

Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Agenda 2030 resolves to take action for people. planet, prosperity, peace and partnership through a commitment to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter 'SDGs') and to the three main pillars of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social. It also recognises that gender equality is critical to achieving all the SDGs, but also allocates Goal 5 specifically to this issue.



Despite their lofty intention to steer society towards a just, sustainable, and peaceful future in which 'no one will be left behind', Agenda 2030 and the SDGs have been criticised for failing to center existing international commitments, notably international human rights norms and standards, which are fundamental to achieving progress that is equitable and truly transformational. While the declaration to the Agenda includes a recognition of the importance of human rights, the Goals and their associated Targets and Indicators make no reference to human rights or human rights instruments. The latter is reflective of an increasingly hostile environment towards universally accepted human rights standards, monitoring, and accountability. In addition, structural inequalities as well as neoliberalism and rising conservatism and extremist ideologies around the world are

1 https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1

making it more difficult than ever to hold states accountable to their commitment to sustainable development.

We believe that the overall objectives of the Agenda 2030 cannot be attained if human rights are not realised. Given the diluted presence of a human rights perspective in the SDGs, Targets and Indicators, it is upon civil society at large to ensure that the further development. conceptualisation and implementation of the Agenda 2030 fully respect and promote human rights standards, as enshrined in international instruments of universal recognition. In particular, there is a need to strengthen the articulation of sustainable development agendas with feminist visions of development and rights, as feminist activists and organisations have long articulated. As such, we believe that harmonising the SDGs and human rights treaties can enhance all processes for the ultimate benefit of women and girls.

To help in this harmonisation effort. IWRAW Asia Pacific has created a tool for women's rights groups, civil society, and other actors interested in building connections between human rights instruments and the SDGs framework and incorporating such linkages into their advocacy work. Conceived as an interactive Excel workbook, this tool is intended to facilitate the process of identifying links and gaps between human rights standards and the Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators on a particular issue of interest, and envisioning an advocacy strategy that leverages these connections to prompt State action.

The tool can be used for a myriad of advocacy purposes. For example, it can help with integrating a human rights approach into SDG review and consultation processes, particularly Voluntary National Reviews. It can also help with strategies striving to use the SDGs as a tool to promote compliance with human rights obligations or to include or strengthen an SDG perspective in shadow reports or other reports within the UN human rights system.

An example of the latter is <u>Leaving</u> No One Behind: The Imperative of Inclusive Development in Palestine. a report prepared in 2018 by the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) and the Non-Governmental Women Coalition for the Implementation of CEDAW in the Occupied State of Palestine, with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific, which was submitted to the **CEDAW Committee during** Palestine's inaugural state report and published during the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the State of Palestine.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

THE IMPERATIVE OF INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN PALESTINE



The present User Manual is intended to assist civil society and women's rights organisations in using the CEDAW-SDGs tool to make connections between the SDGs and human rights frameworks and devise advocacy strategies that leverage such links to prompt State action. Using this tool, create a CEDAW-SDG harmonisation strategy in 4 steps:

- 1. Identify an issue of interest,e.g. violence against women;
- 2. Identifying the relevant standards in each framework;
- 3. Identifying the gaps and the links between standards with respect to the issue in question;
- 4. Plan your CEDAW-SDGs harmonisation strategy.

Each step will be thoroughly explained in what follows. In addition, you will find examples of each of the steps from reports previously developed by women's rights organisations participating in SDGs processes and CEDAW review sessions.

Good luck!



1. Identify the issue of concern

Start by identifying the issue, problem, or topic that concerns you or that is relevant for your work. A myriad of issues lies at the intersection of sustainable development and women's rights, be it poor reproductive health services for women or the lack of accessible and safe transportation systems. Striving to be as specific as possible, articulate the issue of interest and, drawing from, among others, your own research or work, current or past events in your country, a case study, or a treaty body review, elaborate on its most relevant developments. To get the ball rolling, we suggest answering some questions:

How are women's lives affected by the issue?

How do race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, caste, and disability influence the way that the issue impacts women?

What are the main drivers of the problem?

Who are the relevant actors? Both allies and opposition.

Are there existing policies or legislation relevant to the issues you're trying to address?

Have there been attempts to introduce reforms?

How many police cases have been filed on the issue you're trying to address?

Mention your data sources as much as possible

Violence Against Women in Palestine*

Gender-based violence is a key issue in Palestine. Despite the lack of updated statistics from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics on gender-based violence in Palestine, a survey on Violence issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2011 indicates that 58.6% of married women (48.8% in the West Bank and 76.4% in Gaza Strip) were subject to at least one act of psychological abuse during 2011. The same statistics indicated that 23.5% of women who had been married were subject to at least one act of physical abuse by their husbands, and this includes 17.4% of women in the West Bank and 34.8% in the Gaza Strip. 11.8% of the women had been sexually assaulted by their husbands at least once and 54.8% of married women had been subject to some form of social abuse by their husbands during that period. Statistics from the same survey indicate that in general, 51% of women in Palestine face multi-dimensional violence and discrimination. All local studies and surveys from 2005 and 2011 indicate that the offender is a family member of the first degree (father, brother, husband).

Several factors contribute to gender-based violence in Palestine, most important of which are: 1) The Occupation and its impact on social, economic, and political relations. The decades-long interrelation between Israeli occupation and patriarchal culture in Palestinian society has contributed to a spike in the levels of gender-based violence and discrimination; 2) The patriarchal traditions, norms, and values prevailing in the Palestinian society; 3) Poverty and unemployment; 4) Weak legal protection, and the tribal rule of law that adopts patriarchal culture in resolving issues of violence against women, especially domestic violence; 5) The influence of media in establishing and promoting the conventional stereotypical concept reproductive role and confining it to women, and; 6) Difference in laws applied based on political sovereignty.

Women and girls with disabilities suffer from composite violence by parents, society, and the occupation. The issues of violence suffered by persons with disabilities were not given the priority or the due concern by the State of Palestine, and therefore were not reflected in the national policies and national developmental and humanitarian plans.

Difference in laws applied based on political sovereignty is one of contributing factors to the multiplicity and contradictions in Palestinian legislation and failure adopt a legislative system to be applied to all Palestinian women (in East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza Strip). [...] This contradiction led to the fragmentation of Palestinian women and girls in multiple legal and administrative contexts. This has adversely impacted the protection of their rights and has asserted men's control over women in judicial proceedings issued by courts of Gaza Strip or Jerusalem, as they are not binding in the State of Palestine.

Palestinian women's vulnerability to violence continues to increase because of the violence against them by Israeli occupation whether directly, or indirectly as a result of the impact of various forms of violence inflicted on their family members by the occupation. In studies by UNRWA on the impact of war on gender-based violence in Palestine, it has been noted that gender-based violence and emergencies are correlated and do not come from nowhere; in the wake of emergencies, violence against women would increase. As the main causes of gender-based violence are rooted in gender inequality discrimination, the risk of gender-based violence is exacerbated when protection systems and structures fall down during emergencies, consequently increasing risks.

National measures, whether laws, policies, services or interventions aimed at combating gender-based violence, are still limited and vary between the humanitarian framework and the developmental framework in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. [...] A limited framework of gender equality exists in some of the laws that have arisen under the Palestinian National Authority. However, women's enjoyment of these laws continues to be hindered due to: 1) Application of some old local legal frameworks that enshrine the rule of patriarchal norms and traditions in society; 2) Draft amendments by the government and discussions of the laws are referred to the House of Fatwa for approval so as not to conflict with the Sharia and here the realisation of laws on women's rights becomes problematic; 3) Lack of amendment in the procedural laws, which hinders the implementation process from a gender perspective, and; 4) Attitude of judges and judicial personnel who still view women from a traditional paternal and patriarchal perspective. [...] The State of Palestine has taken some measures to integrate gender into development plans, most notably at the planning level. This includes the establishment of gender units in various government institutions, which aim to integrate gender into the public plans of governmental institutions and control the gender-responsive budget. However, the representation of women and their presence in the general plans of the various ministries have not been worked on nor has a budget been allocated to them. Gender mainstreaming has been dealt with superficially and isolated into plans of the Gender Unit rather than being established as a major sector of the public system.

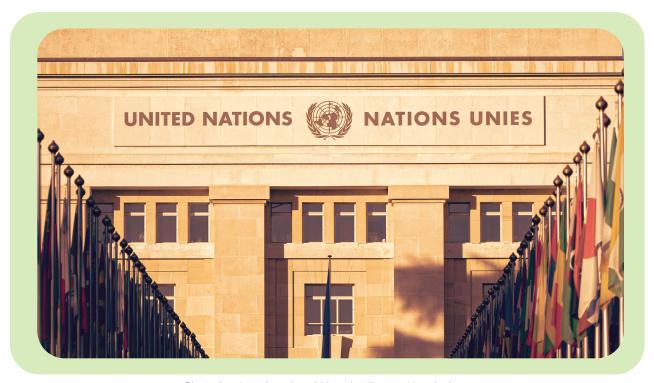
*Extracts from the 2018 report published by the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) and the Non-Governmental Women Coalition for the Implementation of CEDAW in the Occupied State of Palestine, with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific (IWRAW AP), submitted to the CEDAW Committee during Palestine's inaugural state report. Find the report <u>here</u>.

2. Identify the relevant human rights standard and SDG

International human rights and sustainable development instruments touch upon most aspects of women's lives. Identify the provisions that are most relevant to the issue identified in the previous step.

A) Identify the relevant human right standard

Identify the articles contained in human rights conventions, including CEDAW, ICCPR and ICESCR, that are relevant to the issue. These provisions are normally developed by human rights bodies that define the scope of the articles, providing guidance to States as to the extent of their obligations under international law. Identify whether the treaty body of the selected convention has emitted a General Comment/Recommendation, Concluding comments in the context of review processes or Decisions adopted in the context of the complaints procedure.



Gender-based violence in international human rights standards*

CEDAW, Article 1, defines "discrimination against women" as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." The CEDAW Committee clarified in <u>General Recommendation No. 19</u> on Violence against women that the Article 1 definition includes gender-based violence, as it is "a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men." As such, State parties to CEDAW have the obligation to take all appropriate means to eliminate gender-based violence, in accordance with Article 2 and subsequent provisions of the Convention.

General Recommendation No. 19, adopted in 1992, was a historic step in the fight against gender-based violence. Not only it unambiguously recognized the Convention's applicability to the issue, thereby obliging State parties to legislate and take all appropriate means to eradicate it, but it was a landmark move to frame violence against women as a human rights issue, no longer concealed in the private sphere, putatively outside the purview of state sanction. In 2017, the CEDAW Committee issued General Recommendation No. 35 on Violence against women, striving to update General Recommendation No. 19. General Recommendation No. 35 recognizes the prohibition of gender-based violence a norm of international customary law, binding all states and not only State parties to CEDAW. In addition, new forms of gender-based violence are acknowledged, for example violations of sexual and reproductive health rights, and different levels of liability of the State for failing to eliminate, either by act or omission, to eliminate violence against women were defined, including failure to prevent violence by private individuals and corporations.

^{*}Based on the 2018 report published by the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) and the Non-Governmental Women Coalition for the Implementation of CEDAW in the Occupied State of Palestine, with support from IWRAW Asia Pacific (IWRAW AP), submitted to the CEDAW Committee during Palestine's inaugural state report. Find the report here.

Vocabulary Review

General Recommendations

General Recommendations (GRs) are authoritative statements on the meaning of the provisions in the CEDAW Convention with respect to the rights of women and the obligations of the State, and on what kind of information should be included in State Party reports. These are produced by the CEDAW Committee, as mandated by Article 21 of the CEDAW Convention. To date, there are 38 General Comments/Recommendations under the CEDAW Convention (as of December 2021). Find the recommendations here.

Concluding observations

Under Article 18 of the CEDAW Convention, State parties have the obligation to report to the Committee the measures they have taken to give effect to the provisions of the Convention. The Committee, in turn, can produce Concluding observations on the reports submitted by State parties, with a view to assisting the State party in implementing its obligations under the Convention. Find the compilation of Concluding observations for each reviewed country here.

Decisions under the Individual Complaints Procedure

The CEDAW Committee may consider individual communications alleging violations of the Convention only by States parties to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. There are three main procedures for bringing complaints of violations of the provisions of CEDAW and other human rights treaties: individual communications; state-to-state complaints; and inquiries. While the decisions taken by the Committee in the context of the complaints procedure are merely binding on the State allegedly violating the Convention, these may provide guidance as to the scope of States' obligations to protect, respect, and fulfill human rights. Find CEDAW jurisprudence here.

2. Identify the relevant human rights standard and SDG

B) Identify the relevant SDG

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals can be disaggregated into a list of 169 Targets. In turn, progress towards these Targets was agreed to be tracked and measured using 232 unique Indicators.

Find the full list of goals, targets and indicators here. Nevertheless, it deserves underscoring that Agenda 2030 and SDGs should be understood and implemented through a holistic approach. As such, progress towards any of the SDGs should bleed into efforts to realize the remaining 16 goals.

In this step, identify links between the human rights articles you identified previously and the corresponding Sustainable Development Goals, Targets, and Indicators. The SDGs are interconnected and interdependent, therefore you may find more than one corresponding goal, target and/or indicator.

Need help making the links?
Use the Human Rights Guide
to the Sustainable
Development Goals by the
Danish Institute for Human
Rights:

http://sdg.humanrights.dk



SDG 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

TARGET 5.1

End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

INDICATOR 5.1.1

Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.

TARGET 5.3

Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

INDICATOR 5.3.1

Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.

INDICATOR 5.5.1

Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments.

TARGET 5.5

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decisionmaking in political, economic and public life.

TARGET 5.2

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

INDICATOR 5.2.1

Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

INDICATOR 5.2.2

Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.

TARGET 5.C

Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

INDICATOR 5.C.1

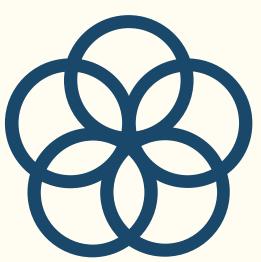
Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The SDGs & Women's Human Rights





Goal 16Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions



Goal 17Partnerships for the Goals

3. Identify gaps and links

Interweaving the SDGs and human rights framework requires, first and foremost, identifying the ways in which they intersect and diverge, with a view to identifying opportunities of harmonisation. In this step, compare the human rights articles and their scope against the corresponding Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators you have identified. In doing so, think about the following questions:

Do the SDGs, Targets and Indicators cover the issue you're trying to address? What issues or dimensions aren't covered?

What commonalities and differences exist in the treatment each instrument gives to the issue(s)?

If you identify gaps, please mention them in this section. If you don't identify gaps, then clearly articulate the links you've identified.

Gaps and linkages between frameworks can exist both in how the issue is treated formally by instruments and the comments and opinions of institutional bodies, but also in how States are implementing the applicable SDGs and human rights provisions. As you trace the commonalities and discrepancies between frameworks, seek to identify whether these come from their original formulation and authoritative interpretation of the standards, or from State action.

For this purpose, rely on, for example, State reports to the CEDAW Committee or other treaty bodies or the State's Voluntary National Review before the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Perhaps inadvertently, this step incorporates a monitoring exercise that can be employed for varied advocacy purposes beyond SDG-CEDAW harmonisation.



States' reporting duties

States' periodic reporting obligation to the CEDAW Committee

Upon ratifying CEDAW, State parties undertake the obligation of submitting an initial report on the measures that they have adopted to comply with the Convention's provisions within one year after the entry into force of the treaty, and then periodically every four years or whenever the Committee so requests (art. 18, para. 1, of the Convention). State parties are expected to report during their scheduled CEDAW session, in which they engage in constructive dialogue with CEDAW Committee members. The Committee, in turn, produces Concluding observations to assist the State party in implementing its obligations under the Convention.

Voluntary National Reviews at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Unlike the accountability processes that take place before other UN human rights bodies, UN Members that adopted Agenda 2030 opt into Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Occurring during the last three days of the annual High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), VNRs are designed for governments to share progress, challenges and their lessons learned in implementing the SDGs, and for stakeholders to learn about and comment on government's implementation of Agenda 2030. During HLPF, governments deliver oral presentations based on written reports prepared in the previous months, in which other States, representatives of the Major Groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) participate and comment on.

Gaps and linkages between SDGs and CEDAW on the issue of violence against women*

As the State of Palestine implements the commitments under the 2030 Agenda to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, it is clear that SDG 5 alone is unable to address the unique situation of women and girls in Palestine whose experience of violence and avenues of access to justice are adversely influenced by the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

SDG 5 by itself is also insufficient to bring in the human rights obligations relating to eliminating gender-based violence including CEDAW General Recommendations on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, and relevant resolutions by the UN Security Council, among others. SDG 5 must be considered hand in hand with relevant targets and indicators in SDG 16 on peaceful societies and SDG 11 on sustainable cities and human settlements. It is imperative that the implementation and reporting of the 2030 Agenda addresses actions of the Occupying State including through SDG 16.3 that calls to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

Furthermore, while SDG indicator 5.1.1 on ensuring that legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex remains relevant for Palestine, the lack of coherence in the national legislative system(s) must be addressed through national indicators that are context specific.

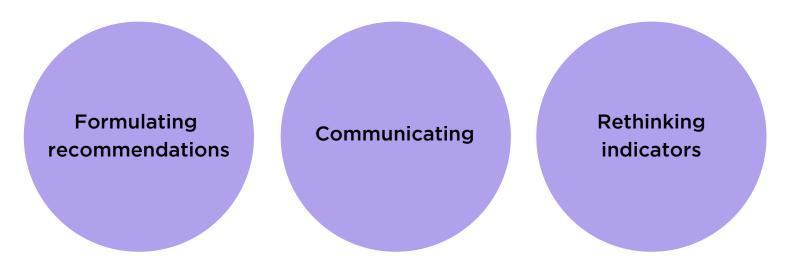
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4. Plan your strategy

The gaps and linkages identified before can be read as opportunities to bring the SDGs into accord with human rights standards, particularly CEDAW. Where you have spotted gaps, you have found areas in which a human rights perspective is begging to be bolstered. This creates not only a chance to harness the momentum created by the 2030 Agenda SDG to promote human rights compliance, but, most importantly, to ensure that SDG implementation doesn't come at the expense of justice, dignity, and equality.

On the other hand, where you have found linkages, you have identified windows of opportunity to leverage the legitimacy, acceptance, and infrastructure of either framework to urge State action, increase accountability, and advance human rights realisation.

In this final stage, get ready to put your findings from previous steps into motion. We suggest three ways to transform these ideas and conclusions into advocacy moves.



1) Formulating Recommendations

What policies should be put in place to comply with human rights instruments and the 2030 Agenda in the issue of your interest? How can existing policies be improved for that purpose? How would adopting a human rights perspective facilitate achieve the relevant SDG? What courses of action should be avoided?

This is the moment for creative and proactive thinking. Building upon the situation analysis, the applicable standards and the gaps and linkages previously identified, formulate recommendations to the State about how to address the issue in a manner consistent with international human rights standards and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Aim to be specific, imaginative yet pragmatic, and to illustrate some benefits and challenges of opting for the proposed approach.

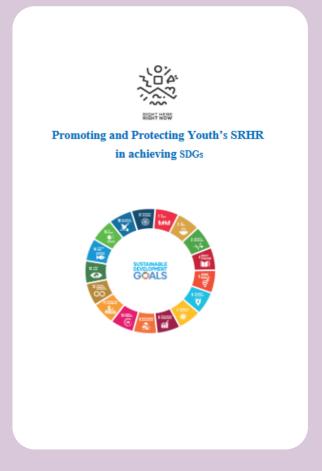
These recommendations can later turn into different outputs. For example, they can be published as policy briefs during your country's Voluntary National Review.

Examples of these documents are the alternative reports prepared by members of the Women's Major Group (WMG) for Sustainable Development, which may be found on the WMG's website.

In addition, the recommendations prepared under this step can be submitted to UN human rights treaty bodies as alternative / shadow reports. You may consult IWRAW-AP guidelines for participation in the CEDAW reporting process, detailing the steps to be taken by NGOs in preparing shadow/alternative reports to the CEDAW Committee. Find the guideline here.

Advocating for the sexual and reproductive rights of the youth in Bangladesh

In 2020, the Right Here Right Now (RHRN) initiative published a youth consultation report in the context of Bangladesh's participation at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and VNR that year. The report, the outgrowth of a series of consultations with youth organisations and young activists across the country, elaborates on the country situation and provides policy recommendations for SDG implementation around three areas: 1) comprehensive sexuality education for all adolescents, 2) availability and non-discriminatory access to SRH information and services in government facilities and 3) the gender equality in SRHR as a cross cutting issue. You may find the report here.





2) Communicating

Based on the information compiled so far, what are the advocacy messages you want to send to the State and to civil society at large? How can you use this information to increase awareness, both in the general public and governmental officials about the problem and the desirability of human rights-centered solutions? How can you leverage an invigorated public awareness about the issue to generate pressure and urge the State to act?

In this step, think of sparking public conversations about the issue by creating compelling messages that convey its relevance and the need to address it from a human rights approach. This is an invitation to think of advocacy tools that accompany and increase the resonance of the recommendations identified in Step a).



US Mission Photo: Photo by Eric Bridiers

"If It Doesn't Work for Women, It Absolutely Doesn't Work at All" - Barbara Adams

The private sector's focus on profitability, governmental failure to properly tax the wealthy, and decisions on money allocation are all crucial factors affecting the Sustainable Development Goals. Ultimately, these impact gender equality and women's rights. Funded through the Bretton Woods Project's Gender Equality and Macroeconomics project, in this video Barbara Adams from the Global Policy Forum explains why the public sector is essential for achieving the SDGs, and the prospects for ensuring accountability through combining the SDGs with CEDAW.



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3) Rethinking Indicators

If the global indicator does not sufficiently cover the scope of the issue you're trying to address, use this space to propose revisions to the indicator or to propose new indicators. Please make sure the indicators are centered on relevant human rights standards and obligations. This section is useful if you've identified opportunities to influence the development of SDGs indicators at national, regional or global levels.

This User Guide was drafted by Vanessa Daza Castillo, IWRAW AP's Feminist Sustainable Development Fellow, with the support of Constanza Pauchulo, Programme Manager, and the IWRAW AP team. It was designed by Pravind Premnath, Communications Officer.

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific is a feminist organisation committed to the full realisation of women's human rights through the pursuit of equality. We adopt an approach based on the universal nature of human rights, focusing particularly on the experience of women and girls from the Global South and recognising the need to eliminate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination at all levels.



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