

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTION WATCH ASIA PACIFIC

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 2019

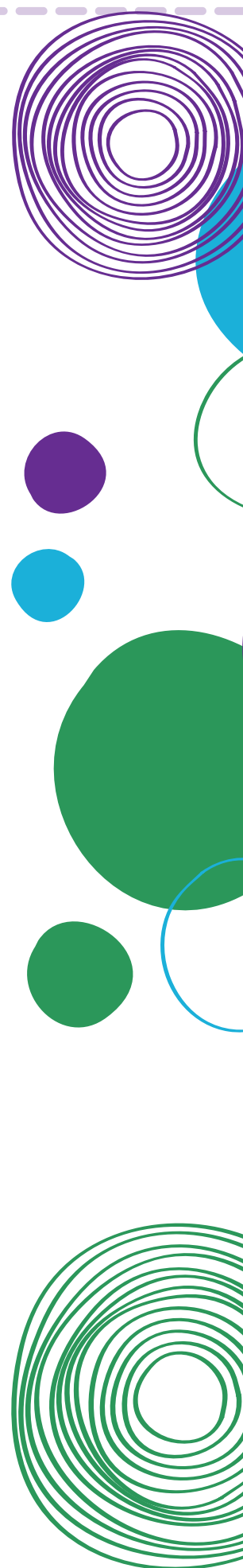


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ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CESCR	Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
GBVAW	Gender-based violence against women
HLPF	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HRC	Human Rights Council
IFI	International financial institution
LBTIQ	Lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OP CEDAW	CEDAW Optional Protocol
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UN	United Nations
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WRO	Women's rights organisation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

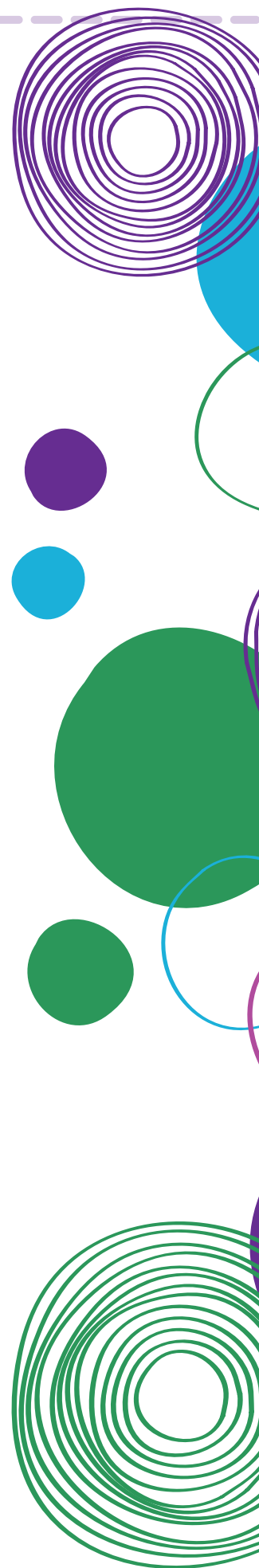
2019 marked 40 years of CEDAW. It was also the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action agreed at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development as well as the bridge year to the 2020 Beijing+25 global reviews. The milestones made the year an important stocktaking point, and IWRAW Asia Pacific developed our strategic plan cognizant of all these developments. In the final year of the three-year strategy spanning 2017-2019, we continued to foreground the core feminist values of inclusion, non-discrimination, and intersectionality in our work on gender equality and the rights of women. Excessive right-wing sentiments fomenting violent opposition towards gender parity have required that advocates for equality find innovative ways to galvanise actors into making progressive forward movement on important issues. The encroaching limitations imposed on democratic freedoms by autocratic institutions have encouraged the proliferation of racism, misogyny, transphobia, ableism, and other forms of structural violence. Diminishing avenues for organising put at risk the realisation of human rights obligations and threaten the ongoing safety and holistic well-being of groups of marginalised women.

Our activities this year were guided by four strategic pillars. Pillar one was engagement with contemporary issues, which saw us work to integrate CEDAW's framework for women's economic justice into the agendas for sustainable development and business and human rights, and develop strategies to address other contemporary issues. Pillar two focused on sustaining the women's human rights movement and activism, while pillar three sought to achieve the implementation/accountability of the CEDAW framework of equality through law, policy and institutions in order to create an enabling legal and institutional environment for women's access to justice. The fourth pillar involved engaging with international and regional standard-setting institutions to ensure the integration of and compliance with CEDAW and the equality framework.

We supported women's rights organisations in harmonising the Sustainable Development Agenda with the articles of CEDAW, with recommendations focusing on wage gaps, access to economic resources such as land, decision making in the workplace, security and social protection, and the economic empowerment of marginalised groups of women. IWRAW AP was present at the Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum (#RBHRForum) held in Bangkok in June 2019. This multi-stakeholder event under the Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) and Business and Human Rights agendas allowed for opportunities to network and to identify opportunities to learn how the CEDAW framework could be synergised with the RBC framework.

Our efforts to cultivate movement building at the country level have seen us engaging with issues on an intersectional basis. IWRAW AP's selection of participants in From Global to Local, its mentoring programme held in Geneva before each CEDAW review session, has increasingly focused on groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination. This is reflected in the concerns raised in the shadow reports submitted. IWRAW AP has also developed guidelines with sex workers and with women who use drugs on how they can use the CEDAW processes to demand accountability for their rights. In 2019, 45 activists were fully supported by IWRAW AP to participate in their country's review and another 45 self-funded to attend the programme. Around 25% of these activists were from marginalised groups and included indigenous women, LGBTIQ women, women from ethnic and religious minorities, women living with HIV, and women sex workers.

The From Global to Local programme sees the Geneva-based advocacy as a step towards ensuring CEDAW implementation at a national level. Participants in the programme are encouraged to organise around the Concluding Observations when they return to their countries. Through the STIC project (Strengthening Implementation of CEDAW) in South and Southeast Asia, with a focus



on economic, social and cultural rights, access to justice, and the Sustainable Development Goals, IWRAW AP was able to proactively support civil society organisations to advocate for CEDAW implementation in Bangladesh, Nepal, Vietnam and Timor Leste.

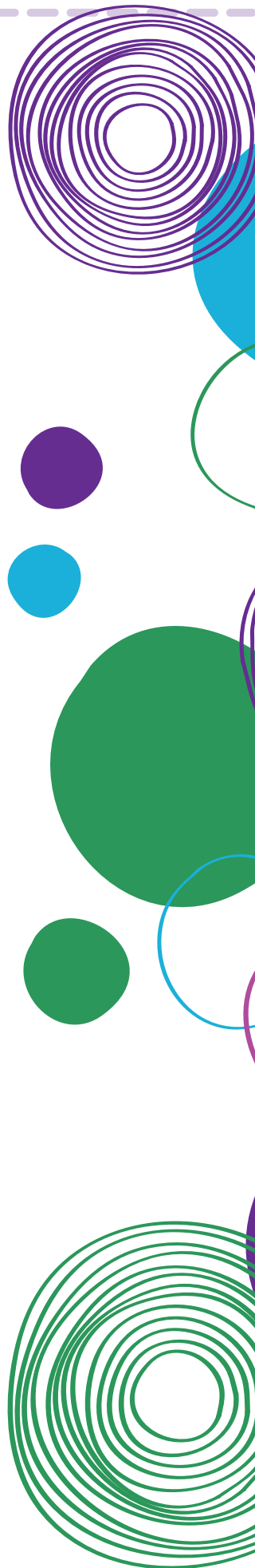
In 2019, major gatherings were held around three thematic areas. One was the Southeast Asia Global South Women's Forum, which focused on the world of work in the context of sustainable development. This was an opportunity to discuss feminist definitions and the demands of 'work'. This event also saw the testing of the SDG-CEDAW tool with 40 participants including women activists working with women workers, women with disabilities, informal sector workers, and sex workers from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. Another event was a convening on labour rights and access to justice which brought together 39 women from women's rights organisations and the labour rights movement from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Uganda, and Vietnam. Finally, the meetings on trafficking in women in the context of global migration organised in collaboration with GAATW, FEMNET, CREA and SWIFA included women from the women's rights, labour rights, migrant rights and sex workers' rights movements who gathered to inform the development of a draft CEDAW General Recommendation on trafficking and to develop a Manifesto on Feminist Approaches to Counter Trafficking (the FACT Manifesto).

In December 2019, we convened a meeting in Kuala Lumpur of 22 resource persons working in the areas of women's human rights and economic justice. The meeting served to unofficially launch one of our new programmatic areas - 'Transforming Economics and Development through a Feminist Approach', or TrEAD - under our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and lay the foundation for this year's theme for the Global South Women's Forum on Sustainable Development. The meeting, titled 'Organising towards a feminist macro-economic agenda', revealed the breadth of experience and expertise available within the women's rights movement, as well as the need for ongoing critical feminist analysis of priority economic areas and cross-movement building with groups working on labour rights, migrant rights, sex workers' rights, indigenous rights, land rights and environmental rights, and others struggling against

a political and economic world order based on neoliberal 'solutions' and dominated by corporate influence and patriarchal social values.

We remain cognizant of the challenges presented when laws and legal institutions are wielded as cudgels against human rights. The actions taken by women's rights organisations on the Concluding Observations from the CEDAW reviews lead to critical changes in national policies and laws. Capacity building of justice-sector actors, judges, and lawyers is a key component for advancing the discourse on gender equality in laws and policies and for driving the domestication of CEDAW. The STIC Project has been working with two partners, Forum for Women Law & Development in Nepal and Judicial System Monitoring Programme in Timor Leste, to use CEDAW as a framework to monitor the application of gender-based violence laws and their gaps.

In addition, the Judges for Gender Justice programme - the platform for knowledge sharing and peer advocacy among judicial actors - held its second convening in Colombo, Sri Lanka in March 2019. The event's theme was women's right to equality in the family, and it resulted in the Colombo Declaration. In mid-2019, IWRAW AP, with support from Women's Fund Asia, began a collaborative project in South Asia with Partners for Law in Development (PLD) India and the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) to review and take stock, from a feminist and human rights perspective, of the ways in which laws in the region have framed sexual violence and rights.



Presenting IWRAW Asia Pacific's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

In September 2018, at IWRAW Asia Pacific's staff retreat at Awanmulan in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, planning began for the five-year strategy commencing in 2020. We reflected on the work undertaken in the previous two to three years facilitating women's rights activists' participation in the CEDAW reviews, and through the activities of our various thematic portfolios. We identified the challenges faced by women, especially women experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, around the world. This learning and our analysis of the global context led us to agree that in the next strategic period we should focus on three overarching issues: demanding accountability, interrogating borders and resisting right-wing populism.

A writeshop in July 2019 cemented many ideas and plans that were then presented at our board meeting held soon after. Immediately after the board meeting, we took part in logframe training in order to better organise and clarify our intended direction. A final validation meeting was held in November 2019 in conjunction with representatives from selected partner organisations as well as our board and advisory committee.

IWRAW Asia Pacific's current five-year strategy builds on a strong foundation of advocacy for gender equality and women's human rights. We will continue to facilitate national women's rights organisations, particularly women facing intersectional discrimination, to claim their rights through the CEDAW framework for substantive equality and non-discrimination. As we move through challenging times, the work we do will contribute to building a movement of women's rights organisations that are able to inform and influence global processes on local priority issues.

CONTEXT

This report describes the work of IWRAW Asia Pacific (IWRAW AP) at the end of its three-year strategy 2017-2019. The work is grounded in IWRAW AP's core feminist values of diversity and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination and respect (intersectionality). In practical terms, IWRAW AP's theory of change indicates that the organisation will:

- strengthen the capacity of women's rights organisations to claim women's human rights;
- drive progressive interpretation of human rights, especially women's human rights;
- facilitate and convene civil society forums and create safe spaces for collaborative resistance;
- strategise to ensure state accountability for women's human rights;
- develop tools of analysis using a gender equality framework; and
- open up spaces of influence and mobilising key actors

while at the same time creating awareness of and compliance with CEDAW and other global human rights standards.

As was made clear in our previous two reports, the world has been changing rapidly since the strategy was developed in early 2016, but as we move into 2020 - a somewhat hectic year of anniversaries in which we celebrate not just Beijing +25, but also anniversaries relating to Security Council Resolution 1325, the SDGs, the CEDAW Committee's 40th year, and the UN's 75th anniversary - much of the contextual



landscape remains unchanged.

In 2019 we continued to work against a backdrop of global political crisis. We observed variations on the same struggles taking place around the world, with civil society organisations working to combat cycles of tacit and explicit threats as they encounter regression of human rights at both international and national levels and the consolidation of yet more illiberal democracies. More and more right-wing populist governments are being elected into office. Religious extremism persists, frequently backed by state power. The concept of ‘state sovereignty’ is being used to undermine international scrutiny of state violations of human rights and tighten national borders, while millions of people are displaced as a consequence of conflict, development and climate change. Transnational corporations are becoming stronger, pushing workers into precarious jobs and demanding tax cuts that reduce state revenues for social protection for the most vulnerable. The tentacles of the global neoliberal economy continue to constrain the economic rights of women, particularly in the Global South, and the infusion of corporate finance into support for development and human rights institutions is resulting in the adoption of a depoliticised gender equality and women’s rights agenda, and an instrumental approach to the inclusion of women. The diminishing commitments of national governments to fund the human rights mechanisms are being replaced by global instruments that are voluntary, and are neither rights-based nor rooted in international law. The United Nations treaty body system is itself under-resourced, underscoring the notion that human rights are optional.

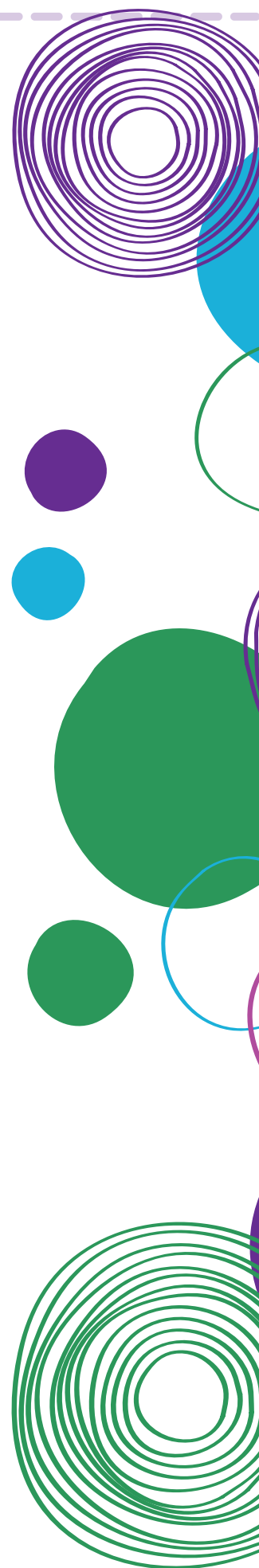
Left to right: Activists Samrawit Alemayehu (Ethiopia), Alexa Moore (UK), Thato Semele (Botswana), Maki Kimura (UK) and Kristina Ferarri (Serbia) at the 72nd CEDAW session in February 2019



However, we have also seen some positive changes. The focus on gender parity and wage equality, and greater political awareness of the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes and violence against women through the #MeToo movement, has galvanised the women's rights movement. There are increasing opportunities to interrogate structural discrimination that cause and create obstacles to eliminating gender bias and violence against women. We see one of our challenges as contributing to the framing of structural violence as a strategic issue of the women's movement based on what we have learned about the infrastructure for gender equality, the culture and substance of laws addressing violence, and the need to address women's economic rights as part of the enabling environment to protect women's right to equality and non-discrimination. Another critical element of the context is ensuring women's access to justice, and IWRAW AP has historically identified the capacity building of justice sector actors, judges and lawyers, as a key component for advancing the discourse on gender equality in laws and policies.

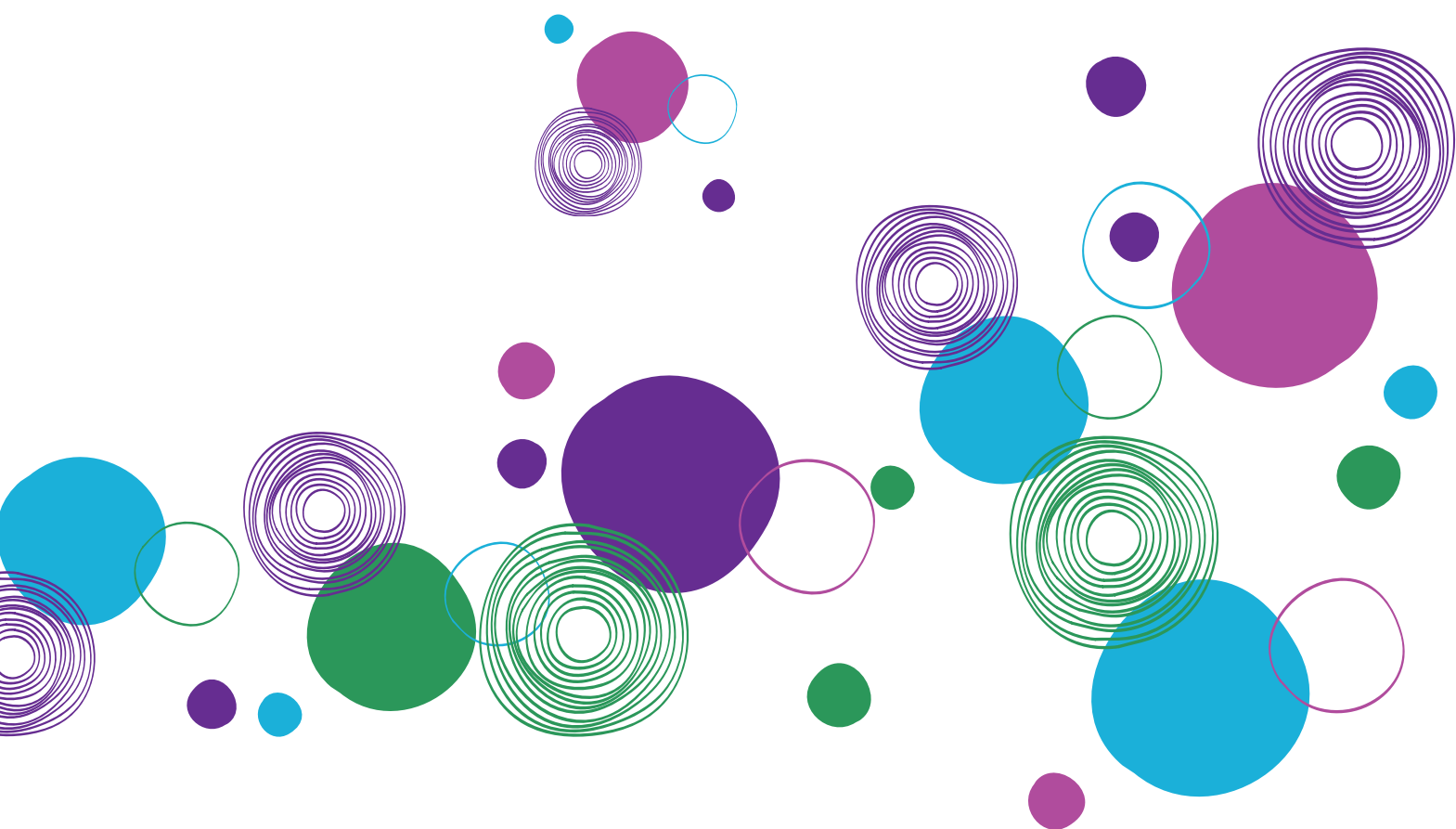
In terms of the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda is now in its fourth year of implementation and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process has seen an increasing number of countries reporting to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). The reviews have been critiqued for being less of a progress report and discussion on challenges and more of a 'show and tell', with most countries presenting implementation plans. The CEDAW Committee is revising its work procedures to connect implementation of the SDGs to the CEDAW review process in order to improve accountability and reporting on outcomes.

Existing inequalities are replicated through inadequate responses to the concerns mentioned above. Too often, gains ostensibly made for gender equality reflect carceral and capitalist approaches that lack intersectional analysis and prioritise those already occupying positions of (relative) privilege. We have seen examples of this in laws against



trafficking, sex work and surrogacy which predominantly target and punish those living in poverty; in a failure to envision greater forms of justice than the brutality of the prison system; and in companies' selective support for gender equality and progressive norms while profiting from exploitative labour practices. There is also evidence of pushback on what has already been achieved: the false narrative of 'gender ideology'; the manufactured panic over trans people's access to bathrooms; legislative attacks on abortion rights; the increasing demonisation of non-citizens.

In response to this rather bleak situation, IWRAW AP invested a great deal of energy in 2019 to develop an exciting new five-year strategy, building on our work over the last 25 years, and also looking at the challenges that we are likely to face in the future. The new strategy was shared with representatives of partners, approved by IWRAW AP's governance bodies and scheduled to come into effect from 2020. This report will describe the different activities of IWRAW AP during 2019, and how far, cumulatively over the three years, IWRAW AP has achieved the outcomes of the strategy 2017-2019.



THEORY OF CHANGE

Pillar 1: Emerging/ contemporary development and human rights issues

Outcome 1.1: The CEDAW equality framework and analysis is integrated into new and emerging spaces (SDGs and business spaces).

- The CEDAW review process is positioned as an accountability mechanism for gender equality in the SDGs
- The CEDAW review process addresses issues of women's economic rights and business human rights through Concluding Observations.

Outcome 1.2: CEDAW and CESCR take on emerging issues and integrate attention to women's human rights issues.

Outcome 1.3: Voices on women's human rights and CEDAW framework are amplified in traditional and non-traditional forums (such as UN Forum on Business and Human Rights).

Outcome 1.4: Use of knowledge products and tools by WROs.

Pillar 2: Strengthening women's human rights movements and activism

Outcome 2.1: Strengthened national-level activism on CEDAW and human rights frameworks (long-term).

Outcome 2.2: Strengthened WROs' connections and networks at the national, regional, and international levels to advocate for an inclusive, intersectional and political vision of CEDAW.

Outcome 2.3: Strengthened participation in CEDAW agendas and processes of WROs and women who face marginalisation and intersectional discriminations.

Pillar 3: Law and policy institutions

Outcome 3.1: CEDAW's equality framework is made applicable at a national level and integrated into national policies, laws and judgements (long-term).

Outcome 3.2: More justice sector actors analyse their cases using the CEDAW equality framework, protecting women's human rights.

Outcome 3.3: Greater use of OP CEDAW.

Pillar 4: International and regional advocacy

Outcome 4.1: Strengthened advocacy to influence global spaces and other human rights mechanisms (such as CSW, HRC, UPR, CRPD) to apply and integrate the CEDAW equality framework.

Outcome 4.2: Increased recognition of IWRAP AP as a stakeholder in business and human rights reform.

Outcome 4.3: Increased regional advocacy to strengthen the application of the Equality Framework in countries in different regions.

Creating compliance and awareness

A wide constituency of actors (WROs, legal sector actors, NHRIs, government officials, private sector organisations, regional and international bodies) used the range of knowledge products and tools to apply the Equality Framework to address contemporary issues relating to women's human rights, and are compliant with CEDAW

Opening spaces of Influence

- Created an alternative strategic space, the Global South Women's Forum, to amplify women's voices, build political power and influence the SDGs to address women's human rights
- Facilitated collective analyses and strategies for WROs to bring country-level issues and priorities into global and regional spaces
- Created spaces for marginalised women to have their voices infused into CEDAW advocacy and activism
- International, regional and national spaces influenced by WROs' advocacy in relation to CEDAW

Training and Capacity Building

Building capacity of NHRIs, justice sector actors, government bodies and civil society organisations to use the CEDAW equality framework in their work

Tools/Analysis

Developed a range of knowledge products and tools around the Equality Framework that enables WROs to address contemporary issues inimical to women's human rights

Generated knowledge and research on key legal and other issues regarding state accountability for women's human rights violations under CEDAW

PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES IN 2019

IWRAW Asia Pacific's theory of change (see page 13) is based on four strategic pillars with outcomes that are envisaged as a result of IWRAW Asia Pacific's own work, the efforts of our partners, and the constituencies of women's rights advocates that we have nurtured over two decades, as well as the institutions that we have influenced (and continue to influence) through our work.

IWRAW Asia Pacific's contribution to the different outcomes is through constituency building and supporting movements, and falls broadly into four categories: analysis and the development of tools; training and capacity building; opening spaces of influence; and creating compliance and awareness.

This section shows how in 2019 these efforts came together in national, regional and global contexts, and how cumulatively the work of IWRAW AP in the period 2017-2019 has contributed towards achieving the outcomes.

From Global to Local

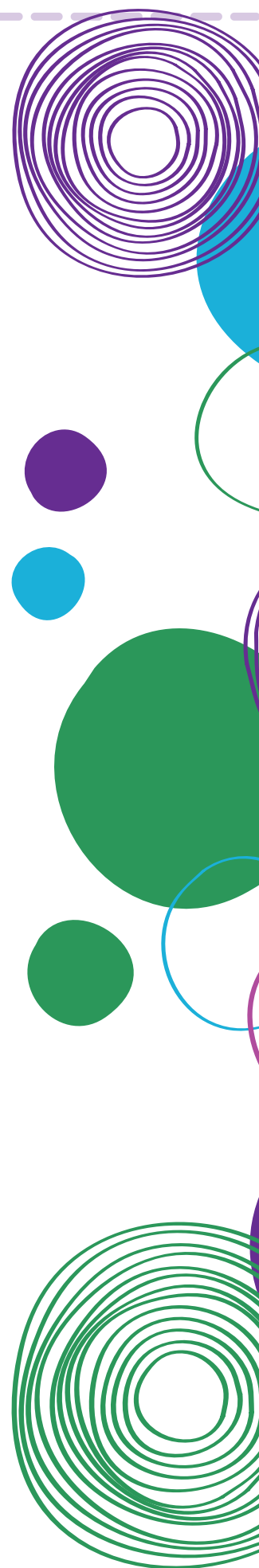
The From Global to Local programme provides support to national-level women's activism in different ways, creating a space for achieving global solidarity on overarching structural concerns. Activists participating in the programme in 2019 identified several issues that cut across their different national experiences and required further discussion and joint action by the global women's movement. These included:

- the political use of gender-neutral concepts to diminish and weaken the imperative to address gender discrimination, including discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation;
- the power and presence of right-wing ideology in shaping laws, policies and

narratives around women's rights and non-discrimination;

- the impact of macroeconomic policies and international trade and finance systems which challenge the ability and political will of states to protect and fulfill rights for women, e.g the privatisation of essential services that constrain women's access to health and education, weakening regulatory mechanisms and incentivising business conduct;
- lack of sustainable funding and architecture for gender equality - the rationalising of institutions has reduced the capacity and resources to implement CEDAW obligations within the state system;
- political and ideological resistance to incorporating non-discrimination and equality in legal frameworks;
- the challenge of decentralised governments implementing a state's international legal obligations like CEDAW;
- increased conservatism around the laws and concepts about women's bodies, and pushback against women's rights to sexual and reproductive health, especially around access to safe abortion; and
- specific legal and de facto discrimination relating to identity (e.g. for LGBTIQ persons) and the limited ability of the international systems to respond to the claims of rights based on identity.

The participants felt that the CEDAW review system connects and provides a timeline for reporting and accountability that can be used with the states to address priority issues. Where the Concluding Observations match women's demands and priorities, they become a weighty tool to frame their national advocacy. For some activists, facing conflict/post-conflict rule-of-law issues and weak democratic norms, the process allowed them to bring their issues to an international body as a last resort (e.g. Andorra, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Myanmar). In other countries, where the state is presenting itself as a responsible regional/international actor, the state's compliance with CEDAW has a domestic political relevance (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Iraq and Lithuania).



Advancing the Rights of Marginalised Groups of Women

IWRAW AP sees advocacy at the national space as the domain of national women's rights organisations to which IWRAW AP provides a supporting role in terms of capacity strengthening, information sharing and facilitating their ability to navigate the space and have their voices heard. We know that transformation must ultimately happen at the country level if women are to realise their human rights. However, national spaces are also structured along lines of ethnicity, class, caste, sexual orientation, disability, and citizenship, and women's organisations are not totally immune to the pressures of these structurations. At the same time, national-level activism, particularly for marginalised women, may be curbed by curtailment of democratic freedoms in many countries, as well as by the growing racism, misogyny and structural violence that is directed towards women, gender non-conforming people, sex workers, refugees and migrants, women with disabilities, indigenous people and other minorities. Many of them look to international platforms such as CEDAW to have their voices heard.

In 2019, activists from 22 countries presented 138 shadow reports to the CEDAW Committee. The country-level issues and priorities raised are shown below:

ISSUES	72ND SESSION	73RD SESSION	74TH SESSION
Environment and climate change	UK	Guyana, Mozambique	
Ethnic minorities, including Black, Roma and Traveller women	Colombia, Serbia, UK	Austria	Bosnia & Herzegovina
GBVAW	Colombia, Ethiopia, UK	Austria, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Mozambique	Andorra, Cambodia
'Gender ideology' discourse	Colombia, Serbia	Austria	Kazakhstan, Seychelles

ISSUES	72ND SESSION	73RD SESSION	74TH SESSION
Girls and adolescents	Ethiopia, UK	Côte d'Ivoire	
Gold mining	Ethiopia	DR Congo, Guyana	
Indigenous women	Colombia, Ethiopia	DR Congo, Guyana	
Intersex people	UK	Austria	
Labour rights			Cambodia, Lithuania
LBTQ rights	Angola, Botswana, Colombia, UK	Austria, Cabo Verde	Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Seychelles
Leprosy	Ethiopia		
Legal framework and institutions	Serbia	DR Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique	Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cambodia, Seychelles
Marriage and family relations			Iraq
Maternal health	UK		DR Congo
Older women	UK		
Prisoners	UK		
Refugees	Colombia, Myanmar, UK	Austria	
Rural and peasant women	Colombia, Ethiopia	DR Congo, Côte d'Ivoire	Bosnia & Herzegovina

ISSUES	72ND SESSION	73RD SESSION	74TH SESSION
Sex workers	Botswana, Serbia, UK	DR Congo, Mozambique	Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Seychelles
SRHR	Colombia, Myanmar		Andorra, Cambodia
Surrogacy			Cambodia, Lithuania
Tax justice	UK		
Trafficking	UK	Austria, Mozambique	Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cambodia, Kazakhstan
Welfare	UK	Austria	
Women, peace & security and sexual violence in conflict	Colombia, Myanmar, UK	Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo	Bosnia & Herzegovina, Iraq
Women with disabilities	Colombia, Serbia, UK		

Capacity strengthening

In accordance with our policy on marginalised women, we have made a special effort to respond to requests to strengthen the capacity of different marginalised groups in different geographies. During this year, based on requests for technical support, we carried out CEDAW training workshops for rural women in Papua New Guinea, sex workers in Myanmar, and young indigenous women who are part of the network of the Asian Indigenous Peoples' Pact (AIPP). Additionally, we continued our collaboration with the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) on a project aiming to create a resource pool of CEDAW experts and advocates from among APNSW's members in South and Southeast Asia. As part of this, we

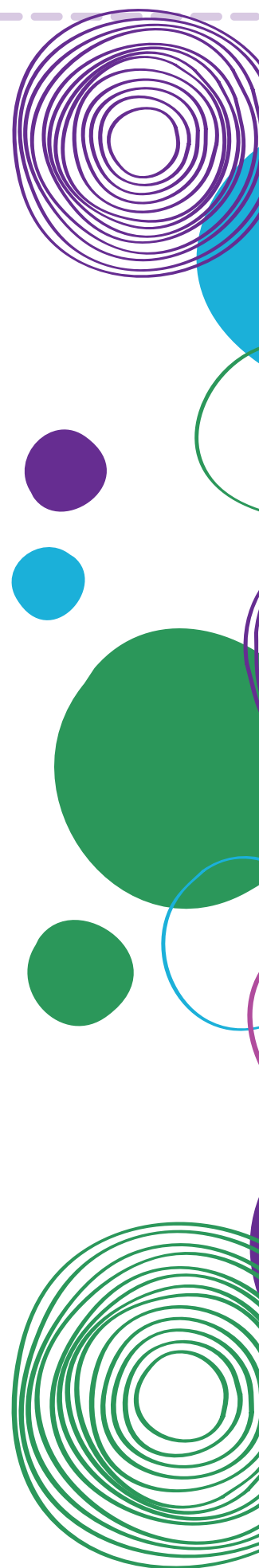
provided technical support at two shadow report training workshops - the first organised in Cambodia by Women's Network for Unity and the second organised in Indonesia by Organisasi Perubahan Sosial Indonesia, a CEDAW training for Myanmar AMA Association - as well as co-organising the second Regional CEDAW Activism Institute for APNSW network members from 10 countries in South and Southeast Asia in [Nepal](#).

Sex workers and garment workers from Cambodia made their first ever interventions at the 74th CEDAW session, sharing their testimonies with Committee members on issues facing their colleagues. Representatives of WNU Cambodia and WIC were supported by IWRAW AP to participate at the From Global to Local programme and to make their oral statements.

Programme officer Ishita Dutta also made inputs into a meeting on drug policy and feminism organised by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), and a regional training on drug policy, human rights and access to justice organised by the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) to support community-based organisations of women who use drugs to understand and engage with the CEDAW review process.

Global South Women's Forum and the CEDAW-SDGs Harmonising Tool

At the [Global South Women's Forum in Southeast Asia](#) held in Kuala Lumpur in April 2019, participants sought to use their lived experience to understand and analyse work in the context of changes in the global economy and how work is organised. They reframed the concepts of work, and also conceptualised women's right to work and women's rights at work. They experimented with the CEDAW-SDGs tool and proposed changes and modifications. The main modification proposed when applying the tool to issues relating to migrant and domestic workers' rights was to incorporate the frameworks of the



Beijing Platform for Action and the ILO.

The Forum comprised 40 activists from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam. They represented or were working closely with women workers in the formal and informal sectors, migrant workers, sex workers, workers in situations of conflict, women in unpaid care work, older women, and women with disabilities; and were engaged in advocacy for women's labour rights, women's economic, social and cultural rights, sex workers' rights, SOGIE rights, access to justice, corporate accountability for women's human rights, and eradicating gender-based violence.

The Forum was especially important in the context of the Southeast Asia region where, despite a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and reports to the HLPF, infrastructure and technology-driven national development and the influence of the private sector often override women's labour rights, the human rights of women workers in global value chains and domestic households, and the rights of women migrant workers. The convening provided the space for these women to develop a common understanding about work, the context within which it occurs and the key issues that affected women in the region. Together they worked on reframing the concepts related to 'work' from a feminist perspective, and discussed women's right to work and women's rights at work.

Collectively, the Global South Women's Forum participants agreed that their demands need to be based on:

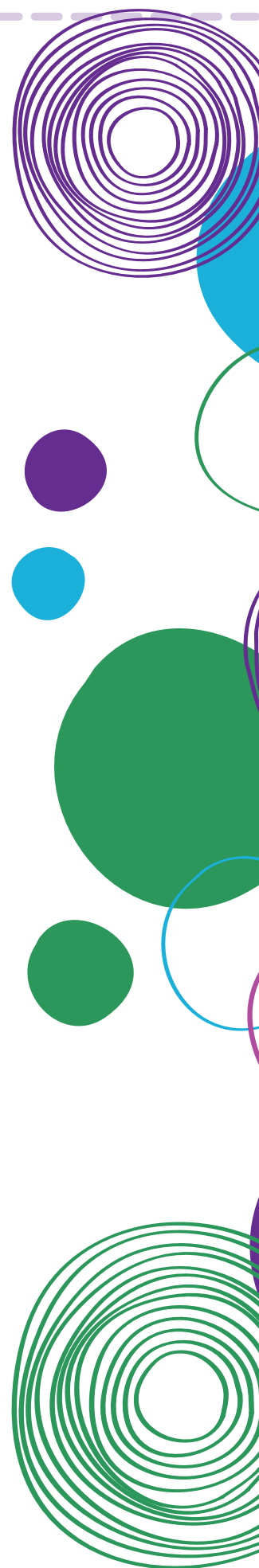
- inclusive equality for all women, particularly marginalised and excluded women, such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, rural women, sex workers, migrant women, lesbians, bisexual and transgender women, women living with HIV, women from religious minorities, women from the informal sector, refugee women, stateless women, and elderly women;
- challenging the heteronormative frameworks for protections and benefits in the fields of right to work, rights at work and economic rights;
- the right to dignity as a cross-cutting framework for work and justice;
- the reconceptualisation of the value of work from a feminist/human rights lens;
- access to justice beyond criminalisation; and

- recognition of all forms of work and workers, including the marginalised.

Based on these foundational principles, they made the following demands:

1. Recognise sex work as work and ensure that sex workers' human rights are upheld
2. Ensure freedom for workers to organise and unionise
3. Involve CSOs, NGOs, women's organisations, and workers' rights groups in the monitoring process of SDGs
4. Full implementation of the mechanisms and tools for gender work in each countries
5. Solidarity movements to strengthen work (across region, institutes, and countries)
6. Address sexual harassment in the workplace
7. Address the language and framework around the issue of pay gaps intersectionally
8. Protection of internet-based workers (digital and creative economy)
9. Sustainable wellbeing for all women and in particular for marginalised and excluded women
10. End pregnancy-related discrimination in employment
11. Movements (women, feminists, human rights, SOGIE etc) to urgently engage with and address financing and trade policy
12. Address the issue of overtime work

Later in the year IWRAW AP co-facilitated with RESURJ a training for the Asia Pacific Alliance for Reproductive Health and Rights (APA) and RESURJ members. This was another opportunity to test the application of the CEDAW-SDGs tool, this time on the subject of sexual and reproductive health and rights and with a constituency of SRHR advocates. It led to reflection on the political context of rising right-wing conservatism and extremisms that are leading to a clampdown on human rights, especially sexual and reproductive



rights, and an attempt to develop an understanding of the links between SRHR and the social, economic, environmental and ecological challenges of our time. It generated a pool of trained participants who are able to build an intersectional analysis and call for more coherence between the various processes and frameworks to which their states are party.

At IWRAW AP we had been thinking of expanding the tool to include the CEDAW General Recommendations, but these two learning activities showed us that the tool could encompass different human rights frameworks, depending on the issues at hand and the goals of the user. The challenge would be to see how this diversity can be incorporated.

Business and Human Rights Forums

Our work over the years has gained us recognition with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, with other women's rights groups active in the field, with regional bodies such as AICHR, and with international agencies. While the momentum for this work was somewhat subdued in the gap between Sanyu Awori's transition out of IWRAW AP to the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) (where she continues to be an ally) and the arrival of our new team member Constanza Pauchulo, who will take on the corporate accountability and macroeconomics portfolios, we were able to maintain some contact with the Working Group and with the work of the Feminists for a Binding Treaty. We were pleased to see in 2019 that the Working Group focused its report to the Human Rights Council on the [Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#), and also to welcome the Chair of the Working Group, Surya Deva, to our [Regional Convening on Women's Labour Rights and Access to Justice](#) in Bali, Indonesia in May 2019.

IWRAW Asia Pacific's work on business and human rights has also looked at the protection agenda, remedies and mechanisms for corrective approaches to changing behaviour and structures related to business impact on rights and peoples. In 2019 we were represented by Audrey Lee at the Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum (#RBHRForum) in Bangkok, a multistakeholder event addressing an array of priority issues under the Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) and business

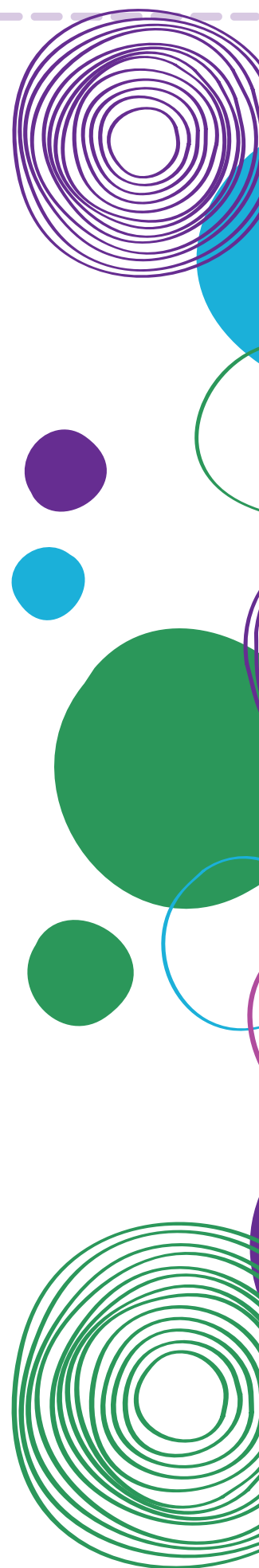
and human rights agendas. It was an opportunity to network and to identify opportunities to learn how the CEDAW Framework could be synergised with the RBC framework. Audrey was able to contribute ideas relating to:

- the sustainability and economic growth agenda – and how women’s rights can be implemented through an inequalities and inclusions approach
- labour flexibilisation and precarity – how RBC will address this issue of gendered impact
- structural causes of inequality in global value chains
- policy coherence on gender equality discussed in the RBC community – with particular focus on wage equality and sexual harassment.

Gender Equality and Macroeconomics (GEM)

Our work on influencing the international financial institutions gathered momentum in 2019 with impetus from a partnership with the [Bretton Woods Project](#) that will lead us to expand our constituency of women’s rights organisations engaging with issues relating to gender equality and macroeconomics. The Gender Equality and Macroeconomics (GEM) project kicked off with a meeting of 22 resource persons in December 2019 in Kuala Lumpur. The meeting, entitled Organising towards a feminist macroeconomic agenda, raised several ‘red flags’, or areas of concern, which included:

- Maximising finance for development - proposing that the private sector comes in to fill the gap in finances needed to achieve the SDGs, rather than states raising taxes to get more revenue for this
- Smart economics - by framing gender equality as ‘smart economics’, the IFIs are co-opting the gender equality narrative and the policy space from feminist activists and their communities
- Co-option also of the SRHR narrative by the IFIs, especially in Africa



- Institutionalising development instead of addressing structural failures and issues
 - many parallel processes are being created. Africa already has an African Development Bank that is controlled by non-African countries which provide over 80% of its funding. An African Monetary Fund is being created to help with policies
- Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) that privilege the private sector for the provision of public services
- The 'Women4Growth' narrative focuses on women as a bankable labour force, sidelining or obscuring questions regarding the working conditions or quality of jobs that are available to women, or the historical and continuing injustices endemic to the global economic system and its role in entrenching and perpetuating gender inequality
- Maintaining continued economic growth - the need to consider the finite ecological limits to models of perpetual growth
- 'Inclusion' means integrating women into an exploitative and discriminatory economic system
- Big Tech transnationals are bigger than states and functioning as if the digital economy has no boundaries.



Eleanor Dictaan-Bang-oa from the Tebtebba Foundation speaks about macroeconomics, extractive industries and indigenous women, at the GEM meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

Regional Convening on Women's Labour Rights and Access to Justice

A feminist analysis of the future of work underlined the discussions of the [Regional Convening on Women's Labour Rights and Access to Justice](#), organised by IWRAP AP in Bali in May and attended by 39 activists from our network of partners from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand, Timor Leste, Uganda and Vietnam. Against the backdrop of the precarity of women's work in the current global economy, the violence faced by women workers not only at the workplace but also on their way to and from work, the reduced protection for many women workers, the pervasiveness of exploitative business models and practices, and the failure of states to create and enforce conditions that will enable a decent working environment, the participants also discussed the growth of labour flexibilisation, which appears to give women more freedom (working from home, etc.), but hinders their access to the benefits and other entitlements that workers in more formal employment may have.

One of the outcomes of the meeting was the commitment of a group of participants to work on mapping the effective alternative mechanisms that exist for accessing justice for women's rights at work.



Irene Ekonga of FIDA Uganda discusses women in trade unions at the Bali convening on women's labour rights and access to justice.

Strategic Dialogue on Women's Human Rights and Climate Justice

There are many narratives which are not included in the global framing of the environmental and climate agendas. The geopolitical and structural origins of discrimination that women face in their lived realities are linked to a global economy that champions unlimited exploitation of the environment for economic growth. Women's unpaid work is taken for granted by social and economic plans that are driven by the global political economy. A feminist, human rights approach is crucial to ensure frameworks for climate change and environmental policies that recognise these linkages and the intersectional discriminations faced by women, especially indigenous women, rural women, women with disabilities, LGBTIQ women and others.

IWRAW AP recognises that despite its limited experience in this thematic area, it is deeply important to address these issues as consequences of environmental and climate injustice. As such, IWRAW AP hosted a strategic dialogue on climate justice, with women's human rights defenders and environmental and climate activists. We hoped that learning from the activists present would help us to strengthen our work by infusing an intersectional feminist analysis into the climate change and environment narratives. We expected to:

- revisit the different contexts in which women's lived realities, especially those of women facing intersectional discrimination, are impacted by climate change and environmental degradation;
- identify gaps in policies that are looking to combat climate change;
- identify alternative frameworks;
- identify the potential of recent developments in human rights frameworks to address the policy gaps above; and
- consider ways in which the Global South women's rights movement can work collectively on strategies to address the impact and causes of climate change and environmental degradation.

The dialogue took place in Bangkok in November 2019, with representatives from South, East and Southeast Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean, Africa and Europe; the majority being from the Global South. It resulted in very deep discussions around the global capitalist system's destruction of the environment, exacerbation of climate change, and simultaneous co-optation of the solutions. Participants pointed to

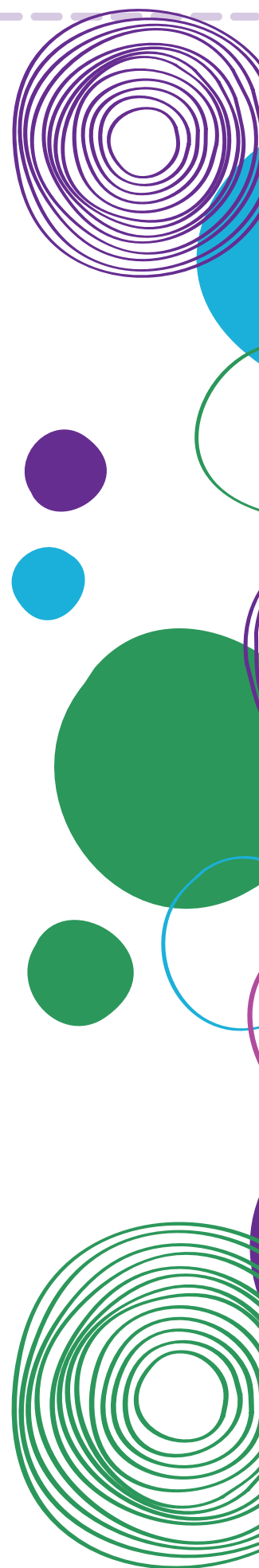
inequalities existing at a local level, as well as the inequalities between the Global North and South, as causes of environmental degradation and climate change. Women were always given short shrift and treated as victims, even though they were often at the forefront of dealing with the consequences of environmental devastation and major climate events. Participants called for a feminist grassroots movement to claim space and their narratives, and reclaim their knowledge, and to challenge some of the key neoliberal concepts and 'solutions' to the climate crisis. They critiqued the green economy and the blue economy as false solutions that continue with land and ocean grabbing, and expressed a desire to collaborate on developing alternative, locally grounded solutions to the problems they face.

From the outcomes of this dialogue, IWRAW hopes to support the advocacy of activists fighting environmental and climate injustice in human rights and feminist spaces, especially through the use of the CEDAW Convention and its recently published General Recommendation 37 on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.

Strengthening Implementation of CEDAW (StIC)

The StIC Project focused on women's economic, social and cultural rights, access to justice, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South and Southeast Asia, with CEDAW serving as the primary framework. The project was implemented from June 2017 through May 2019 with the support of Women's Fund Asia. The project had a regional scope with some focused activities at national level.

IWRAW Asia Pacific worked with Forum for Women, Law and Development (Nepal) and Judicial System Monitoring Programme in (Timor-Leste) to use CEDAW as a framework to monitor the application of gender-based violence laws as well as their gaps. The stories of change from these two partners reflected the outcomes of



their activism and the need to take a holistic approach to access to justice, one which is based not just on legal processes but also on the context within which legal action takes place.

Similarly, the activities in Bangladesh and Vietnam were implemented in partnership with Karmojibi Nari and CGFED respectively to address the inequalities and discrimination experienced by women migrant and garment workers. These two partners were able to leverage the crucial opportunity of international attention and accountability to substantially push forward their advocacy for workers's rights at national level.

Domestication of CEDAW is rarely the outcome of a single year's activity, but of concerted long-term advocacy by women's rights groups who have at some point benefited from IWRAW AP's support in terms of capacity building, training, knowledge products and tools, and participation in our activities.

Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED), Vietnam

CGFED was established in 1993 in Vietnam to pursue gender equality through research, communications and community development. It works to tackle rural poverty through citizens' empowerment and policy advocacy. CGFED's work also revolves around gender and climate change, gender awareness in media, campaigning for communities affected by mining, and empowerment of ethnic minorities including women and adolescents through sexual and reproductive health and rights. Action research, participatory learning and innovation and development are key approaches of CGFED.

CGFED has significant experience in organising young people, primarily in youth groups and networks that learn about and advocate for human rights in the context of a rapidly evolving and industrialising economy. The STIC project built upon this experience, particularly by drawing from CGFED's learnings from a three-year project with IWRAW AP, 'Women's Economic Leadership & Empowerment', that preceded it. The project initiatives under the STIC Project in Vietnam focused on organising youth to act for human rights and raising media awareness of women's economic rights and women migrant workers' rights.

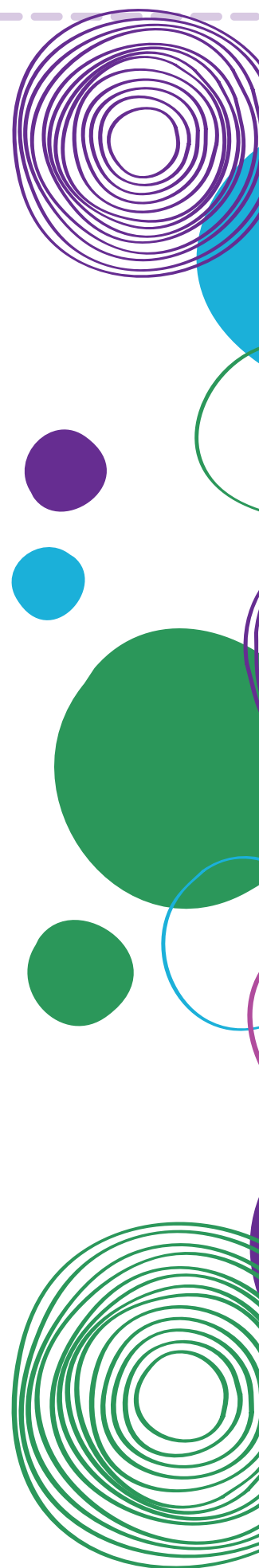
The most significant development as a result of this project in Vietnam was enhanced partner's ability to raise awareness and implement CEDAW recommendations. The duration of STIC Project coincided with two important international human rights processes – Vietnam's Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the SDGs in July 2018 and Vietnam's third-cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

These two processes were important in several ways and provided an opportunity to build a common understanding about CEDAW and other human rights standards such as the 2030 Agenda and ILO conventions. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs were confirmed as a priority development strategy by the Vietnamese government, who made strong claims to channel resources towards this and to promote the participation of all relevant stakeholders, civil society organisations, communities, and people along with state agencies. This made it even more pertinent that we continue to develop the understanding of human rights standards and international human rights mechanisms throughout Vietnam, through our youth groups and the media.

Karmojibi Nari (KN), Bangladesh

Karmojibi Nari started its journey on 1 May 1991, International Labour Day, and is still marching on the road of women's rights and equal dignity. Over the years, KN organised formal and informal sector workers, particularly women workers, strengthened their leadership capacity and advocated with concerned authorities to harmonise the existing regulations, amend and/or enact new ones and ensure effective implementation of the laws for the wellbeing of workers. Besides finding ways to fight various prevailing problems for women workers in factories at the local level, there was an emphasis on reforming or enacting related laws and regulations at the national level, which have a serious impact on women workers.

Under the STIC project, KN focused on exploring, through a women's rights lens, the challenges and labour rights violations faced by workers in the readymade garment (RMG) industry. They conducted



first-hand research to gain a clearer understanding of the working conditions within the readymade garment factories and how it specifically impacted the rights, safety and health of women, all backed up by clear data and women's lived realities. They also used the insights gained from the research to provide policy recommendations to the government and advocated for implementation of the recommendations provided by the CEDAW Committee in relation to garment workers in the Concluding Observations.

The most significant change as a result of this project is filling in the knowledge gaps on women's rights in the garment sector in Bangladesh, revealing important areas for advocacy for women's rights at work. Its groundbreaking nature meant the project activities received a lot of media exposure along with government representatives expressing commitments to take recommendations, which was a major achievement, as it widely publicised the effectiveness of this approach – linking grassroots activism to international frameworks. To the wider civil society of Bangladesh, this demonstrated the effective use of the CEDAW framework for advocacy.

IWRAW AP has historically identified the capacity building of justice sector actors, judges and lawyers as a key component for advancing the discourse on gender equality in laws and policies and driving the domestication of CEDAW. Several activities described below are activities of national legal activism and aimed at influencing the formulation of laws and their implementation.

Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) - Timor-Leste

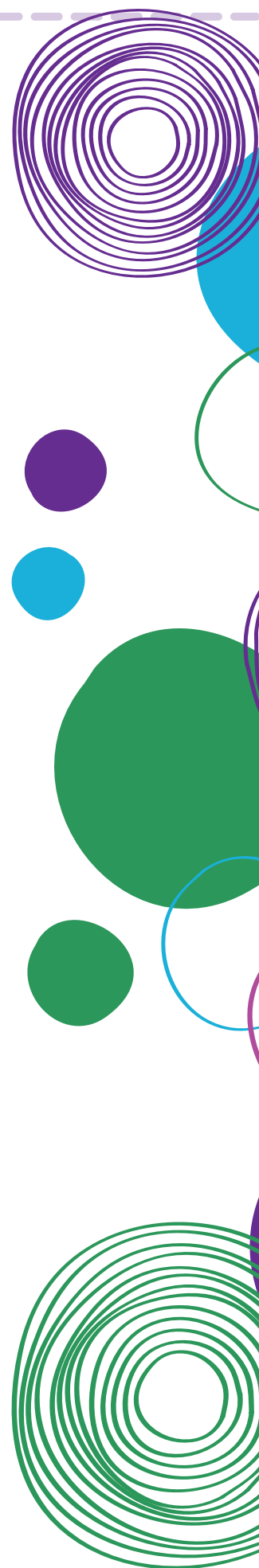
The Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) was established in 2001 to monitor the processes of the Ad Hoc Human Rights Tribunal in Jakarta, Indonesia, and the Special Panels for Serious Crimes in Timor-Leste. JSMP now exists as a Timorese-led organisation working to improve the judicial and legislative systems in Timor-Leste, through advocacy to promote legality, transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

JSMP monitored 4,997 cases from 2012 to 2018, of which 58% were on gender-based violence, and 49 were regarding incest. Timor-Leste's penal code has discriminatory limitations with regard to incest, where courts can only impose

punishments if the aggrieved is under 17 years old and there was no consent. There is no specific article on the crime of incest. Younger victims of incest are protected by articles concerning sexual abuse of a minor and aggravation on account of a familial relationship. Older victims are also protected by a combination of several articles, but only with proof that the activity was non-consensual. This places the burden of proving non-consent on the harmed party, who is likely already suffering from serious forms of trauma. The ability to consent is questionable, considering that victims are often minors and abused by a person with familial authority. Furthermore, the survivors face pressure from families and communities to not testify, which suggests that the number of cases could be highly underreported.

JSMP started its advocacy campaign urging the National Parliament to amend the Penal Code with an initial report published in 2012. The National Parliament recognised the need for an update, but no action was taken. In 2015, the CEDAW Committee also brought up the need for a clear definition of incest in the Timor-Leste Penal Code. JSMP continued to advocate for change, producing a report in 2018 that provided further insights into how the justice system had progressed in its handling of incest. JSMP's advocacy also included bringing together justice system actors and civil society organisations, and led the judges and prosecutors to accept its recommendations on creating a separate article for incest in the Timor-Leste Penal Code.

Under the STIC project, JSMP started providing training – the first of its kind in Timor-Leste – to medical professionals on their role in reporting and providing evidence in cases of sexual violence. Medical professionals are generally hesitant to be present during trials because they have a limited understanding of legal proceedings and are not aware of their obligations to provide expert testimonies and evidence. The training was carried out in two districts, but demonstrated a clear need for educating medical professionals about their legal obligations in cases of incest. The initiative has been strongly supported by the Ministry of Health and the medical



profession in Timor-Leste.

Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) - Nepal

Established in 1995, FWLD works to change discriminatory laws and challenge embedded systems of discrimination in society and culture. FWLD uses international human rights instruments and the cross-cutting effect of laws to promote the rights of marginalised groups using an intersectional lens.

The project was launched at the same time as CEDAW's sixth thematic review of Nepal. FWLD was at the forefront of mobilising civil society to write the shadow report to CEDAW and was pleased that the Committee's recommendations were in line with the concerns expressed in that report. Once the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations were released, FWLD decided to focus on General Recommendations 33 and 35, because they expand CEDAW jurisprudence in regard to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and access to justice.

FWLD took the opportunity of the STIC Project to organise four workshops with district and high court judges on CEDAW and the General Recommendations. Despite Nepal ratifying CEDAW in 1991, the use of CEDAW as a legal tool by the judiciary is still relatively low. The workshops aimed to enhance the understanding of justice sector actors on the gender perspective around access to justice and state obligation when making decisions on cases related to SGBV. FWLD also conducted a court-monitoring initiative to shed light on the kinds of SGBV cases that are being reported to the courts, how they are treated by the lawyers and judges, and ultimately, the implementation gaps of managing these cases in accordance with human rights principles and centring the needs of survivors of assault. The workshops and accompanying conversations with the judges and lawyers opened avenues for FWLD to continue working with them. The judges were very enthusiastic about using CEDAW in upcoming cases related to SGBV.

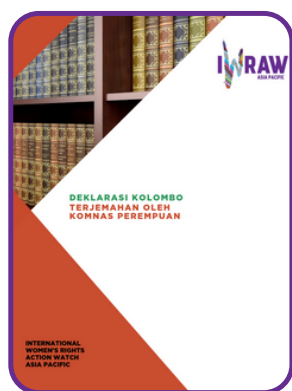
The project demonstrated the effectiveness of evidence-based advocacy. There was a great deal of interest in the results of FWLD's court-monitoring study, and the recommendations were taken seriously. Some important features of the study made it more acceptable and interesting to stakeholders. It was carried out with participation from all the stakeholders – government, civil society, lawyers and

judges. It was focused on court procedures and provided information on internal processes within the justice system – how survivors are treated and their cases are managed – and it supported advocacy not on the CEDAW Convention alone but specifically on the General Recommendations.

Judges for Gender Justice

Judges for Gender Justice is a knowledge-sharing and peer advocacy platform which was initially convened in December 2017. This resulted in the adoption of the [Bellagio Declaration](#) on state obligation and role of the judiciary in ensuring access to justice for gender-based violence, including sexual violence, in an effective, competent manner and with a gender perspective. This initiative is based on our growing understanding that gender equality jurisprudence is proliferating at the national level and that judges in their own jurisdictions and regions can themselves be strong change advocates among their peers.

The second convening, focusing regionally on South and Southeast Asia, took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka in March 2019. Organised in collaboration with the Law & Society Trust and the Asia Foundation Sri Lanka, with support also from the Women's Fund Asia, the regional judicial colloquium had a thematic focus on the issue of women's right to equality in the family, as this is a key concern for women's rights in both regions. The [Colombo Declaration on the Role of the Judiciary in Advancing Women's Right to Equality in Marriage and Family Relations](#) is an outcome of this meeting and builds on the resources available to judicial officers to bolster their use of progressive international human rights law standards to enhance protection of women's rights at the national level. It has also been translated into [Indonesian](#).



CEDAW Optional Protocol

In 2019, we provided inputs into an Individual Complaint filed under the CEDAW Optional Protocol in a case of gender- and ethnicity-based discrimination involving Turkmenistan. The submission drafting was led by Prof Andrew Byrnes, IWRAW AP Advisory Committee Member. We also submitted a request to the CEDAW Committee seeking to make a third-party intervention in the case of *Koneva v Russia*, along with the Miami School of Law Human Rights Clinic. The CEDAW Committee unfortunately did not approve this request.

United Nations Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls

IWRAW was invited in the Asia Pacific regional Expert Group Meeting (EGM), organised by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAG), in collaboration with the 'Women, Work and Leadership Research Network' at the University of Sydney. The consultation took place on 12-13 September 2019 in Sydney, Australia, at the University of Sydney Business School, as part of a process to inform the WGDAG thematic report on 'Women's Human Rights in the Changing World of Work', which will be submitted to the Human Rights Council in June 2020. Shanti Uprety made an intervention concerning the current context for women's rights to and at work in the Asia Pacific region.

Feminist Inquiries into Rights and Equality (FIRE)

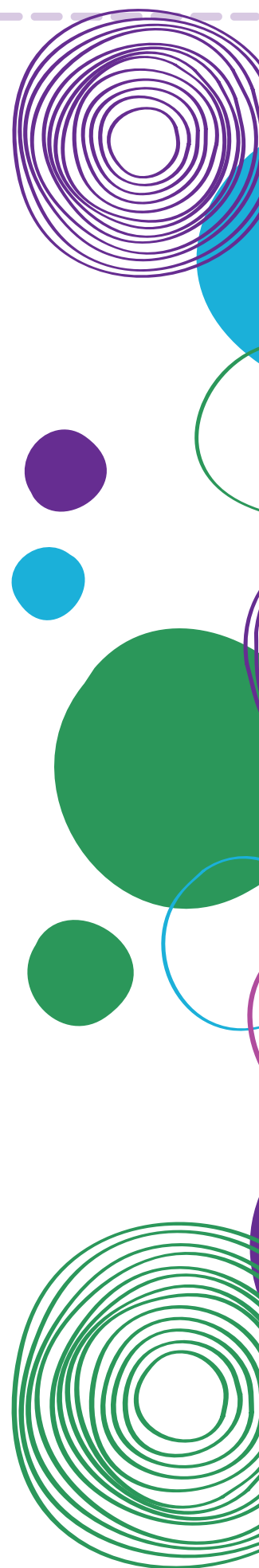
In mid-2019, IWRAW AP, with support from Women's Fund Asia, began a collaborative project in South Asia, with [Partners for Law in Development \(PLD\) India](#) and the [Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust \(BLAST\)](#), to review and take stock, from a feminist and human rights perspective, of the ways in which laws in the region have framed sexual violence and rights. The Feminist Inquiries into Rights and Equality (FIRE) project calls for identifying linkages between issues, acknowledging conflict of rights in the popular strategies and focusing on prevention and victim support. In doing so, it hopes to open new possibilities of policy advocacy and replication in South Asia. Other collaborators include [WOREC, Nepal](#) and [SSA, Sri Lanka](#). The project lead is PLD, and IWRAW AP also acts as fiscal support for the other three countries. The project focuses on three issue areas: policies and programmes for addressing child marriage, redress for sexual violence, and affirming gender identity. The region has seen significant yet piecemeal changes to jurisprudence, such as the overthrow of discriminatory laws regarding sexuality,

sexual autonomy and choice, upholding intrinsic aspects of privacy, life and equality that have evolved in relation to choice of partners, both within and outside of marriage (India); the landmark ruling pronouncing the degrading medico-legal examination of rape survivors ('two-finger test') as unconstitutional and unscientific (Bangladesh); and the passing of a wide-ranging act in Parliament according citizens the right to officially register on all documents their self-identification as male, female or a blend of both genders (Pakistan). The project works towards consolidating these changes to reintroduce preventive rather than punitive approaches to structural discrimination. It expects that the outcomes will give impetus to adoption and promotion of measures that address disadvantage, build agency and transform.

Feminist Approach to Counter Trafficking (FACT)

2019 saw IWRAP AP at the forefront of mobilising across the women's movement and the labour rights, migrant rights and sex workers' rights movements to advocate for a feminist approach to the issue of trafficking. Leveraging the opportunity of the development of a CEDAW General Recommendation on trafficking, IWRAP Asia Pacific sought to bring together diverse constituencies to build solidarity and work towards policy coherence in relation to trafficking. Simultaneously, IWRAP AP also sought to open up pathways to the CEDAW advocacy space for marginalised groups impacted by anti-trafficking laws, policies and practices. The overarching goal of the project was to contribute to countering the ongoing regression in women's human rights standards at the international, regional and national levels, taking place against a backdrop of shrinking civic spaces, particularly for those advocating for the rights of marginalised groups.

IWRAP Asia Pacific in collaboration with the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) organised two global convenings - one in Bangkok, Thailand and one in Nairobi, Kenya (the latter also being organised in collaboration with FEMNET), to analyse the root causes



of trafficking as a violation of human rights located at the intersections of gender, migration, development and labour; to discuss positive and negative examples of anti-trafficking laws and policies and their implementation; and to develop a feminist approach to counter trafficking. Even though it seems likely that the final General Recommendation may end up replicating policy measures concerning trafficking that have adverse human rights impacts on the rights of marginalised groups, the two meetings have mobilised a critical mass of organisations and people that will continue to advocate for a feminist approach to counter trafficking. The outcome of this mobilisation is a Manifesto on a Feminist Approach to Counter Trafficking (FACT), to which 30 organisations have already signed up. IWRAP AP will continue to expand the adoption of the Manifesto, and also work with organisations to advocate at a national level for the implementation of some of its intentions.



Sex workers' rights activist Phelister Abdallah in our video from Nairobi, [*Analysing the Structural and Systemic Causes of Trafficking*](#).

Networking and Alliance Building

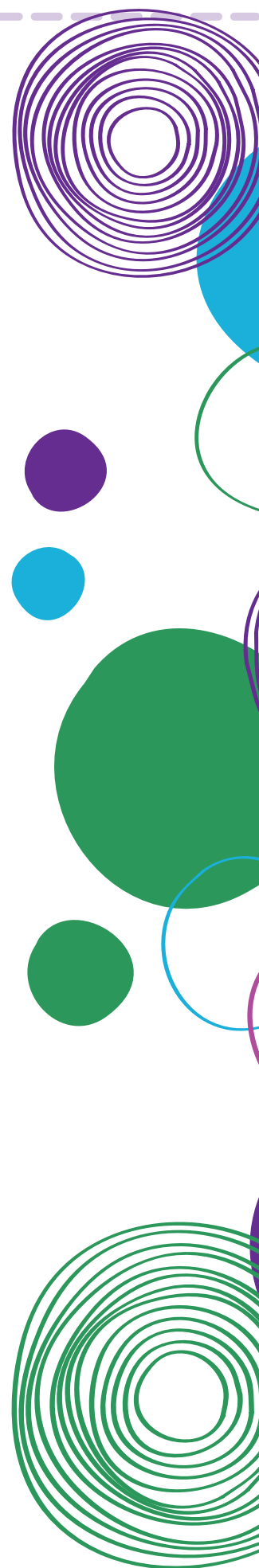
Movement building and activism also means joining hands with so many other people. We continue to participate actively in many networks: [APWAPS](#), [ESCR-Net](#), the Sex Worker Inclusive Feminist Alliance (SWIFA), the [Observatory on the Universality of Rights \(OURS\)](#), Feminists for a Binding Treaty, Women's Major Group, AP-RCEM, [Feminist Alliance for Rights](#), etc.

As members of ESCR-Net, IWRAP AP Programme Officers Shanti Upirety and Sachini Perera participated in two strategic meetings organised by the Women and ESCR (WESCR) Working Group and the Monitoring Working Group respectively. The WESCR Working Group's 'women and work' agenda has synergies with our own work on women and economic rights. IWRAP AP's Executive Director was elected to the ESCR-Net Board by members in the Asia Region.

IWRAP AP is now on the working group of the Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURS), a platform currently coordinated by AWID. We participated in a strategic planning meeting of OURS working group members, brainstorming and developing building blocks for a long-term strategic plan for the platform. We are currently contributing to processes being undertaken by the WG to create a formal structure and independent resourcing for the OURS platform.

IWRAP AP partnered with Women's Regional Network (WRN) to host a Summit on Forced Displacement and Gender in South Asia from 27 February to 1 March 2019 in Kuala Lumpur. The Summit brought together 55 diverse stakeholders from 15 countries, mainly from South Asia but some from Southeast Asia, Europe and the US, to discuss the situation of human rights violations of forcibly displaced women and girls and demand that stakeholders as well as the regional and international community take preventive and protective measures to address their urgent needs and rights. At the conclusion of the Summit, a South Asia [Call for Action](#) on Gender in Forcible Displacement was adopted. This call was released on World Refugee Day 2019.

Towards the end of the year we were also invited by the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) to a Climate Summit that they were organising in collaboration with other international NGOs. IWRAP AP was also among the ESCR-Net members who provided an advisory role to the Summit organisers. The Summit regrettably



offered limited opportunities for the voices of marginalised groups from the Global South to be heard, but for IWRAW AP it was an opportunity to connect with groups that are working on climate change and human rights. In 2019 the women's movement and the UN system started gearing up to commemorate several anniversaries in 2020. These include the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+25), the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325, the fifth year of the implementation of the SDGs and the 40th anniversary of the CEDAW Committee.

Beijing +25

In 2019, the United Nations began preparing for a number of significant anniversaries in 2020. Foremost among these for the women's movement was Beijing +25 celebrating 25 years since the adoption of the platform of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). IWRAW AP has been involved with the activities leading up to Beijing +25 in different ways. Quite early in 2019, we were asked to help UN Women integrate the CEDAW equality framework into the guidelines for NGO reporting to Beijing +25 where they were previously absent.

Later on, we were invited on to the CSO Forum Steering Committee for the Asia Pacific Review of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Asia Pacific Review, held in Bangkok, brought together 300-plus civil society and young women activists from 250 organisations and networks to review the 25 years of implementation of the BPfA. The Declaration of the Civil Society Forum was presented to the intergovernmental meeting and reflected much of IWRAW AP's position on marginalised women and on sex work. Our partner in the region, the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), made a successful application to mount a side exhibition at the intergovernmental meeting – but were faced with a pushback at the event, and required intervention from the CSO Steering Committee to enable them to continue with the exhibition. This was one of a couple of indications that there continues to be blowback against women's human rights, against which even the formal institutions established to protect those rights are unable to fight.

Also related to the Beijing +25 global organising was the Tunis Gender Equality Forum organised by the United Nations Development Programme and UN Women and funded by the governments of Tunisia and Sweden (both showing off their

gender-sensitive government policies). IWRAP AP attended the meeting alongside about 600 women and men. The agenda was organised around the themes of Beijing + 25, conflict, inter-generational learning, and technology and innovation. Much of it was very superficial and disappointing. There had been an attempt to bring in a significant number of young people, but it also showed that participation is not everything, if the groups with less power are not active in the agenda setting. The most valuable part of the meeting was the ability to work together with a group of activists to make a statement about the US pushback on SRHR on resolution 2467 of the Security Council, and the acquiescence of the other members, and to have that resolution endorsed by the larger group.



CEDAW CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS IN 2019

The CEDAW review system connects and provides a timeline for reporting and accountability that can be used with the states to address priority issues. The recommendations, or Concluding Observations, of the CEDAW Committee to the States Parties are key, and should be the basis for national-level policy and law reform leading to a more sustained social change for women to access and exercise their universal and equal human rights. However, States Parties often fall short of implementing the recommendations, due to lack of political will, capacity and/or resources.

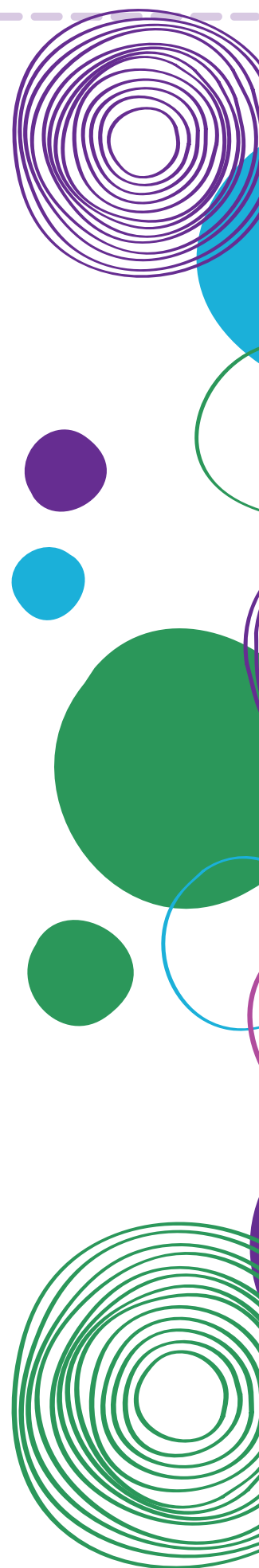
Where Concluding Observations match the demands and priorities of WROs, they become a weighty tool to frame their national advocacy. For some activists, facing conflict/post-conflict rule-of-law issues and weak democratic norms, the process allows them to bring their issues to an international body as a last resort (e.g. Andorra, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Myanmar). In other countries, where the state is presenting itself as a responsible regional/international actor, the state's compliance with CEDAW has a domestic political relevance (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Iraq, Lithuania). By participating in the CEDAW reviews, women's rights organisations provide the CEDAW Committee with grounded lived experience on which to base their constructive dialogues with states, and develop strong Concluding Observations. The actions that women's rights organisations take on the Concluding Observations from the CEDAW reviews lead to changes in national policies and laws, and are essential for CEDAW compliance by all States Parties.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2018, the CEDAW Committee's working group on the SDGs developed a comprehensive guideline for states to report on the SDGs in their periodic reviews. Following on from this, in several of the 2019 constructive dialogues with state parties, the Committee adopted a more detailed reference to states' commitments to the 2030 Agenda, holding them to account to relevant Sustainable Development Goals and indicators that matched the articles of the Convention. However, detailed questioning on accountability to these goals and targets, in line with CEDAW's articles, was uneven across the reviews: only 13 of the 21 countries reviewed had detailed Concluding Observations that referred to specific Sustainable Development Goals and targets. The other eight only received a general paragraph on accountability to the 2030 Agenda.

In the nine reviews where the Committee referred to specific Sustainable Development Goals and indicators, the most frequent was accountability to Goal 5 on gender equality, and the measures in place to achieve the targets of non-discrimination, violence against women, political participation and the exclusion of harmful practices. A few reviews also referred to Goal 5a - access to economic resources, particularly land. The Concluding Observations for states reviewed in 2019 also referred to Goal 4 and the targets on equal female and male enrolments in education; Goal 8.5 and accountability for ensuring full and productive employment and decent work; and the Goal 3 targets relating to universal access to SRHR services. A few reviews also highlighted the importance of disaggregated data collection and analysis.

IWRAW AP's engagement with the working group of the CEDAW Committee, our side event at the 71st session in 2018, and the report of the Palestinian women - Leaving No One Behind: The imperative of inclusive development in Palestine - which was produced using the IWRAW AP CEDAW-SDGs tool for both the review of the Palestinian State by the CEDAW Committee and the HLPF, all



contributed to the changes that we saw in 2019. But, as indicated by the unevenness in the interrogation of the SDG commitments, there is still considerable work to be done to harmonise the sustainable development and human rights frameworks.

Women's Economic Rights and Business & Human Rights

In the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW sessions in 2019, women's economic rights are addressed largely in terms of Article 11 of the convention, which calls for ending discrimination in the field of employment, and Article 14, which addresses issues affecting rural women. Recommendations in the Concluding Observations of 2019's CEDAW sessions addressed the following:

- women's participation in decision-making positions in the workplace
- ending the wage gap, and recommendations on implementing equal pay for work of equal value
- ending sexual harassment in the workplace
- adopting special measures, including temporary special measures, to facilitate access to employment for women from marginalised groups
- enabling the economic empowerment of marginalised groups
- increasing access to social security and social protection for women, including those in the informal sector and those whose work is not visible, e.g. domestic workers
- recognising and redistributing women's unpaid care work
- ensuring women's access to land and land ownership, increasing the security of their land tenure
- ensuring, before the approval of any acquisition of land or the implementation of resource exploitation projects on rural land, the prior, free and informed consent of all women living in areas affected
- consulting women and marginalised groups in the development and implementation of programmes relating to agriculture, the extractive industries, food security, climate change and disaster response and risk reduction

In a few instances, the Concluding Observations mentioned the importance of trade agreements, recognising the importance of a state's commitments under the Convention, and also called on states to ensure that companies (especially those in the extractive industries) comply with human rights standards.

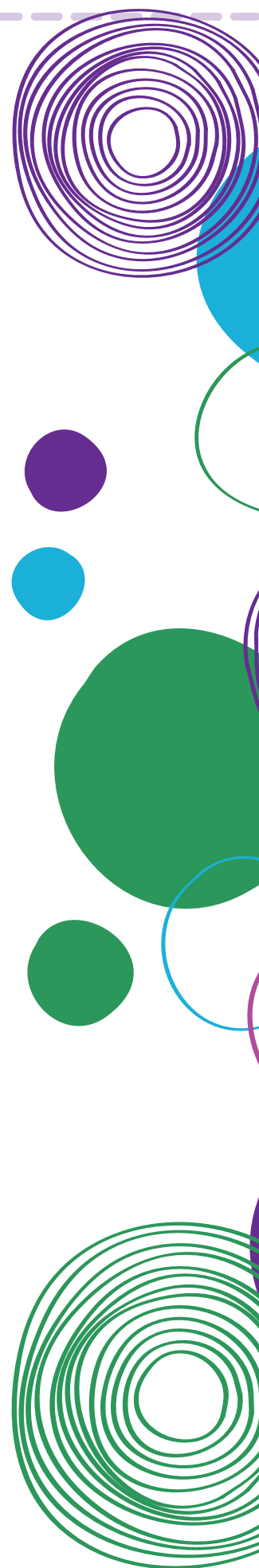
Priorities of Global South Women

Numerous issues that were raised by women's rights activists found their way into the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee in 2019.

For example, the Iraqi women's rights organisation called for the repeal of sections of the Penal Code that pertain to the defence of 'provocation' and 'honour' and refer to mitigation for felonies and misdemeanours that remain in force and contribute to the impunity of perpetrators. The CEDAW Committee took this up with the Iraqi government and recommended that they "[r]epeal articles 128, 130 and 131 of the Penal Code to ensure that perpetrators of crimes committed in the name of so-called honour cannot invoke the defence of honour as a mitigating circumstance for homicide" (Concluding Observations, para 20 (b)).

The Cambodian Workers Information Centre made its first report to the CEDAW Committee on issues relating to the rights of factory workers and challenged the use of contract labour and the subcontracting of workers to sweatshops that do not follow labour regulations. Cambodian women's rights activists from NGO CEDAW brought up the lack of legal protection for domestic workers in Cambodia. The CEDAW Committee took up both these issues. In its Concluding Observations para 37, the Committee recommended that the Cambodian state:

- (a) Take concrete measures to ensure that women who work on fixed duration contracts are able to enjoy their rights to freedom of association and assembly, including participation in trade unions to raise their legitimate concerns about working conditions without fear of having their contract terminated, as well as their right to basic employment benefits [...] and (b) Ensure that the rights of women in the informal employment sector are effectively protected, including by amending the Labour Law so that domestic workers enjoy the same labour protections as workers in other



sectors and by adopting the Law on Social Security Schemes to enable workers in the informal sector to access social security benefits.

Women's Rights Organisations' Reflections on their Participation in the 2019 CEDAW Sessions

- Caribe Afirmativo, Colombia: 'Intervención de Caribe Afirmativo ante la CEDAW organismo de la ONU en Ginebra', 19 February 2019
<https://caribeafirmativo.lgbt/intervencion-caribe-afirmativo-ante-la-cedaw-organismo-la-onu-ginebra/>
- Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Ethiopia: 'Ethiopia: Gaps in gender equality', 20 February 2019
<http://dawnnet.org/2019/02/ethiopia-gaps-in-gender-equality>
- AFRODES, Colombia: 'Mujeres de AFRODES participan en informe de discriminación', 24 February 2019 <http://www.afrodescolombia.org/afrodes-participa-la-seccion-numero-72-la-cedaw/>
- Proceso de Comunidades Negras, Colombia: 'Participación del Proceso de Comunidades Negras en la Sesión No. 72 de CEDAW', 8 March 2019
<https://renacientes.net/blog/2019/03/08/participacion-del-proceso-de-comunidades-negras-en-la-sesion-no-72-de-cedaw/>
- Sloboda Prava (Equal Rights), Serbia: 'CEDAW shadow report on the status of sex workers in Serbia', 15 March 2019 <https://swannet.org/cedaw-shadow-report-on-the-status-of-sex-workers-in-serbia/>
- Caribe Afirmativo, Colombia: 'Luego del examen periódico de la CEDAW al Estado colombiano, el Comité de expertas manifestó su preocupación sobre los derechos de las mujeres lesbianas, bisexuales y trans, y emitió recomendaciones para mejorar las condiciones de vida de estas', 20 March 2019
<https://caribeafirmativo.lgbt/luego-del-examen-periodico-la-cedaw-al-estado-colombiano-comite-expertas-manifesto-preocupacion-los-derechos-las-mujeres-lesbianas-bisexuales-trans-emitio-recomendaciones-p/>

COMMUNICATIONS

Mobilising online

With political and democratic spaces increasingly under attack, we recognise the importance and effectiveness of showing solidarity with our allies through electronic means. Online spaces support our movement building, by enabling us to connect across different movements, raise awareness, call to action, and plant seeds for future work. We also recognise that, as in other spaces, safety on the internet is of paramount importance.

In 2019 we used online platforms in multiple ways:

- [IWRAW AP's website](#), which shares a wide range of information, from thematic shadow report guidelines, to video interviews with activists highlighting their priorities and struggles, to blog posts on key issues
- translations of the CEDAW Quick & Concise video series into [multiple languages](#)
- commemoration of [#40YearsOfCEDAW](#), with quotes from activists around the world
- livetweets and [Twitter Moments](#) of CEDAW sessions
- [#OurRightsAreNotOptional](#) campaign against proposed [reduction in yearly CEDAW sessions](#)
- sharing of key messages to coincide with international days of action, such as a [set of graphics shared on International Sex Workers Day](#) to highlight rights violations recorded against sex workers in Asia and Africa



- [tweet chat on sex workers' rights](#), coorganised with the Coalition for Bodily & Sexual Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), for the 2019 #OneDayOneStruggle campaign
- regular sharing of news and campaigns, tailored to [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) audiences. (See page 47 for growth in Facebook and Twitter followers.)
- cedaw4change listserv, with information and updates regularly shared among a membership of over 1400 women's rights activists around the world

18 December 2019 marked 40 years since the adoption of CEDAW by the United Nations General Assembly. Since 1979, 189 states have ratified the treaty. To celebrate four decades of CEDAW, IWRAW AP gathered testimonies from women's rights activists around the globe, reflecting the gains made through CEDAW, articulating hopes for the future and identifying threats to the actualisation of women's human rights. These testimonies were published on social media, and 12 selected testimonies were pulled together into a limited-edition calendar for 2020.

#40YearsOfCEDAW



We submitted a request for Inquiry to the CEDAW Committee to put a stop to reproductive rights violations in the Philippines, knowing that the finding of the government's accountability would impact not just women in the Philippines but throughout the world. It was historic ... EnGendeRights and the Center for Reproductive Rights were able to successfully urge the revision of the national policy on post-abortion care. We urge others to continually engage the CEDAW Committee, as the impact of the Committee's recommendations is far-reaching.

CLARA RITA 'CLAIRE' A. PADILLA
ENGENDERIGHTS, PHILIPPINES

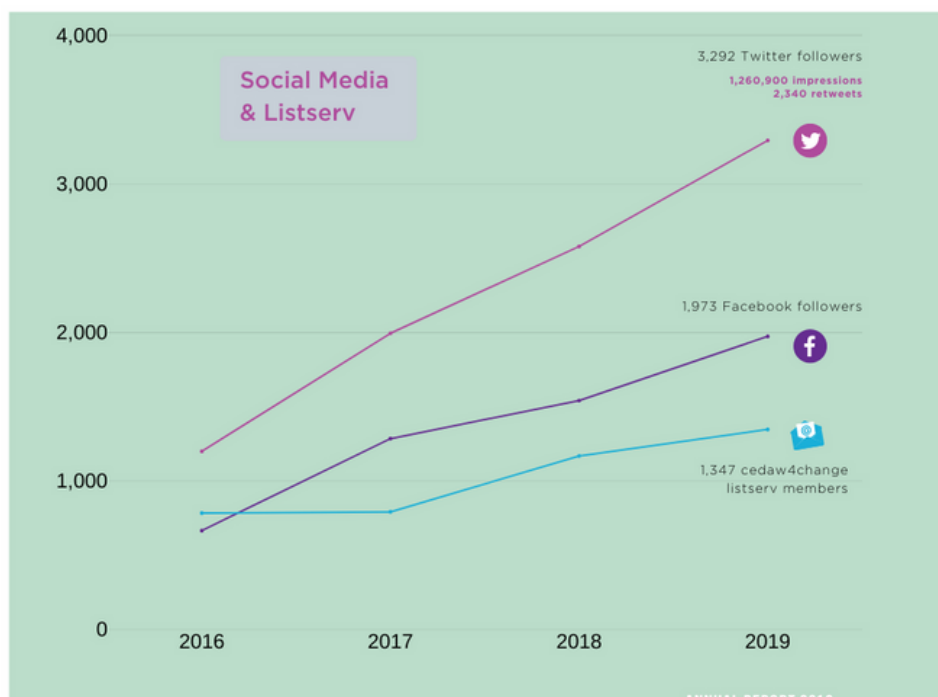
#40YearsOfCEDAW



We must not forget that CEDAW is critical to the lives of women who face some of the worst human rights violations because they are indigenous, poor, homeless, come from minority groups, have different sexual identities, experience disabilities or face discrimination due to their age. It is our responsibility to ensure that CEDAW continues to stand for the rights of women wherever they are and whoever they are.

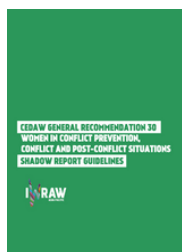
DEBBIE STOTHARD
ALTSEAN-BURMA

The graph below shows the steady growth of IRAW AP's online presence.



Videos

In 2019 we released a [series of video interviews](#) with women's rights activists filmed at the [Southeast Asia regional consultation of the Global South Women's Forum](#), as well as an outcome video of the [regional convening on women's labour rights and access to justice](#), and a retrospective of the [Strengthening Implementation of CEDAW \(StIC\) Project](#).



Print publications

We expanded our range of shadow report guidelines with a set on [women's right to work and rights at work](#), and published redesigned guidelines for [CEDAW General Recommendation 30](#) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

CHANGES AT IWRAW ASIA PACIFIC

Team Changes

There were several team changes over the year that led to the need to reorganise and reallocate our programme responsibilities. Sanyu Awori, Programme Officer for the business and women's human rights portfolio, decided to move on from IWRAW AP to the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre where she will carry on the work on business and human rights that she so wonderfully championed at IWRAW AP. Sachini Perera, who joined as our Communications Officer but then moved to becoming a Programme Officer with a focus on our sustainable development and women's human rights work, also left in the middle of the year to pursue a Masters Degree in London. Umyra Ahmad, programme officer, who worked on gender-based violence and access to justice, and jumpstarted IWRAW AP's new programme area on women's human rights and environmental justice, left at the end of the year to join AWID, with a special responsibility for coordinating the OURS alliance, of which IWRAW AP is also a member.

While the departure of the three programme officers has been disruptive, it has also provided IWRAW AP with allies in organisations that can support our work and can be important collaborators – the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, and AWID. We did, however, have to rethink the distribution of our portfolio responsibilities. The development of a new five-year strategy helped us to think through the team restructuring. Two new programme officers were recruited in November and December. The work on corporate responsibility and sustainable development was subsumed under a broader programme on 'Transforming Economics and Development' in IWRAW AP's 2020-2024 strategy and we established a separate programme relating to environmental justice. Our two new team members have taken on these two portfolios.

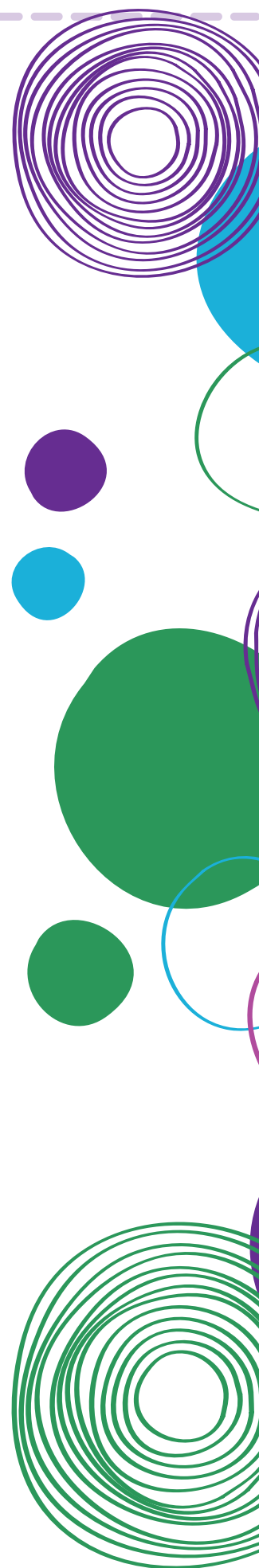
In the Finance and Administrative team, the middle of the year saw the departure of one Finance Officer and the recruitment of another. And in December, Pook Li Ping, IWRAP AP's Finance and Administrative Manager for nine years, resigned from IWRAP AP. Again we were fortunate to be able to recruit a new Manager and Li Ping was able to hand over to her seamlessly.

Five-Year Strategy Development

One of the significant team activities in 2019 was spearheading the development of a five-year strategy for the organisation. The process of developing this plan began in September 2018 with IWRAP Asia Pacific's staff retreat at Awanmulan in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. There, we reflected on what we had learned over the last two to three years through our work facilitating women's rights activists to participate in the CEDAW reviews, and through the activities of our various thematic portfolios. We identified the challenges faced by women, especially women experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, around the world.

This learning and our analysis of the global context led us to agree that in the next strategic period we should focus on three overarching issues: demanding accountability, interrogating borders and resisting right-wing populism. We wanted to resist and reframe the narratives that drive our context as described at the beginning of this report, as well as reimagine state obligation and demand accountability from all actors – state and non-state. We are conscious of our privilege as an organisation and wanted to use this privilege to support the movement by providing thought leadership and by creating safe spaces to develop and exercise women's rights advocacy in a hostile world.

The team, together with IWRAP AP's governance bodies, confirmed in November 2018 that the fundamental premise of our activism had not changed, but that in the context of a crisis of multilateralism, we needed to reaffirm our challenge of abusive power relationships and



stem the insidious spread of the democratic deficit. Based on this, the final strategy brings into focus five interrelated programmatic areas: Countering Human Rights Regression and UN Capture; Interrogating Borders and their Impact on Women's Human Rights; Advancing Gender Equality in the World of Work; Connecting Gender Equality to Environmental Justice; and Transforming Economics and Development through a Feminist Approach.

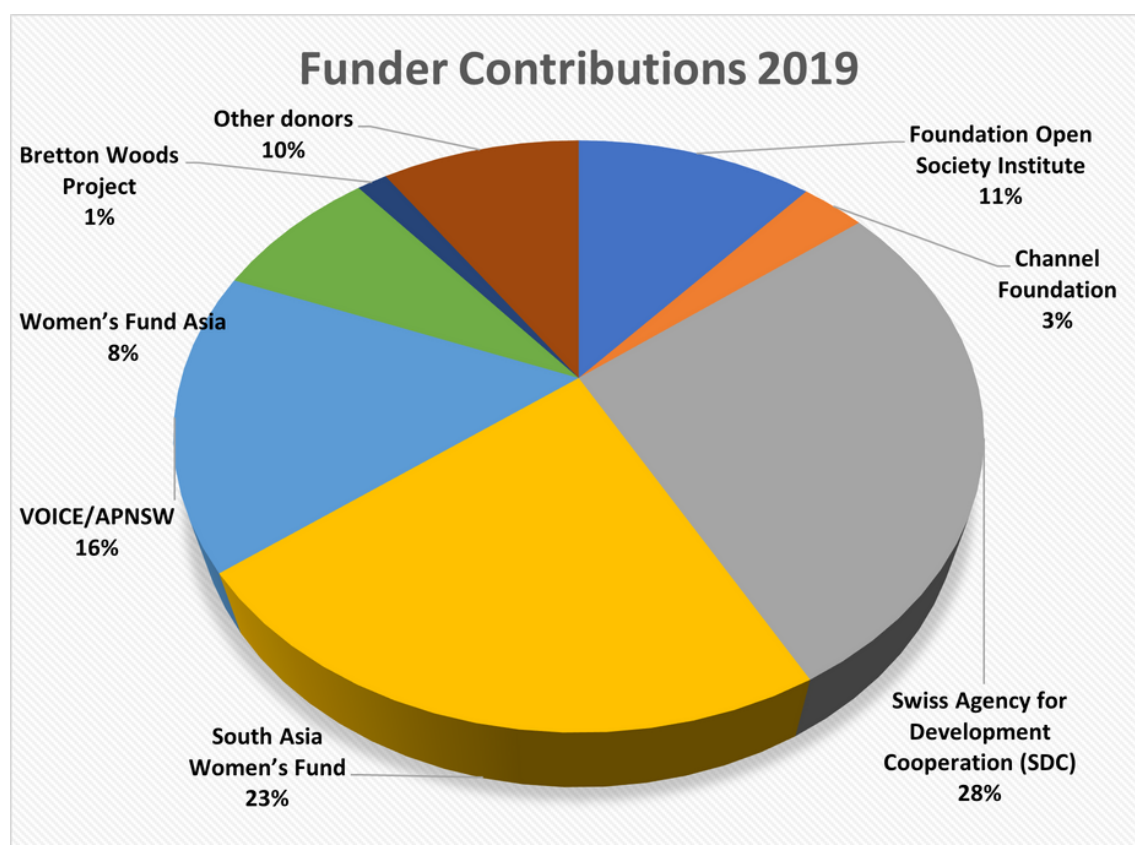


We also had a number of discussions on organisational policy changes that enabled us to be reflexive about the power hierarchies and accountabilities within IWRAW AP, allowing different groups within IWRAW AP to be accountable to each other; building organisational practices and implementing IWRAW AP's policy on Marginalised Groups of Women, so that we do not replicate systems of discrimination and exclusion; creating a community of care; and influencing power holders to be more accountable to resourcing women's human rights work in the long term.

The initial discussions in 2018 were followed by a strategic planning meeting which took place in April 2019. A writeshop in July 2019 was a turning point in cementing many ideas and plans, and was held a few days before the July board meeting, at which the draft was presented to the board members. A logframe training followed. In November 2019, at the Annual Advisory Committee Meeting and in conjunction with representatives from selected partner organisations and our Board and Advisory Committee, we were able to validate the strategy. A team meeting to develop a detailed work plan was scheduled for January 2020, after which IWRAW AP would be ready to roll out the strategy.

FINANCES

Donor base

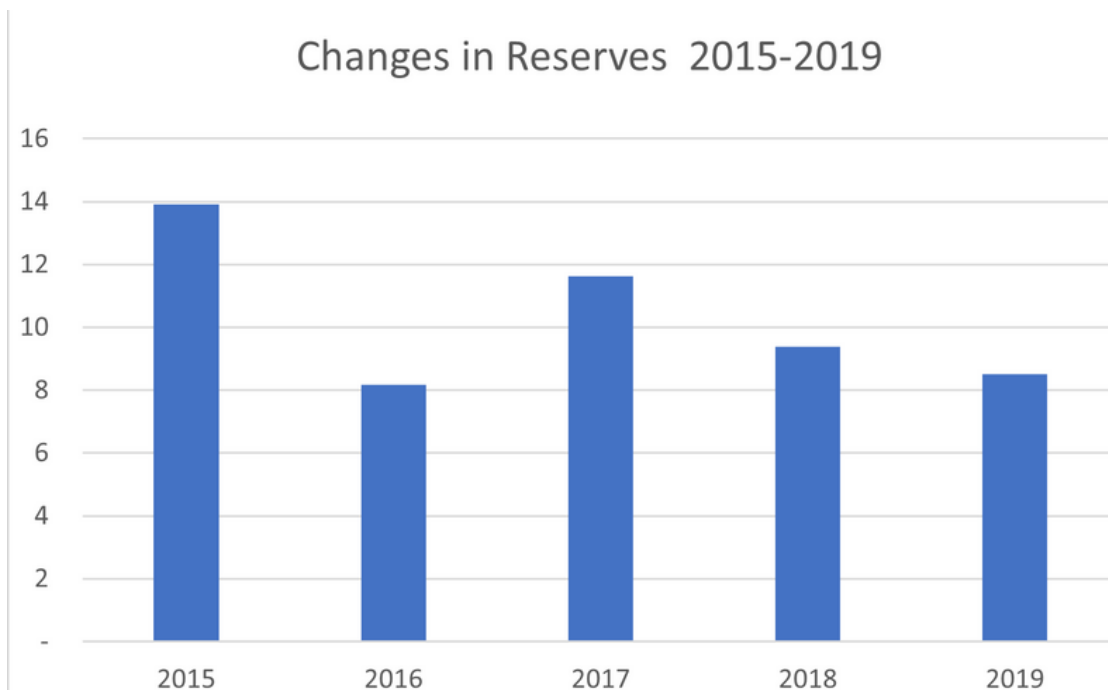


In 2019, in addition to our core grant from the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), the support from Women's Fund Asia for the STIC project, and Channel Foundation for the From Global to Local programme and the ongoing support from APNSW, IWRAW AP was able to raise additional funds from the Open Society Foundations women's rights programme to support the core work. We were also able to mobilise funds from the VOICE Sudden Opportunities grant and

the Open Society Foundation's harm reduction programme for the work on trafficking as well as additional funds from Women's Fund Asia for the work on the FIRE project mentioned above. IWRAW AP also acts as the fiscal agent for ALTSEAN.

We were also very pleased that, following conversations with colleagues at SDC, a change was made to the proportion of matching funds required. IWRAW AP is now allowed to utilise SDC's funds to up to 45% of our expenses.

Sustainability Fund (Reserves)



CREDITS

Staff

Audrey Lee, Programme Manager

Constanza Pauchulo, Programme Officer (from October 2019)

Gurmit Kaur, Technical Advisor (January to March 2019)

Hemanayagi Gopal, Finance Officer (from June 2019)

Ishita Dutta, Programme Officer

Nine, Communications Officer

Loo May Kuen, Admin and Finance Manager (from November 2019)

Ng Jia Jia, Temporary Assistant (April to July 2019)

Phang Lai Yoong, Admin Officer

Pook Li Ping, Admin and Finance Manager (until December 2019)

Priyanthi Fernando, Executive Director

Sachini Perera, Programme Officer (until June 2019)

Sanyu Awori, Programme Officer (until January 2019)

Shanti Uprety, Programme Officer

Siti Zainab Binti Abdullah, Cleaner

Umyra Ahmad Fikri, Programme Officer (until November 2019)

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Donors

Bretton Woods Project

Channel Foundation

Open Society Foundations

South Asia Women's Fund

Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation

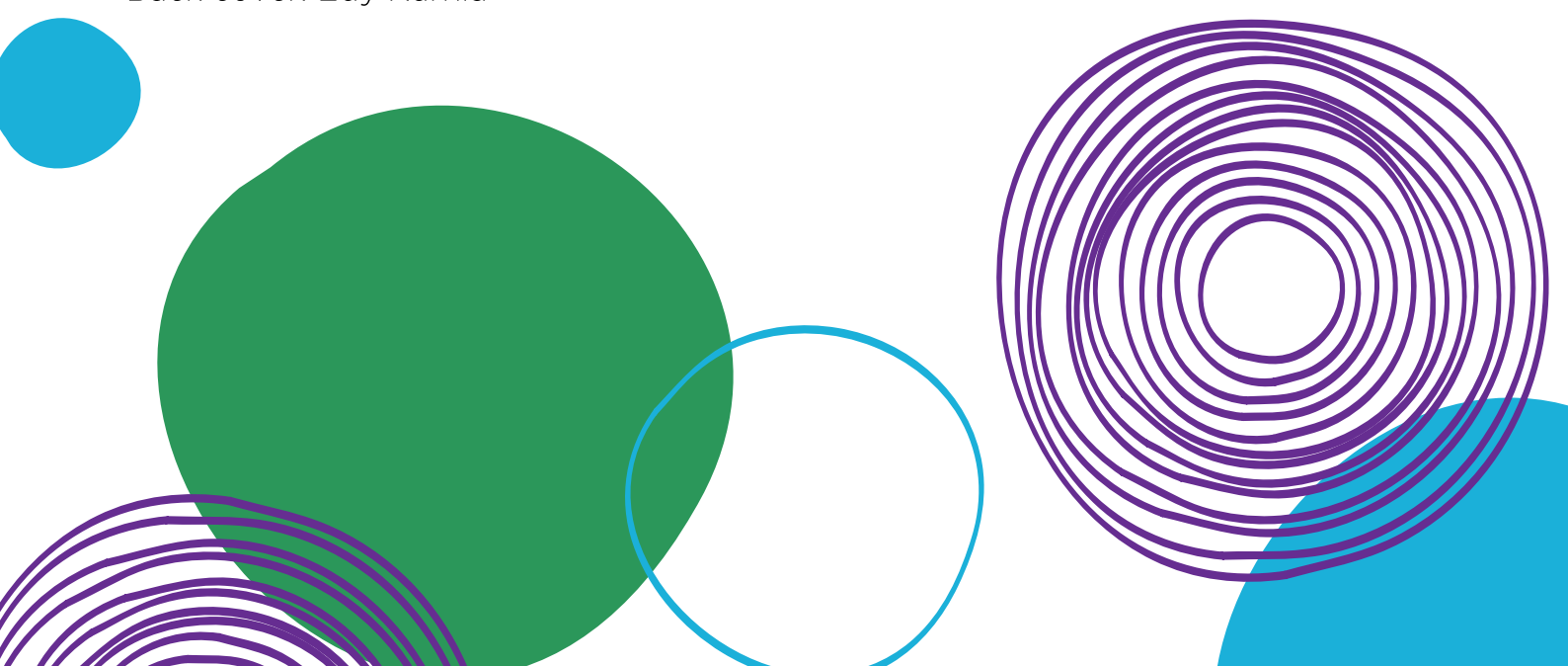
VOICE/Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers

Women's Fund Asia

Photos

Front cover: navabi.co.uk/stock-photos/

Back cover: Edy Kurnia





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Priyanthi Fernando
Malaysia

