now what they call synodality that we say they are going to listen to the periphery and all that I said to the women, you better talk we better talk and tell them exactly what we say that we are really not considered equal to them, we are not in the decision making or the call that what they call the decision making bodies, that we have to say that No, although actually we have more influence among the the poor people because we are with them. The priests and the bishops are not in the palaces and all that. But we the the way the Catholic nuns, we are with the people, we act with the poor, and that is why we can influence them even if we are not in the desat decision making bodies of the church. So the Blessed Virgin Mary, I'm telling you since the saving backdoor in the Catholic Church.

Tehmina Kaosji 1:34:22

Thank you. Thank you so much for that sister, Mary John. On that note, everyone it is time for a 10 minute screen break. We will take a short pause as we refresh our eyes and we will come back together with the rest of our speakers. And of course Sister Mary John as well towards the end when we have the panel discussion. See you all in 10 minutes time. Thank you so much. With a bachelor with a Bachelor of human sciences in Sociology and Anthropology and obtained a PhD in sociology from Victoria University of Wellington, Dr. Al-Attas explores the field of family, gender and work. She has also been engaged in multiple research projects on a variety of issues in Malaysia, including free speech, social cohesion during COVID-19 issues of low income, urban household and a book on sociology of marriage and family. She is also an outspoken advocate on women's rights issues, appearing on public platforms to draw attention to social issues. Her most recent research and advocacy focuses on the issue of period poverty, dealing with social attitudes and institutional problems connected to menstrual health and hygiene. Dr. Fatima over to you and of course, your research work.

Dr Fatimah Al-Attas 1:44:15

Tehmina, first of all, thank you to Kiniacademy for inviting me. I'm really honored to be here. And Sister Mary's presentation just now as well as the minutes presentation was really interesting. And I learned so much from that. And I'm just like, still, you know, like when you get a lot of good information and just sort of in shock. But that was really good. Going back to my presentation. So today I'm going to talk about period poverty. So the first part of it is just defining what period poverty is and then we're going to talk about gender inequality and how that spreads or we can see that in the public space and then how do we solve it? can sell and address these kinds of issues next days. So when we talk about period poverty, sometimes there's a bit of confusion as to what period poverty is. And that's the interesting bit because I think it sort of catches people's attention enough to get them to listen to what period poverty looks like, or what it means. Essentially, period poverty is the inability of a menstruating person or female body to access menstrual health. So usually, what we see being published, especially recently in Malaysia, which mix of catching on with mainstream media is on the lack of one element, which is the menstrual product. So poverty is in inequality of wealth inequality that results in an ability, or lack to access of the menstrual products, like sanitary pads, or tampons or menstrual cup for people to manage their menstruation. But that's actually just one part of what period poverty is. So when we're talking about period poverty, we actually want to cover everything around menstrual health, what does not allow women or give not give access to being able to manage menstrual health? So usually, I'll highlight four things. Number one, is the product not having access to the products that can allow women or girls to manage their menstrual health? So it could be any absorbing and safe product? And key number two would be the wash facilities. Wash facilities is clean water, access to toilets access to sanitation, disposal, management of the products if, for example, if we're using disposable sanitary pad, can we dispose of the product properly? And then we're looking also at hand wash. So that's the second and elements that that would be knowledge or information about menstruation. So do they know about what menstruation is? That it's normal, that it's a cycle, what to expect and things like that. And then finally, would be privacy. So these are the four things that are usually mentioned. But if we look at the slide, it only covers the two things, which is knowledge and materials and facilities. So in order to ensure that women and girls have access to menstrual health, were actually looking at a few other things, which is the health services and resources. That means the sort of social connection that girls and women have access to, if they're not feeling well, for example, and they're going through

endometriosis, like excess excessive pain relating to menstruation. Do they know what it is? And can they get support in helpful that, or any other forms of disorders. And then of course, the big elephant in the room is the stigma around periods or around menstruation. So ensuring that women and girls have access to positive and respectful environment. And this is another hot issue in Malaysia are we seeing around issues relating to period spot checks, which we can discuss a little bit more later on, about those being checked for having periods at school. And then of course, we have the issue of inclusivity. These are looking at the impacts of certain stigmas, or certain ideas around menstruation and how that affects the lives of women and girls, including whether they are excluded from certain spaces, whether they're restricted from doing certain things, whether they're being discriminated for having menstruation, for example, they are labeled as dirty, or they're labeled as emotionally unwell and things like that. And then, of course, any form of violence occasions are related to menstruation. And then this would have an impact on different parts of women's lives in girls lives, for example, not being able to manage their menstruation could mean that they don't have access to education. So they don't have proper products to help them manage their menstruation or the schools do not have access to clean water, and things like that. So that means that they don't have access to other life opportunities. And then that could also look at things relating to work or women with endometriosis might not have the same kind of opportunities to go back to work. And then we're looking at other issues relating to politics. For example, the idea that women are more emotional because we have more menstruation and things like that, therefore, not being given access to or not given the same opportunities to take on certain roles. So inclusivity is also another thing that we we also have to discuss when we're talking about menstrual health and discrimination in gender. Next, please. So how is it that at any given time it's estimated that they are 800 million of us menstruating, and we mentioned it for 30 or so years of our lives, but we don't really talk much about it or we still don't know enough about it. So what happens is when we're talking about menstruation, we have what we call a culture of concealment. So generally we don't listen or we don't hear about people talking about menstruation, we don't address menstruation, and even more. So in our region. It's quite a taboo and stigmatized topic. We hush hush about it, we whisper about it, we give different names to menstruation, we give different names to sanitary pads, we have different names to anything relating to it so as to silence the conversation, so as to make sure that it's invisible. Nobody knows who and when somebody is mentoring, if you're in a discussion, or if you're in a roundtable meeting, you don't know if your colleague is mentoring, if she had a knee cage, even then you wouldn't know or she'd had to, she would have to hide it. Or we see girls at school. If there's a leakage, there's a big, there's a big process or there's a lot of processes in trying to manage the leakage so as to make sure that nobody knows what has happened and keep everything silent and quiet. So there's a lot of silencing and invisibility around menstruation. So this makes sure that it's neatly and tightly put away that nobody talks about it. And then we have the stigma and taboo relating to menstruation as well. The idea that the menstruating body is the tea, the idea that the menstruating what is problematic, the blood is dirty, black, for example, then, women who are menstruating are not in a good state, whether it's emotionally sometimes in some cultures, we believe that women who are menstruating are weak, spiritually or are more prone to getting disturbed by different creatures and things like that. So there's a lot of different stigmas and taboos. And this is also very much related to where we are at and the culture that we're looking at around menstruation as well. And then more often than not, when we're talking about menstruation, if we're not talking about stigma and taboos, we're looking at it from a hygiene lens. So what happens with hygiene lenses, maturation is conceived as

something that's a disease or something that has to do with cleanliness. So we have to ensure that everything is clean. So often, in a public setting, women and girls hide their menstruation so that they can appear clean, and they can appear that they're not sick so that they are deserving of being in a public setting. So we have this package of culture of concealment, that sort of stops us from doing a lot of things that stop us from having conversations around menstruation. And why is it that it continues to happen? So would suggest that we have torture of concealment, imperative that women and girls learn from a very young age. And we internalize certain ideas about menstruation, so ideas around stigma and taboos, ideas around silence and invisibility and ideas around cleanliness and health. And through my research in Malaysia. So we interview young girls as well, at the beginning of their menstruation up until more than 10 cycles. And then when they are much older to see how they experience menstruation and how they come up with ideas around practices, ideas about hygiene. So we're definitely noticing the internalizing of these values or the internalizing of these practices and what we call the imperative to ensure that we don't talk about it. So even in a setting where we're running the focus group discussions with these young girls, it's harder for them to speak up because they, they have internalized it so well that the first response is always to say shame, like in Malaysia they say Malu like it's so shameful to even talk about it, to talk about how they are managing it to talk about what's happening to them to ask questions about it. So it is so embedded that it has been taught to girls and women from a very young age, and then it goes on for a long time. So it's no wonder that even though half of us mentary and in some countries in in the ASEAN region, more than half of the population are women. We still don't talk about menstruation we still don't talk about issues relating to menstruation, because of the strength of the culture consumer and or the consumer imperative where we've sort of agreed not to talk about it, and we hold on to it and we teach others and we silence others. If they say like they're menstruating, are they showing the demonstrating video They're not to do it, or we help them in covering things up. So it sort of perpetuates this idea of concealment. And next please. So then what happens when we have the culture of concealment, which is part of the conversation around gender inequality, and that meets with wealth inequality. So this is where the conversation about period poverty happens. So we have this widening gap of wealth inequality that happens a lot in countries that are developing or progressing rapidly. And then we have high levels of urbanization. So we find that we have a population of urban planners. And then at the same time, there is a distinct separation or differentiation between the urban and the rural population, right. So we find that a lot of things have been in these regions, that revolves around wealth inequalities. And so when we meet the intersection of wealth inequality, and gender inequality, we know that there are even less conversations that talk about how women or girls are impacted by these kind of inequalities. So in the case of Malaysia, our research is looking at urban poor, young girls. So it's a new population of urban pilots, a growing population of urban poor, and even more so with the pandemic, we find that a lot more people are affected by the cost of living in the city. And then when we talk to girls and women about menstruation, it does not come up at the priority of things that people think about when they thinking about surviving through the pandemic, and through the challenges of, you know, the economic challenges. So one of the interesting things that we find is that, with urban poverty, it takes on a unique kind of, it's different. And I think it's hard for the public to notice that, because the idea of poverty is so embedded that we want to see a particular look of poverty. And with period poverty, it's, it's it has been somewhat the same when we're talking about reporting around period poverty. Our idea of poverty is almost always there's this picture in our head about what it should look like. But we're not talking about

urban poverty, it looks a bit different. So when we started our research, we did wonder if whether or not poverty exists? And that's a question that I get a lot. Is there real? Is it something that we are still facing in 2021? And it is a question that I had to ask myself in the beginning as well. But if people experienced poverty, and because women at the same time, experiencing gender inequality, there is a very high chance that it exists, is just that we don't see it, or it's being covered up. So the first instance that we found out, or I found out about period, poverty was in meeting with a homeless lady that there was asking for sanitary kit. So we were giving out food. But she asked, Do you have sanitary pads? That just struck me? And I think that's, that's definitely my privilege, you know, not having to have to think about that at all. But that got me looking through things and trying to find and I couldn't find anything, whether it's in academia or in reporting, there was like two reports, maybe in the last 10 years about period poverty in Malaysia. And even then, it was very short write ups about people giving out sanitary pads. And that was it. So when we started our research with urban poor young girls, which I got from a report that there were those who were missing out on school because they didn't have access to sanitary pads, I wondered if I wasn't going to find anything. So in the first focus group that we did with the girls, it felt like I wasn't going to find anything and check the boxes. They had access to water. They had access to sanitary pads, they were taught at school about menstruation. But it was until we listened to the recordings again that we realized no, it looked like they had them. But when we listened again, they had to share the sanitary pad with their family members. For example, in some of the cases, we found that the mothers would buy a bag or a few packets at the beginning of the month of sanitary pads and they might have a larger family with sometimes five to nine girls in the same family. So what happens is they have to share the sanitary pad and that's not enough obviously. So what happens is, they've learned to take what you can get so it's like a first come first serve kind of setting Unfortunately, but they were jovial about it, it wasn't like I said, you know the story of poverty, like we don't have enough. So it's really difficult, they were just happy about it. They're like, Oh, if you don't get it to bed, you know and laugh about it, that's just going to be awkward for you. What happens if you don't go to school, when you don't have sanitary pads, that teachers would send you home, then we started noticing that it was a whole ecosystem that allowed for this to happen, that young girls who are children, essentially, under the care of their parents didn't get access to enough sanitary pads, they did have some, but it wasn't enough, they had to prolong the use of the sanitary pads that he had. So instead of using it for the stipulated time, they would extend the use so as to not be wasteful. This idea of being wasteful. And then also when they went to school, nobody was checking on whether or not the school facilities had good access to water flow, the bins were cleared out that they had bins to throw out the sanitary pads that they were comfortable enough to change the sanitary pads was cool. So what happened is, they did miss out on school. And on days where they don't have sanitary pads, they would go home, and the teachers would allow for them to go home. And then they were not comfortable to change the sanitary pads at home at school, even though they had them. So what they do is they don't participate in certain types of activities that will allow them, they will make the move more. So they would sit in and choose not to participate in certain things. And that was also allowed. And given that that's not a problem. There wasn't support anywhere around those things. And they didn't. And even though they did have a class or a session about menstruation, it didn't give them enough information about what they needed to know. And it was always set up in a very awkward kind of situation that they didn't really learn about what the cycle was, and to go back and US was not something that they had access to. So they didn't really have access to us again, about their menstrual cycle. So we noticed

that, okay, we have a problem here. But it doesn't look like what we think it looked like. It looks like at least for the urban, poor young girls. And then we started talking to NGOs, NGOs, and NGOs who have been working on period poverty. And we noticed that in different segments of our societies, it doesn't look the same. So in really rural remote areas in Malaysia, we have problems in all areas, because they're so far removed. So they don't have access to sanitary pads. And they don't have access to cloth pads, they don't have access to tampons, they just don't have access to products. And in some places, there's no access to clean water, sanitation, toilets, privacy, and they don't learn about menstruation. So some of them would be scolded for having menstruation early because that was problematic for their family, they were taken out of school when they started menstruating. And things like that. So the severity of these cases were much more so they would have to use, or they would have to resort to extreme measures of, for example, from completely not using anything and just letting the blood leaked all together, or putting coconut husk in old socks or borrowing all cloth or they would use the same cloth that they would rotate with your family members. So that's definitely not safe for them. So we find that they these are some of the differences that we find between the rural and remote areas. And then we have those with different identities are the intersectionality of the identities, the marginalized groups of refugees, stateless girls and women would experience different things. So there was definitely that gap where we've not taken the time to understand how women experience menstrual health management, and outlines, you know, and what what we're doing as a society in order to make sure that women have access to this and how many women or girls are affected by poverty. So that's something that we don't see, because of the concealment and silencing as well, that's the big elephant in the room, in terms of trying to have these conversations is very challenging. And then at the same time, we know that nobody's looking at it, or there's not enough people looking at it. And so a lot of girls and women who experienced period poverty do not know that they're experiencing period poverty and they do not know how to get help for it. Because it's really embarrassing. It's really shameful to reach out and get support for that. Thank you. Next please. So in the public space, what happens is we live in a patriarchal society. So the women body that or the female body that men's rights is not really welcomed in this society or in the public space, and we can see this visibly in a lot of the examples I've already given just now, so when we're talking about the mentor rating body, more often than not, it is framed or it is perceived as Deki, whether it is dirty, physically dirty, or whether it is considered spiritually or culturally dirty. And then there is this idea of women being weak because women mentary, or they're weak while they are menstruating, that menstruation is an illness, or that women are experiencing illness and that it's shameful. And women menstruating and women speaking about their menstruation, or the menses itself, brings discomfort to others. So the idea of speaking about it or the idea of looking at women leakage, during menstruation makes other people uncomfortable, and therefore does not or should not be placed in the public space. So when we're talking about menstrual concealment, we find that concealing it is better for women, because of these reasons, because of these perceptions. And framing around menstruation makes it better for women to choose to conceal it. So it it further strengthens the idea of the concealment imperative that we feel that it's better for us to not talk about it, whether it's socially, whether politically to bring up issues relating to policy changes, and things like that, or in our personal lives to tell others because sometimes, there's this constant idea that menstruating women, for example, are more emotional, so we shouldn't talk about things. We don't bring these issues, and things like that. So these are just some of the examples. Next piece. All right, so we want to look at how period poverty looks like in public spaces, and how we can start to address them. So what

we've seen so far in terms of reporting of period poverty, not just in Malaysia, but globally has always been about the really severe cases of period poverty, not to say that they are not important to highlight, but that gives us the illusion that those are the only ones we want to talk about. So whenever we discuss poverty in Malaysia, I find that journalists or reporters often ask like how severe it is tell us like the really serious cases are always chasing for really severe cases like oh, how many women are choosing to get pregnant instead of going through menstruation because they cannot afford it? So I feel that we really need to, you know, relook at the problem. Isn't it enough that women should be able to manage our menstruation safely? And healthily? Isn't that the basic level that we need? It shouldn't have to be the extreme that women have to choose to starve themselves so that they don't have menstruation for the month? Or that they have to choose pregnancy over menstruation? Isn't it enough? Or isn't it the bare minimum that we all women should be able to all be given the right to manage our menstruation properly. So in addressing these issues, we need to look at how menstruation, or how period poverty affects women in those in the different public spaces that we are in. So we're talking about about education, and what we're definitely looking at facilities, and access to products. So whether or not we have considered the facilities are enough for young girls. And for women to manage our menstruation. So this includes access to water access to space. In some cultures, different practices around menstruation might require different types of facilities. So that would be something that we would need to think about. And we want to ensure that people have the comfort to manage their menstruation safely, and also comfortably in those spaces that there is privacy for women and girls to do that. And then we're also looking at access to products, whether or not they have products. So we want to check whether the toilets have extra products for women and girls to have access to right. And then we also want to know how well this is about gender sensitivity. And I think we've highlighted this before with the previous speakers as well. Being sensitive to the needs of menstruating bodies in spaces where we are in so in education setting, our teachers trained to understand what these are whether or not the teachers who deliver these messages are checking so we find that sometimes there with schools, we know that in Malaysia at least the education around menstruation usually would separate the girls and the boys. So we don't talk about menstruation together. So boys have different ideas about menstruation and girls have different ideas about menstruation. And the problem sort of stems here as well. The understanding of Inspiration is not in a safe and clear kind of way. And therefore the conversation around menstruation is also not being put in a way that is safe and healthy. So we find that there's a lot of bullying relating to menstruation in the, in the school setting itself where boys are teasing girls about demonstration shaming them for leakage or teasing them to say, Oh, you have menstruation you're leaking now, even though they're not leaking, so we have issues like that, that are ongoing, even in 2021 Is it somehow you know, is surprising for a lot of people. But these are things that are still ongoing in the same is also happening in the workplace that women or girls, or women are treated differently for having menstruation or women have to conceal their menstruation even though we're going through pain or discomfort that women do not feel comfortable enough to excuse ourselves to manage our menstruation. And then we have questions around cultural and religious spaces. And this may be different depending on where we are, depending on our country, and depending also on the religious practices that we have. So it will be something that we want to explore perhaps, or something that you want to look into as well in understanding the context of those spaces, because there are different beliefs. And there are also different practices that are being imposed on girls or that they are taught to girls about menstruation. And it may not be true.

And it may be something that really is really excluding them from certain spaces of really discriminatory in some ways. For example, in the context of the Muslim community in Malaysia, around washing up the sanitary ban, it's a very sensitive topic, right? About washing of the disposable sanitary pad is something that is so cultural, and something that is so strongly internalized by women and girls, and this is one of the research areas that we're looking at as well, to wash the sanitary pad, if it's not being washed, then women or girls can be disturbed by spiritual creatures, because the blood is considered so religiously there is no there is no evidence for this. But it is continually perpetuated within the culture. And so it causes a lot of psychological distress to girls as well in terms of trying to manage their menstruation, and then the disciplining that comes with that, and their understanding of themselves. And the immense rating bodies. We also have issues relating to the political sphere, how often is it that we get to push for policies that relate to managing menstrual health without being taken lightly or without it being something that's not taken too seriously, or not taken seriously enough, and not just a woman's issue. And we want to talk about how we can streamline the initiatives and efforts around poverty and how we can talk about it seriously to look at the potential life outcomes of girls and women within our society. And then, of course, the general public areas, we want to make sure we bring into the conversations of public toilets, whether public toilets are safe spaces for girls and women to manage their menstruation, whether there are clear ideas around what is needed, and how we can cater to the safety of girls and women in public spaces. Next, please. Alright, the role of advocacy activism and media in addressing issue of period poverty, especially in the public space, so I think we take on like a three step kind of process. So the first one is definitely raising awareness, and then promoting for policies that are tailored to what is needed in each region and in each country, and then monitoring those policies to ensure that they sustainability, and that the policies are something that's long term. And I think this is something that Amina and Sister Mary highlighted as well. We have policies and we can come up with great policies. But we really need to check the implementation of these policies, whether they're good or not. So advocacy, activism, and the media really plays a strong role in all of these three areas. And I want to give an example, about how poverty is being addressed in different parts, including Malaysia. So I was really fortunate to be speaking to colleagues in New Zealand who address period poverty and how that translated into policy implementation, as well as giving out free sanitary kits to school going children. So it's always about collaboration. It's always about organizing ourselves together. So collaborating with different parties and talking to each other means that we can work together We can discuss things and we can learn from each other. And so that's really an important aspect of how we've addressed period poverty, or we're addressing period poverty in Malaysia. So also to talk to each other, not just within our area. So not just in academia for someone like me just talking about research about poverty, but also getting to know the grassroots actors and talking to them about what's happening, what's working. And then of course, meeting with the media and talking to people in media and addressing how we can frame the discussion around period poverty. So that is the very basic kind of collaboration that we should be able to have in trying to make these kinds of changes around poverty or any women's issues, I suppose, that we're trying to bring or to push forward. So with the beginning, conversation is just raising awareness. And I think that's something that we're still working on in Malaysia is trying to make sure that people know what period poverty is, and to understand how it affects women's and those lives. And I think the most important part during this awareness kind of campaign is to make sure that the framing around period poverty is correct. And I'm really scared that period, poverty is almost always framed as something that

is extreme. And in Malaysia, in particular, the story of women getting pregnant because they don't have sanitary pads, I'm really trying hard to make sure that that's not the face of poverty, you know, that we continue to talk about period poverty in including all men's reading bodies in considering how all men's reading buddies are affected by the different areas, or the different elements that may not be available to all of us. So not just framing it as something that's extreme. So it's easy for us to sort of let go, as soon as we know that, okay, people have, you know, it's not something believable, it's not something relatable, it's not affecting enough people for us to care, trying to move those conversations and trying to make sure that we do things consciously. And I think they mean, I brought this just now on how things are being reported, what's getting reported, whether there is an understanding of the issue is also really important. And then we move on to promoting things. What are we looking for, what do we need to do next. So the collaboration between the different groups is really important in ensuring that we have a good voice. And the voice is something that we've, we've solved, discussed together, and we know what we want to push for within our country or within our nation. So this goes also for other nations and other countries who may have different challenges. You know, in some countries, maybe it's the wash facilities that you want to push forward first, you know, we don't want to have a copycat kind of policies, just because we see a lot of reporting of poverty in a particular country that talks about products, then we you know, sort of hop on to then just pull that in into our country. And that's not something we really need to begin with. So we have to tailor our advocacy, our activism to what is important to our people, and therefore we need to understand our people first. So that's really important. And then once we get policy changes, we have to make sure that we monitor those policy changes in terms of its implementation, whether it's reaching the target groups that we are hoping that it will and how that's changing and how that's improving the situation in the long run. So that's really important as well, next piece. Alright, so if we want to open the conversation and keep the conversation going, we really need to understand what's happening in our region, and what's happening within the context of things. So just like I said, if we look at, for example, countries who have passed laws are who have passed or given policies to give out free sanitary kits or address poverty, they have different needs, so they address them differently. Right. So I can give an example. For example, in Malaysia. If we give free sanitary kits only in the form of a disposable sanitary pad, it's not always going to be good, because in really in really rural remote areas where there is no disposal management, which is the facility part of menstrual health, what happens is, women cannot dispose the sanitary pads properly. So we've had NGOs who have given disposable sanitary pads in really rural remote areas. And what happens is when they come back next time, we find floating sanitary pads in the waters. So that's not helpful for anybody. So we need to understand that it's not always a one size fits all solution. So we really have to understand the context in which we're bringing these solutions, right. And then we also have to talk about the conversation around the culture of our setting Another example of products is, for example, we want to go for a more sustainable kind of route, right to use a menstrual cup. So essentially, a menstrual cup is a silicone cup that can be used for a long time. So can we use up to five to seven years? So if you want to think about like sustainability, and economical kind of things you might want to consider or why don't we give a metro cup to all girls and women, you know, you could quickly fundraise that or you could quickly give them that, but the menstrual cup needs to be inserted. And if we're looking at the cultures around virginity, then there's a lot of conversations that needs to be had in education and support that needs to be had. So it's not just about structures. It's not just about giving out the product, but it has to also come with education and changing the framework. So maybe

we want to consider what are the understandings of culture around those contexts as well. And whether it's sustainable or not. The other thing, for example, with using cup is we have to consider whether or not they have access to clean water to wash those cups. So it's not really simplistic kind of policies that we want to push for that we've seen, like, for example, Scotland has done it and given up free pads for everybody, that we just want to hop on board and deliver, you know, there are people who need it, and they need it fast. But that shouldn't be the only solution. And that's not the sustainable solution. So in opening up the conversation, we need to take the time to understand the context within our region, and within our country and the kind of diversity that we have in our society. Who are the women that we have in our society? Who are the girls that we have? And what kind of infrastructure facilities that we have? What are the cultures around menstruation? What are the cultures around gender access to certain facilities or access to certain spheres of life, whether it's social, whether it's religious, whether it's political. So these are things that we have to talk about, we cannot just, you know, have one conversation around giving free pads for everybody, those conversations need to happen. And we have to allow for those conversations to happen. Next please. So I want to just highlight the Malaysian case, which has been quite exciting. I think, you know, there's still a lot of things, we need to do this, there's a lot more things for us to push for. But I think what is optimistic and exciting about the Malaysian case, is how fast things have progressed. And I think they're gonna highlight this before. Prior to 2017, we had maybe a handful of reporting about period poverty. And that was just like, one short article about an initiative to give out free sanitary pads, or an initiative of social enterprise coming up with the idea of one by one, and you give out one sanitary pad to another, for example, and unfortunately, underprivileged go. But what's happened since the pandemic, especially is the conversations around menstruation, around period poverty that's happened. And I think a lot of this has to do with how the meet some media channels have played on the issue. And for the first time, we have had the conversation around period poverty happen, not only in independent media, but also on mainstream media. So we've managed to get through to radio, we've managed to get through to TV, we've managed to get through to print paper, digital media. So that's really, that's really a breakthrough in terms of speaking about menstruation in platform. So it's an optimistic perspective, to think about how even within the culture of principles sigma, we managed to penetrate these things. And we managed to bring issues that are important out there, if there is political will, and if there is understanding and willingness also from those, or from those of you who are working in this area to highlight and to push for these issues. And the journalists that I spoke with, especially at the beginning of this earlier last year, and earlier this year, they had to fight for these issues to be highlighted and just like the minister, they had to ask, and they had to push that these issues are being reported. So that was really something beautiful to see. And then at the beginning it was just because in Malaysia we speak different languages. So we have media in different languages. In the beginning, it was just English and Malay media and then later on we got into central Delhi, which is Mandarin media to talk about period poverty. So that was really good because they expanded who were going to read about it and how they were going to read it and you know the framing around period poverty and also giving or unpacking the concealment of menstruation. There's one here is our former Minister of religious affairs with the sanitary pad. And I think that's a very powerful picture. Well, given the taboo and stigma around menstruation. So I think that's a really powerful reporting about menstruation and the role of men in menstruation. Otherwise, we always see the same kind of pictures and depictions around menstruation, around menstruation around poverty. So having different kinds of depictions having different kinds of

conversations is important. Even though we see really good progress, these are just some of the report things we've had even more reporting after, in the last year around period poverty. So that's very exciting. But what I find is that it's always similar kind of reporting that happens around menstruation that we're looking at severe cases, or we're really looking at cases where, which is, like I said earlier, you know, the kinds of cases that we don't normally find, and we want to talk about that rather than talking about the basic needs are not met. And that should be serious enough for us to highlight that it doesn't have to be, you know, the the worst kind of pieces that we bring into the media that is that it's really bad that we half of the population cannot get access to our basic right should already be newsworthy, it should already be something that we constantly talk about. All right, next space.

Tehmina Kaoosji 2:26:41

And then we find that there was a policy change, or we find that there is government kind of conversation that we didn't see before, and we had not seen before. So I think we have to acknowledge that conversations, not only on social media, which plays a big role, and it's something that is much stronger now. Because largely because of the pandemic and also the rise of social movements online, that we find that it's also moved into mainstream media, and that creates awareness around poverty. And with that awareness, we found that there was more conversations that were being had with within the parliament. And there were more conversations that were being had by parliamentarians by politicians. And then we saw the first release, or the first budget allocation for period poverty. And that is to be given to teenage girls. So it was to be given to poor teenage girls. So it's not all women, not all women categories. And we want to make sure that we address these issues. Next, we want to look at the implementations of the budget in giving out free hygiene kits and why they're giving it out to girls, and not all women and things like that. But at the same time, it's progress. It's something that we look forward to it shows us it's definitely doable. If we give enough, you know, attention to it and really highlight it enough. It's something that can happen. And it's something that we want to continue to push for and we want to continue to talk about. Okay, I think that sort of wraps things up for me, and I hope that we can continue the conversation and there'll be questions later on. Thank you. Thanks so much for that Dr. Fatima that was super informative. And I love the format that you went with, especially digging really deep into how in such a short period of time, we've been able to achieve some significant milestones when it comes to addressing period poverty in Malaysia. We will leave the questions for you for the later session together with the rest of the panel. In consideration of time. I would now like to proceed with our final speaker for the day. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Dr. Tamara Nair. She is a research fellow at the Center for non traditional security studies and he has center at the s Rajaratnam School of International study, Nanyang Technological University. She graduated from the National University of Singapore NUS with a bachelor's degree in political science and geography going on to trade at the National Institute of Education. Dr. Nair's current research focuses on issues of power and the biopolitics of labor and technology, movements of people in Southeast Asia and the women peace and security agenda in the entire region. She's also Singapore's representative of the ASEAN women for peace registry and has authored the 2018 human rights and Peace Education report for Singapore as the representative for Nanyang Technology University for the ASEAN university network or human rights as well as Peace Education. Dr. Tamara, the floor is now yours.

Dr. Tamara Nair 2:29:52

Thank you so much Tehmina. Can everyone hear me just need to do a quick check? Oh, good.

Tehmina Kaoosji 2:29:58

Yes, we can hear you clear. Thanks.

Dr. Tamara Nair 2:30:01

Thank you so much for that introduction. And I also like to thank my colleagues who presented earlier sister, Mary, John and Fatima, and you yourself Tehmina and with every presentation, I find my presentation getting smaller and smaller, which is great given that we have a little bit of a time constraint. no worries so I've got good news that I'm going to be I'm going to have to cut down my presentation a bit not because not so much of the because of the time, but more of I will try to avoid repetition, because much of what I've wanted to say, has been said by the speakers before me, so could I just get my first slide, please? Thank you. So today I'm going to talk about women and economic insecurity. And I, you know, this is this is really bread and butter issues here coming right down to the ability to have financial, you know, psychological social freedoms for women in this region, much of my work is I'm from Singapore, I'm Korean. So when you look at Singapore's context, you don't really think in terms of economic insecurity. But that, of course, does not mean we don't have economically insecure people in Singapore. But my this particular presentation in my work, my larger work actually focuses on Southeast Asia. And mostly I look at the emerging economies of Southeast Asia. So I look a lot, I look a lot, I look at countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and to some extent, Philippines, Indonesia. So just very quickly, and all our speakers have actually done this. But I just want to give you a historical context. But in this context, I want to look at it specifically from an economic point of view. So when we speak in terms of women and economic security, and we take a look at history, and here, I'm talking about pre colonial times. And even before that, you know, before I get too into the presentation, I just want to say that when we speak in terms of economic growth and economic progress in Southeast Asia, we must acknowledge the fact that it has been on the backs of women that this region has grown. And this, this is true, even pre colonial times, you know, and, and I'll get into that in my presentation itself. So basically, women had an extremely prominent role in the economy. Before we had, basically the Europeans come in here, before colonial times, and much of the local industries, whether it was spices or partake, or, you know, even agriculture, right, so what were manage, and they were administered by women, and women had a lot of freedom of movement in public spaces, and they had economic agents. So they could they could actually, that, of course, that didn't mean that men were not important men was still part of the labor force. But it was just like sister, Mary, John was saying it was more of an equal opportunity situation like we both could appear in the public space, as they were in the private space. So it wasn't like one go out, and one stayed home, there was not the situation. And the female labor force actually, in fact, was highly valued in this part of the world, especially because we did a lot of rice cultivation and also small animal husbandry. Now rice cultivation is an extremely labor intensive activity. And as a result, it required entire families to be involved in the production of this problem. So women had a lot of economic value. And this is one of the reasons why when we look at the history of female infanticide. Southeast Asia did not have very high rates of female infanticide. Whereas when we studied the study the same situation, it is a Asia, excuse me, and in South Asia, we see the numbers of female infanticide are very high. One of one of these reasons is because we needed women to be participating in the economy. They were important economic actors, they had

economic agency, and they work in freedom of movement in the public space. However, with important philosophies that came in together with colonialism has increasingly put women in support subordination positions. Now just very quickly talk about the colonial period. There was a great change in the nature of work for women. During this time, they were hired as cheap laborer in many of the plantations, and in many of the processing factories, right, so whether they were rubber plantations or whatever they were doing spice or budget, or whatever the Europeans wanted to take out of this region, for export, and a lot of women were put in cheap labor to participate in these economic activities. There were, there was also a change in customary laws where there was a reduction in women's autonomy. And there was a strengthening of the position of men in the household. So women sort of started disappearing from the public space, and moving more into private space, space, sorry, into their homes, and the concept of head of household you know, at this time, which always meant the man, the husband was the head of the household, and the women would be at home taking care of, she'll be home, you know, housewife taking care of children that this concept exists today. And one of CEDAW's recommendation, I believe, you mentioned CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, all our countries, all the Southeast Asian countries, it's actually the most ratified human rights instrument in the world, but also the one with the most number of reservations. Only six countries have not ratified since we are one of them privately, but only we have the most Zero has the most number of reservations. And, you know, one of the recommendations of the CEDAW committee, I don't know the other countries, but for Singapore has been to take away this concept of head of household, because the nature of the household has changed drastically in the late 20th. And the 21st century, it's no longer so we have house husbands, we have single family homes, we have, you know, same same sex partner home, so we can't really take that concept of head of household, and then everything his policies are sort of created and implemented based on that concept. So when we trace it back, we'll find that this concept of the head of household is pretty much Well, I wouldn't say it's just from the colonial period, but it certainly sort of solidified during during this time, the idea that men would be the breadwinners, and women will be the filmmakers in that sense. Another very important impact of colonial of the colonial period was the commodification of women as sex workers. Now, when the you know, in arguably the case of Singapore, when we had the British bringing in a lot of manual laborers, mostly from South and East Asia, over here, you they created a sort of a very male, majority male space, where the number of women were less so as a result, they also started bringing in a lot of women, prostitutes, or sex workers from around the region, from China from Japan in order to sort of service this not only the Asian men, but also the European men. Of course, I'm not saying that they invented prostitution, obviously not this is prostitution is existed here. Since forever, I guess it is a witness, occupation, but Gnostic. Um, but what has happened during the colonial period, it became a very, and this is research done by other scholars, it became a very racialized colonial form of racialized colonial capitalism. Right, and an economy was created around, women were commodified. And they were appropriated for Colonial needs the once again, as I said, it, prostitution didn't occur here because of colonialism, but it certainly became an economy to satisfy the needs of, of both Asian as well as Western men. And when, but however, you know, in the in the late, I think, in the early 20th century, with the increase in communication and transportation and all that we had a lot of women coming over to this region to be with their husbands. And as a result, the economy itself broke down a bit, the sex motor economy broke down a bit, and the demand for Asian sex workers were reduced during that time. Okay, now, my next point here is the perpetrator and the shift of

women's position. Now, Pepper was a very important cash crop in this region during the colonial times, and it affected the women's position in society. Now, pre colonial times, women were the ones who actually dealt with traders from around the world. Maybe they're from China or wherever they came from, in trade, trading black pepper or pepper nigrum. So they were the managers of this tree, but once it became an important for lonelier export product, what happened was that well, very simply the colonialists, you know, there was an increase in demand for pepper pepper and the colonialists wanted didn't want women handling it because it moved beyond a household production system. And they bought more men involved in the trade and overtime the women were eradicated from the Management Administration of the trade, the trading locations changed from nearby towns into the ports which were far away women found it difficult to travel with your children or to leave their children for a few days when they you know, they would go and trade and then come back that was difficult for them gradually, the control of perpetrate fell into the hands of the the men in your family. And the role of women got reduced to menial tasks like sifting the you know, the good seeds from the bad or, or packaging, right, especially during the Dutch in the Dutch and English trading course of the region. So basically, you know, the Spice Islands and Java and places like that, um, of course, another thing is the importance of cheap machinery. This was specially after the Industrial Revolution in Europe, where you had the advent of lot of machinery was being used in factories and all that, and, you know, these guys, the colonialist sort of imported into these regions. And then, you know, manufacturing of, for example, like cigars, and weaving in Manila, or tobacco, and Patek printing in Indonesia, were taken over by machines, rather than being done by hand, which would have been the job of women at that time. So they lost autonomy, that way, machines dominated mass production, I'll come back to the machines and technology towards the end of my presentation, because then you see, it's just like a big cycle. But now we're talking about more high tech type machines and technology like AI. But anyway, for, for now, the machines dominated the mass production in the economy. And of course, the European model of capitalism sought more male labor than female. And, you know, finally, there was this whole idea of the influence of a European urban respectability. So towards the late 19th century, a lot of the many of the Asian societies here Asian societies, they sort of emulated a middle class or upper middle class that a lot of them became traders, a lot of them, you know, came up, according to like, socio economic status, and they wanted to emulate the middle upper middle class of Europe. And when you look at those folks over there in Europe, you would see that men go out of the homes to work and do male things, whatever it is they do, whether they drink in parks, and, you know, all that remains stayed at home, they, you know, took care of things in the household, and manage the children, their education, and so on. And this was a kind of respectability when it came to households. And people over this part of the world, they wanted to emulate that. And therefore they had this sort of influence of European urban respectability. And this was this was something that this is an idea that was imported from during colonial times. And actually it started right to post colonial times do it's only in recent times that we have obviously changed with much more information in education of women and economic opportunities. Next slide, please. Okay, so here, I'm going to talk a bit about the decolonization and also the emergence of nation states in this region. So basically post independence time, and how there was, you know, sort of decolonization post independence and the renewed importance and interest in women's labor. Well, the Southeast Asian societies in the 1960s underwent another significant change, where women became essential as factory workers, because we shifted to like export oriented economies. So we needed women to do all those production type work, which require patience and

long hours. So we got them out of their homes, into the the factories, and of course into the eight Geez, sorry, the late 70s and 80s, we saw all of this region, all the different countries, we were like really forging ahead when it came to economic growth. And like I said, on the backs of women, because many, you know, the whole idea of mobile men, stationary women, no longer existed. So women were not only moving into factories and working, they were also moving out of their countries and working. And, you know, they were sending back money. And, you know, especially into Southeast Asia movement, from from different countries to the two countries within this region, and later on, of course, internationally, not only within this region. Um, so you will see a slight shift in the gender roles. But of course, all this does not mean, women were overly empowered, or they had absolute control over their lives. Because sometimes it was absolute necessity, that they had to leave families, they had to take jobs in factories, work grueling hours, for very little pay. And, of course, you know, having to travel out of your country, you know, probably a village or a town or a place, you've never moved beyond its borders. And then now, there you are, in another country, working very far away from anything or anyone, you know. And of course, when they go into these factories, and when they go into, you know, let's say, for domestic workers, if they're not specialized, they go into these homes, there's a host of problems that faces themselves, loneliness, just being one of it. Of course, that's a very important factor, many of them are lonely their depression, but at the same time, they earn very low wages. And it has been useful for governments working together with a lot of transnational corporations to determine and to retain low wages of women workers. Because that sort of made gave an advantage to countries that wanted these corporations to come in. And, you know, this research has been done by some scholars in this region who actually examine foreign direct investment and wages of women. And although this is not a very explored area of research, or even an area of interest for a lot of people, especially when I'm speaking of policymakers and all that, but they have found that where the wages of women have low, they were more attractive for transnational corporations to come in, it's like a race to the bottom, so the cap wages low, so they would be attractive to these companies. Um, as for women, migrant workers, or you know, India, for India, or countries, um, your home countries, there were two things going on, they were punitive measures being developed around these female migrant workers, of course, if you're, if you're highly trained and specialized, as you know, over the years in the 90s, and then the 2000s, if you're highly trained and specialized, we will go out as nurses and teachers, globally. But if you did not have that, you know, privilege of education, for instance, and but but you end up going out, you still have opportunities to go out, you go out as domestic workers, or waiters, or whatever jobs that your qualifications can get you. So there was a series of punitive and pastoral measures that occurred, that's how big a group of female workers who are going out of countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, so Philippines, he had a whole series of punitive measures, sorry, pastoral measures that the government has had come up with, you know, things like institutional and legal frameworks around workers who are going out to work, whether they were protective measures, whether they were measures in terms of coming back and, you know, rejoining the communities and their countries and employment, all that, but there were also punitive measures in a way like for countries like Indonesia, which continue to keep wages of domestic helpers low, so that they would be competitive. When it came to the, you know, this market is economy of domestic workers from this region. So we had a whole lot of policies, that's how that's how much how we're number one, the number of women who are going on and these are young and unmarried women, mostly mostly young and unmarried, but they contributed a large percentage, especially, you know, it can Philippines and Indonesia, large percent of their GDP actually accomplice is

accounted for by remittances from these migrant workers. And a large majority of these migrant workers are women. Um, and of course at the same time while they are, you know, going out to work and you know, earning money and sending back those who are back in their home countries, they continue to engage in aircrew based work, which means they are very important to food security, not only of their homes, but very often in your regional or even national systems of food security. Well, almost up to 50% of Well, it depends on the country, you're talking about women's contribution in agriculture, goes up to around 50%. In countries like Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand, Thailand is a bit higher, because it's also export crop rice is also an export crop. And more than 50%, in places like Vietnam, excuse me and lovers. In Philippines, the actual participation in rice production is lower for women, but women are very involved in the management decisions and in inputs in hiring of labor and measures, such as that which is higher than any other part. So what I'm trying to say here is not only were women who left providing for the economy, it was also women who were behind and in their homes, also actively contributing to not only the food security of the countries, but also in terms of the income, the national income of the countries. Okay, now, I just want to talk about this labor intensive industries and the systemic discrimination now, when I touched briefly on this, when I talked about the race to the bottom and keeping wages low. But another thing is women's participation in the factories were seen as temporary, because of childbirth. And because of care burden. You know, so they don't see women as being long term employees. And as a result, you know, a lot of the technical skills and a lot of this a lot of the training that would allow them to move beyond factory workers, whether it's to move into a supervisory role, or even, you know, further up into management, those kinds of training was not really available for women, because they didn't see women as basically sticking around for for a long time. So it wouldn't be, it wouldn't be good if they didn't see the word investing in these women. However, you know, that is not to say that they are no female supervisors or managers, of course, there are a few who actually made it. But for, for the majority of them, there was a sort of dis systemic discrimination in the system, where you needed your labor, but you wanted them to remain in a particular position and not move up. So the more technical and higher skilled jobs then will went to men did not go to women. And women remained in the production lines with very little upward mobility. Now I'm speaking in terms of the 70s 80s 90s. But I believe even now, there's no massive change, as in suddenly we are having a whole lot of female supervisors or managers, , get the next slide, please. Okay, and now, you know, you would think that as we move along, and you know, you see how important it is to have females in the labor force, not necessarily the case. One thing is the education that is given to both boys and girls at a young age and good news is compared to other regions in the world. We do much I mean, we do relatively well, because you could say that there's almost the gap, the gender gap in education has been drastically reduced in all the Southeast Asian countries. Because there are many legal provisions in states which require compulsory education for boys and girls, right, at least primary school education, or at least 10 years of education. So in Singapore, it's 10 years of education. I'm not really aware of what it's like in other parts of Southeast Asia, um, the today primary school enrollment for boys and girls. He said a rate of 90% across the region, if you take it across the region that's pretty high. But despite this, in the middle income countries as well as emerging economies of Southeast Asia, they register very numbers of what we call OSC. just out of school children. So children being moved out of school for many different reasons, and the x, this exclusion is tilted more towards removing girls than it is removing boys from school. Why? Because girls have the ability to take on wider household responsibilities, especially if their moms are overseas working. You

know, and if she has younger siblings, she's able to help or the mom doesn't have travel has to travel to another country, even if she travels from the village to city. Right. So like rural urban migration, in that sense, girls day back to look after younger siblings, the cost of transportation and schooling, that's a factor. So if they have to think in terms of boy or girl, most likely goes to boys. And there's also this ignoring or future implication of salaries that might be earned from girls that might come back to the family, they don't think of it that way. They think like, okay, girl's going to marry out. And she's not going to, you know, she's going to have to take care of her family, her in laws over at the other side. Um, and of course, the presumption that sons will support parents as they get older, you know, and the parents will live with the sons. Now, the fact that goes tend to be excluded from schools. It's very contrary to how girls perform in schools, right? Girls perform very well in schools, even better than boys, especially in language, right, and humanities, but they perform just as well as boys in mathematics and science subjects. So it is unlikely that girls cannot perform well in STEM subjects. Right? So when you talk in terms of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, right now, why am I bringing this up? It's because your future employment opportunities are going to be in STEM type jobs. I'm not saying of course, we will still need the humanitarians and social scientists and all that. But look at all the technology that's going on, whether it's AI, whether it's digitalization, and whatever it is, so the economic opportunities is going to be there. Now, if you do not allow girls, to, to the opportunities to be in STEM education, you are talking, you're looking at a skewed labor force for the future, where you are going to have what I call what I call what is called sectoral and occupational bias. Now, sectoral bias is basically the women dominating particular sectors, sectors of caregiving, teaching, nursing, and those types of jobs. No, dangerous because, well, you look at for office work, for instance, or even teaching you, you're going to have a lot of digital digitalization of these types of jobs, and it's coming. And when it comes to do you think is going to lose the jobs first. So it's going to be your because remember, they don't really go up the levels very easy. There's a glass ceiling. And, you know, and women tend to be, you know, in lower ranking positions in that sense. So when you have some kind of technology coming in, and you can get a machine to do your job faster. Why would I need you this has actually happened in the manufacturing industry, especially the garment industry, when they talk about, you know, skills like cutting, and sewing, I can get a machine to do the job of five people. So I've saved money, I might as well you know, use a machine. So it's a matter of time before maybe, you know, it was rolling in earlier. But now because of the pandemic, everything has been stalled in terms of looking at technology and future of work. But it does not to say it's just ended, it will come in and we need to be prepared for that. Right. So basically, what I'm trying to say is when it comes to education, young women need to be encouraged to go into STEM type education, because obviously they are capable of doing it. The only reason they don't is because of some sort of cultural bias that has put been put in the women do not girls do not perform as well in science and tech, some kind of you know, ridiculous notion like that. Okay, um, then I come to occupational bias. Occupational bias is simply because they are going to be within each of those sectors or whether it's teaching or whatever it is, it's going to be If they're going to be lower end, and I didn't talk, I did talk about this. And when we have technological breakthroughs, in terms of jobs, being able to be done by machines, the first ones to lose jobs will, most will mean a large percentage of that would be your female labor. So I think I've addressed the last point as well, women and technology jobs of the future of work. So we need to get more women to go into STEM type jobs, sorry, stem type training. Next slide, please. Okay, the gender bias and what it means for economic security. I have to say that when we when countries in this region and governments and not only this

region, but across the world, when they speak about unemployment, you're actually talking about male unemployment, if you can really look at it, who specifically talks about female unemployment, unless, you know, it's, it's, it's a situation where you have an aging population, and you really need to have the females in the labor force, right. So especially this part of the world, you, we don't see any research being specifically done, or even any reporting done for that matter, when we speak specifically about female unemployment. And that goes back to this very heteronormative heteronormative, understanding, excuse me, of the roles of women and men, especially in a family. So when we think in unemployment, we are thinking, what we are thinking unemployment, everyone, I'm not saying we don't think about women, but to be more specific, they would be more worried if more men who are jobs are then more women, because women have another role. And that is in the homes, right? The traditional routes. And so you know, realizing a more equitable and efficient use of human capital is very essential for Southeast Asia, if it's thinking about coming out of this pandemic in a healthy way. And, you know, sort of uplifting everybody. And I will go into COVID-19 in a bit. Because, you know, when development comes in, and there's benefits, everyone is lifted up, right? However, when there is a crisis, or a downturn risk, the suffering is disproportionate, some people can still, you know, sort of maintain some level of livelihood, but the ones that fall, it's not going to be the same. And unfortunately, the ones that fall are the ones who are most insecure economically, you know, any other way and they tend to be women. Right, and not only women, but also, you know, I would say, the other marginalized groups, whether the ethnic minorities, Soji community, and groups who are disadvantaged in some way. Okay. And of course, you know, sorry, can we just go back to the previous slide, please, I'm going to be done in a bit. I thought I'd be done. But, um, and of course, you know, if you don't have you have more women out, into in the economy, they sort of also drive the economic growth in terms of spending power, their ability to consume and ability to spend, that's number one. And number two, you have, you end up spending less in terms of social safety nets for these groups of women, especially those can fall into poverty very easily the ones on the fringes. So by uplifting them, you actually have you have tax revenue, that's one and then you have less expenditure and on social safety measures, which can then be targeted to really help people that are way below poverty line, and then you can have very targeted measures for them. Next slide please. And of course, you know, coming to you look, I mean, you just have to look at the reporting ILO reports and all that it shows that women have been heavily and very badly impacted by COVID 19. Basically, it has been it has brought to the froth or forefront the instability of human security for women and human security is made up of three components, right. Freedom from one freedom from fear and freedom from indignities. All three of the freedoms have been compromised in COVID-19, so they have become extremely insecure. In terms of plus, like personal protection. We look a lot of domestic abuse, a lot of violence against women, VA W. We see a lot of economic insecurity in terms of loss of jobs because a lot of them have been informed Labour, a lot of them have, a lot of them have left jobs because they just couldn't cope with the care burden in terms of looking after the children having to look to their education and schooling, you know that. And not only children, but sometimes elderly, parents, or even siblings and all that, who are unable and others who are unable to take care of themselves. And there has been a disproportionate increase in unpaid work, which is what I'm talking about in terms of the care but the increase in the capital, I mean, personally, me myself, when we had the lockdown in Singapore, I had a well, you know, I had to look to my daughter's home based learning. That was one, so I had to sit down because a young child, she's only eight. So I had to sit down and I had to actually go through, if I had left a free day and just gone on to do my work, I don't

know what would have happened at the end of the day. But I had to like sit down. And no, you took a very big toll on someone like me, and this is me with all my resources. You know, I had I had the internet, I had, you know, plays, I had everything at my disposal. And even someone like me was struggling. So imagine someone who does not have all those resources to have, I only have one child, imagine someone with three or four children and not have all those resources. So the digital divide also really came to the forefront during this time, because we saw a lot of inequality in terms of the availability, yes, you can go online, and you can work and whatever it is. But what if you don't have those resources, and the ones who tend to not have those resources, or not have the ability to actually know how to use the resources, because they were never trained, never thought never expose, also tend to be women. So I mean, when I'm coming to the whole idea of media and reporting and all that, you know, whenever we talk about economic security in ASEAN, we always see big picture economic security, and that's the understanding of economic security. But economic security also has another side. And that is the individual, the economic security of individuals, we never seem to actually talk enough about the economic insecurities of certain groups of people. Yes, I'm not saying we completely do. But if you look at the main, you know, the broadsheets, and whatever it is, you you see that much of it talks about it as if it's a very huge concept. But economic security is also something that can filter down to the individual and filter down to especially individuals that are disadvantaged in one way or another. And women tend to fall into this group. So a lot of focus needs to be I mean, if you're looking at UN regional peace and stability is what ASEAN says, you know, peace, stability, regional growth and order, how do you have that when 50% of your population has fallen in the gaps? Right, when in terms of your policy, so AEC or say ASEAN economic community itself, women tend to lose out because the jobs that actually you know, it is engineering, it is trade, it is salted commodities, and all these things? How many women are in these jobs? And so when you talk about ASEAN Economic Community and this Grand Exchange of things, who are we actually talking about? We're not talking about women in that case. Right. So I will just leave it at that. I think we exceeded my time. So sorry about that. And thank you very much.

Tehmina Kaoosji 3:08:33

Not at all. Thank you so much for that, Dr. Tamara. I think that was a excellent, really in depth presentation. And so very interesting. I wish we could go into into a real deep dive when it comes to the q&a session. But I'm seeing as in we are rather short of time, I feel that I will have to go with a one main question, which I hope that each one of you could perhaps contribute to with your insight, your perspective coming with what you also presented on Sister Mary John, Dr. Fatima, as well as Dr. Tamara. I really wanted to ask this one anchoring question. Do you feel that it really what does it really boil down to when it comes to achieving women's empowerment, from a policymaking angle? We truly should we truly be looking at in each of our individual and very diverse Southeast Asian countries towards women's political empowerment, if that where the answer lies to all of this, everything that we've discussed all the way from period poverty to feminization of labor to all the issues in the Philippines with regard to sex trafficking, domestic violence and other issues. Does it all hinge around having more female policymakers in the corridors of power? Can I ask to Sister Mary John perhaps to go first. Sorry, sister, Mary John, you're on mute. I can't hear you. Yes. Just the Mary. John, I can't hear you. Just the Mary. Sister Mary, I can't hear you.

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB 3:10:28

Yeah, now I have unmuted.

Tehmina Kaoosji 3:10:30

All right. Thank you so much.

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB 3:10:32

Again, political empowerment would be no, I say no. That's all I say, personal empowerment. You we have to Presidents women Presidents in the Philippines, that is the highest political empowerment, did they do enough for women? No, why? Because they did not have a woman consciousness, they do not have the understanding of the dynamics of, of women oppression, etc. So for me, the very first thing is first, a real consciousness raising with the women themselves that that they have to understand the socialization process, and that they understand the dynamics of oppression and exploitation, etc. Only then when they have already a personal psychological, whatever empowerment, then you can go to economic empowerment, political, but if you begin with political empowerment, you you reach nothing. I have said that because I have two women presidents and one of them is even from from our school, no, but they did not have a woman consciousness. So did they do? Well, of course, Cory Aquino did say the March is a women's month, okay, so they did something and had 5%, what they call that 5% Of all the budgets of political organization should be used for women, that's already something. But other than that, because there is no real understanding of what underlies women's inequality, women's preference, or women's, they go as far as that, okay. But that's why for me, it's so important this consciousness raising, so that each woman should first understand our own dynamics and also civilization. For me, that is the most important personal empowerment, which means psychological, spiritual, whatever, but it should be personal first, and then only you can become an instrument of empowerment of all women and of, of the whole society. That is my stand.

Tehmina Kaoosji 3:12:46

Sure, thank you so much for that sister, Mary. John, I think you make a really insightful analysis, particularly considering Philippines, very unique political landscape, where, as you said, two female presidents and yet no monumental social change, only the good work that organizations like Gabriela and others have been doing. Yes, you are right. I now like to move on to Dr Fatimah Al-Attas With the same question, and perhaps your perspective on Do you feel it is? It should anchor around increasing women's representation in politics and policymaking? And that is a way to get around a host of the social issues we have, including, of course, period, poverty.

Dr Fatimah Al-Attas 3:13:29

I really resonate with what Sister Mary was saying about how sometimes even when we have political representation, or if we have women on board, without clear ideas about where the systematic problems are. And I think we need to also consider how our identities may be impacting our understanding of the system, you know, the intersectionality of our identities, whether or not we're very privileged women from particular socio economic groups, and understanding issues like poverty, even, for example, we may experience menstruation, but we've never had to, you know, count how many sanitary pads we've had. So we won't even consider to think that that's a problem for anyone. So that's

also important in understanding that systems, I really resonate with Sister Mary on that. And I think having political will is also really important, you know, when given the position whether we are ready to take on those positions and to make things right where they're supposed to be. That would be also something that's important. And then I think, in Malaysia in particular, we don't want to have this token kind of culture where women are just placed there so that there's like a face of a woman there. And women themselves take on the role of being a token that, you know, I'm representing women, but there is no clear understanding of what that looks like and what are the concerns of different women and the diversity of women in our society. So I think just highlighting those things This will be something that I'd like to pay attention to.

Tehmina Kaoosji 3:15:06

Absolutely, thanks so much for that Dr Fatima and Dr. Tamara, I wanted to ask you a question that a similar question but one of the slight tangent, particularly because, of course, your presentation focus a lot on the bi politics of power, female labor in particular. So it's in a way, because we're speaking here about women's rights. Is there a way to decouple women's human rights from the economic utility aspect of things, especially in Southeast Asian societies? Because generally, and that is also the way in which I anchor my arguments. As a feminist broadcast journalist, I always look at the economic aspects of the economy gains as losses, particularly in a COVID perspective, which Malaysia is going to suffer innovatively if we don't work to agenda equality. But is there a way to still advocate for women for human rights outside of just the economic question of utility?

Dr. Tamara Nair 3:16:04

Thank you for that question. Absolutely. And you should, it shouldn't just be about economic rights or economic security, it should be about let me just go off tension for a minute to address the comments of Sister Mary, John and Dr. Fatima, I agree wholeheartedly with them. That political empowerment is not the only thing that's necessary. If you even look at the female political leaders, what is the agenda or platform they have come up on? It's not anything related to women, for women's rights, or equality of not only women, but just the idea of equality or even social issues? For that matter? It has always been hard for national security issues, whether it's economics, you know, whether it's whatever it might be, but it's not. It's not what we call softer issues. Right? So and also, you know, the idea of proxy representation, you have a female, but who's pulling the strings? And are you representing women? Are you representing people in power? Right? So as far as I think political empowerment is still very important, but like, sister, Mary John has said, You need to have different levels. And that is one of the levels. But before that, you really need to empower yourselves, and why don't you want to inform yourselves what the issue is, and then your platform? And then within your platform? Do you want to look at which comes to your question, do you want to look at an economic perspective, a social perspective, account, you know, socio cultural perspective, or even a religious perspective for that matter, right? Because the violation of rights happens in any one of those spheres, political, social, environmental, economic, any one of those spheres. So even before you can go into a politically become a politically empowered person, you have to be a well informed person. And then an empowered person, and then an informed person, and then you bring those mandates with you your agenda, and then you, you sort of have you empower yourself in that sense. So all across our countries, right, we all have, there is no country that denies women political participation rights. We

have no I don't think so. I don't think so. So, um, you know, but even before that, like Sister Mary was saying, and Fatima was saying, as well, let's, let's get informed, let's get empowered ourselves, let's build capacity, within an abilities within ourselves, and the groups that we are within, before we move up to the next step, then we are better positioned to actually ask for what we want, and what we need, or rather demand what we need. So when, okay, so that's my comment, which I very much agree with so much for saying that, to both of my colleagues who have who has spoken, coming to your comment. Yeah, definitely not. Of course, you know, like I said, there are many ways to realize women's rights. And I formally look at the human security framework, it's very simple. Freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from indignities. Any, any arena you are in, should provide you these three freedoms. Basic, and that is the foundation of what we mean by human security in the Human Development Report in 1994. That's what they talked about in the economic sphere, are you accorded these three freedoms, like decent work, the concept of decent work is freedom from, you know, the concept of the you know, glass ceiling that's not freedom from well, wanting indignities in that sense. So if you go into social sphere. Right? If you go into the social sphere, once again, freedom from fear freedom from, like digital security, I should not be afraid to be online and give anyone my opinion that I should I should have that freedom from fear from doing that. Unfortunately, no, that's not the case women are more likely to be abused online than women, like you yourself have said earlier. You know, and and the attacks on women are very gendered, are very specific, you know, when compared to the attacks of men, which tend to be broader and more about issues of what they have said on a particular issue or whatever. But on women, it tends to be you know, you're dressed like this, what do you know, your hair is like that? Whatever. Very, you know, like, Sister Mary, you talked about Maria. Raisa, right. So I was Reza Yes, I was in a webinar, I was lucky enough to be in a webinar with our digital security of a woman and digital security. And she talked about the violation of her rights and her freedom of speech by just putting extremely people putting extremely sexist remarks and using her face super impulse within I apologize for my language and presenting you with this image, but with a male scrotum with her face, and do is really disgusting and terrible. And why would you you know, for one, you might not like what she's saying, yes. But you Your anger is sort of magnified, because she's female. So, you know, in each one of those different arrangements, you should have those three freedoms, you your these three freedoms should be protected not only for women, for everyone, for children, for marginalized women, for men, for men, as well, because men, and I think a sister Mary, you said this as well, they are also victims of this social isolation. It's not. They are also victims of patriarchy, patriarchy, we must remember it's not all men is a few powerful men who exert their power on the majority of us. So it's not just oil men, because men also turn out to be victims. In that sense, I hope I've answered your question. In that in, was that what you were looking for?

Tehmina Kaoosji 3:22:30

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. I think that was a very interesting approach to answer the question, Dr. Tamara, thank you so much, because of course when it boils down to it, it is about human security. And women are definitely not exempt from that unalienable right. On that note, thank you so much, once again, to Sister Mary John to Dr. Fatima, Dr. Tamara, for joining us and for being so generous with your insights as well as perspective. It's been an absolute pleasure presenting the keynote and moderating this masterclass on feminism policy and women's empowerment in Southeast Asia. To end with, I feel it's particularly poignant that we're holding this talk within the 16 days of activism, drawing from of

course, the annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women idabelle 2021. So each one of us has, of course, shared perspective and insight on different forms of violence, which individually and collectively impact women's lives around Southeast Asia. Women also make up roughly 50% of Southeast Asia's population, leaving behind half the population is never an option when it comes to gender equality, progress, and yet, even pandemic recovery and national development. denying women their full humanity should never be the question, but a constant work in progress with major stakeholders from government, civil society, education, religion, and media partnering towards equitable opportunity for all women and girls. Arguments a compelling, thoughtful questions from our audience as well truly help anchor the discussions. And as we move closer to the end of the 16 days of activism and human rights stay on track December, I would like to emphasize women's rights are human rights. I'm Tehmina Kaoosji, And on that note, I hand over the floor back to Danny Yong, CEO Kini Academy, for the closing remarks over to you then.

Ajinder Kaur 3:24:39

Sorry, Danny, I think you're muted.

Tehmina Kaoosji 3:24:45

Sorry, Danny, we can't hear. Yes.

Danny Yong 3:24:48

Yeah. Um, thank you so much. Tehmina. What a great closing. There's nothing more I can add to that. But just to thank all all the speakers in our panel Tehmina sister, Mary John, Dr. Fatima, Dr. Tamara, and thank you for all all you guys for attending as well. Please remember that we have a poll, we love for you to take that poll and tell us how you felt about our our event today. And remember that we have recorded this session. And that will be available in a few days in the SEAFOR.org. website. And feel free to look look over that again. And for those who are interested, that transcript and the slides will also be available on the Seafore.org website. And for for those of you who are participating in our story projects, do remember that our deadline is coming up. Okay. And remember that you also still have our previous speakers as your source. do reach out to us if you want to speak with them. We will put you in contact. We've already got quite a few you are talking to the speakers before really. So if you have Have you shared the yes, you have shared the muscle, please see the post survey in the chat to fill him up as if you can before you leave. For the four speakers if you wish to leave It's okay. You can already Yeah, we have a few minutes