

2013



[ANNUAL REPORT]



MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO WOMEN'S ACTIVISM
CELEBRATING 20 YEARS • IWRAW ASIA PACIFIC

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ABOUT IWRAW ASIA PACIFIC

International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW) Asia Pacific is a feminist organisation based in the Global South working nationally, regionally and internationally towards the achievement of women's human rights. We work on progressive social change for women based on the universality, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights, and use the lens of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to contribute to the progressive interpretation and realisation of the human rights of women.

Since 2004 we have been recognized by the CEDAW Committee and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as the key NGO to support communication and submission of alternative information to the CEDAW Committee. As of July 2013, our list of country level partners working on CEDAW has grown to 240 organisations globally, with further 30 international and regional networks and organisations with whom we collaborate with on various strategies to promote women's human rights. We have facilitated participation of about 650 women from 165 countries to attend the CEDAW review sessions, monitor state reporting and engage with the CEDAW Committee. This strengthens the work being done on CEDAW implementation at the national level, including through law reform, policy analysis and litigation initiatives which we do in partnership with women's groups at the local and state level.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Last year was a significant year for IWRAW Asia Pacific. It marked twenty years since its establishment by Shanthi Dairiam in 1993 as an organisation committed to ensuring effective enforcement of CEDAW and other international women's human rights norms and standards. It also marked the culmination of an extensive three year plan, developed in consultation with key advisors and national partners, which integrated the diverse focus areas into a holistic framework for CEDAW implementation based on building capacity, developing resources and enhancing advocacy of partner organisations in the Global South.

There were also many organisational changes – I moved from South Africa to Kuala Lumpur to take up the appointment as Executive Director in April 2013. Audrey Lee, who had been the *de facto* Executive Director was appointed Programmes Manager. Three Programme staff Gauri Bhopatkar, Wathshlah Naidu and Gayathri Jambulingam left at the end of their contracts and also to pursue academic studies. This year we also welcomed new staff to our diverse programmes team Shanti Uprety from Nepal and Suraya Zainuddin from Malaysia.

As is reflected in this annual report, there are emerging challenges to women's human rights globally which require intensified action. Progressing in achieving women's human rights, empowerment and gender equality has been uneven and legislative changes often have not translated into effective rights enforcement given the institutional and capacity constraints of governments. Strategies to achieve women's human rights need to transcend conventional approaches, bridge divides and confront new realities.

Despite these challenges we continued to build capacity and provide resources as well as advocacy support to more than 200 partner organisations, resulting in an increasingly empowered women's movement that can continue to challenge impunity on women's human rights.

The many programmes reflected in this report reflect the extent to which there is still a continued need for knowledge, resources, information and capacity building on CEDAW as well as support for ongoing monitoring of compliance and mechanisms to ensure accountability of governments. There was increasing demand from the Middle East North Africa region for assistance with legal changes affecting women's human rights, and for supporting lawyers with CEDAW-related capacity building and strategic litigation.

With the support of the UN Women South East Asia Regional Office we have been able to provide effective support and capacity building to a broader range of stakeholders (including National Human Rights Institutions and Women's Ministries) to ensure effective and sustained monitoring of CEDAW compliance as well as institutional support for domestic law reform.

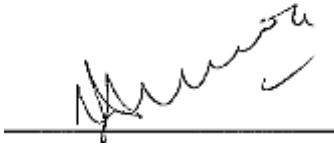
In addition, various positive changes arose as a result of the expansion of activities to empower young women and groups marginalised on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Young Women for Change programme generated much enthusiasm and energy and unveiled a generation of young people who will inspire and prompt new strategies for change. We are indebted to the Fund for Gender Equality for supporting this expansion of our work.

Our international advocacy initiatives were sustained and resulted in reinforcing the women's human rights framework in international processes. This included contributing to the discussions on ensuring women's human rights as a framework for the post 2015 sustainable development goals, as well as continued advocacy and engagement in ESCAP, APPC and ASEAN processes.

We concluded the year's activities with finalising our organisational strategy for 2014-2016 with the assistance of our board, advisory committee and partners, and also developed key outcomes and indicators to ensure effective

measurement of the impact of our programmes in the future. I would like to thank everyone who participated and to express our enormous gratitude to donors who have supported our work.

Lastly, I am indebted to my programmes and management staff, in particular Audrey Lee and our formidable Administration and Finance Manager Li Ping Pook, for their immeasurable support during my personal transition as well as the organisational restructuring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Urmila Bhoola', is written above a horizontal line.

Urmila Bhoola

10.3.14

CHANGES IN CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

Equality and rights resisted at the highest levels

The negative trend in global discourse and inconsistent commitment to women's human rights manifested itself in roll backs on progress at various high level processes. This is especially disconcerting to feminist groups when the 2015 anniversary of the World Conference of Women is being discussed as a platform to measure progress since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. The uneven progress with giving full effect to international women's rights norms is reflected in the increased intolerance and continued contention over issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, harmful practices perpetuated in the context of negative culture and traditions, and more simplistically discriminatory laws that continue to exist in direct violation of CEDAW.

In Southeast Asia, discriminatory laws such as the Indonesian Marriage Law, the divorce laws in the Philippines, the retirement laws in the Mekong region, and obedience laws and customs within marriage that continue to make it difficult to change stereotypes about a woman's role in society. In fact, Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women records 282 regional/local laws and regulations that discriminate against women in these forms: restrictions in the law that regulates women's dress; reduction of the right to protection and legal certainty due to the regional policy on criminalization of prostitution; elimination of the right to protection and legal certainty through regional policy about prohibition of khalwat; neglect of protection through regional policy on migrant domestic workers, as some examples. These laws have sparked violence and increased discrimination against women.

Besides Southeast Asia, IRAW Asia Pacific programmes focused on continuing support to the advocacy of women's groups and civil society groups in the Middle East North Africa region despite the political instability which threatens the already established progress in some areas of achieving substantive rights for women in that region. The MENA region has witnessed radical changes since December 2010 which resulted in toppling two of dictators, Ben Ali of Tunisia and Mubarak of Egypt, and more recently in Libya. These popular uprisings were not only unprecedented in the MENA region but also had a snowball effect which has now swept most Arab countries and mobilized women and men demanding change. One of the key concerns for women in the region relates to the domestication of CEDAW principles pursuant to ratification by the states. While some initiatives have been undertaken in enhancing understanding on the issue of domestication of CEDAW in the MENA region, it is fairly limited for the Gulf sub-region as the work on CEDAW is fairly new and the legal status of CEDAW is still not clear. In the Gulf sub-region, the problem is the lack of experience of women's NGOs in using CEDAW and it is not used to enforce the rights of other women in the Gulf region such as migrant workers. In other states, the status of CEDAW, despite its international prominence, is below the national Constitution but higher than the other national laws. Applying CEDAW in litigation and identifying precedent setting cases at the national level becomes problematic if the issue of the applicability of CEDAW or its domestication at the national level is not addressed first. This experience demonstrated the need to develop increased capacity of women's rights organizations in MENA in order to enable them to utilize their knowledge and skills to defend CEDAW against criticism that it is a Western imposition and undermines state sovereignty.

In the newly democratized states of the former-Soviet and the Eastern European states (which are chasing the development and opportunities illustrated by the successes of other EU members) state institutions continue to evolve and strengthen compliance with both EU regulations and international treaty norms for gender equality. While basic structures and mechanisms for equality and enforcement of law may exist, the population often does not have the means or the capacity to initiate or pursue the claiming of rights through such processes. With the post Soviet and Central Asia states, equality between women and men is constitutionally guaranteed but at the same time, there is a huge gap between theory and practice in the implementation of basic equality standards. The ILO has found that "there is a considerable high-level resistance across this region to a gender equality issue and its interpretation" because of the assumption of that it is not necessary to go beyond de jure equality, as well as the

lack of political will to tackle the question of societal stereotypes as the main barriers to be overcome. The increasing fundamentalist agenda of states in this region can be seen in the recent development, for example. Macedonia passing a new law criminalizing abortion in middle of 2013, which was [enacted without debate](#), and the fact that child marriage in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and various other Central Asian states [are illegal but widespread](#).

Role of non-state actors in the economic life of a state and impact of the development agenda

There is a clear need to raise the issue of the negative impacts of the current global environment and the lack of centrality of women's human rights in the funding trends, in particular in responding to violations of women's rights. What we observe from the priorities of our country level partners, the analysis from the CEDAW review process, geopolitics, and current events seem to indicate that several issues will be critical for IWRAW Asia Pacific's continued engagement with issues affecting women's human rights.

The impact of big businesses and foreign aid coming into newer economies has affected many of our partner organisations in countries especially those in the Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as in the Mekong. There is potential for strengthening of human rights standards in this exchange and moving towards economic alliances, as the newer economies seek to emulate standards of the developing and donor states, and seek to integrate their economies, as well as their policies. However, there may also be a danger in that people's rights are bartered away by states seeking to take advantage of knowledge and technology transfers, infrastructure development and co-partnerships in extractive industries, which results in unsustainable harvesting of natural resources. The impact of these preferred modes of foreign investment and economic 'growth' mean that the loss of access to land and natural resources on women is the most severe. The majority of women are engaged in agriculture and the informal labour sector, are at the most risk of not being able to take opportunity of the growing economies but instead find their physical and social assets being slowly eroded. If the legal and social environment provide no support to buffer them from these harms, women will continue to be marginalised from economic progress and will not benefit from global partnerships which seek to achieve economic growth. This has a knock on effect on her other rights and the rights of her family and community.

Changing environment for rights advocacy at the global level

Changes to the treaty body reviews and related aspects of the ongoing discussions between UN and member states on treaty body strengthening and reform also places some stress in terms of the continued need for NGO (and specifically women's human rights) advocacy to ensure that evolving systems, harmonization of procedures and belt tightening by the UN does not jeopardise the human development agenda. There is a need to ensure a continued focus on ensuring that all people can and are enabled to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms. There have been various limitations proposed by member states to the UN to limit international and expert scrutiny of their human rights records. The legitimate expectations of civil society organisations in taking part, providing submissions and alternative solutions and perspectives in such processes of the UN as well as in holding their States accountable for human rights implementation at both national and international levels needs to be preserved irrespective of the harmonisation process.

Gender equality agenda still marginalized at social and political mainstreaming processes at local levels,- CEDAW needs to be more recognized as an instructive framework towards this achievement.

We continued to see in 2013 continued lack of progress in establishing clear legal regimes and policies to entrench CEDAW at the domestic level. Our work in this area has shown us that while legal rights are being granted to women in many countries, de facto discrimination persists due to lack of enforcement, and women's access to legal rights are curtailed by denial of rights to economic and social development. Hence, the challenges bridge the traditional divisions between civil and political and socio-economic rights and requires a synergy between legal and development policy measures to guarantee fully the rights of women.

The potential of CEDAW to serve as a catalyst for change in public policy and measures by governments has been recognised by states, UN agencies and civil society. However, there needs to be further work in embedding this

framework into the concepts and policies adhered to by governments, to ensure that constraining factors to the practical realisation of women's human rights are identified, monitored, addressed and eliminated and strengthening and enabling processes put in its place. IRAW Asia Pacific's programming for 2013 and scaled up our CEDAW focused activities to ensure that the outreach and intent of our advocacy impacts the ground level law and policy framework as well as the structural environment.

Focus on state actors –strengthening country level institutions

In 2013 IRAW Asia Pacific launched two complex projects in Southeast Asia (in the Mekong region), in collaboration with UN Women Southeast Asia, on strengthening three categories of national actors with a role and mandate on gender equality and CEDAW implementation – gender machinery, justice machinery and national human rights institutions. The first project's objectives include strengthening state accountability mechanisms by building capacity of women's machinery, gender focal points in government and relevant agents in the justice sector to play a central, coordinating role in law reform, using CEDAW norms and principles as a foundation for developing gender responsive laws and policies. The second project seeks to ensure equal access to justice through capacity building of the judicial and justice sector, and strengthening the state's protection mechanisms for women through a fair, accessible, trusted and accountable justice sector for all groups within society. The projects increase monitoring of state action on gender equality, and identify and address problems and gaps within existing laws, mechanisms and processes which impede justice and security for women and girls.

Continued need to engage with policy organs and international fora where women's rights at the global level are to be secured

From 2013- 2015, there is a window of opportunity for women to work together to seek clear gender equality outcomes and opportunities for social transformation that are based on recognition of the equal status of women, as well as the need to correct historical and contextual power imbalances that have marginalised women and limited their ability to fully exercise their fundamental freedoms and human rights enshrined by domestic and international legal and policy frameworks. From 2012-2015 various global processes impacting gender equality outcomes were initiated. This includes the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) in June 2012, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) review throughout 2013-2014 which will culminate in the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing+20 review possibly slated for 2015, the MDGs review at the 58th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and the review of International Conference on Population Development(Cairo Platform) on women's reproductive health and rights, as well as the Global review of Security Council Resolution 1325 and the promotion of Women, Peace and Security in 2014. These initiatives require infusion of feminist perspectives and women's rights as a core framework. In advancing the Post 2015 development agenda, it is critical that women's rights are at the centre of a people-centred development model, otherwise development and economic growth will not effectively end poverty and inequality. These initiatives and processes need reinforcement of the principle that achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and rights are autonomous ends in themselves and not simply means to facilitate economic growth. Given the current trajectory of the development discourse, it is pivotal for women to maximise the opportunities and spaces created and to participate as full agents of change in the discourse as well as initiatives for development and poverty eradication.

Women's groups need to develop strategies that focus on strengthening women's empowerment in economic and political spheres through ensuring that gender equality is an outcome of national development plans. The continued focus on women as rights holders and beneficiaries should feature in addressing specific problems such as land-grabbing, sustainable livelihoods, housing, food and water security as well as climate change and environmental degradation. The agencies of women from and representing marginalised people and issues within this context is also a key priority and in this regard the impact on rural women, indigenous women, women with disabilities, women living with HIV/AIDS, young women, migrant and refugee women is significant.

Gendered stereotypes, fundamentalism and conservatism

Gender relations at the local level in these countries are influenced by various social, religious and economic factors, some of which are in flux while other aspects remain unchanged. Positive incremental changes such as women's increased participation in the labour force, access to education, and economic empowerment present an opportunity for activism through social discourse, public advocacy and education, as well as creating social actors with a balance of advocacy skills, political knowledge, feminist ideology and culturally sensitive perspectives. Human rights education in these countries through formal education is limited – thus women encounter concepts and notions about rights in non-formal settings.

The changing political landscape at domestic level greatly affects the work with national groups to address the current dangers and threats e.g. law reform based on extremely retrogressive interpretations of religion, lack of recognition of gender equality and the role of women in the reform movement translating into eroding political power and representation. There is an increasing need to address the impact of culture and religion in the promotion and protection of the rights of women.

Related to this is the need to address the political strategies employed by women's human rights groups who use the framework of State secularism as a means for evolving the concept of rights, gender equality and relevant protections and steps needed to correct the environment, in juxtaposition with those women's groups who seek to articulate feminist perspectives and rights. Continued challenges from fundamentalism based on specific interpretations of religion and culture have a direct impact on women in Southeast Asia especially due to limiting education and employment, imposition of strict cultural standards on women, limitations on women's legal capacity, expansion of legal and labour protections to sex workers and lack of sanctions for violence against women, and denial of freedom and choice when it comes to matters of sexual and reproductive rights. IRAW Asia Pacific's work has been to address the concerns of partners in the all regions impacted by the push for recognition of specific religious interpretations in opposition to the principle of universality of rights, which impedes the acceptance of internationally recognised standards for human rights.

The intractable and regressive factors that continue to make distinctions about the role and status of men and women require more critical and thoughtful responses towards solutions that lead to social balance and justice between genders, communities and other interest groups. This is the basis for programmes that will challenge existing socio-political structures and systems that continue to discriminate and marginalise women on the basis of their gender.

Political economy in Southeast Asia

In relation to the ASEAN, one major change in the offing is the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which is one of three pillars of the 'ASEAN Vision 2020' as declared by the ASEAN leaders in at their 30th Anniversary in December 1997. The other pillars are the ASEAN Political-Security Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. AEC is the basis for strengthening the multilateral trade ties between ASEAN members, and to engage as ASEAN with external regional trading systems. The aims and purposes of ASEAN emphasise economic growth through trade, agriculture, industries, transport and communication. Massive promotion and facilitation of investment in ASEAN are among activities of AEC to transform ASEAN into a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and freer flow of capital. A large population of the public in ASEAN, and even some state agencies are unaware about the vision of one economic ASEAN community and that AEC with its complicated structure and economic growth and trade, labour, services and goods expansion focus, does not recognize people as central subjects, let alone women and grassroots communities most at risk in terms of opportunities as well as being exploited. Moreover, there is a growing concern over the effect on women. It was unanimously agreed that the dream proclaimed as the ASEAN dream is not even a de facto dream of ASEAN people. There is a need to create space for increased awareness on ASEAN & capacity to engage on ASEAN. It has been realized that at ground level there is lack of information on ASEAN mechanisms amongst the women groups, and creating the spaces and providing opportunities to learn about ASEAN and engage with ASEAN have proved effective in instigating women's movements with engaging with ASEAN. Hence, special attention has to be given to particular countries like Laos,

Cambodia and Brunei where extra focus on strengthening the women's rights network, and capacity building on ASEAN and its impact on women's rights is required.

Strengthening the activism of young women

This is aimed at supporting a new generation of rights activists through knowledge, analytical and skills building on CEDAW, community leadership and policy advocacy. Effective future leaders of rights activism and gender equality, whether they work through civil society processes or within the structures of the state in future, require specific interventions and support systems now, in order to enhance their social capital and their capacity to engage analytically on rights issues and to analyse and monitor the impact of state laws and policies on populations and communities.

Organizational changes

2013 represents the 20th anniversary of the organisation. With the end of the second decade IWRAW Asia Pacific will initiate a new three year plan at the end of the year to reflect our response to the context highlighted above. In December we held an external evaluation of the organization by Susan Bazilli to evaluate priorities, needs and challenges which the organization will need to address.

The key change to the organisation was Urmila Bhoola being appointed Executive Director in April 2013, bringing legal and judicial experience as well as demonstrated leadership in running a legal advocacy organisation in South Africa. Audrey Lee, who had been de facto Executive Director and Officer in Charge for the last two years, was appointed Programmes Manager at the same time. Our long serving programme staff Gauri Bhopatkar, Wathshlah Naidu and Gayathiri Jambulingam left the organisation in 2013 at the end of their contracts and for purposes of pursuing their education, while we were joined by one young activist Suraya Zainuddin.

REPORT

SUMMARY OF 2013 OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Across the globe many new laws and programs were enacted in the last few years which reflect the object and purpose of the CEDAW Convention and the aspirations and needs of women. Despite this general trend toward legal compliance, there are also cases of backsliding in the legal framework of rights for women. The IWRAW Asia Pacific three year plan from 2011 to 2013 was designed to address the need to effectively monitor laws for CEDAW compliance, to strengthen government agencies mandated to promote gender equality and to advocate for positive legal environment for gender equality including removal of discriminatory laws and CEDAW compliance by non-state actors.

The focus in 2013 was on targeted support for women's rights groups in the Global South towards understanding and using the CEDAW Convention, its standards and mechanisms, as a source of law and a framework to interrogate laws and policies, as well as to strengthen the institutions of the State and the cultural environment towards gender equality. The plan reflected continued targets to achieve the removal of discriminatory laws against women since 1993.

2013 was also the 20th anniversary of IWRAW Asia Pacific since its establishment in 1993. The ideology of IWRAW Asia Pacific continued to be framed on its role as a facilitator and enabler of the capacity of women's groups and networks at the national level in strengthening the environment for respect, protection and fulfillment of women's rights.

Global programme on CEDAW - Since 2004, we have been the NGO recognized officially to support the CEDAW process and have been running the From Global to Local project for the 17th successive year since 1997, in collaboration with UN Women (previously UNIFEM, New York) and with support from various donors. In 2013 we were able to provide targeted support for women's NGOs representing groups of women subjected to multiple forms of discrimination to advance their advocacy agendas in global human rights, especially those groups that have not been able to access space for public dialogue, attention, or policy focus. This programme also helped to facilitate participation of mainstream women's rights groups from developing countries to ensure coverage of a broad range of issues under all articles of the Convention and to facilitate better strategic linkage, partnership and normative agreement between mainstream women's rights groups and marginalised, thematic and/or sectoral groups. In this year we worked to ensure participation of 67 women from at the 54th, 55th and 56th sessions, from Angola, Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Pakistan, Solomon Islands, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Serbia, United Kingdom, Andorra, Benin, Cambodia, Colombia, Republic of Moldova, Seychelles, Tajikistan to engage with the CEDAW Committee's review of their governments.

From January – December 2013 we held 3 global trainings on NGOs in the CEDAW review process, 1 MENA region Training of Trainers on CEDAW, 1 regional training for lawyers in the MENA region, 2 case clinics/trainings for lawyers in Lebanon and Jordan, 1 training for Judges in Lebanon on the issue of trafficking laws and CEDAW, 3 strategic Southeast Asia consultations with institutional actors for CEDAW implementation with a particular focus on access to justice (a consultation with national human rights institutions on CEDAW implementation, a regional workshop to collaborate with state agencies and NGOs on the use of CEDAW to strengthen women's access to justice, a regional dialogue with governments to promote ratification of the Optional Protocol mechanisms of CEDAW Convention and the Economic Social and Cultural Rights Covenant), 1 regional dialogue to strengthen Caribbean states' implementation of CEDAW Concluding Observations, and 12 country level capacity building initiatives on using CEDAW in collaboration with civil society partner organisations and government actors in Laos, Timor Leste, Philippines, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Myanmar, Qatar and Bahrain, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Iraq.

2011-2013 objectives were to:

1. Enhance capacity of women's groups and other organizations, including mass movements and marginalised groups, towards:
 - a. claiming rights through use of law; and
 - b. drawing accountability from state and non-state actors on the effective implementation of international human rights standards;
2. Facilitate the inclusion of women in human rights standard setting and interpretation processes and in the application of these standards at national, regional and international level, including through alliance building and strengthening international and regional partnerships;
3. Develop capacity and acquire knowledge on how to use CEDAW more holistically and creatively including through exploring the application of CEDAW in new contexts and issues particularly those where there is most resistance (for example conflict, sexual orientation and gender identity, culture and religion as well as economic, social and cultural rights) in partnership with new and existing allies;
4. Consolidate gains, expand partnerships and sharpen focus on the application of CEDAW in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Central and Eastern Europe and explore ways in which we can support this work in other regions;
5. Enhance the effectiveness of new and existing international, regional and national mechanisms/ institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights, including through the integration of an international women's human rights perspective;
6. Improve and enhance the effectiveness of IWRAW Asia Pacific to achieve its objectives through a holistic review of governance structures and procedures and the organizations policies, practices and culture.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE THE OUTCOMES

In this annual report we highlight key strategies in 2013 which furthered these objectives.

Outcome 1

During 2013 we implemented our use of law and litigation strategy and held three legal and litigation initiatives in order to achieve outcome 1a.

- **Regional Workshop for Lawyers Litigating on Women's Human Rights Using CEDAW for MENA**

The Middle East and North Africa Regional Workshop for Lawyers Litigating on Women's Human Rights Using CEDAW was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 28 July – 31 July 2013 with support from Open Society Foundation. This Workshop is part of our ongoing efforts to support lawyers to litigate cases relating to women's human rights founded on the Principle of Equality and Non-discrimination at the domestic courts. From 2011-2012 we have convened 3 similar lawyers workshops in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific.



9 participants attended the Workshop representing Bar Councils/ Associations, NGOs and Law Firms from Jordan, Bahrain, Egypt and Lebanon. The Workshop was conducted by Resource Persons from Jordan, United States of America and 2 IWRAW Asia Pacific staff with experience in legal rights in South Africa and India.

Deliberations at the Workshop progressed from identifying women's lived realities in countries in the MENA Region; the role of lawyers and the challenges in promoting gender equality and CEDAW amongst legal professionals and the

judiciary; in depth analysis and discussions on CEDAW's approach to substantive equality, non-discrimination and state obligation; sharing of comparative jurisprudence and legal strategies from across the world and in specific from within the MENA Region; and finally a practical implementation of knowledge gained during the training through a moot court model. The 4 day workshop resulted in identification of follow-up strategies and proposals for national level trainings of lawyers in collaboration with Bar Associations and NGOs in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt.

The positive impact of the MENA Regional Workshop could be witnessed by the fact that the participants were able to incorporate the knowledge gained on strategies for implementation of CEDAW to formulate follow-up activities and garner support for their implementation with established institutions at the national level. An example of this success is the sustained partnership was established with the Bar Association of Beirut for integration of discussions on CEDAW with the curriculum of trainee lawyers. Additionally the Minister of Justice for Lebanon pledged his support towards future discussions and initiatives on CEDAW within the country.

- **CEDAW Trainings with Lawyers in Lebanon and Jordan**

- a. Jordan national level workshop for lawyers on litigating women's human rights using CEDAW**

The National Workshop for Lawyers in Jordan was organized in partnership with Sisterhood is Global Institute (SIGI) of Jordan from 12 – 14 December 2014, in Amman, Jordan. The Workshop was consistently attended for all 3 days by 14 participants with 9 participants from provinces in the northern and southern part of Jordan and 5 participants from within Amman. Participants were lawyers ranging from 3 – 10 years of experience in litigation at the community level through NGOs, law firms and independent practice.



Jordanian lawyers at the Training

Resource Persons were Asma Khader from SIGI, Jordan, and Hala Ahed Deeb from Jordanian Women's Union. Hala Deeb is the lawyer in charge of legal aid at JWU and was a participant at the MENA Regional Workshop for Lawyers. Due to her prior experience in training NGO activists on CEDAW, her participation as a Resource Person at the National Workshop was in implementation of the strategy to build a larger community of women's human rights lawyers through peer trainers.

Participants identified two main challenges to implementation of CEDAW and its principles in Amman. The first related to Reservations registered by the country to Article 16 and Article 9 of the Convention while the second related the lack of clarity within the constitution on the hierarchy in application of international standards and CEDAW specifically, to instances of conflict between provisions under national and international law. The Workshop served as a forum for resolving division of opinion on application of CEDAW over Shariah Law and Shariah courts on a number of contexts such as guardianship, marriage and divorce and polygamy. While discussions on Day 1 witnessed support amongst the participants for Reservations on Article 16 and Article 9 by Jordan, discussions on Day 3 requiring implementation of innovative strategies and arguments in applying CEDAW to case studies on citizenship depicted unanimous agreement on the universality of CEDAW principles and the need to challenge the basis for Jordan's reservation on the relevant articles.

In relation to group Exercises 1 and 2 implementing strategies of documenting client interviews and court action, participants unanimously chose to focus on the issue of domestic violence. The Workshop

concluded with participants presenting arguments on cases relating to the issues of judicial pardon granted to persons accused of rape in the event that they marry the victim of rape; limitation on right of a mother to transmit citizenship to children born out of marriage to a non-citizen; discrimination in employment practices between men and women.

b. Lebanon national level seminar on litigating women's human rights using CEDAW

The activity in Lebanon was implemented in two stages of an introductory seminar at the House of Lawyers in Beirut on 4th December 2013 to be followed by a focused 2 day Workshop with lawyers at the Beirut Bar Association from 24 – 25 January 2014. The series of activities in Lebanon piloted collaboration between Avenir Liban, an NGO in Lebanon, the Beirut Bar Association and IWRAW Asia Pacific. The national strategy was spearheaded by Patricia Elias Smida, a lawyer who is the President of Avenir Liban and participant at the MENA Regional Workshop for Lawyers.

The Seminar on 4 December was organized as a part of a series of seminars organized by the Bar Association for the benefit of enhancing thematic knowledge of the members of the Bar Association. The 1 day Seminar was attended by 350 members of the Bar Association including lawyers and judges and other judicial officers as well as the Minister of Justice of Lebanon. Resource Persons at the Seminar included Nahla Haider, current member of the CEDAW Committee from Lebanon, and Patricia Elias Smida. The objectives of the Seminar were to garner large scale support and interest in women's human rights and CEDAW within the legal fraternity in Lebanon.

The aim of the seminar was to reduce resistance in implementation of a long term strategy for engaging lawyers on litigation using CEDAW as well as advocate for integrating components on women's human rights and CEDAW as part of the regular curriculum for trainee lawyers with the Beirut Bar Association. The speakers at the Seminar explained and discussed CEDAW and its framework of equality in detail. Following the Seminar, 24 participants were registered for the follow-up 2 days National Workshop on litigating human rights using CEDAW on a first-come first-serve basis.

The Seminar received wide coverage in the national media resulting in mobilization of mass support and interest for the follow-up workshop within the Bar Association. Therefore despite the change in leadership at the Bar Association during the implementation of the 2 pronged strategy, the project as a whole received least amount of resistance.



300 participants at the Seminar on CEDAW in Lebanon.



Expert panel at the seminar.

○ Dialogue with Judges in Lebanon on the Trafficking Laws

In response to requests from IWRAW Asia Pacific's national partner in Lebanon, KAFA (enough) Violence and Exploitation, a Dialogue for Judges on the Use of the CEDAW Framework for Addressing the Trafficking and Exploitation of Women in Lebanon was jointly organized from 24 – 25 July 2013 in Beirut, Lebanon. Resource Persons for the Dialogue were Prof. Savitri Goonesekere, former CEDAW Committee Member, and Ms. Ghida Franjeh, a lawyer with specialization on trafficking laws in Lebanon.

The dialogue was able to strengthen understanding of the lived realities of women who have been trafficked, as well as specific vulnerabilities that lead to trafficking and exploitation of women; increase awareness of State obligations under CEDAW and the UN Trafficking Protocol, and particularly the role of the justice sector in ensuring protection of women's rights; to promote the application of international legal standards and principles related to the trafficking and exploitation of women; to ensure recognition that survivors of trafficking are not criminals, but individuals whose rights have been violated; and to promote measures for ensuring that legal proceedings are gender sensitive and responsive to the specific needs of trafficking survivors.

In process the Dialogue resulted in depicting significant apathy amongst judges at the prosecutorial level with only 7 judges amongst approximately 50 judges who were invited responding positively to the invitations and complying with their commitments to participate. In substance, however the 2 days Dialogue with the participant judges resulted in in-depth discussions on the new Trafficking Act in Lebanon, the difficulties in judicial interpretation caused by indiscriminate and inconsistent adoption of principles and standards from the range of international laws relating to trafficking within domestic laws and highlighted the necessity of repealing existing provisions under the Penal Code which contradict in principle with the progressive approaches adopted under the new legislation.

The Dialogue concluded with a visit to the General Prosecutor at the Cassation Court, Samir Hammoud, which resulted in positive discussions on possible collaboration in organizing a follow –up Seminar on the issue of trafficking and CEDAW for Judges at the Cassation Court with compulsory attendance.

Lebanese newspaper reports on the dialogue as first steps in further review of the laws on trafficking by judges.



- **Case Clinics** -Initial Consultation on Use of OP CEDAW for Italy - The strategy on use of OP CEDAW was initiated as follow up to the Periodic Review of Italy at the 49th CEDAW Review Session in July 2011. It included conducting a two day Consultation on the Inquiry Process under OP CEDAW on the issue of femicide and violence against women held in Rome in April 2013. The 16 participants were from a coalition from Casa Internazionale delle Donne (international house of women), Network D.i.Re (Women network against violence), Pangea Foundation, Democratic Lawyers, Be Free, (women shelters), Differenza Donna, (women shelters) Le Nove and ActionAid. The training provided clarity on the discussions and communications held prior to the Initial Consultation lead to the decision of focusing the Initial Consultation on the issue of VAW. The Consultation involved an orientation on the OP CEDAW in general and on Articles 8 – 10 in specific along with the relevant rules of procedure. Specific sessions were also dedicated to identification of the specific problems at the national level and violations relating to VAW under CEDAW. It was agreed that the focus of the Inquiry would be on the inaction of government agencies and law enforcement officials on reported cases for VAW. The Consultation ended with the development of a strategic action plan towards the drafting and submission of a Request for Inquiry. Key actions identified for immediate follow-up were gathering of data and analysis of information on service delivery and responses from the law enforcement agencies on cases of VAW.
- We also strengthened our tools for training lawyers and currently use our framework for working with lawyers on strengthening the application of CEDAW in jurisprudence and legal and litigation strategy based on the following components:
 - Explanation of CEDAW and other standards as well as standard setting processes relating to women's human rights under international law – This component explained the role and influence of civil society actors and individual governments in setting standards at the international level; the obligations of state parties under international law and implications of reservations or declarations as well as the opportunities for lawyers in framing arguments on state obligation irrespective of reservations and declaration by respective State Parties; and finally an explanation on the core principles of CEDAW and their relevance to specific country contexts.
 - Domestic incorporation of international law – This component included discussions on the models and strategies of incorporating international standards and principles as well as treaty jurisprudence in domestic. While Resource Persons presented the best practices from across countries across the world to illustrate each of the models and strategies, participants engaged in extensive discussions on judicial responses to arguments using international law within their country as well as opportunities and strategies to address opposition and reluctance from the judiciary in accepting arguments for use of CEDAW or its principles.
 - Role of Lawyers and Strategies in Enhancing Protection for Women's Human Rights – This component started with self-reflections by participants on their perceived role in society, in relation to their clients, in relation to law and in perspective of their political identities and ideologies. Discussions were geared towards encouraging lawyers to rethink their role as changemakers in society with specific skills in interpretation and use of the law, along with positive examples from countries across the world. Participants were requested to identify various actors and stakeholders at the national level that lawyers can influence in ensuring change in legal environment relating to women's human rights, e.g. law reform through legislative action and advocacy with parliamentarians, enhancing jurisprudence through court action and advocacy with judges, etc.
 - Practical implementation of strategies – This component consisted of 3 group exercises. The first two involved creation of questionnaires/ formats for collation, documentation and analysis of evidence as pre-requisite for advocacy for change. The methods for collation of evidence were identified as through monitoring court proceedings for cases relating to a specific issue/violation to document successes, challenges and patterns in application of the law by judiciary; and systematic documentation of client

interviews in legal aid cases to analyze successes or gaps and challenges in application of the law to women's lived realities. The third exercise required building arguments for sample cases (based on key thematic issues and priorities within the country) using CEDAW and other international instruments relating to women's human rights.

To effect outcome 1b. on drawing accountability for human rights from non state actors we implemented a **knowledge strategy on the impact of non-state actors** on women's human rights. The impact of non-state actors we focused on were International Financial Institutions (and instruments) and business actors (transnational corporations and multi national enterprises).

- From January 2013 we worked with Ali Miller from Yale University Law School on a draft Framework on Accountability of IFIs, financial institutions and MNEs/TNCs on violations of Women's Human Rights in the context of broader nature of Conflict and Post-conflict Settings being completed for 2014 towards supporting feminist engagement in the 2015 development agenda process as well as refining approaches to holding actors accountable for the funding environment which promotes conflict and the concomitant rights violations which happen to women.
- We are working with the Institute of Human Rights and Business of UK on developing a user friendly guide to provide concise and useful information for CSOs/NGOs on how to use the UN General Principles of Business and Human Rights using a CEDAW perspective to address the impact of businesses on women's human rights. This will be a tool to support our engagement on using CEDAW to frame advocacy and other policy reform discussions specific to the rights context of women impacted by business decisions and the policy environment arising out of various macroeconomic frameworks in the Asian region.

Outcome 2

Four key strategies were implemented to effect objective 2 which focused on advocacy with CEDAW, treaty bodies, United Nations processes and regional systems of governance and cooperation such as ASEAN.

- **UN Processes on development**

UN involvement included collaboration with the Centre for Women's Global leadership and support for a statement reaffirming the need for a people-centred approach to economic growth and development. Following consultation with partners in our network we released a further statement criticising the lack of centrality afforded to the existing international women's human rights framework in the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons Report on the Post 2015 sustainable development goals. We participated as one of 119 civil society organisations in the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference held in Bangkok in September 2013, following which a statement was released reinforcing that universal access to comprehensive, integrated, quality sexual and reproductive health services, information and care is a human right to which all women are entitled. Our statement served to remind member states that services should be delivered in a non-discriminatory manner and include access to a full range of safe, affordable, effective and voluntary forms of modern contraception; adequate counselling, information and education; adolescent and youth friendly services; comprehensive maternity care including pre and post natal care and safe delivery services; safe comprehensive abortion care; prevention and treatment of STIs, HIV and reproductive cancers; and prevention of sexual and gender based violence.

We issued a statement calling on the High level Panel of Eminent Persons to move away from mere rhetoric to actual and practical implementation of actions and policies that will address the substantial gaps that exist between developed and under-developed countries in the promotion of a cohesive and global development agenda that benefits everyone.

We reinforced the centrality of the following principles to the development agenda and its application to women's human rights :

- Human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible.
- There should be non-retrogression once a particular right is recognised.
- Strong mechanisms to ensure state accountability and due diligence should be prominent in the development agenda.

We also provided input into a consultation process with the UN NGLS to ensure that the demands of women in the South East Asia region for the basic rights necessary to ensure their equal access to economic growth and development were incorporated into the process.

- **Treaty Body Strengthening Process**

We engaged in extensive lobbying and dialogue as part of the Treaty Body Strengthening Process and also issued a statement reinforcing our view, based on 20 years of engagement with the CEDAW review process, that any revised intergovernmental process should ensure non-retrogression of the existing standards and good practices of treaty bodies. In the statement we called on all stakeholders in the strengthening process of Treaty Bodies to maintain the central focus on the substance and quality of the reporting process and the effectiveness of the treaty body system in drawing accountability of the state parties in fulfilling their treaty obligations.

- **Facilitating NGO advocacy to CEDAW Committee**

- **Global to Local Training and Mentoring Programme**

We worked to ensure participation of 67 women from at the 54th 55th and 56th sessions, 17 women from Angola, Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Pakistan, Solomon Islands and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at 54th session in February 2013 and 30 women from Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Serbia and United Kingdom at the 55th session, in July 2013, and 20 women from Benin, Cambodia, Colombia, Republic of Moldova, Seychelles, and Tajikistan in October 2013 at the 56th session, to engage with the CEDAW Committee's review of their governments. We provided support to these women's groups through our **Programme**.

Through this programme and various capacity building and follow-up strategies that are based on using CEDAW as a foundation and standard for advocacy, IRAW Asia Pacific adds value to both local activism and international standard setting. It provides the link to the "disconnect" that traditionally exists between those groups shaping the development of human rights monitoring at the international level and those grassroots organisations demanding accountability from their governments, a gap which in many ways trumped women's access to the means of claiming and realising their own rights. Of vital importance to the organization is ensuring that its national, regional and international activities are not implemented as separate components but rather as complementary.

The 54 CEDAW Session was held over 11 Feb 2013 - 01 Mar 2013. Seven (7) countries were reviewed in this session including Macedonia, Hungary, Pakistan, Angola, Cyprus, Austria, Greece and Solomon Islands (which was postponed at the last minute.). In total we facilitated participation of 17 activists from Macedonia, Pakistan, Angola and Hungary, of whom 10 were from Macedonia and Hungary.



54th CEDAW Session, Geneva - Equality activists from all over the world monitoring the dialogue between CEDAW experts and states parties – a global watchdog for women's human rights. This is a Hungarian activist presenting her

The From Global to Local Training and Mentoring in Geneva was held over 2 weeks from 8th-22th February, 2013. Hungary was reviewed in the first week of the review on the 14th February and Macedonia on 21st February. Thus activists from Hungary were provided training and support from 8th -15th and Macedonia from 15th-22nd. The sequence of the activities include: 3 day trainings on the weekends prior to the session, facilitating the Lunch Briefing organised by NGO representatives for the CEDAW Committee members on the day before the official review, daily debriefings throughout both weeks and a half day strategy session on Saturday, 16 February, for participants of week 1 and on Friday 22 February, for participants of week 2.

Of the 17 activists in the training we funded 12 women – 3 from Pakistan, 1 from Angola, 4 from Macedonia and 4 from Hungary.

The 55th CEDAW session was held from 8 - 26 July. The CEDAW Committee reviewed 8 countries: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Serbia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Crown Dependencies), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Overseas Territory).



Activists from Congo, Cuba Cape Verde Dominican Republic discussing their experiences with CEDAW activism

The 56th CEDAW session was held from 30 September -15 October 2013. The CEDAW Committee reviewed 8 countries: Andorra Benin, Cambodia, Colombia, Republic of Moldova, Seychelles, and Tajikistan.

NGO groups from Moldova providing CEDAW Committee alternative information at their lunch briefing.



IWRAW Asia Pacific encouraged and facilitated participation and trained of a total of 67 women from these countries and we funded the participation of more than 30 women's rights activist.

- **Trainings and technical support for NGO alternative / shadow reports:**

- IWRAW Asia Pacific facilitated the submission of NGO alternative/shadow reports from all the fourteen reporting States Brazil, Grenada, Jordan and Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Serbia and United Kingdom. Of these, IWRAW Asia Pacific provided feedback and technical inputs to all the 17 shadow reports/alternative submissions submitted from coalitions of women's groups, to the Committee. These can be found at the page of the 54th and 55th CEDAW Session of the OHCHR website. Earlier in 2011 and 2012 we had provided training to United Kingdom NGOs (Women's Support Centre), as well as Jordan (Arab Women's Organisation), Afghanistan (Afghan Women's Network) and Zimbabwe and their shadow reports were then submitted to CEDAW Committee. We continue to received verbal feedback from the CEDAW Committee on the improved nature of NGO reports.
- In 2013 we held **shadow report trainings** for four countries coming up for review - Qatar, Bahrain (January 2013), Kazakhstan (March 2013) and Iraq (May 2013).

- **Shadow Report Training for Qatar and Bahrain Women's Groups**

IWRAW Asia Pacific with support from Bahrain Women's Union organized the CEDAW Shadow Report Training for participants from non-governmental organisations from Bahrain and Qatar from 11 – 14 January 2013 in Manama, Bahrain. This was an activity fully funded by HIVOS.

The training brought together around 35 participants from Bahrain and Qatar and focused on re – affirming and strengthening participants' knowledge of CEDAW concepts and mechanisms, emphasising the process of writing and presenting a Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee and how to use the shadow reporting process as a tool for advocacy within the country. Participants also engaged in the identification and analysis of critical issues at the national level and the challenges in addressing the issues as well as the gaps in state interventions. As an immediate output the participants developed their strategies and action plan in taking forward the preparation of the CEDAW shadow report and their advocacy plan using the report leading up to the state review in February 2014.

- **Shadow Report Training for Kazakhstan**

IWRAW Asia Pacific in collaboration with NGO Sana Sezim organized the CEDAW Shadow Report Training for participants from non-governmental organisations in Almaty from the 26th to the 29th of March 2013. This was an activity fully funded by Channel Foundation.

Kazakhstan will be review by the CEDAW Committee during the 57th CEDAW Session in February 2014. The State of Kazakhstan will be presenting its 4th and 5th periodic review. The workshop strengthened participants' knowledge of CEDAW concepts and mechanisms, emphasising the process of writing and presenting a Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee and how to use the shadow reporting process as a tool for advocacy within the country. There were 18 participants from various organisations attending the training.



Representatives from the various Kazak organisations reviewing their reports and information while applying the CEDAW shadow report guidelines

A huge success of this training was the active participation of representatives from disability groups and people living with HIV/AIDS. This allows for issues that are normally undertaken by groups that are not part of the mainstream women's groups to claim new spaces for their voices to be heard. Groups from outside the capitol of Almaty also participated in this training – once again allowing for a more broad-based representation of issues that affect women. The key output was the timeline and plan developed for the data gathering and writing of the shadow report as a means of raising alternative perspectives on achievements of equality in Kazak context which is one of a muslim majority country coming out of socialist state system and as a new transitioning economy.

▪ CEDAW Shadow Report Training for Iraqi NGOS

IWRAW Asia Pacific in collaboration with Iraqi Al Amal Association organized the CEDAW Shadow Report Training for participants from non-governmental organisations in Iraq from the 9th – 11th of May 2013. Earlier, IWRAW Asia Pacific had in 2010 worked with Baghdad Women's Association on their shadow report process but the coalition as yet has not finalized their report.

Thus IWRAW AP was willing to support this new coalition which is working on some issues not covered by BWA's earlier shadow report including political participation, especially in relation to quick changes in the Arab region due to the 'Spring' , right to education, media freedoms and jurisprudence. Iraq will be reviewed by the CEDAW Committee during the 57th CEDAW Session in February 2014. The State of Iraq will be presenting its 4th - 5th periodic review since the last report in 2000. We provided knowledge of CEDAW concepts and mechanisms, emphasising the process of writing and presenting a Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee and how to use the shadow reporting process as a tool for advocacy within the country.

There were 17 participants from various organisations who attended the training. A huge success of this training was the active participation of all representatives who are very keen on the CEDAW process as a tool for change as it is the first time that NGOs are coming together to report to a UN Treaty Body – CEDAW of all TBs is the first for Iraqis. This allows for women's issues to be highlighted by the NGOs that are not normally given the space, to claim new spaces for their voices to be heard. The women in this group have been through a lot and experienced and witnessed a lot of violence in their lives. Groups from outside the capitol, Baghdad, also participated in this training actively – once again allowing for a more broad-based representation of issues that affect women. It was diverse group of women who attended the training, including a representative from the human rights commission. The participation of representatives from minority women's groups including the northern Kurdish representation and all of this added to richness of the learning/process. The key output was the action plan outlining the process of preparing the shadow report and subsequent strategies on using the CEDAW Shadow Report as an advocacy tool to promote women's rights at the national level with a pragmatic methodology to collate information, including appropriate questionnaire to enable effective outreach and collection of relevant data and information.

• International fora



IWRAW Asia Pacific organised parallel events in conjunction with the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women from 4 – 15 March 2013 in New York. The theme this year was on the Elimination and Prevention of all forms of Violence against Women and Girls.

The negotiations on the outcome document in itself was rather controversial with some conservative states (Russia, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Holy See, Pakistan, etc) attempting to derail the process and undermine previous agreements. This is rather concerning as it reflects the trend in the global thinking on women's human rights, where there is constant wavering in the commitments and roll back on progress already made. This is reflected in the increased intolerance of and continued contention over issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, harmful practices perpetuated in the context of negative culture and traditions, among others.

IWRAW Asia Pacific, through various caucuses, engaged in lobbying the various states in incorporating progressive language in the outcome document, held our own conceptual spaces for sharing ideas with our peers in government and civil society. We also created several campaigning resources.



**Stop Impunity!
Demand Accountability!
End VAW now**

Our badge and motto for CSW 2013

We engaged at 3 strategic spaces at the CSW:

I) Expert Panel : A critique on existing frameworks to hold our states accountable in its efforts to eliminate violence against women (4 March 2013)

IWRAW Asia Pacific convened a panel of experts to discuss and strategise towards effective rights-based approaches in eliminating violence against women. The Panel aimed to bring together experts and practitioners familiar with the different frameworks (due diligence, impunity, CEDAW) applied in addressing violence against women. The discussion was intended to make the linkages between the different framework and the existing strategies and work towards developing integrated approaches/strategies to enhance accountability mechanisms of the states at the domestic, regional and international levels in addressing the elimination of violence and discrimination against women. The discussion assessed and critiqued the lack of implementation of state obligation as interpreted under the various international frameworks, in particular in the contexts of justice systems; socializing the impact of VAW; changing negative stereotypes and cultural norms; the specific focus on men and other stakeholders; focus on mediation as opposed to proceedings against the perpetrators, etc.

The speakers were:

- i) Lesley Ann Foster, Masimanyane – *“Exploring emerging forms and context in relation to VAW: Challenges and Opportunities in combating VAW through the domestication of international norms and standards”*
- ii) Vrinda Grover, Human Rights Lawyer – *“Critique of the application of the UN Impunity Principles in addressing VAW in the context of conflict and transition period”*
- iii) Ria Chiongson, Gender and Justice Expert – *“Overview of the World Bank’s Justice Reform Framework/strategy and its implication in the Context of VAW – “New Directions in Justice Reform”*
- iv) Shanthi Dairiam, (Board of Directors, IWRAW Asia Pacific) moderated the session and provided the synthesis focusing on the application and integration of the CEDAW Framework in the context of emerging forms of VAW.

II) Panel : Sustaining and Invigorating Multi-stakeholder Responses to Women’s Human Rights – Strategic Interventions by Women’s Human Rights Activists (6 March 2013)

IWRAW Asia Pacific, Global Fund for Women and Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) jointly organised an interactive dialogue aimed at strengthening dialogue between women's human rights organizations and donors on women's human rights funding agenda. It had activists share existing innovative practices that have impacted social, contextual and institutional changes related to women's human rights funding. This was followed by donors responding to the strategies and challenges shared by activists. The discussion was

intended to move forward the discourse by determining some innovative ideas and strategies on collaborative partnerships between donors and/or women's human rights groups to sustain and support women's human rights advocacy. Speakers:

- i) Lydia Alpizar, Executive Director, AWID – *“Global Overview of the Funding Trends”*
- ii) Shanthi Dairiam, Board of Directors, IRAW Asia Pacific – *“Challenges in Funding Trends and Modalities Impacting Sustainability of WHRs Activism”*
- iii) Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator, APWLD – *“The Way Forward – Resource Mobilisation and Sustaining*



ers responded from the floor, providing a donor perspective.
S. Naidu (Programme Officer, IRAW Asia Pacific).

Swamped NGO Panels

III) Strategy Meeting with Donors and Women's Human Rights Organisation – Sustaining and Invigorating Multi-stakeholder Responses to Violence Against Women (7 March 2013)

IRAW Asia Pacific in collaboration with Global Fund for Women and the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) convened a strategy meeting with donors (INGOs, bilateral and multilaterals) to raise the issue of the negative impacts of the current global environment and the lack of centrality of women's human rights in the funding trends, in particular in responding to violence against women. It was also intended to create the space for the different stakeholders to respond to and share insights on how to develop collaborative strategies towards sustainable funding solutions that impact the agenda on women's human rights and specifically on violence against women.

The specific objectives of the Strategy Meeting were to:

- i) Strengthen dialogue between women's human rights organisations and donors focused on advancing women's human rights strategies, with specific focus on violence against women;
- ii) Brainstorm on reinforcing standards and elements of a feminists framework that would influence donor priorities and foster multi-stakeholder collaboration to promote work on eliminating violence against women;
- iii) Strategise on multi-stakeholders initiatives and collaborations that are holistic and comprehensive taking into account the emerging trends and challenges in advancing women's human rights;
- iv) Develop a multi-stakeholder network aimed at influencing the agenda on women's human rights and its intersections with multiple forms and sites of violence against women leading towards the post 2015 development agenda.

The session started with the sharing of the outcome and synthesis of the previous day's panel on interventions by women's human rights activists; followed by an input of using the change matrix; and concluded with a discussion on the framework and principles for funding women's human rights work.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the Global Fund for Women, Channel Foundation, Oxfam Novib, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Ford Foundation, World Bank, UN Women Fund for Gender Equality, Women Win, Foundation for a Just Society (FJS), APWLD, AWID, CWGL.

IV) NGO – CSW Asia Pacific Caucus

IRAW Asia Pacific and the Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW), as Co-chairs of the NGO-CSW Asia Pacific, facilitated the Asia Pacific Caucus during the CSW. The Caucus meetings in the evening served as a venue for providing updates and deliberating on possible interventions to impact the Outcome Document. The Asia Pacific Caucus also facilitated a meeting with H.E. Mr. Masood Khan, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, New York on 8 March 2013. We used this opportunity to share the Asia Pacific Caucus' recommendations/proposals and concerns in relation to the negotiations on the CSW57 Outcome Document.

VI) International Women's Day Statement, 8 March 2013

IWRAW Asia Pacific and the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) co-drafted a statement on Concerns of Women's Organizations over Negotiations on CSW 57 Outcome Document released on International Women's Day. The final statement was endorsed by approximately 400 organisations and individuals.

- **ASEAN and women's human rights**

IWRAW Asia Pacific engages on ASEAN as an entrypoint to effect CEDAW implementation and strengthen rights protection and promotion for women as a joint convenor of the SEA Women's Caucus on ASEAN. During this period, the South East Asia Women's Caucus on ASEAN focused its activities on building and strengthening the capacity and knowledge of WC members, at the national level, to engage with ASEAN. There was also engagement with ASEAN representatives by providing feminist substantive inputs on their work plans and views. Various Capacity building activities like Basic Civil Society engagement with ASEAN, FGD on 'ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint' and 'Training and Dialogue on ASEAN with AICHR and ACWC' led to fruitful results from women holding key positions on NGOs being apprised about ASEAN, to their capacities increased so as to map out approaching the ASEAN. The participants of Capacity building program were also thankful for their newly gained thorough understanding and for receiving further directions to engage in ASEAN. We also convened our annual meeting from 10-11 and developed our strategy plan for the next three years as the caucus focused on movement building, capacity building on women's rights and ASEAN, Advocacy for change in laws and policies and related to all these some areas where we need to create knowledge.

Meanwhile, WC also got to have few significant progress and tasks undertaken under the Knowledge and resource creation as well. Through impressive participation in ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People's Forum 2013, WC was able to provide meaningful knowledge sharing to huge audience on Women's Rights. WC also had prominence presence as we led few program committees during the meeting. Also, the ASEAN reader, which had been delayed, was contracted and first draft was completed. Also, informative video 'ASEAN for Women' was made in Burmese language and were circulated to relevant civil society bodies. With production of this resource and additionally having this being uploaded in youtube, wide public awareness will be created about ASEAN in Myanmar.

Advocacy programs of forums on Post- ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) saw successful assessment of approved AHRD, AICHR's performance and in engaging with ASEAN. Significant outcome of these activities were that strategies were developed, which will lead to proper planned advocacy undertaking.

With these various activities on strengthened awareness, expanded membership base and further knowledge and strategies developed in engagements, and national workshops held, WC believes that these provided strong impetus on our movement building process.

[Caucus website](#) for more details and updates.



Outcome 3

To implement outcome 3, IWRAW Asia Pacific focused on building conceptual clarity and developing tools to support our advocacy on specific **thematic issues** and on **applying the CEDAW framework** to strengthening monitoring, legal analysis and advocacy on law reform.

- **CEDAW Compliance Framework Project** – this is a long term project initiated with partners from 2011 to strengthen evidence based advocacy using the CEDAW framework to ensure that law and policy reform are enacted in compliance with CEDAW standards. It functions as a value addition to existing law reform advocacy already prioritised by country level groups and seeks to put greater skills and resources in their hands, and to involve them into a larger pool of CEDAW expertise with real world experience in working on technical aspects of policy advocacy, monitoring and analysis.
 - The **Regional Consultation on Good practices on CEDAW compliant laws (Mid Term Evaluation with CEDAW Compliance Framework Project** current and new Partners) was held on June 21-23, 2013 in Kuala Lumpur. The implementation of the project from January – June 2013 has been focused CSO actors by providing spaces for learning and sharing towards strengthening using CEDAW for gender equality monitoring and reform. This project is also part of the larger project with UN Women SEA on expanding the pool of experts on CEDAW. This was to review the last years work, and to measure what progress and insights we have achieved in mapping good practices in doing law reform advocacy using CEDAW which we initiated in 2011.

Law reform advocacy and monitoring is something requiring institutional capacity and the CCF project supports such capacity building. Thus the regional meeting directly contributed to the outcome and indicators – e.g. by building up the pool of people in SEA who can use CEDAW Compliance Framework training addition of 8 new NGO representatives from 3 countries), and whereby 6 laws and policies were identified for reform and monitoring.



Our partners sharing experience of their CCF project

This three day meeting was a platform for cross-regional experience sharing on implementation of CCF project towards surfacing good practices in advocating for legal and policy compliance to CEDAW. There were 16 participants from various partner organizations from six different countries attending the meeting. It enabled existing partners from Bangladesh, Timor Leste and Vietnam to discuss the challenges faced and lessons learnt in implementing the CCF activities in their respective countries.

The meeting was also helpful for new partners (Thailand, Laos and Cambodia) to understand the conceptual as well as practical aspects of the project. During the experience sharing session, new partners also discussed potential issues that they can work on through CCF project. The interaction, review and reflection with existing and new partner of CCF project also created a space for IWRAW Asia Pacific to review and revisit its follow up plans and strategies. We built capacity of the 8 new partners who were able to start their analysis on the most crucial laws and create plans for monitoring specific laws and strengthened the capacity of the 8 ongoing partners on e.g.

- Cambodia – domestic violence law
- Thailand – trafficking law (some overlaps with violations to migrants)

- Vietnam – labour law and/retirement policy
 - Timor Leste –re entry policy for education/labour code
 - Laos –maternity leave/access to justice/education/political participation at local level
- In terms of project meetings at the country level we also undertook various country level activities on CEDAW monitoring.
- To assess the status of CCF in **Timor Leste** we held a meeting with partners from Timor Leste was organized in office premise on 19 June, 013. The meeting was participated by Yasinta from Rede Feto, Apolonia from Alola Foundation and Judith Center from Gender Studies. The proposed programme of work was discussed during the meeting and some revisions were made based on the feedback provided by the whole group which was useful for planning and for obtaining updates, feedback and critical analysis of the project needs.
 - To assess the status of the CCF Project in **Vietnam**, IWRAP Asia Pacific’s resource person had a follow up meeting with the Vietnamese partners in May 2013. This provided an opportunity for IWRAP Asia Pacific and GENCOMNET to evaluate the implementation of CCF in Vietnam, to discuss the analysis of the project context and implementation strategies under “justice access” perspective and the achievements and (internal and external) challenges in implementing the objectives of CCF project. It also created a space to identify existing gaps in the project implementation and enhance the knowledge of the relations between project context analysis and women’s justice access situation (based on identified topics) and map out justice access steps in the project implementation plan.
 - In **Laos** we held an Orientation Training/Workshop on CEDAW Compliance Framework, 12-15 November 2013, Hotel Vansana Riverside, Vientiane (Laos) which was organised by the Faculty of Law and Political Science of University of Laos and IWRAP Asia Pacific. This was a preliminary meeting with the national partner in Laos on building a shared and clear understanding on IWRAP Asia Pacific’s CEDAW Compliance Framework Project (CCF Project), and to introduce the key national partner –Faculty of Law and Political Science (FLP) and its partners to the CEDAW Compliance Framework.



University and state agencies in Laos working on CEDAW Concluding Observations and priority issues

The activity was successful in understanding key priority issues for Laos in the context of women’s human rights and CEDAW implementation. Representation of key stakeholders at the workshop can be said to be a positive aspect of the meeting. At the end of this process the country team selected the issue of disparity of achievements in girls education as well as the political participation of women at local governance level as two areas for monitoring towards making recommendations for legal and/or reform through the education policy and local governance policy.

- In **Thailand** we supported Foundation for Women and Prorights organise an Orientation/Training Workshop, 11-14 December 2013 in Ampawa Thailand on CEDAW Compliance Framework with national women's human rights organizations and networks. The event was organized by IWRAW Asia Pacific in collaboration with FFW. For this activity, FFW received support from United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Country Office Thailand. Pro-rights provided administrative and logistic support.

Orientation workshop was the initial activity with the national partner and key coalition members to develop understanding about IWRAW Asia Pacific's CEDAW Compliance Framework (CCF) project. Even though this orientation workshop was intended only for civil society, the participation of representatives from Government agencies especially the Law Reform Commission which now has drafted a revised law on Gender Equality provided an opportunity to do CCF testing on both the drafts of the GE Act against CSO and LRC versions. This is an important 'real world' test of the framework against the expectations and challenges faced by legal drafting bodies at the state level and how CSOs can then support and strengthen their drafting process and drafting recommendations to ensure CEDAW compliance.



Thai group working
on the Gender
Equality law at the
CCF Workshop

- In **Cambodia** we kicked off the CCF partnership with NGO CEDAW with a Training Workshop On CEDAW Compliance Framework at Himawari Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 16-19 December 2013. Since NGO-CEDAW is working as a partnership with IWRAW-AP in a joint research and advocacy project-CEDAW Compliance Framework Project (CCF Project), this workshop is considered as a starting point of project's activities and will continue as needed to effect positive legislative change in the areas identified. By understanding this process, key CSOs will be able to assist the state to become more effective in carrying out the State Obligation on CEDAW implementation.

To start this project, NGO-CE DAW organised 4 day training to the key selected participants. The primary objective of the training is to build the capacity of civil society groups in using CEDAW to critically analyze a specific law or policy and to evaluate its compliance with CEDAW. The content of the training focused on monitoring analyzing and looking for gaps in the existing domestic violence law in Cambodia. The end result of the workshop was greater clarity on the standards of CEDAW and areas which needed to be monitored on the DV law which the NGOs could then work with state counterparts e.g. the Ministry of Women's Advancement.



Cambodian NGOs and MOWA staff discussing
their perspectives on the domestic violence

- **CEDAW Concluding Observations Consultations to support NGO strategizing on CEDAW**
 - **Consultation on CEDAW Concluding Observations with New Zealand NGOs**



Spaces for continued planning and discussions are critical to motivated, cohesive and well devised plans – leading discussions with New Zealand NGOs.

In November 2012, IWRAW Asia Pacific received a request for technical assistance from the Pacific Women's Watch New Zealand for a training/consultation on CEDAW and Concluding Observations. New Zealand had been reviewed by the CEDAW Committee in July 2012.

This training was held for a period of three days (12-14 April 2013) in Auckland, New Zealand. It was attended by 26 women, representing different areas of concern/work which included rights of indigenous groups, disability groups, trade unions, women working with shelters, migrant women and others. Similarly it was to provide space for NGOs to come together and devise a common strategy focusing on priorities and followup from the CEDAW review.

The feedback from participants post the training included the fact that they were extremely empowered by this process, they have gained a better understanding of the usefulness and benefits of the CEDAW Convention and the possibility of establishing a CEDAW Coalition that works around CEDAW in a more sustained and systematised manner.

During the evaluation session, all of the participants expressed on how empowered they felt during this training. It was a training that reinforced the need to 'demystify' the notion that UN treaty bodies/ international advocacy around treaties is complex and could only be understood by those with a legal background.

- **Consultation on CEDAW Concluding Observations in partnership with Macedonian NGOs.**

On May 14-17 2013 we supported Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (ESE) with coordinating a CEDAW Concluding Observations Consultation to strategise on the implementation of the Concluding Observations.



Macedonian groups discussing priority actions.

With this consultation we supported the groups to understand the substance of each recommendation and use the recommendations of the Committee to make more incisive advocacy and help build their states capacity to deliver on their obligations. At this consultation 18 activists (17 women and 1 man) from various Macedonian NGOs discussed and planned for follow-up monitoring activities and gained clarity on how they could utilize the outcomes of the review.

Post consultation feedback and evaluation provided to the resource persons verbally in May (as feedback was in Macedonian there is no translation in English of these documents) was that the meeting served all its objectives and the participants learnt what they still needed to do to make effective advocacy plans to engage the state on their priorities –trafficking, Roma people's rights, the general backsliding in women's rights in Macedonia due to conservative culture, the domestic violence protections and the discrimination against sex workers.

One major output from the consultation was development of priorities and steps to be taken by each organisation of the coalition. The group decided to develop a plan for monitoring the

situation with domestic violence, trafficking in human beings and sex workers in republic of Macedonia which included these objectives using CEDAW compliance as the key justification when working with the state. The agreed plans are:

- To develop adequate tools and monitoring mechanisms for assessing the implementation of the national legal framework for protection of victims of domestic violence;
- To analyse the institutional response toward the problem of domestic violence in the country, focusing on the court protection in the civil and criminal justice system;
- To prepare recommendations for advancement of the civil and criminal system of protection;
- To encourage judges from the civil and criminal justice system to implement adequately the existing national legal framework for protection of victims of domestic violence;
- To strengthen the capacities of the judges for application of the international standards for protection of the victims of gender based violence and gender based discrimination (focus on CEDAW Convention).

- **Thematic issues**

- In 2013, we kicked off a SEA strategy on **access to justice** and CEDAW compliance with Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Timor, Cambodia and Thailand, where we will work with institutions for gender equality at the country level.

Under the UN Women SEA Project one aspect is to develop knowledge and advocacy products on application of CEDAW framework to access to justice for women Research on access to justice started in March and will be ongoing until August when we complete it. Three researchers are supporting us in compiling 7 country level reports on access to justice. A regional summary and recommendations report is the main output to be completed after the Regional writeshop on indicators on access to justice which will be held at the end of August. The research will focus on domestic applicability of CEDAW and other international human rights treaties, and substantive provisions in the Constitution that support approaches which can enhance social justice for women.

The research outline includes information to better answer questions about the legal framework's capacity to address access to justice for women, what are the national initiatives to promote and protect women's access to justice, barriers to access to justice, specific role of relevant actors in addressing women's access, what have they done to promote access to appropriate mechanisms for the early resolution of problems and violations, have they established establish a triage function, enabling matters to be directed to the most appropriate destination for resolution, irrespective of how people make contact with the system, what has been done for resources to be best directed, what is the available data reflecting where and how people access the justice system, what steps have been taken to promote fair outcomes, and have they allocated resources efficiently and through ongoing evaluation. This information will support the next phase of capacity building and engagement with various state agencies on issues of protection of rights and CEDAW implementation.

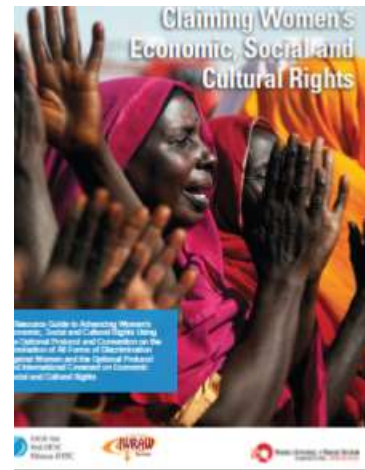
- **CEDAW General Recommendation on Access to Justice Drafting Process**

IWRAW Asia Pacific had provided extensive support to NGOs in preparation for the Day of General Discussion prior to the 54th Session, especially in the preparation of the concept note and the selection of panellists. The Day of General Discussions was held on 18 February 2013. Panelists consisted of representatives of UNDP, OHCHR, UN Woman (Lee Waldorf), Frances Raday, Simone Cusack, Shaheen Sardar Ali, Magdalena Sepulveda, and two speakers nominated by IWRAW Asia Pacific – Sara Hossain

and Karen Vertido. Additionally Martha Morgan delivered the [Oral Statement on behalf of IRAW Asia Pacific](#) and Ayesha read a statement on behalf of Widows for Peace and Democracy.

- In 2013, we have begun to identify and prioritise participation of activists who **work on rights of sex workers and positive women (WLHIV)** to the CEDAW review. In February we had 7 women from these groups to ensure that the CEDAW dialogues are able to highlight key concerns of these groups of women whose rights are routinely violated based on stigma.

- Women's economic social and cultural rights – Working with ESCR Net we completed and disseminated the IRAW Asia Pacific and ESCR Net [Manual on Litigation and Advocacy on Women's' ESC Rights under CEDAW/OP-CEDAW and ICESCR/OP-ICESCR](#) provides an overview of women's ESC rights and State's obligations, as well as guidance on argumentation, strategy and resources when submitting communications or seeking an inquiry under both Optional Protocols.



- **Violence against Women**

We worked with Asia Pacific Women Law and Development to convene a **Asia Pacific Roundtable: International and Regional Standard Setting to eliminate Violence Against Women, 7-8 December 2013, in Bali Indonesia** to assess the need for a new Convention on Violence against Women in ASEAN and UN. Currently, at the global level, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women is proposing a UN Convention on VAW while at the regional level, the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) is considering for an ASEAN Convention on Violence against Women. The roundtable helped create a space for women's rights organizations and advocates, UN mandate holders (former and current) and other relevant stakeholders from Asia Pacific region working on the issue of violence against women to share their expertise, assess and deliberate if there this is an opportune moment to call for a new instrument to strengthen the responses to violence against women. The analysis of the current global and regional political context is quite bleak as observed in the 56th session of the CSW when the governments failed to adopt agreed conclusions on the basis of safeguarding "traditional values" at the expensive of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women. This is not new to the context Southeast Asia women are living in when the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration states "public morality" as a ground for limitation of rights, the requirement for enjoyment of human rights balancing with responsibilities and that the specific national political, social, economic, legal, religious, cultural backgrounds of countries to be considered for the realization of human rights represent real departure from the international standards. These arguments of culture, religion, public morality, traditional values and belief already have been used by ASEAN bodies.

While there is a support for a creation of new international and regional ASEAN Convention on violence against women, many women's organizations and movements are indeed concerned about this proposal. The arguments against a new instrument clearly states that there is in fact no absence of standards despite there were great level of dissatisfactions on ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, but rather the political will and persisting structural and ideological conditions that allow violence against women to persist. The same position also stresses that attention needs to be on enforcement and accountability rather than needing to establish new standards, and need to fulfill the current obligations rather. It is to be noted that the global and regional law making and mechanisms creation should not be an end in itself and may need to focus on implementing the existing obligations.



Hence, in this global and regional situation there is need to reinvigorate global support and develop a holistic accountability framework to eliminate violence and discrimination against women. Having a regional mechanism/instrument has the same value/benefit as having domestic laws -it recognises a social problem as a justice issue requiring regulation, sanctions, remedies etc. However, the issue would be implementation. At National level, there are laws related to VAW, just no proper implementation. In this context need to very strategically deliberate if there is a need for a new instrument either at international or regional level in ASEAN or refocus our advocacy on drawing accountability of the states under the existing human rights instruments. And with the opportunity of Roundtable discussion like this proposed one could be an important impetus in the process of creating or direct involvement in crafting the said instrument, giving more legitimacy.

The key outcome of this activity was :

- That the regional VAW NGOs and service and advocacy NGOs working on support to victim-survivors were able contribute to the global discussion on the need for an instrument and understand what are the limits of establishing global legal accountability and what mechanisms and standards already exist.
- Understanding and consensus of the group representing major NGOs working on violence that a Global Convention may not be a good strategy to pursue at this stage of global development on women's rights.
- The CEDAW Committee made a public statement to the consultation raising their concerns about establishing a global convention on violence against women.
- An analysis towards various accountability mechanisms and instruments was also created and this will be shared by APWLD soon.

Outcome 4

To implement outcome 4 which focuses on our regional strategies we worked mainly in 3 regions:

Middle East North Africa

○ **Networking with regional Partner Equality Without Reservation**

At the 3rd Regional Conference of the Equality Without Reservations Coalition from 24 – 26 January 2013 in Cairo, Egypt, IWRAW Asia Pacific was invited to attend. The conference reviewed the achievements and challenges experienced by the EWR Coalition. It also focused on several priority issues such as personal status laws and women's social and economic rights post the Arab Spring. IWRAW Asia Pacific, provided inputs on the normative framework of CEDAW and its application in MENA as well as on the campaign on the use and ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. This was also an opportunity to engage in more structured ways with EWR, one key partner in MENA region. The context for most of the discussions were premised on the post revolution events. There is a sense of disillusionment on the post revolution events as well as a sense of hope for continued fight for democracy. It was irrefutably agreed that women continue to experience multiple burdens and discrimination even in these times. Key issues of concern in the region include:

- Personal status law (unified family law/unified civil law)
- Constitutional reforms

- Political participation of women
 - Review of national plans
 - Domestic violence/Family Violence law
 - Removal of reservation
 - Ratification of CEDAW Campaign for Sudan, Palestine and Somalia
- **Capacity building of the justice sector and litigation strategies** was another key area of work with MENA partners. These are discussed in Outcome 1 a.
 - **Regional Training of Trainers (RTOT) on the Application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for MENA region , 2-6 December 2013 Amman, Jordan**
The training aims to strengthen the ability of women activists and organisations to apply CEDAW and other international human rights norms in the domestic context, and to expand the pool of resource persons in the selected MENA countries who can conduct trainings & provide technical assistance on the CEDAW Convention at the local, national and sub-regional levels in collaboration with IWRAW Asia Pacific.

Another primary reason for this RTOT is to increase the number of fluent Arabic trainers in IWRAW AP's resource pool. Participants will need to be bilingual (English and Arabic)

Sessions on deconstructing discrimination



The training explored the complexities in the actual implementation of the CEDAW principles. It provided the participants with the tools used to understand and analyse the key features, mechanisms and procedures of the Convention, the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention and other UN instruments. The training was well received and saw the participation of women activists who were experienced in their own fields/areas of expertise and appreciated the depth of understanding CEDAW that this RTOT provided. Many of them echoed the sentiments that this RTOT was timely especially with current situation in the MENA region, where they see a regression of the gains that were made on issues relating with women's human rights.

Most of the women participants were excited with the knowledge that they gained during this training. They were empowered with the tools of analysis to de-construct many of the issues faced by women in their respective countries. They felt that they now had better conceptual clarity about the key features, principles and procedures of CEDAW. They were also convinced that CEDAW can be used creatively and anyone women wanting to be an advocate of women's human rights must have the conceptual clarity on its structure, principles and procedures.

Many felt empowered after this training to continue with their work around CEDAW and IWRAW AP also managed to identify several potential trainers that could be included in the organisations' pool of trainers. It is important that IWRAW AP monitors the suggested follow-up activities that were suggested by the participants as this will be a useful gauge as to the commitment of the women to disseminating the knowledge and skills gained during this RTOT.

Southeast Asia

A major portion of support in 2013 was to partners in this region. We implemented 2 large projects focused on SEA in collaboration with the UN Women SEA on strengthening the actor base for CEDAW implementation in SEA (See Outcome 5 below) and another project which was supported by the UN Women Gender Equality Fund.

- **Capacity building for Myanmar NGOs**

We supported new partners in Myanmar on a **CEDAW Training and the Monitoring of the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations**, Yangon, Myanmar in May 27-30, 2013. Through an investigation visit we made contacts with NGOs in Myanmar the need for CEDAW capacity building for the NGOs in Myanmar was raised. Therefore we organized this training with NGO Gender Group as a priority since we had little entrypoint into Myanmar before this. The Consultation enabled us to provide structured space to strengthen the participants' knowledge and skills on CEDAW and use of the CEDAW reporting cycle to consolidate their national women's human rights advocacy. The State's implementation of the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations was examined to identify challenges to its implementation by the government at the national level as well as to examine the role played by women in promoting the implementation of the Concluding Observations. At the end a strategic plan and next steps for monitoring the implementation of the Concluding Observations, were identified.

There were 23 persons from various organizations working on women issues including some from different states and divisions i.e. Shan State, Kachin State, Karen State, Mon State, Ayerrawady Division and Taninthari Division.

- UN Women SEA Project - **strengthening the actor base including state actors and non state actors for CEDAW implementation in Southeast Asia**

The overall goal of the project is to reduce discrimination against women in Southeast Asia through strengthened gender machinery, justice sector, NHRIs, and civil society capacity to advocate for legal reform that is compliant with international human rights norms and standards, for improved women's access to legal remedies and justice mechanisms/legal protection; to monitor state implementation of CEDAW in securing full realization of rights for women/substantive equality for women.

See Outcome 3 as this project intersects both Outcome 3 and Outcome 4.

- UN Women Fund for Gender Equality Project **on strengthening the voices of young women as gender equality advocates** in Southeast Asia.

The primary objective of this particular project is to build the capacity of young women activists in four SEA countries of Malaysia, Laos Vietnam and Timor Leste (those between the ages of 18-30 years) to participate in national and international lobbying while translating their knowledge and experience into strengthening their national level activism. gap that exist both at the national and international spaces, where these young women are seldom provided the space or the opportunity to undertaken key lobbying tasks. This is generally given to the more 'experienced' activists. Among reasons why young activists particularly in Southeast Asia are more hesitant to undertake these types of activities is not solely due to the lack of opportunity but also stems from the lack of skills or training provided to them as well as the existence of a culture 'where the young need to defer to their 'elders'. Keeping all this in mind, IRAW Asia Pacific has embarked in this 2 year project to build the capacity of young women to actively and systematically engage in these spaces/arenas.

Four main activities were initiated from January-September 2013:

- **Partners meeting** in April 1-2 2013.

On April 1-2 2013 we held the meeting with advisors and 4 non lead partners which we explained in the programme narrative as part of the monitoring and evaluation and to kick off the project. The 16 partners and resource people were briefed on the project goals which provided a platform for us to work together on building capacity and to support young women

as the next generation of equality and social justice advocates. We were then able to agree on ways to achieve the expected output and outcomes, understand the use of the available funds and coordination support costs, accountability to each other through reporting and updates, agreement on the principles of engagement, the criteria and identification of young women to participate in the project, that the project allows us to explore further opportunities with various stakeholders; that we should jointly develop and institute a baseline framework for monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the project; identify ways to address potential risks and constraints in programme implementation; and agree on workplan and timeline for implementation. This kickoff meeting was important to establish the partnership and expectations.

- **Writeshop of developing curriculum and content** for engaging the young woman activist.
In order to create a specific training curriculum and materials for supporting young women activists we held a 3 day writeshop on 28-30 April 2013. We were able to finalise and model a curriculum structure and outlines for 2 kinds of trainings - 4 day conceptual human rights training for young women and a 3 day advocacy skills workshop which focuses more on practical skills working on policy and campaigns.
- **Training of young women activists** in Malaysia, Laos Vietnam and Timor Leste throughout July- October 2013- Initial testing of the curriculum in the four countries done by the country partner in collaboration with IRAW Asia Pacific. These trainings are a platform for new and young activists alike to share, challenge and strengthen their knowledge on rights-based language and advocacy. With the empowering environment, the young women were socialized to the WHRs and CEDAW principles and given the space to develop an advocacy plan that responds to a women's rights situation or issue that is important to them and relevant in their country. This activity/space also strengthened their role as activists and enabled them to utilize their ideas for activism in society and enabled IRAW AP to connect with new groups and looser coalitions.
 - Vietnam - IRAW Asia Pacific organized a four day training programme titled "Strengthening the Voices of Young Women as Gender Equality Advocates in Southeast Asia" from 20-23 August 2013 in Hanoi, Vietnam. The training was conducted in partnership with Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development Vietnam to develop the capacity of young women in Laos to articulate their aspirations and needs using CEDAW and support their activism for gender equality. The training was participated by 9 young women and 3 men from the age group of 16-30 years. Most of the participants were university students, and those working for local NGO as well as volunteers. The young people who attended this training in Vietnam exemplify the very best of what young people have to offer in the process for the realization of women's human rights. They were keen, enthusiastic, talented, compassionate and committed. This project showcases the need for many young people to be involved in the claiming and enjoyment of rights. This training provided the much needed safe space for them to ask questions and challenge gender roles and stereotypes. The attendance of a young mother and her five-month old infant added a new depth to understanding women's human rights from a real life experience. Her commitment in attending everyday with her child showcased the resilience and commitment of women in doing their best to empower themselves. It was indeed a great honour for IRAW Asia Pacific and CGFED to be part of a movement that provides women such as this participant the opportunity to participate with no barriers



Ngoc from CGFED Vietnam
leading the training session



Malaysia - IRAW Asia Pacific together with its national partner in Malaysia, KRYSS, organized the "Young Women Making Change" training in Kuala Lumpur from the 21 – 25

of August. 25 young people (some from trans community) participated in this training. The participants were a good mix of representatives from NGOs working on DV, LGBT rights, indigenous rights, Muslim women's rights, mainstream human rights/women's rights and environment rights to university students, teachers, corporate sector reps, independent journalists and writers and this enabled richer discussions and sharing of knowledge within the group. Participants were introduced to basic international human rights principles and instruments, they used the space to analyse social issues and the concept of the inter-related nature of rights and were able to understand how discrimination / privilege in one context have a bearing in others and the role of power in the exercise of rights. The young women had a good understanding that their individual efforts contribute to social change. There was clear thought process around the social constructions of gender, its relationship with discrimination, inequalities and to women's subordination. Together they examined how gender intersects with various forms of inequalities and privileges (race, class, age, sexual orientation, abilities etc). Participants were also introduced to the concept of social contract, the role of State and other actors within it. They are sustaining their discussions and study sessions on rights through the facebook closed group to provide a safe space called "Young Women Making Change"

- **Laos** - IWRAP Asia Pacific organized a four day training programme titled "Strengthening the Voices of Young Women as Gender Equality Advocates in Southeast Asia" from July 23-26, 2013 in Vientiane, Laos. The training was conducted in partnership with Gender and Development Association (GDA) Laos to develop the capacity of young women in Laos to articulate their aspirations and needs using CEDAW and support their activism for gender equality. The training was participated by 25 young women from the age group of 16-30 years. Most of the participants were university students from the Law and Social Science Faculties with a few of them having recently joined local NGO or INGOs as paid staff or volunteers. At the end of the training participants selected three issues and developed action plans to work on it together. On creating awareness around human rights principles and standards, participants showed a general understanding and this was reflected in their sharings and participation. Some of the more technical input around HR principles and treaties were a little more difficult and could be due to the terminology and translation. In discussing the social construction of gender it was clear that the stereotyped roles of women as child bearers and carers was very entrenched. There remained some conflation with the biological ability to have children and therefore the duty to do so along with maternal instincts to care for children.

Outcome 5

To implement outcome 5 which is focused on specific institutions to strengthen **accountability for implementation of women's human rights** we implemented various initiatives:

- In 2013 we began a three year project with the UN Women East and Southeast Asia programme on **strengthening the actor base including state actors** for CEDAW implementation in Southeast Asia. This project focused on three key **state institutions (gender machinery, national human rights institutions and justice sector) as well as NGO actors**.
 - Under this project we held a **Regional Consultation on Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in the Context of Access to Justice**, which brought together 16 individuals from the justice sector, women's machineries, sectoral government bodies , national human rights institutions and civil society from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and

Vietnam on 27-29 August 2013, in Kuala Lumpur. The Consultation was organized as a means to strengthen awareness concerning the barriers faced by women seeking access to justice in the region and CEDAW obligations in the area of access to justice, as well as to develop indicators for guiding and assessing CEDAW implementation in the access to justice context. During the meeting, participants identified the need for indicators to assess access to justice for women in Southeast Asia.

The Regional Consultation provided a key opportunity for networking among government officials and selected NGOs in Southeast Asia on the issue of access to justice for women. Many participant evaluations indicated enhanced knowledge of the barriers facing women seeking access to justice in the region, as well as international norms and principles relating to access to justice, as a result of presentations by resource persons and group discussions. A common theme of evaluations was the usefulness of country presentations on successes and challenges in promoting access to justice for women. Preparation of the draft indicators was followed by the preparation (by country groups) of strategic plans for use of the indicators domestically. These plans represent initial brainstorming by country participants on how the indicators might be translated into their specific domestic contexts. Participants also identified certain domestic challenges that would need to be overcome in order to ensure their effectiveness. Ideally, this initial brainstorming would be only the beginning of national and regional dialogue on use of the indicators. In their evaluations, participants expressed a desire to use the indicators in public education programs; advocacy; legal/policy review processes.



Certain participants also indicated that it would be useful to integrate the indicators developed at the Regional Consultation into existing programmes for monitoring and supporting human rights standards at the domestic level.

Brainstorming with our colleagues in government.

- **Under the UN Women SEA project we also focused on strengthening national human rights institutions capacity to support governments in CEDAW implementation.**
 - The first stage of the project was to **research and map** the key issues for NHRI in terms of CEDAW implementation and specially focused on delivering access to justice. From January – June 2013 we worked on the research component of the project focused on the role and mandate of NHRIs in the 5 countries in Southeast Asia with accredited Paris Principles compliant institutions (Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, and Timor Leste). This regional review and mapping of gaps in domestic level protections and remedies for women human rights is meant to serve as foundation of development of regional plans from NHRI and regional bodies on ways to enhance legal remedies and protection mechanisms for women of disadvantaged sectors, which will be pursued at later stages in the national level, as well as cross regional sharing to enhance cooperation especially in regional or cross border issues such as trafficking and migrant workers rights.

The research looked at issues of women's access to justice which the role and mandate of NHRIs can strengthen – these issues include judicial justice, administrative and quasi-judicial justice, as well as informal mechanisms of justice, which decide on and create jurisprudence on rights being violated and provide the required remedies. Access to this

type of justice takes into consideration all the substantive, structural, economic, cultural, social or political obstacles to this access, and also includes in the remedies access to economic, cultural, political, social, civil rights that have been denied on grounds of discrimination against women based on sex and/or gender, inextricably linked with other factors that affect women, such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief, nationality, health, status, age, class, caste and sexual orientation and gender identity. The key findings from the desk research on national human rights institutions in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Thailand has pointed to the need for strengthening the protection mandate of such institutions, including with regard to women's human rights, as well as various possible entry points to be discussed in individual country reports and an executive summary. The final reports will be discussed with the NHRIs later in the year at national level capacity buildings as well as the regional consultation in November 2013.

Research indicates that all of the NHRIs have experienced some problems in terms of effectiveness. The problems vary by country, but a concern in many cases relates to resource constraints. A lack of fiscal autonomy/fiscal independence is often cited as an obstacle to effectiveness in the case of Timor-Leste and the Philippines. In all countries, there have been certain problems in terms of cooperation from domestic authorities. In Malaysia, for instance, SUHAKAM prepares annual reports containing recommendations for improvement of the situation of human rights in Malaysia, but such reports have never been debated in Parliament.

While capacity on issues relating to non-discrimination and gender equality is developing, including as a result of interaction within regional NHRI networks, more remains to be done. An advisor in Timor-Leste mentions that, only a few years ago, staff in the Provedor's Office expressed skepticism about the relevance of CEDAW given the existence of language on non-discrimination in the country's Constitution (language which has itself been criticized by the CEDAW Committee as inconsistent with CEDAW). Building capacity in the countries concerned is an ongoing process, and one that presents particular challenges in areas such as Timor-Leste where a simultaneous process of institution-building is taking place.

These issues will be the focus of discussions at both the national and regional meetings with NHRI in order to priorities a set of actions to address the major gaps. Some of the trends in the gaps are related to information and data, as well as monitoring systems, within the governance system to track progress in terms of CEDAW compliance. Other gaps are in substantive areas such as lack of good legal framework addressing specific priority issues in the different countries and legal frameworks which recognise and domesticate CEDAW principles into the local law and policy.

- **Focus on CEDAW Concluding Observations Implementation by State**

- On 17-20 September 2013 IWRAW Asia Pacific collaborated with Association of Women's Organisations Jamaica (AWOJA) on a **Caribbean Region Government-NGO Dialogue: Towards Effective Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, Knutsford Hotel ,Kingston Jamaica.

This inaugural and key Government-NGO Dialogue brought together government officials as well as women's groups, academics and activists from Jamaica, Guyana and the Bahamas to discuss the States' progress in implementing the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations post the July 2012 review.

The opening ceremony was graced by the presence of Senator Sandra Falconer (Minister of Information in the Office of the Prime Minister) who presented the welcome remarks on behalf of the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Hon. Portia Simpson-Miller. It was also attended by representatives from UN agencies – Ms. Sita Oussein (Dep. Director & OIC UNFPA Sub-regional Office Caribbean) and Mr. Pierre Somse – Country Coordinator UNAIDS. Representatives from the South African and Guyanese missions based in Kingston also attended the opening ceremony.



The presence of the Professor Barbara Bailey (current CEDAW Committee member) and Dr. Glenda Simms (former CEDAW Committee member) was also an important acknowledgment of the importance of organizing this dialogue between State representatives and civil society organizations. The Dialogue helped to identify and address problems faced by the respective State Parties in reporting and implementing the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee.

Official launch by Senator Falconer

The Dialogue enabled the sharing of experiences and challenges in implementation of CEDAW in an honest and open manner, and allowed States Parties to engage with NGO representatives on the difficulties they face. It also provided a basis for discussing and planning a joint and comprehensive approach to submission of a Follow-Up report to the CEDAW Committee as part of the roadmap towards fulfilling all CEDAW commitments of the State.

The Dialogue also contributed to clarifying misconceptions about the OP-CEDAW, to discussing the content of TMS (Temporary Special Measures) as well as the strategies to ensure continued collaboration between National Women's Machineries in government and women's rights NGOs. The Dialogue contributed in a positive manner to strengthening the capacity of States to implement CEDAW, through building a comprehensive understanding of the requirements of the CEDAW Committee and their obligations under CEDAW. The Dialogue enabled States Parties to address challenges, work with NGOs and emphasized the urgent need to work towards the universal norm of gender equality in CEDAW in the interests of the whole society. This Government-NGO dialogue provided an avenue for government officials to exchange strategies, methodologies, data requirements and experiences in implementing the Convention and the follow-up to the Concluding Observations. This was the first step to build the required capacity and develop resources of the state. More specifically, the ability and capacity of the state's machinery to report to the CEDAW Committee in a timely and efficient manner has been and will continue to be enhanced.

- **Focus on ratification of the OPCEDAW and OPICESCR**

One means of ensuring compliance for equality and non discrimination for women's economic social and cultural rights is to use the optional protocol to CEDAW or the Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Towards supporting the climate for ratification, IWRAW Asia Pacific organised a **Government – NGO Dialogue on Promoting Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 18 – 20 November 2013** followed by a Side Event for NGOs on Strategic Advocacy for Promoting Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the National Level. The Dialogue was organised with the objectives of enhancing knowledge and clarity on the application and implementation of CEDAW and ICESCR as well as identify opportunities for ratification of OP CEDAW and OP ICESCR. It resulted in the formulation of recommendations for continued efforts towards enhancing knowledge about the two treaties and their optional protocols amongst government machineries and agencies and civil society at the national level as well as follow-up plans of pursuing discussions on ratification of the ICESCR, OP ICESCR and the OP CEDAW at the

national level. Additionally it resulted in the civil society representatives formulating action plans to address challenges and opportunities towards promoting women's economic social and cultural rights at the national and regional level.

The activity was initially planned to be a capacity building workshop on OP CEDAW with the aim of identifying issues and cases to pursue using the Optional Protocol. It was however modified in objectives and expected outputs and outcome in the consideration of the following:

- IWRAW Asia Pacific's regional lawyers workshop conducted in 2012 depicted a need for more concerted effort towards enhancing basic understanding and acceptance of CEDAW and CEDAW jurisprudence within the region both through court action as well as legislative reform. While Philippines had witnessed 2 attempts to use OP CEDAW the general lack of information on the Optional Protocol amongst the Government had created obstacles in implementation of the CEDAW Committee's decisions and recommendations. Additionally only 4 countries in the region had ratified OP CEDAW with none of remaining 3 countries having made any successful attempt at using the mechanisms under the Optional Protocol. These contexts in combination had failed to create favourable conditions for strengthening CEDAW jurisprudence within the region.
- Concluding Observations to the more recent Periodic Reports considered by the CEDAW Committee from countries in Southeast Asia focussed mainly on issues relating to the development agenda and the emerging socio-economic contexts that resulted in wide ranging violations of women's economic, social and cultural rights. However with the enhanced emphasis on the ASEAN and its new economic order countries and policies adopted with the region were often found to be in conflict with the international standards and principles of human rights.
- The Optional Protocol to ICESCR was adopted in May 2013 with the 10th ratification. However none amongst the 10 ratifying countries were from Southeast Asia. While Timor-Leste had initiated the ratification process by becoming a signatory to the Optional Protocol, they had failed to complete the ratification process till date.
- IWRAW Asia Pacific is a member of the International NGO Coalition for the Campaign on Ratification of the Optional Protocol to ICESCR. In light of the recent funding limitation faced by the Secretariat of the NGO Coalition, all Steering Committee members had been requested to contribute towards the global action plan of the Coalition. Therefore, as the only Steering Committee Member of the Coalition based in Southeast Asia and IWRAW Asia Pacific had undertaken the responsibility of incorporating discussions on the OP ICESCR and ratification of the same within its scheduled activities and interface with women's machineries, National Human Rights Commissions and civil society in Southeast Asia where best possible and appropriate.

In view of the above challenges and opportunities, a Dialogue with Government representatives and civil society was proposed as an attempt to re-initiate discussions on international human rights standards, the increasing opportunities of engaging with international standard setting processes and subsequently gaining greater guidance and co-operation in upholding rights of women within the region.

The immediate outputs of the Dialogue were:

1. List of Recommendations adopted by the full plenary at the Dialogue
2. Strategic Action Plans towards promotion of women's economic, social and cultural rights at the national and regional level.

3. Video celebrating the adoption of the OP ICESCR and highlighting the relevance of ICESCR and CEDAW towards enhancing justiciability of women's economic, social and cultural rights in Southeast Asia.

The Dialogue resulted in the following:

1. Finalisation of Recommendations by the full plenary at the Dialogue

Some of the most relevant recommendations were:

- a. Enhancement of knowledge regarding the treaties amongst key ministries and government officials to support larger and informed discussions on the possibilities of ratification of ICESCR, OP ICESCR and OP CEDAW at the national level. (Most government participants stated lack of knowledge on ICESCR and OP ICESCR and requested for follow up dedicated workshops and capacity building initiatives regarding the two treaties and the standards promoted by them. There was also a unanimous request for specific and in-depth capacity building workshops for government representatives on OP CEDAW)
 - b. Follow-up discussions to be conducted at the national level regarding clarity on proper ratification processes/ work procedures and identification of focal ministries/ agencies responsible for ratification (This was mainly in light of discussions from Thailand regarding misplacement of responsibility for ratification of ICESCR and OP ICESCR with the Attorney General's Office beyond the approved mandate of the AG's Office. Other countries shared similar challenges.)
 - c. CSOs to advocate for implementation of CEDAW and ICESCR as well as ratification of OP CEDAW and OP ICESCR by the member states in SEA through the ASEAN.
2. Immediate and medium term strategic action/ advocacy plans developed by NGO participants at the Side Event for NGOs.

Some of the main action plans related identified by the NGOs were as follows:

- a. Awareness raising initiatives on OP ICESCR to be pursued at the national level targeting Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Women, Ministry of External Affairs or such similar and relevant ministries and government agencies in each of the countries. These could include publication of IEC materials, workshops and dialogue etc.)
- b. Mobilise opinion amongst National Human Rights Commissions in favour of ratification of OP CEDAW, ICESCR and OP ICESCR.
- c. Mobilise networks and voices within ASEAN for voicing encouragement towards ratification of OP-ICESCR, especially through ASEAN interface, ASEAN People's Forum, activities of the Women's Caucus etc.
- d. As an immediate outcome of the Dialogue, Myanmar NGO participants reported having been approached by the Ministry of Women's Affairs of Myanmar for the first time for consultation on the drafting of the Periodic Report to the CEDAW Committee.

Outcome 6

Under this outcome we initiated an **external evaluation** throughout May 2013 to run into December 2013. The evaluator was identified and her scope of work is determining the impact of IWRAW Asia Pacific and its needs and ability to achieve its organisational goals especially in the next 3 year term. In addition IWRAW Asia Pacific has also initiated monitoring and evaluation plans for a training for staff and a tool or monitoring system for measuring the impact of future work.

In December 2013 we also convened a **strategic plan review** on 17-18 December 2013 to review a draft strategic plan and finalize strategic objectives for 2014-16. This plan was the outcome of a strategic planning process that began in August 2011, and this review would conclude the process. The first day of the meeting focused on

providing an overview of the strategic planning process as well as the organization's direction and philosophy. IRAW Asia Pacific seeks to link work on standard setting at the international level to local levels, where change is most meaningful, and to place women at the heart of this work. The draft strategic plan was formulated to operationalize this mission. Participants then looked at current issues facing the organization and its work in different parts of the world. Key challenges included rising inequality, conservatism, and vulgar nationalism, shrinking spaces, civil liberties, and labour protections, and the lack of political will by states to promote international human rights standards either domestically or at the international level. The post-2015 development agenda, Treaty Body Strengthening Process, and proposed Convention on Violence Against Women were some of the strategic spaces identified. The second day focused on partnership modalities and management structure. As an organization that seeks to build greater capacity at the local level for using CEDAW and international human rights instruments to realize and promote women's human rights, IRAW Asia Pacific is heavily invested in its partners and in creating partnerships that are mutual, impactful, and sustained. Recommendations were made to address challenges in terms of non-functioning advisory groups and poor board-staff relations as well as the need to better include partners in the organization's work. The organisation shared with partners an overview of the draft strategic plan and invited to share their feedback. Recommendations made would be consolidated and incorporated into the final strategic plan. Members of staff remained for two additional days to participate in a monitoring and evaluation training that looked at formulating focused outcomes, outputs, and indicators and drawing up an effective monitoring system to ensure that the organization meets its strategic objectives for the next three years.



IRAW Asia Pacific with advisory member, partners and resource persons

IMPACT OF OUR WORK

I Evidence of Impact: Change in Policy and practice changes at national level

- Through our observations based on continued monitoring of impact of CEDAW at national level and through reports made by our partners, positive changes to de jure and de facto environment for women's equality and non-discrimination through **law and policy reform** were made in 2013:
 - Our partner, **Saudi Arabian** women's coalition 'Saudi Women for Reform' in 2008 engaged with the CEDAW Committee on the need for a state response to domestic violence. After 5 years there is now progress on this issue. In 2013 the government of [Saudi Arabian passed a new law on domestic violence](#) in the home and work place as a punishable crime, and allows for shelters for victims. There are some constraints for women's free movement due to the system of requiring women to have a male escort in public which will make it difficult for women to report instances of abuse. It also establishes the system for reviewing [cases by creating a court of domestic violence](#). The passage of this law and the new court is effort of women's activism in Saudi Arabia who waged long campaigns in public to challenge the private nature of such crimes and the inviolable status of male head of households who are inevitably the main abusers or who permit such abuse to occur.
 - **France** [enacted a new law](#) which deals with violence against women and trafficking which imposed higher penalties for trafficking and other forms of 'slavery like' conditions, and also made criminally punishable certain practices of genital mutilation of girls and forced marriage. The CEDAW Committee had made [recommendations](#) to the French government in 2008 at the last review to improve the law on trafficking as a large number of women were being trafficked into and out of France as well as the issue of customary practices against girls. This was raised by our network partner European Women's Lobby in the 2008 review of France
 - **Ghana** imposes [higher penal sentences on rape charges](#) and greater protections for women victims, due to lack of change in number of cases of sexual violence against women and girls. In [2006 the CEDAW Committee](#) highlighted the need for a domestic violence law to be passed as it had been in the review process for a long time. Our partner in Ghana, WILDAF Ghana was a key NGO working on this line of advocacy at their domestic level.
 - In February 2013 the **Haitian** government [discussed new changes to several laws](#) after the CEDAW review which in 2009 highlighted [these same issues](#) as recommendations needing priority attention by the state. The government is now working on draft Penal Code Revision Law that, if approved by the Haitian Parliament later in 2014, would be a major advancement in legislation addressing gender-based violence and discrimination through three critical provisions: legalize abortion in limited circumstances, for example, where the health of the mother is in danger and in instances of rape and incest; modernize the definition of rape, including specific codification of marital rape as a crime; and protect Haiti's LGBT community by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
 - After the tragic death of a girl married to an adult male on the night of her "marriage" the Minister of Human Rights in **Yemen** pledged to [draft a law to ban this practice](#)
 - The Supreme Court of **Ghana** applied CEDAW (Articles 2 and 5) in support of its decision to apply the principle of equality in the sharing of property between a couple. [This Decision](#) is remarkable for wives who until now have to prove substantial contribution to acquisition of property to get a share in joint property. This was also raised by Ghanaian NGOs including our partners WILDAF.
 - **Nigeria** [passed the Violence Against Persons \(Prohibition\) Law Number 12 of 2012 in March 2013](#). This law enacts a comprehensive definition of rape, harsher sentences for rape and other sexual offences, compensation for rape victims, institutional protection from further abuse through restraining orders and a new fund to support the rehabilitation of victims of violence. This was raised by WLAC, WILDAF and Baobab in the 41st session of the CEDAW review.
 - **Cambodia** - The country's [genocide tribunal changes its own ruling to start investigating cases of sexual violence under its powers](#). The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) will now look at acts of sexual violence, namely forced marriage and rape, to be included in its case against three former Khmer Rouge officials who have been charged with crimes against humanity and genocide.
 - **Cambodia** - In July 2013, the first person charged under [new law on acid attacks \(2011\)](#) imprisoned and also fined for violence against women. The law is a hopeful starting point to realizing that this sort of behavior will not be accepted and perpetrators will be held accountable.
 - **Indonesia** - Aceh local government [removes stoning provision](#) and goes further to say that the practice of the Syariah court would be to use counseling and not caning and emphasise rehabilitation. CWGI coalition raised this issue in the 2012 review of Indonesia.
 - **Laos** - [New law on Laos Women's Union](#) (July 2013) could be a way in for women to play a bigger role in government, political process and in decision making on development and governance.
 - **Thailand** - [Moves towards a law](#) on transgender rights especially in relation to documents and also right to civil union for same sex couples.
 - **Indonesia** - [Landmark judgement in 2013](#) by the constitutional court recognizes the rights of indigenous people under the constitution in management and decision making over communal land and natural resources. Women are the most affected by this ruling as they are usually in charge of harvesting and planting at small scales in the rural areas.
 - **Philippines** - [new law on enforced disappearances](#) which forbids State agents from abducting people suspected of anti-Government activity, and provides for a maximum penalty of life imprisonment without amnesty for the practice of enforced disappearances which is also considered a continuing

crime. Also important that it allows for provisions on restitution, compensation and rehabilitation of victims and their family members and women who are often left without their partners are now able to seek reparations from the state.

- We supported **Philippines** NGOs (Engenderights) in the inquiry on reproductive rights . They held the inquiry in November 2012. In June 2013, the **Reproductive Health Bill was passed** and seemed to indicate a turnaround in relation to the inquiry but was later stopped by the Supreme Court so that oral arguments can be heard in August on its constitutionality. We are continuing to monitor this situation and the steps the Committee will take.

II Evidence of Impact: Change in Policy and practice changes at international and level



- **Strengthening women's human rights through engaging on current dialogues on women's human rights at global processes**

Global advocacy

- Through the Commission on the Status of Women Annual Conference (CSW) -we worked with Global fund for Women and other organisations such as Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development, on 4th and 6th of March 2013 to hold two substantive thematic discussions on violence against women . The "Expert Panel on critiquing on existing frameworks to hold our states accountable in its efforts to eliminate violence against women" (4 March 2013) and the discussion "Sustaining and Invigorating Multi-stakeholder Responses to Women's Human Rights – Strategic Interventions by Women's Human Rights Activists, 6th March 2013 enabled IRAW Asia Pacific to form caucuses for specific recommendations to the CSW process to address some key areas of concern in relation to violence against women. We also made statements on the trend which sees delays or lack of agreed outcome from the end of the official process. See Statement in annex Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 6th Asia Pacific Population Conference

For IRAW Asia Pacific CSW statements - <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/statements.htm>

- Through ICPD process at both formal and NGO process levels. - We worked with various groups on advocacy on women's sexual and reproductive rights at the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 6th Asia Pacific Population Conference to negotiate on the outcome statement. The 6th APPC brought together over 400 delegates from 42 member states from the Asia-Pacific region, as well as civil society and United Nations members, to assess achievements made since Cairo. It identified outstanding issues and new challenges with the aim of renewing political commitments to the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD POA) beyond 2014. The forum set the regional population and development agenda for the next decade, and will be the regional contribution to the global ICPD beyond 2014 review. This culminated in the [joint NGO statement](#) at the 6th Asia Pacific Population Conference. The NGO outcome statement was strong in emphasizing the need for rights based approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights moving away from the incentivized programming currently practiced in health policy. It also advocated for comprehensive multi-pronged approaches to the provision of "an essential package of integrated sexual and reproductive health services, information and care" as well as a higher standard of universal healthcare and to use the human rights based approach to analyzing results and outcomes of all policy and programming towards non-discrimination and substantive equality for women and girls.



IRAW Asia Pacific and NGOs at the Asia Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok, hosted by UNESCAP and UNFPA, September 2013.

- Through the **CEDAW process** we achieved several results at several levels:
 - Clear direction was given to State delegations that the CEDAW's framework of substantive equality and non-discrimination is required to be integrated in the existing legislative and policy framework implemented within the country context. Committee also made it clear to the state delegations that

CEDAW is one of the human rights standards that they need to adhere to achieve gender equality and protection of women's human rights, and the Convention gives a framework to implement rights under other human rights treaties and MDG commitments for diverse groups of women in realisation of their rights in civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Unavailability of resources or traditional values and custom cannot be argued as a ground for evading or delaying implementation of its obligations under the Convention.

- **Creating new standards through the General Recommendations** - we made a substantive statements on access to justice for women on the Day of Discussion in February 13 2013. We highlighted some key concerns relating to incorporation of CEDAW into domestic legal frameworks, and the way CEDAW can be used to ensure results in terms of women's social justice. See Statement in annex.
- **Bringing marginalised issues to the fore** - In 2013 we were able to provide targeted support for women's NGOs representing groups of women subjected to multiple forms of discrimination to advance their advocacy agendas in global human rights, especially those groups that have not been able to **access space for public dialogue, attention, or policy focus**. This programme also helped to facilitate participation of mainstream women's rights groups from developing countries to ensure coverage of a broad range of issues under all articles of the Convention and to facilitate **better strategic linkage, partnership and normative agreement between mainstream women's rights groups and marginalised, thematic and/or sectoral groups**. Recognising the difficulty faced by marginalised rights groups our programme provided platforms for sharing, exchange and joint strategizing. We enhanced strategic link of national rights advocacy and international standard setting and interpretation, especially in raising the voices of marginalised women and recognition of their rights especially those working on HIV AIDS, harm reduction, sex work, rural women, LGBT rights, minority populations and trafficked women. It helped the women activists see the relevance of their work, even though it focused on specific rights/violations such as domestic violence, to the larger lobbying and mobilisation for change which recognises a culture of adherence to women's human rights. This improved advocacy for the recognition and protection of rights of LGBT, HIVAIDS, ROMA for countries like United Kingdom, Macedonia and Hungary to the mainstream groups toward a common platform for advocacy and to ensure that an intersectional approach to women's discrimination will be addressed through the CEDAW review process. This happened for all countries as they shared training, mentoring and lobbying spaces, as well as developed joint strategies to leverage individual organizational strengths and networks. We were able to bring together diverse coalitions from Macedonia and Hungary working on rights of sex workers, sexual minorities, ethnic minorities in United Kingdom, and disabled women to the same training and to share the same public dialogue space and jointly interface with the CEDAW treaty body. We believe this approach to process oriented advocacy will be able to mobilise more support for gender equality in the local rights and civil discourse, as well as socialise concepts and norms of equality and non-discrimination more effectively. These are extremely relevant approaches for countries which are facing which is facing both internal and external pressures to reform and at the same time to preserve the status quo which is not supportive of equality. In these climates, women's rights will tend to be marginalised, and the CEDAW Review represents a useful spotlight on critical issues and specific grave violations that need to be recognised and addressed.
- **Providing greater reach to the CEDAW as a treaty body to impact country level and community level discussion on women's human rights** - Through a [webcasting](#) strategy we provided public access to the CEDAW review to enable more women to join the review online thus disseminating the impact of the review globally. The CEDAW review is broadcast online on the internet to allow CSOs who cannot attend the review in person to listen to the questioning and answers delivered by our governments on results and actions taken for gender equality. This method allows for greater sharing on NGO information as well as information and pledges given by the state to which NGOs can use to discuss further followups with the governments after the review.



Our support to the OHCHR and the Committee - webcasting the review online to reach women across the world.

Regional advocacy:

This strategy focused on increasing the demand for accountability of governments and regional bodies like ASEAN by women's organisations, including with regard to budget commitments and agreements on CEDAW and human rights instruments in general.

- With Women's Caucus we prepared three publications - a feminist guide on the Asean Economic Blueprint, a basic Asean reader and a paper on Corporate Social Accountability for the people-oriented

and socially responsible ASEAN Community. These will be available for public circulation soon. These and the statement on the Declaration on Eliminating Violence Against Women drive our strategy in seeking greater state accountability for women's human rights realization by ASEAN and the individual member states.

- Evidence of increase in recognition of accountability of national and regional system for women's human rights implementation.
- Our contribution to Southeast Asia states parties identifying and amending existing discriminatory laws and policies and to fully implement the CEDAW Convention include: - As part of SEA Women's Caucus on ASEAN, we are working with our partner APWLD on a paper to elaborate on our feminist framework and analysis of looking at globalization, fundamentalism, and militarization through the feminist lens and from the vantage point of women for access to control over resources, decent work and living wages, peace and justice, and voicing out their concerns. Inclusively, also looking at discriminations from multi level aspects like state obligations and substantive equality, and gendered impacts particularly to women, such as violence, discrimination, stereotyping, double burden and marginalization. This is to be finalized by end of year 2013.
- We also made several statements on the Asean Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women to highlight two major points. One, that it should be an instrument to guarantee implementation of CEDAW and CRC, and that it should be dealing separately with violence against women and violence against children¹.

III Evidence of impact: Sustained inclusive and participative practices/processes at UN and national level to support advocacy of women's groups

- **Importance of NGO input into international gender policy processes such as CEDAW** - Again we had the experience from the 54th and 55th Sessions that it is especially critical for the NGOs working on marginalised contexts to engage with the CEDAW reporting process. It is important that they bring in to the Committee nuanced knowledge and analysis on specific category of discrimination against women or against a group of women, but they are also aware of and can provide information to the Committee on overall/holistic realization of human rights by women. This is critical as the Committee from its experience of 30 years do acknowledge that NGOs and groups addressing a range of issues and contexts of women's human rights are not able to participate at the CEDAW review session, and at the same time, the Committee would like to have an independent analysis of the situation on ground for women in the context of CEDAW implementation.
- Continued to **include and facilitate country level NGOs in the CEDAW review process**. For the two 2013 sessions we supported 23 NGO submissions to CEDAW. Direct engagement by country level groups is critical as they are the key beneficiaries of the output of the review –states will receive the Concluding Observations of the Committee which has been enriched by NGO input and thus propose recommendations which have included perspectives and information from NGOs. NGOs at country level also have to experience the process and recognize the validity of the international scrutiny mechanism and international human rights standards which can enhance their domestic advocacy.

For the 54th CEDAW Session, we have facilitated the submission of 10 NGO reports, and provided inputs and review of 7 reports to ensure compliance with the NGO submission guidelines of the CEDAW Committee. As the Committee has imposed new guides on the length of submissions there is a need to ensure effective information, highlighting of priority issues and clear recommendations to the Committee for their consideration. The shadow reports are from:

- Angola – Shadow report from Fundação Open Society – Angola & Plataforma Mulher em Acção
- Cyprus - Coalition from Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, Cyprus Family Planning Association, Hands Across the Divide (HAD), Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), Socialist Women's Movement, Women of Europe - AIPFE Women's Movement Protoporia
- Hungary- 3 Reports from 1. National Council of Persons with Disability (FESZT), the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA), 2. Association of Sex Workers, and 3. Good Shepard
- Pakistan – 3 Reports from Shirkat gah, Aurat Foundation and Scheduled caste groups in Pakistan.
- Solomon Islands - Coalition led by National Council of Women and the Women's Rights Action Movement.
- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – 2 reports from National Council of Persons with Disability (FESZT), the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and Centar E Romengoro Tari I Diz Skopje /Roma Center Skopje

For the 55th Session, IRAW Asia Pacific facilitated the submission of NGO alternative/shadow reports from all the eight reporting States. Of these, IRAW Asia Pacific provided feedback and technical inputs to all the 13 shadow reports/alternative submissions submitted from coalitions of women's groups, to the Committee

- Afghanistan - report of Afghanistan Women's Network

- Bosnia and Herzegovina - reports from Sarajevo Open Centre, Rights for All, United Women, Lara, Medica, Future, Helsinki Citizens Assembly, Collective - Initiative for Experiential Learning of the Lotos Association, Women's Forum Bratunac, Women to Women, Foundation Cure.
 - Cape Verde – reports from Cape Verdean Federation of Persons with Disabilities Associations 'Committee of Women with Disabilities of Cape Verde (FECAD) Association for Self Promotion of Women in Development (MORABI) Cape Verdean Association of the Deaf (ACS) Cape Verde Special Conditions Persons Development and Training Association (ADEF) Association for the Promotion of the Family, Women and Children (PLURAL) Association of Families and Friends Children with Cerebral Paralysis (ACARINHAR), Cape Verdean Association of Lawyers Women (AMJ), Association of Persons with Visual Disabilities of Cape Verde (ADEVIC), Association for the Promotion of Mental Health (APONTE) and Handicap International (HI)
 - Cuba - Reports from Latin American and Caribbean Continental Students Organization (OCLAE), Center of Studies about Youth (CESJ) outlined education as a major concern of Cuban women as a key enabler of their revolution
 - Dominican Republic – reports from Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres (CLADEM-RD), Colectiva Mujer y Salud, Foro Feminista, Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral (COIN), Núcleo de Apoyo a la Mujer (NAM) and Alianza Solidaria para la Lucha contra el VIH y el SIDA (ASOLSIDA).
 - DR Congo – reports from Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, CCDEF Les Anges du Ciel, Coalition Of Non-Governmental Organizations For The Reporting And The Monitoring On The Situation Of Human Rights – Human Rights House(Corrsdh-Mdh) Thematic Group On Women's Rights And Sexual Violence(Tgwrsv)
 - Serbia – reports from Autonomous Women's Center, ASTRA Women in Black Labris and Voice of Difference, Roma Women's Network of Serbia covers issues related to rights of the marginalised roma women, Out of Circle
 - United Kingdom- Reports from North Ireland Commission on Ethnic Minorities, Older Women's Network, Europe and the National Alliance of Women's Organisations covers issues related to aging women, Women's Support Centre
- Qualitatively, the **impact of NGO information** can be estimated from the way CEDAW Committee on numerous occasions used the information provided by the NGOs to frame their questions to the state. The information provided by the NGOs in the Shadow reports (available from [OHCHR website](#)) also allowed for more effective questioning by the CEDAW Committee during the state review as they provided much needed context to many of the activities carried out by the state. Here are some recent examples.
- Macedonia - NGOs called for greater implementation of the domestic violence legislation. Committee clearly address the need to raise the level of enforcement of the law and its implementation must show it is protecting women in the Concluding Observation to Macedoniaⁱⁱ.
 - Hungary - NGOs called for greater implementation of the laws protecting the rights of sex workers. The Committee clearly endorsed this approach in their recommendations in Para 22 and 23ⁱⁱⁱ strongly taking the position that where there is legal protection for this groups of women they cannot be discriminated against due to their category of work.
 - Pakistan - Status of CEDAW and the Constitution, how the functioning of the parallel legal system especially the Federal Syaria Court and the situation of talibanisation of society. The Committee addressed these questions to the state especially in relation to access to justice if the jurisdiction of the highest court in the land is not applicable in certain administrative territories in Para 15 and 16^{iv}.
 - Angola – Our NGO participants were concerned about the impact of traditional culture in limiting the public life and legal protections for women's rights. The Committee addressed similar recommendations to the state asking them to address various forms of violence against women that have been sanctioned by cultural practices^v
 - Afghanistan - One of the key issues raised by women's groups was the lack of implementation of legal protections against Violence which is tied to the security issue. Para 7 of Afghan Concluding Observations^{vi} clearly took on this issue and emphasized the need for critical action to curb violence against women by both state and non state actors.
 - Bosnia Herzegovina - BiH NGOs were critical of the lack of protections of women against trafficking, despite the existence of laws. Some problems were noted based on the jurisdictional question of the state and the continued criminalization of prostitutes despite the Trafficking Protocol (conflicting laws). CEDAW Committee addressed^{vii} these concerns with 23 Paras. in the BiH Concluding Observation focused on the need to harmonise the domestic laws on trafficking with the protocol and focus more attention on how women from marginalised groups are at greater risk as well as to focus on decriminalization of women involved in prostitution.
- **Regional mechanisms** – Contribute to building spaces for engagement for women's organisations and activists with the ASEAN mechanisms for advancement of women's human rights (AICHR and ACWC)

December 2013, resulting in CEDAW being disseminated to the legal community of over 400 people in Jordan and Lebanon.

- Established partnership with the Beirut Bar Association, for future workshops and trainings for lawyers. Strategies formulated by participants from Egypt propose joint implementation with IWRAW Asia Pacific and the University of Cairo, Faculty of Law.
- Established partnerships with NGOs focussing on advocacy through legal initiatives in Lebanon and Jordan.
- Draft model frameworks and formats for documentation of client interviews and implementation of law by judicial and law enforcement officers developed by participants in Jordan and Lebanon. The initiation of this strategy allows IWRAW Asia Pacific to develop partnerships with interested participants for use, and analysis of this data on a yearly basis. Such data would not only contribute towards better reporting to the CEDAW Committee on the status of women's access to justice, but also indicate the need for reform in law or judicial procedures grounded in strong base of evidence.
- Mobilisation of peers from within the legal fraternity at the national level by participants of the Regional Workshop as well as the demonstrated ability to conduct trainings on CEDAW for peers using knowledge gained at the Regional Workshop.
- Mobilisation of support through drafting and submission of a petition to the Government of Lebanon by lawyers for ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. The continuity of strategy on the Optional Protocol can be evidenced through the request for a follow-up workshop on the Optional Protocol from the participants forwarded by Avenir Liban to IWRAW Asia Pacific.

V Evidence of impact : Movement Building, partnerships and networking with current and new partners

This table captures some sense of our outreach and skill-building capacity.

	Category of engagement/specific programmes or projects	Activity	Beneficiaries
1.	National level CSO Engagements	Myanmar National training on application of CEDAW (A1a)	23 direct beneficiaries (2 men) More than 200 indirect beneficiaries based on the NGOs and their members and partner
		Macedonia Concluding Observations Workshop	18 activists (1 man)
		New Zealand Concluding Observations Training	26 women
2.	State /Institutions Engagements	Regional Consultation on Good Laws and CCF regional mid term evaluation	16 direct beneficiaries ;(8 from state)
		Regional Southeast asian Workshop on Application of Indicators for CEDAW Implementation, on Access to Justice	16 state and NGO delegates working on issues related to access to justice from Southeast Asia.
		CEDAW Dialogue with Judges on Trafficking	7 judges as direct beneficiaries

		Law in Lebanon	
3.	Cedaw compliance framework projects at national level (Cambodia, Vietnam, Timor Leste, Laos, Thailand)		30 women
4	CEDAW Shadow report trainings	Iraq, Kazakhstan, Qatar and Bahrain	70 activists (17+ 18+35)
	CEDAW Training of Trainers in MENA	MENA region activists	16 women activists from Bahrain Egypt Iraq Qatar, Lebanon, Mauritania and Morocco.
6.	Litigation Strategies	Technical assistance and training (case clinic) – Italy	Direct beneficiaries 16. Indirect beneficiaries not quantifiable – but based on statistics from the situational analysis of the study for an Inquiry under OPCEDAW, domestic violence is happening to 1 in 4 women ^{viii}
		MENA Regional Training for Lawyers on Application of CEDAW	9 lawyers
		CEDAW Training and seminar for Lawyers in Lebanon and Jordan	400 male and female, mostly lawyers
5	ASEAN Activities Jan – June 2013		53 direct beneficiaries of the two country level capacity building and a focus group discussion. 124 direct beneficiaries of dialogues with AICHR, ACWC and state in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam
6	From Global to Local Programme – 54 th and 55th-56th CEDAW review		47 direct beneficiaries for 54th and 55 th session from 20 organisations from 12 countries .
7	UN Women Fund for Gender Equality –Young Women Activists Project		Direct beneficiaries 80 young women trained so far.
8	International advocacy on women's rights - various CSW panels -ICPD advocacy		200 women and policy makers as direct beneficiaries 400 policy makers Indirect not quantifiable

	Total		Direct beneficiaries more than 2000 Indirect beneficiaries –non quantifiable.
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CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

On our general programme

1. Due to financial and time constraint some of our partners have difficulty in working with us on joint projects as they cannot comply with some financial policies put in place for transparency and accountability for the joint use of funds. We will have to consider how to overcome this in the long term but accept we may have to move on from such partners in the short term as we are also bound by organisational as well as donor financing policies.
2. As the geographical scope and the nature of support anticipated by its various national and regional partners which at this moment number more than 70, IWRAW Asia Pacific still needs to secure in advance funding for its plans for 2014-2015, for which the operational budget is approximately USD 1.5mil per year. We have not obtained full funds for 2014 activities but are continuing to pursue with several donors. A balance of funding types needs to be struck to make possible all the goals and projects envisioned at the pace and schedule and human resources required, for example project funds and core funding.
3. CEDAW Framework for gender equality - While we observed that CEDAW is recognized by both State and non state parties as a framework for institutionalizing gender equality and change in public policy and there needs to be further work to ensure that both constraining factors to the practical realisation of women's human rights are identified, monitored, addressed and eliminated and strengthening and enabling processes put in its place. CEDAW focus, especially as an enforcement mechanism is needed to prevent regression from gains and achievements thus far by the women's rights activists and advocates in terms of enactment of progressive laws in various spheres; expansion in jurisprudence, particularly progressive interpretations under religious laws; building social awareness and acceptance of issues relating to women's human rights; and gaining political commitments towards meeting state obligations under CEDAW and other international human rights standards relating to women's human rights. Ensuring incorporation and implementation of CEDAW principles through individual stages within processes of state restructuring, constitutional reforms, and conflict resolution and peace building is another key area of our ongoing work. This would largely include fair, adequate and effective participation and representation of women in each of the processes; reflection of CEDAW principles in new constitutions and laws adopted; adherence to CEDAW standards in establishment of new institutions and structures or reformation of existing ones. The role of NGOs continues to be questioned in the treaty body process, and in domestic accountability and monitoring – there are many SEA countries with NGO laws and laws which make it difficult for organisations to raise funds from external sources. The treaty body itself has been a great ally to NGO showing their willingness to engage in information provided. Strengthening the environment for women's human rights advocacy and considerations for security of those who undertake such work needs to be an important consideration of any international advocacy. There is need to support NGOs to perform CEDAW monitoring as a basis for their sustained and informed advocacy, and using the legal obligations of the treaty.
4. On the execution of partnerships on law and policy advocacy what we learnt was the importance of partner profile – e.g. some partners are working closely with government. So it is easier to influence government on policy advocacy. Government seeking inputs from them thus the future critical engagement can be quite positive.
5. Culture of accountability and risk felt by NGO partners in MENA and Asia – It was shared by some partners that there was concern over how much they can openly 'critique' the state in relation to compliance with international norms through this project. As we did not want to expose risk to partners who were concerned about state scrutiny we took opportunity to broaden the group to include professional groups like Bar Associations and law faculties who were not similarly constrained. These groups were willing to work on the project and with the NGOs adding their research and legal capacity to the project.
6. We obtained validation of the usefulness of the CEDAW Compliance Framework and its methods. The flexibility of the CCF project was also illustrated as a response to emerging situations - Reformulation of Labor Code is one among the two issues identified to work for the CCF project in TL. The idea was to do use CEDAW standards for revising the discriminatory policy provisions within the Labor Code that restricts full realization of women's rights. The government revised the policy and drafted a Labor Law in 2012 but the policy recommendations that NGOs were proposing have not been considered and incorporated in the law.

Now the challenge ahead is to monitor for minimum of 2 years for its implementation to suggest reform in it. This enables the NGOs (in this case Alola and Rede Feto) some feasible interim solution to carry forward the rest of the project activities. Our partner in Vietnam Gencomnet explained that the CCF improved their activities monitoring Vietnam's implementation of CEDAW and supported information for their independent shadow reports on the status of women in Vietnam to supplement and improve their efforts at advocacy and monitoring of women's human rights in Vietnam. They pointed out that while Vietnam has made efforts to improve their laws on gender equality, the implementation of these new laws and policies has not advanced. Long term gains that the groups identified included: CCF leads to collective efforts in the immediate term, thus adds to strength in numbers/solidarity around issues that may not have been part of the main awareness (i.e. prior lack of knowledge of women in agriculture issues); media use makes the issue become a national issue and on national agenda rather than merely a women's NGO issue and capacity building (increase conceptual skills of government implementers of laws to make law enforcement agency/agenda more effective)

7. NGOs have shared that they see continued need to draw accountability using international norms because it gives them a measure of common understanding about what certain concepts mean across the world, and thus have a good entrypoint to discuss further action with the state. They also find that the review output which is the Concluding Observations directly addresses their issues and provide specific recommendations through which they can claim rights and push for action.
8. Strengthened response on marginalize issues - Recognising the difficulty faced by marginalised rights groups our programme provided platforms for sharing, exchange and joint strategizing. We enhanced strategic link of national rights advocacy and international standard setting and interpretation, especially in raising the voices of marginalised women and recognition of their rights especially those working on HIV AIDS, harm reduction, sex work, rural women, LGBT rights, minority populations and trafficked women.
9. This time for sex worker rights, trafficking, and context of working on gender equality in post conflict there was significant change in recognition by women's groups of how to utilise the CEDAW session practically as a way to strengthen accountability mechanisms for gender equality locally, and not to see the process of advocacy with CEDAW as event based and related to physically being at an international venue. It helped the women activists see the relevance of their work, even though it focused on specific rights/violations such as domestic violence, to the larger lobbying and mobilisation for change which recognises a culture of adherence to women's human rights.
10. This improved advocacy for the recognition and protection of rights of LGBT, HIVAIDS, ROMA for countries like Serbia Macedonia Hungary to the mainstream groups toward a common platform for advocacy and to ensure that an intersectional approach to women's discrimination will be addressed through the CEDAW review process. This happened for all countries as they shared training, mentoring and lobbying spaces, as well as developed joint strategies to leverage individual organizational strengths and networks.
11. The changing political landscape of the post-Soviet, Macedonia and Hungary greatly affects the work with national groups to address the current dangers and threats (e.g. law reform based on extremely retrogressive interpretations, lack of recognition of gender equality at the highest levels of the legal system and political process, translating into eroding political power and representation. There is need to address the impact of culture and religion in the promotion and protection of the rights of women for the Eastern European region. Related to this is the need to address the political strategies employed by women's human rights groups who use the framework of rights and gender equality to expand current state protections.
12. **On ASEAN and SEA countries**
 - Myanmar is opening up to a lot of positive feedback from external sources. There is great opportunity to work with Myanmarese groups from our experience. There is a need to facilitate connect with exiled groups.
 - Actual action on the ground – To increase WC's impact on the lives of ASEAN Women, the Women's Caucus members must also be ready to share their respective expertise and other resources with ASEAN bodies in actual projects. This creates synergized engagement and continued relationship building with ASEAN bodies as well.

- Need of strengthened communication channel: Within the WC, strengthening of the communication channel is required, particularly for flow of information to be channeled to all WC members, and in synergizing the work of WC secretariat with all the WC member organizations. Additionally, it has been also realized by the WC focal points on the need of having synergy with national level related forums.
- Making the link that regional level advocacy functions only with national level struggles - Although the ASEAN is a regional body, the ultimate sites of decision-making and therefore struggle are still the national governments. Thus the tasks of building and strengthening the relationships with key people in AICHR, ACWC and ASEAN as a whole begin nationally. Advocacy and campaigns must equally target national audience and spaces.
- Real and progressive consultations – As the Women’s Caucus follows and even attempts to be one step ahead of the work of ASEAN, sometimes the pace of the work forces consultations to be too fast and too soon. These consultations are also heavily reliant on the internet and telephones, which however efficient still cannot match face to face conversations. Balance should be observed to ensure that behind every decision and content is the participation of communities but also to ensure that the mainstream majority which is not gender sensitive also recognizes the feminist agenda.
- Working on ASEAN agenda encompasses more than the rights bodies like AICHR and ACWC. Women’s Caucus needs to be very familiar and updated on the socio-economic ramifications of various bilateral and multilateral agreements to ensure that impact from AEC and other such documents on women’s realities will be more positive rather than negative.
- With Myanmar being the chair and host of the next Asean in 2014, there is a need to create networks with Myanmar NGOs to discuss CEDAW implementation as well as Asean’s role and obligation to ensure women’s human rights.
- To pursue advocacy for ratification of OP CEDAW, ICESCR and OP ICESCR with the ASEAN through the ACSC/ APF 2014.
- Explore need for National level consultations on OP CEDAW and OP ICESCR in specific countries where further and in-depth capacity building workshops have been requested through the list of recommendations.

13. On MENA region

Based on the implementation of strategies and evaluation from the participants, the following will be taken into consideration for future work in the region:

- Engagement with formal institutions of law such as the Bar Associations, Ministries of Justice and Universities/ Faculties for Legal Education for enhancing knowledge on women’s human rights under international human rights law and CEDAW in specific.
- Continued partnerships with law firms and NGOs providing legal aid to create a network of lawyers for future implementation of strategic activities/ initiatives
- Ability of lawyers to formulate and implement innovative tools and strategies to monitor legal environment for realisation of women’s human rights. Such strategies and tools include litigation, monitoring trends of implementation of laws through Court Watch, identifying gaps and lacunae in law through consistent documentation of and law reform.
- Creation of a pool of peer advocates and trainers within the legal fraternity to enhance a positive environment for implementation of legal strategies for protection of women’s human rights.
- Promoting women’s access to justice through use and implementation of CEDAW jurisprudence by lawyers at the national level, as well as expanding the scope of gender justice through the ratification and use of the Optional Protocol for CEDAW.
- To continue extending larger support towards changing mindset of lawyers as a pre-requisite to successful implementation of a litigation strategy and incorporation of CEDAW standards for women’s human rights in domestic jurisprudence.
- Emphasis on documentation and creation of evidence by lawyers to bridge the gap created by lack of official sex disaggregated data from government agencies depicting trends and patterns in impact of laws and policies upon women’s equal enjoyment of human rights. Such documentation could promote women’s lived realities and their reflection in legal standards through well researched and evidenced arguments for law reform through legislative action or litigation.
- Encouraging an environment of periodic and independent monitoring of relevant actors who contribute to progresses as well as regression in implementation and interpretation of the law for protection of women’s

human rights. Such an environment would promote greater accountability and address impunity for violations of human rights.

- To actively seek and build partnerships with official institutions such as bar associations and institutions for legal education for ensuring widespread and effective outreach in impacting conservative mindsets.
- To consider the need to support multi-pronged and innovative strategies, for engaging and influencing the fraternity of lawyers and use of law.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Based on the learning points from the programme executed in the last three years IRAW Asia Pacific has developed a new three year strategic programme on CEDAW. The overarching goal or impact we seek is to eliminate discrimination against women, and realise women's human rights & social justice using CEDAW. IRAW Asia Pacific has identified several key areas for its organisational programme of work to directly engage and address these issues focused on key drivers of transformative social change i.e. engendering the legal framework for human rights, strengthening the capacity of state institutions to implement CEDAW and innovating and sharpening the analysis and advocacy of women's rights organisations.

Four key strategic areas were identified through the Strategic Planning process in 2011 and 2013.

- Build capacity of country level/national institutions for promotion and protection of women's human rights and to implement CEDAW Concluding Observations.
- Strengthen knowledge and skills of civil society actors and our partners to engage with private actors and corporate sector towards ensuring greater compliance with women's human rights
- Develop innovative methods, tools and resources for effective and sustained advocacy for social change and gender justice especially in critical and new contexts which challenge women's human rights.
- Promote gender equality and gender perspective in all global, and regional development policy processes and human rights standard setting processes.

Four main outcomes were identified for 2014-2016:

1. Strengthened application of CEDAW and WHR standards through a broader actor base at national levels
2. Enhanced access to an expanding knowledge base and advocacy strategies on critical and emerging issues in women's human rights amongst global actors
3. Global and regional policy and standard setting processes are supportive of women's human rights or use a gender equality approach
4. Increased private sector sensitivity towards benefits of gender equality approach

IRAW Asia Pacific continues to work with its country level partners and with regional and international NGOs in the pursuance of these strategies.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ See annex for statement

ⁱⁱ “Violence against women

22. While noting the amendments to the State party’s 2008 Family Law, which extend the definition of a victim of family violence, the Committee remains concerned that this law does not protect all victims of violence, that family violence remains criminalized as an aggravating circumstance only and that specific and comprehensive legislation covering all forms of violence against women, in particular domestic, sexual and psychological violence, is absent. Furthermore, while commending the adoption of the National Strategy for Prevention and Protection from Family Violence 2012–2015 and the National Coordination Body for the Prevention and Protection from Family Violence, the Committee underreported, in particular psychological, physical and sexual violence against women and girls; the limited use of protection orders; the limited number of State-run shelters and the lack of data on violence against women.

23. Recalling its general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Strengthen existing criminal and family law or adopt a comprehensive law addressing all forms of violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, and ensure that all women and girls who are victims of violence are protected by such legislation and have access to immediate means of redress and protection and further ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished;

(b) Raise public awareness, through the media and educational programmes and provide mandatory training for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers, health-service providers and social services and teaching staff in order to ensure that they are sensitized to all forms of violence against women and girls and can provide adequate gender-sensitive support to victims;

(c) Encourage women to report incidents of domestic and sexual violence by raising awareness about the criminal nature of such acts and provide adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence, including Roma women and women from other ethnic minorities;

(d) Increase the number and funding of shelters and guarantee national coverage, including for women from ethnic minorities and women from other disadvantaged groups affected by violence;

(e) Enhance the system of data collection to ensure that data are disaggregated by type of violence and by the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, support research in this field and ensure that information and collected data are available to the public; and

(f) Expeditiously ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and introduce criminal sanctions for non-compliance with restraining orders.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

22. While noting the more comprehensive definition of trafficking in human beings in the Criminal Code and the adoption of a national mechanism for identification of victims, the Committee remains concerned about the insufficient number of shelters for women who are victims of trafficking and their limited access to justice and to adequate remedies, including compensation. The Committee observes with concern the information on stigmatization of the children victims of sexual exploitation. The Committee is also concerned about discrimination against women sex workers and the lack of State party’s action aimed at ensuring safe working conditions and exit programmes for those wishing to leave this activity.

23. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Consider including in its new strategy against trafficking in human beings for the period 2013–2016 measures to address the root causes of trafficking in women and girls;

(b) Increase the number of State-run temporary shelters for women victims of trafficking and enhance the responsiveness of territorial centres to their needs;

(c) Provide adequate assistance and protection to all women victims of trafficking in human beings, including by ensuring legal aid for victims and their reintegration into the society;

(d) Ensure that children in prostitution are not treated as offenders but as victims; and

(e) Adopt measures aimed at preventing discrimination against sex workers and ensure that legislation on their right to safe working conditions is guaranteed at national and local levels.

(f) Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005).

^{iv} Constitutional and legislative framework and access to justice

15. The Committee is concerned about the lack of full incorporation of the Convention into national legislation, including the absence of a prohibition of all forms of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention, and about the persistence of discriminatory provisions against women in a number of laws, such as the Qanoon-e-Shahadat Order 1984 (Law of Evidence), the Hudood Ordinances (1979) and the Citizenship Act (1951). It is concerned at the delay and the lack of a clear time frame for the adoption of a number of important bills, such as the Domestic Violence (Criminal Law amendment) Bill and the Prevention and Control of Women Trafficking Bill, as well as about the poor implementation of laws aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women. The Committee is also concerned that the jurisdiction of the highest courts in the Constitution does not apply to the whole territory of the State party, hence women could be deprived of their constitutional rights, as well as about the ambiguity caused by the recognition in the Constitution of the Federal Shariat Court. It is also concerned at the lack of

awareness by the judiciary of women's rights and relevant domestic legislation. It is further concerned at the existence of parallel justice systems (jirgas and panchayats), despite the ruling against their legality, and of different informal dispute resolution mechanisms (Musaliyat Anjuman), which discriminate against women.

16. The Committee calls upon the State party:

(a) To include in its Constitution and/or in other relevant legislation provisions prohibiting all forms of direct and indirect discrimination against women, including sanctions, in line with article 1 of the Convention (and in line with article 25 of the Constitution), and repeal all discriminatory laws, including the Hudood Ordinances, the Law of Evidence and the Citizenship Act (1951);

^v Stereotypes and harmful practices

17. The Committee expresses its deep concern at the persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions as well as patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. It notes that stereotypes contribute to the persistence of violence against women as well as harmful practices, including early marriage, polygamy, female genital mutilation, levirate, and acts of violence against women of the San Community and against children or old women considered to be witches. The Committee expresses its deep concern that the State party has not taken sufficient sustained and systematic action to eliminate stereotypes and negative cultural values and harmful practices.

18. Recalling that combating negative gender stereotypes is one of the most important requirements for social advancement, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Put in place, without delay, a comprehensive strategy, in conformity with articles 2(f) and 5(a) of the Convention, to eliminate stereotypes and harmful practices that discriminate against women, such as early marriage, polygamy, female genital mutilation, levirate, and acts of violence against women of the San Community and against children or old women considered to be witches. Such measures should include concerted efforts, within a clear timeframe, in collaboration with civil society, the school system, the media and traditional leaders, to educate and raise awareness about negative gender stereotypes, targeting women and girls as well as men and boys at all levels of society;

(b) Adopt legal provisions prohibiting polygamy, early marriages, female genital mutilation and levirate, and include adequate sanctions for violations of these provisions.

^{vi} Para 7 Concluding Observations for Afghanistan "7. The Committee is fully aware of the State party's important efforts to enact and implement, during the last decade, a legal framework protecting and promoting women's rights. However, it considers that the climate of persisting and extreme violence, in particular against women, the on-going political process and the security forces transition, places the State party in a challenging position. The Committee considers that the implementation of the Convention is the most effective safeguard to ensure the full respect and enjoyment of women's rights. It urges the State party to consider the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations as requiring a high priority for national mobilization and international support. The committee calls upon the State party to promptly implement the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting process under the Convention by setting up a special coordination mechanism with all relevant state institutions at all levels, the Parliament (Wolsi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga), the judiciary and with the stakeholders, including international stakeholders currently supporting the State party's transitioning into its Transformation Decade. The Committee will support and closely monitor the implementation of the present concluding observations.

^{vii} "Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

23. While noting the new legislative framework at the State level, the Committee remains concerned about the low number of prosecutions, undue delays in proceedings and the leniency of sentences, despite the growing trend of internal and international trafficking in the State party. It is particularly concerned that the Criminal Codes of the Entities and of Brcko District have not been harmonised with the State Criminal Code and therefore do not allow adequate prosecutions at entity and district level with corresponding punishments and convictions of acts of trafficking, especially internal trafficking. Further, while noting the adoption of regulations protecting victims and witnesses and the development of a new Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Committee is concerned about the lack of effective victim identification procedures, especially regarding women and girls from Roma communities and internally displaced women who are increasingly affected, and that the provision of adequate services to victims of trafficking, such as shelters are mostly operated by non-governmental organizations which rely on external funding.

24. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Amend the Criminal Codes of both Entities and of Brcko District to harmonize them with the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to ensure that acts of trafficking are adequately prosecuted;

(b) Ensure the effective implementation of the new legislative framework and the timely prosecution and punishment of traffickers, as well as review its sentencing policy in trafficking cases;

(c) Provide mandatory and gender sensitive training for judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officers on applicable legal provisions, including regulations on the protection of witnesses of trafficking;

(d) Strengthen mechanisms aimed at early identification and referral of victims of trafficking, with a special focus on Roma and IDP women, as well as preventive measures such as raising awareness on the risks of trafficking for disadvantaged groups of women; and

(e) Ensure adequate funding for anti-trafficking activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations.

25. The Committee expresses concern at the fact that the State party remains a country of origin, destination and transit for trafficking in human beings, in particular women and girls for purposes of sexual exploitation. It is also concerned about prostitution being punishable as an administrative offence, the absence of research and data on the prevalence of exploitation of prostitution in the State party and the lack of policies and programmes to address this phenomenon.

26. The Committee calls on the State party to:

(a) Amend its legislation to ensure that women victims of prostitution are no longer punished by a fine, ensure the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those who exploit prostitution, and take measures to discourage the demand for prostitution;

(b) Pursue a comprehensive approach to addressing the exploitation of prostitution, including by developing strategies to support and provide rehabilitation for women who wish to leave prostitution, and provide, in its next periodic report, comprehensive information and data on the prevalence of exploitation of prostitution.

^{viii} <http://www.abuseisnoexcuse.co.za/domestic-violence/abuse-statistics>