



## IWRAP Asia Pacific Policy on Addressing Rights of Marginalised Groups of Women

My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit!

- Flavia Dzodan

As long as the root causes of structural inequality in the world are not addressed, women will continue to face new challenges when seeking to claim and realise their rights. As more complex and aggressive liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, globalisation and development policies are implemented, women facing exclusion and invisibility are left further behind. In recent years, we have confirmed that political instability, conflict, and natural disasters place marginalised groups of women in further precarious situations.

At this juncture, IWRAP Asia Pacific remains committed to the realisation of rights of all women and seeks to find more inclusive ways to make the human rights claims of marginalised groups of women visible and effective. We believe that the advancement of all women requires new ways of thinking about our work and shaping our programmes. In accordance with international human rights standards, the effective realisation of human rights should lead to transformation. Thus, it is essential to challenge and dismantle the systems of oppression that perpetuate structural inequality for groups of women that face exclusion, invisibility and a denial of rights in their day-to-day lives.

This analysis is grounded in IWRAP Asia Pacific's organisational foundational values of diversity and inclusion; equality and non-discrimination; respect; integrity; and feminism. It also aligns with the strategic plan pillar on *movement building*, a key outcome of which will be strengthened WRO connections and networks at the national, regional, and international levels to advocate for an inclusive, intersectional and political vision of CEDAW.

### **What are our criteria for identifying marginalised groups of women?**

A collective of women and/or girls that:

- is independent and also has leadership capacity within to carry on advocacy after engagement with IWRAP Asia Pacific;
- brings forward human rights claims that relate to non-discrimination, substantive equality or State accountability; and

- through making these claims has an impact on the lives of a distinct number of women that would otherwise be ignored.

### **Why a focus on marginalised groups of women?**

- The concept of marginalised groups of women
  - Women whose lived realities of discrimination and inequality are not yet reflected in the political demands and/or ideological frameworks of the 'majority' and require assistance framing claims in line with CEDAW and other relevant international human rights treaties
  - Women whose identities/communities are criminalised, marginalised and disenfranchised by the State and other actors in terms of recognition of their rights/access to resources, opportunities and justice/under-represented in policy and decision making
  - Within this definition, we recognise that marginalised women are not a homogenous group. That is why we have preferred to use the term 'marginalised groups of women'.
  - We agree to use the term 'marginalised groups of women' as opposed to the term 'women at the margins' to acknowledge the fact that the marginalisation of certain women is a consequence of explicit and implicit actions by those occupying spaces of power and privilege to exclude others. This enables us to take responsibility for our complicity in systems of oppression by which we too have contributed to the marginalisation of certain women.
- The content of the rights of marginalised groups of women
  - When IWRAW Asia Pacific starts working with a specific group of marginalised women, the first step should be to work with the partners to develop a brief report that follows the shadow report guidelines and provides a shared analysis and initial strategy that outline the problems based on the CEDAW framework. It does not have to be detailed.
  - The cycle of rights will be made explicit: inclusion, recognition, implementation, claiming, realisation.
  - The interconnectedness of rights will be highlighted.
  - Temporary special measures and special measures will be considered as possible solutions/recommendations.
  - The concept of remedies and reparations will be explored when considering laws and legal structures.
  - Structural inequality, multiple discrimination and the intersectional analysis should be made explicit, because this is an opportunity to finetune existing tools.
  - IWRAW Asia Pacific will assist to identify international standards that relate to the specific group of women.
  - The issues of young women and girls will be highlighted and, when possible, participation of young women will be supported.

- The context of the rights claims made by marginalised groups of women:
  - Criminalisation and the specific ways women are disenfranchised by economic and social policies will be considered.
  - Systems analysis (dominance frameworks: patriarchy, socio-economic status, casteism, racism, macroeconomic policy, ethno-nationalism, extremism etc.) incorporate an intersectional lens to identify ways these ideologies of inferiority and superiority create cultural, economic, political and social barriers that impair access to rights and resources and the realisation of *de facto* equality.
  - Considering the individual as well as collective dimensions of the human rights claims of marginalised groups of women.

### **Principles of IRAW Asia Pacific's Policy on Engagement with the Rights of Marginalised Groups of Women**

Based on the above common understanding of how to identify marginalised groups of women to work with and what it means to incorporate a consistent practice aligned with the principle of intersectionality, we will be guided by the following principles to ensure that the rights of marginalised women are addressed systematically across all of our areas of work:

- **Inclusion:** Ensure participation of marginalised groups of women across our programmes and ensure respect for diversity and valuing individual or group differences while recognising our common humanity and universal rights and freedoms.
- **Intersectionality:** Incorporate an analysis that explains how forms of oppressions inter-relate and often reflect multiple forms of discrimination.
- **Accessibility:** Be cognizant of and respond to the needs of groups of marginalised women to ensure their meaningful access and participation in our programmes.
- **Accountability:** Follow processes to document, monitor and evaluate the engagement of marginalised groups of women in our programmes.
- **Solidarity:** Build solidarity within and across issues, locations and movements.

### **What we are doing now to address rights of marginalised women:**

Among our current programmes, the portfolios on Women's ESC Rights, Business and Women's Human Rights, Gender-Based Violence Against Women, and Women's Rights and Access to Justice, have a wide focus that indirectly address the rights context of marginalised groups of women. Insofar as they address broader contextual factors that seek to create an enabling socio-economic, political and legal environment for the realisation of women's human rights, they also aid the creation of an environment for recognition

and protection of rights of marginalised groups of women.

Across these programmes, we have sought to address the rights of marginalised groups of women through:

- planning involvement of marginalised women in specific activities
- addressing rights of marginalised women substantively under different themes
- ensuring their lived experiences/realities inform our advocacy work
- supporting organisations working with marginalised women in an advisory capacity (i.e. involvement in the advisory committee of HAI) or through capacity building
- joining alliances and/or expressing solidarity with advocacy initiatives driven by marginalised groups of women
- Accommodating needs of marginalised women in logistical arrangements

Separately, we have other programmes such as the collaboration with Handicap International and the International Disability Alliance, and the work with sex workers and women who use drugs, that are designed to address the rights of marginalised groups of women specifically.

In the past, these efforts have included:

- the Young Women Making Change programme
- supporting LGBTIQ groups in CEDAW advocacy and in development and use of GR28 to recognise and eliminate SOGI discrimination under CEDAW
- supporting women peace and security groups and development of GR30 in addressing rights of women in conflict and post-conflict and accountability of states under CEDAW

**Issues for consideration:**

- Opportunities for taking forward our work with marginalised groups of women:
  - Continuing partnerships – sex workers’ rights groups, disability rights groups, LBT groups, women workers and women migrant workers groups, groups of women who use drugs
  - Building accountability into our existing structures
- Challenges in taking forward our work with marginalised groups of women:
  - Resourcing our work
  - Continuing engagement with diverse constituencies

**Next steps:**

- Continuing partnerships with marginalised groups of women
- Updating the shadow report guidelines so that they respond to a systems analysis based on the CEDAW framework
- Developing this into a political/position paper as an ideological basis for our work in this area