

# DECOLONIAL FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY

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## PREFACE

Whilst this Decolonial Framework and Strategy is part of IWDA's commitment to decolonising our development practice, we want to share with you, transparently, some specific events that have brought IWDA to where we are today as we launch this inaugural framework and strategy.

IWDA knows that international development has its roots in the colonial project and the racist myth of European superiority. These racist and colonial dynamics play out in the everyday practice of international development and in development institutions, and IWDA is not immune. This was made very apparent when, in late 2020, anonymous posts were made to an Instagram page called Holding Accountable. These messages seemed to have been written by former IWDA staff members and volunteers, and described instances of racism and discrimination at IWDA. In addition, current and former staff members told us they had experienced or witnessed racism at IWDA.

The IWDA Leadership Team acknowledged that white women in the organisation had harmed women of colour at IWDA and that systemic organisational practices enabled this harm to occur. The Leadership Team also acknowledged that the pace of organisational change and resolution had been slow and inadequate. A public apology for perpetuating racism and marginalisation was made in August 2021. Since then IWDA has undertaken significant work to imbed a culture of anti-racism, diversity and inclusion at IWDA. This area of internal work has become known as IWDA's 'River of Change', and also forms part of this Strategy.

In addition, we have been aware of the dynamics of racism and coloniality within the development and partnership practice for some time, including our own. The most recent and stark evidence of this lay in the voices of 35 women's rights actors from across the Oceanic Pacific region who engaged in a piece of research commissioned by IWDA in 2020 and authored by Tongan researcher and activist 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki entitled "Creating Equitable South-North Partnerships: Nurturing the Vā and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean Together"<sup>1</sup>. What emerged from this research were stories of Minority World organisations knowingly or unknowingly using 'power over' in their partnerships with Oceanic Pacific women's rights organisations. While these practices were not attributed to IWDA, it is a possibility to which we remain ever-alert.

The following, which illustrates how Minority World development actors are perceived by the Majority World, is just one of the many calls to action for transformative change within the development sector that emerged from the research:

*We often refrain from using expressions around white supremacy or calling it out because it is frowned upon or looked at as being rude or unkind towards those people or organisations who are 'just trying to help' the Pacific. But when you really get down to it and peel the onion down to its core, it is what it is, white privilege and power underestimating our knowledge and skills, claiming their dominance with things like intrusive logos and acknowledgments, when really all they are funding is the awareness, printing or broadcasting of ideas that were always our ideas to begin with.<sup>2</sup> - Research Participant 2000-2009, 2010-2019 period*

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1 Guttenbeil-Likiliki, 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka, Creating Equitable South-North Partnerships: Nurturing the Va and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean Together, Melbourne, IWDA, 2020

2 Guttenbeil-Likiliki, 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka, Creating Equitable South-North Partnerships: Nurturing the Va and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean Together, Melbourne, IWDA, 2020: 23

This Decolonial Framework and Strategy is a key part of IWDA's journey to decolonise development practice. This document is the result of several rounds of internal drafting, drawing heavily on our Director of Systemic Change and Partnerships, Dr Salmah Eva-Lina Lawrence's scholarly work. The document has also been reviewed by five external reviewers, two of whom are IWDA regional partners. We want to thank these reviewers for their critical feedback and contributions to this document and we are delighted that they have given such strong endorsement to our commitment to transformation.

*"The theoretical framing/concepts and principles of the framework is bold, resilient, resistant and uncomfortable. Exactly where it needs to be." - 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Tonga Women and Children's Crisis Centre*

*"This commitment to decolonial praxis is based on revealing and redressing the pervasive but hidden historical factors of development work—not a performative, effusive statement in pursuit of a trend." - Desiree Acholla, Inararibonye Advisors*

*"The IWDA Decolonial Framework and Strategy includes a robust and sophisticated grounding in decolonial theory and strategy." - Professor Yin Paradies, Deakin University*

*"IWDA has approached radical transformative change as being needed to address internal mindsets, internal policies and practice; as well as changing how they show up in partnership with their partners. This is a deeper form of transformation that will lead to addressing the root causes of racism as it shows up in systems, structures, policies, practice and mindsets." - Saranel Benjamin, Oxfam Great Britain*

*"This is such an important step you all are taking. I wish you all the very best." - Nalini Singh, Fiji Women's Rights Movement*

We know that decolonisation is not an end state, it is ongoing and unlimited. As such, we don't see this document as a final position on decolonisation at IWDA. Rather, it is one step forward on a never-ending journey. The document will be refreshed regularly alongside our Strategic Plans and we commit to maintaining organisational momentum and resourcing for this vital agenda.

We also want to thank IWDA staff and partners, past, present and future, and most especially the women of colour, who have raised these issues, held IWDA to account and contributed to reimagining, and rebuilding IWDA towards the next best version of itself and importantly a Decolonial future.

Finally, we want to thank former IWDA CEO, Bettina Baldeschi, under whose leadership this Decolonial Framework & Strategy was developed.

Thank you.

**Dr Salmah Eva-Lina Lawrence,**  
Director, Systemic Change and Partnerships

**Jo Pradela,**  
Director, Knowledge Translation and Equality Insights

# INTRODUCTION

IWDA's Strategic Plan 2025 grounds an organisational commitment to decolonising our approach to feminism and development. Our understanding of decolonisation is shaped by Majority World activists and scholars working in decolonial theory as laid out in Section 1 of this document. We know that despite political decolonisation, coloniality remains an oppressive force. Through decolonial action, we seek to grow as an organisation, including deepening our capacities and capabilities as individuals, within our internal organisational practice and in forming and nurturing partnerships with Majority World (Global South) partners.

This Framework and Strategy outline how we plan to action this commitment. It has been developed drawing on the wealth of literature on decoloniality, our almost 40 years of partnership experience, feedback from our grantee partner organisations across Asia and the Oceanic Pacific, an organisation-wide consultation process, and independent, external review by the following Majority World (Global South) decolonial experts:



**'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki**, Director, Tonga Women and Children's Crisis Centre



**Professor Yin Paradies**, Alfred Deakin Professor and Chair in Race Relations, Deakin University



**Nalini Singh**, Director, Fiji Women's Rights Movement



**Desiree Acholla**, Founder, Inararibonye Advisors



**Saranel Benjamin**, Head of Partnerships, Impact Division, Oxfam Great Britain

The theoretical framing, principles and commitments herein represent our best understanding at the time of writing. However, we intend this to be a living document that will evolve with our organisational comprehension and analysis, as well as with the literature.

## **PURPOSE**

- This document includes two sections, a framework and a strategy. The framework's purpose is to provide:
  - a. conceptual guidance, establishing a common language and understanding for how IWDA thinks about whiteness, coloniality and decolonisation.
- The second part of this document is a strategy, which aims to:
  - b. identify the sites of necessary transformation, IWDA's decolonial practice principles and concrete commitments, as well as;
  - c. outline how we will discern our progress and be accountable for continual evolution and learning.
- The framework part of this document will evolve as the sector, our analysis, and the literature evolves, while the strategy will be fixed and linked to our strategic plan timeframe and refreshed at the same time as future Strategic Plans.

**A DECOLONIAL  
APPROACH  
RECOGNISES THAT  
OUR COLLECTIVE  
WELLBEING IS LINKED  
TO THE RELATIONAL  
RESPONSIBILITIES  
OR OBLIGATIONS WE  
HAVE TOWARDS EACH  
OTHER AND OTHER  
LIFE FORMS.**

# SECTION 1

# FRAMEWORK

## CONCEPTUAL GUIDANCE

IWDA's Decolonial Framework and Strategy is based on the concepts and theories outlined below. This theoretical foundation has been drawn from the forthcoming book by IWDA's current Director of Systemic Change and Partnerships, Dr Salmah Eva-Lina Lawrence; *Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World*<sup>3</sup> and is reproduced with permission in the italicised sections below.

In this section we define the following concepts: whiteness, Majority World/Minority World, modernity, modernity and an ethics of relational autonomy, and coloniality and colonialism. We then set out some principles of decoloniality which will guide the work of IWDA.

## WHITENESS

*'Whiteness' is used by critical race theorists to mean a system or culture that discriminates based on race, specifically the perceived superiority of white peoples and white cultures. Whiteness describes a particular set of practices, many of which have become institutionalised in many parts of the world including in international development.*

*Whiteness can be practised by any individual regardless of race. In international development, this practice is visible in the assumption that so-called 'experts' from the so-called 'developed' world have sufficient knowledge of local contexts to generate appropriate solutions, even when they lack linguistic and cultural fluency - that is, they speak none of the local languages and know nothing of complex local histories, social organisation and power dynamics.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. *Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World*. Forthcoming 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. *Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World*. London. Forthcoming 2024



'Whiteness' is, therefore, separate to an individual's observable traits like skin colour. Whiteness is symbolic of specific social meanings and assumptions, including privilege and worldviews encompassing beliefs, practices, policies, procedures etc.

Because of colonialism and continuing coloniality, whiteness is considered to be a neutral societal norm. IWDA chooses to make visible how this structural barrier influences social and economic privilege and maintains hierarchies. The 'discrimination based on race' that forms the basis of this system has two mutually-reinforcing aspects; the privilege accruing to white people (due to their supposed superiority) and the oppression that other-than-white people are subject to (following from their inferred inferiority).

### MAJORITY WORLD/MINORITY WORLD

*The 'developing' world is the demographic majority on the planet.*

*It is also the sociological majority united by an ethics of relationality and balance that underpins the diverse social, economic, and epistemic<sup>5</sup> systems which contrast starkly with the competitive individualist ethics, growth-based economies and binary knowledge systems of the 'developed world'.*

*The Majority World encompasses populations designated as the 'global south'—some of whom exist in the 'developed' world. It is also populations of First Nations/First Peoples in colonial settler states and it is also populations designated as peoples of colour in Europe, the UK, and in white settler states.*

*The Minority World is the approximately 15% of the planetary population who classify themselves as 'developed'.<sup>6</sup>*

IWDA chooses to use the term 'Majority World' in place of 'global south', 'developing world' or 'third world', and 'Minority World' in place of 'global north', 'developed world' or 'first world'. This is a political choice, as using this language demonstrates that 'global south' populations and cultures are in the global majority, thereby challenging the problematic hierarchies implied by other commonly-utilised terminology.

### MODERNITY

*Modernity is both a social phenomenon and an historical era. As an historical era, most decolonial theorists date it to the arrival of Columbus in the Americas. The idea of race as a hierarchy, with white men at the top of the hierarchy was first publicly debated in Europe shortly after the arrival of Columbus in the Americas, as the Europeans sought to justify their seizure of land and other resources.*

*As a social phenomenon, modernity is characterised, inter alia<sup>7</sup>, by technological advancement through the paradigm of science, and the idea of civilisational progress as linear and hierarchical; dated by many as commencing with the Enlightenment. Other aspects of modernity include accumulation, extractivism, entitlement, exploitation, expropriation, coercion, certainty, control, conformity, compliance, cruelty, commodification, competition and consumption. Because modernity is both a social phenomenon and an historical era, it is used as an analytic concept and also as a normative<sup>8</sup> ideal.*

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5 Relating to knowledge

6 Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. London: Zed Books. Forthcoming 2022

7 Among other things

8 Establishing, relating to, or deriving from a standard or norm, especially of behaviour.

*As an analytic concept modernity is used to explain and understand history and helps to explain how things actually are in the world.*

*As a normative concept, however, modernity is used to show how things **should** be in the world which, in the context of modernity, means that if there are places in the world that are not modern, then they **should** be modernised.*

*Modernity is the normative ideal of international development, that is, international development is based on the premise that European modernity is the way that all places and all people **should** be organised whether or not their cultures have the same ethical, historical or religious roots as European cultures and their settler societies, and regardless of the clear and present dangers that European modernity has for global ecological balance and the life chances of future human generations<sup>9</sup>.*

### MODERNITY AND AN ETHICS OF RELATIONAL AUTONOMY

*One example of why this normative ideal is deeply problematic is that European modernity is synonymous with an ethics of competitive individualism.*

*The Pacific, indeed much of the Majority World, has an ethics which is both relational and individualistic. In places this is known as relationality, in others it is known as relational autonomy. Relationships and interconnectedness matter. In fact, relationality and respect for individual autonomy are foundational to reality in the preponderance of the Majority World. This is why across the Pacific, Africa and Latin America the meaning of family is extended. It is not the nuclear family of European modernity. The extended family is very important to how personhood, subjectivity, social structures, and even the more modern concept of identity, are constructed in the Majority World. There is, therefore, a clear conflict with the premise of international development, that European modernity and its ethics of competitive individualism and unrestricted autonomy is appropriate for other places on the planet.<sup>10</sup>*

IWDA understands that although modernity may have its benefits, it has also been extremely harmful to Majority World peoples, limiting their autonomy, erasing their languages and cultures, and creating social exclusions and hierarchies where none existed before colonialism. These include hierarchies of race and gender.

### COLONIALITY

*Coloniality is theorised as a system of ‘power over’ and it is embedded in modernity and the modern era in which we live. It is a theory developed by a group of primarily Latin American thinkers which coalesced around 1998 into the modernity/coloniality matrix.*

*Coloniality is an analytic concept to understand global and inter-cultural relations of power. Coloniality is exercised through a matrix of hierarchies that were constructed to justify seizure of land, enslavement, genocide and colonisation.*

*A key feature of coloniality is that European values have been imposed on others under the pretext that these values are universal and globally applicable. In the process, different ways of being, knowing, doing, relating, perceiving and living have been violently extinguished meaning that coloniality has been extremely harmful to peoples whose ethnicities, histories, religions and cultures are not European-derived.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. London. Forthcoming 2024

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. London. Forthcoming 2024

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. London. Forthcoming 2024

At IWDA we understand that the colonial values of separation, entitlement, exploitation, unceasing growth, artificial scarcity, competition, commodification, coercion, certainty, and control promulgated throughout the world are also harmful to significant portions, if not all, people in European-derived cultures.

### Colonialism

Colonialism is one expression of coloniality. Colonialism is “some combination of territorial, juridical, cultural, linguistic, political, mental/epistemic, and/ or economic invasion and subsequent domination of a group of people or groups of people by another group of people”<sup>12</sup>.

*Even though political decolonisation has occurred across most of the planet, coloniality continues through the insidious hierarchies that influence interactions between nation-states and individuals.*<sup>13</sup>

### Settler Colonialism

“Settler colonialism is different from other forms of colonialism in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain.”<sup>14</sup> In order for the settlers to make a place their home, they must eliminate and assimilate the Indigenous peoples that live there.<sup>15</sup> The land now called Australia is a settler-colonial state.

### Coloniality of Race

*There is no biological evidence for race in the manner that it is used to promote white superiority by colonial forces. Nonetheless, racial categories have generated systematic racism based on the supposed superiority of the white race.*

*Decolonial theorists call this the coloniality of race and refer to it as a specific mechanism of ‘power-over’. Having asserted the superiority of their race to themselves and others, the European colonial elite next asserted the superiority of their reality, knowledge and values over others. This mechanism continues to play out in international development.*<sup>16</sup>

### Coloniality of Knowledge

*The knowledge hierarchy includes the insistence that the only valid knowledge production is in the Minority World. This knowledge hierarchy has been crucial in the maintenance of the domination of whiteness, such that Majority World peoples are relegated to the role of needy recipients of Eurocentric ideas and practices, and dependent on Eurocentric production of knowledge.*<sup>17</sup>

### International Development & Coloniality

*Significantly different ethical systems, and the practices that arise from them, are rarely considered let alone given prominence in mainstream international development. And ‘beneficiaries’ of development interventions are rarely, if ever, allowed to participate as equally knowledgeable, if not more so, about their context and community, than the ‘development expert’.*<sup>18</sup>

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12 Murrey, A. 2020. Colonialism. International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography. A. Kobayashi, Elsevier, 315

13 Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. London. Forthcoming 2024

14 Tuck, Eve & Yang, K. Wayne, “Decolonization is not a metaphor”, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, p5.

15 Tuck, Eve & Yang, K. Wayne, “Decolonization is not a metaphor”, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, p5.

16 Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. Forthcoming 2024.

17 Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. Forthcoming 2024.

18 Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World. Forthcoming 2024.

At IWDA, we understand that international development is based on the myth of European superiority.

The sector's historical roots can be found in the assistance that was offered by colonial powers to their former colonies as the latter began to achieve independence. Offered as a means to continue the colonial and missionising objectives of 'civilising' the populations of the colonies in order to turn them into the image of the coloniser, this 'assistance' was the forerunner of today's 'aid'.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the exit of colonial powers from Majority World jurisdictions, they have managed to retain a high level of institutional power in the form of the international aid infrastructure – another matrix of power within coloniality. International NGOs like IWDA are part of this institutional power. We believe it is imperative that all Minority World international development actors confront our complicity in maintaining these power structures with the objective of transforming them to be equitable.

International development is, therefore, deeply embedded in colonialism. As it is based on the myth of European superiority, racism is systemic within this sector. Furthermore, the implicit assumption that underpins international development interventions is that poverty will be abolished and prosperity will flourish if all societies were modelled in the manner of the Minority World. However, **Minority World privilege is subsidised by ongoing exploitation, expropriation and oppression of the Majority World.** It is impossible for the whole world to achieve the 'dream' of a middle-class lifestyle without the ongoing existence of modern-day slavery.<sup>20</sup>

What is often made invisible is the reality that poverty in the Majority World is a direct consequence of ongoing oppression perpetrated by the Minority World through global socio-economic frameworks, including crippling debt, tariffs, monetary exchange rates and unequal human and natural 'resource' flows.<sup>21</sup> For example, between 1990-2015, for every dollar of foreign aid, Western donors extracted 80 dollars of resources by unfair exchanges.

Whether conscious or not, the norms underpinning international development, therefore, include: power-over, unexamined cultural arrogance, race-based discrimination and the erasure of Majority World systems of being, doing, knowing, relating and perceiving.

Choices in how we approach development practice, including, what we deem to be legitimate forms of development, partnership, knowledge, decision-making or evidence often perpetuate these systems of coloniality, thereby undermining the legitimacy and strength of local and indigenous ways of being, doing, knowing, relating and perceiving.

### Feminism & Coloniality

Majority World women have long been portrayed by Western feminists as victims in need of saving, as, relative to white women, Majority World women are theorised to lack control over their bodies and lives.<sup>22</sup> This dynamic plays out in the gender and development field too, where the inherent assumption is that white, Minority World women and their gender relations are superior to those of Majority World women and how they conduct their gender relations.<sup>23</sup> White feminists have also tended to prioritise solidarity on the basis of gender

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19 Mpfu, B. and S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019). Introduction Rethinking and Unthinking Development in Africa. Rethinking and Unthinking Development. B. Mpfu and S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Berghahn Books: 1-24.

20 <http://slaveryfootprint.org/>

21 Christian Dorninger, Alf Hornborg, David J. Abson, Henrik von Wehrden, Anke Schaffartzik, Stefan Giljum, John-Oliver Engler, Robert L. Feller, Klaus Hubacek and H. Wieland. 2021. Global patterns of ecologically unequal exchange: Implications for sustainability in the 21st century. *Ecological Economics* 179: 106824.

22 Mohanty, C.T., "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", *Boundary 2*, 12, 1984. And C.f., Burton, A. M. The white woman's burden: British Feminists and The Indian Woman, 1865-1915. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13(4), 1990: 295-308; Jones-Rogers, S. E. They were her property: White women as slave owners in the American South. 2019; SYED, J., & ALI, F. The White Woman's Burden: from colonial "civilisation" to Third World "development." *Third World Quarterly*, 32(2), 2011, 349-365.

23 When we refer to 'women' in this document we mean cis-women, intersex, trans and non-binary people.

over other categories of oppression. This tendency has the effect of making invisible the incredible diversity of lived experiences of women from the Majority World. It also works to absolve the 'white'<sup>24</sup> woman of any implication in the subordination of other women.<sup>25</sup> When positioning themselves as 'sisters in struggle', 'white' women do not have to confront their own culpability within coloniality.

Furthermore, the oppressive logic of colonial modernity, which is intrinsic to the gender and development sector, assumes problematic universal categories like 'man' and 'woman' or 'black' and 'white'. However, the reality of the intersectionality of race, class, sexuality and gender, as well as the irreducible richness of life experiences more generally, far exceeds these narrow colonial categories.<sup>26</sup>

### PRINCIPLES OF DECOLONIALITY

Given the harmful, oppressive and violent impacts of coloniality on Majority World people, and the fact that international development has deep roots in modernity and coloniality, it is clear that organisations like IWDA, located in the Minority World and engaged in the development sector, must take action to decolonise our practice. This is critical both for achievement of our stated aims and if we are to have legitimacy in engagements with global feminist movements.

Below are a set of five principles of decoloniality that will underpin this transformation. These principles are drawn from the forthcoming Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World.<sup>27</sup>

#### PRINCIPLE 1

##### **Perspective, framing and diversity matter.**

We inhabit a planet with an incredible diversity of humans and other life forms. Where we are emplaced – geographically, geopolitically, culturally, and in a myriad of other intersecting ways – shapes the way we interact with the world. Respecting diversity necessarily means that we respect historical and cultural variation. On a planet as diverse as ours, one cannot generate sustainable or ethical solutions without multiple diverse voices framing the issues that matter and how they should be addressed.

#### PRINCIPLE 2

##### **Pluri-verse not uni-verse.**

A decolonial approach rejects the idea of a "uni-verse" or "uni-versal" approaches, which imply a single way of being, knowing, doing, relating and perceiving. A decolonial approach embraces the idea of a "pluri-verse", meaning that we understand there are multiple, different and equal ways of being, knowing and doing, relating and perceiving.

#### PRINCIPLE 3

##### **Power with. Anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, anti-oppression.**

Power with(in) is a feature of decoloniality, power over is a feature of modernity/coloniality and power to achieve certain goals or outcomes is a feature of both. Power with(in) necessitates a constant negotiation between parties and the structures to support it must be institutionalised via both procedural and substantive measures, that is through both legal frameworks and social engagements to challenge and change norms.

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24 'White' here refers to a system or culture that discriminates based on race, specifically the perceived superiority of white people.

25 Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack, *The Race to Innocence: Confronting Hierarchical Relations among Women*, 1 *J. Gender Race & Just.* 335, 1998.

26 Lugones, Maria, *Toward a Decolonial Feminism*, *Hypatia* vol. 25. No. 4, 2010.

27 Lawrence, Salmah Eva-Lina. *Decolonising International Development: The view from the Majority World*. Forthcoming 2024.

A decolonial approach rejects racism, discrimination and the use of 'power-over' others (although soft indirect forms of influence and persuasion remain possible). It pro-actively works to oppose systems of subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic and political benefit of the more powerful social group.

#### **PRINCIPLE 4**

##### **Rights and responsibilities are equally important.**

This relationship between rights and responsibilities is blurred in the Minority World where personhood is defined in the context of competitive individualism – the individual is given prominence over collective and relational wellbeing and the economic system of neo-liberal capitalism is made possible by, and in turn, promotes accumulation, exploitation and oppression. A decolonial approach recognises that our collective wellbeing is linked to the relational responsibilities or obligations we have towards each other and other life forms.

#### **PRINCIPLE 5**

##### **Humility matters.**

In a pluriverse of multiple ways of being, knowing, doing, relating and perceiving, no one individual or group has all the answers to human well-being or cultivating the flourishing of life, more generally.<sup>23</sup> A decolonial approach, therefore, encourages us to 'sit with' issues, situations, problems, engagements or decisions when it is not clear what the best course of action is, at this point in time.

**GIVEN THE HARMFUL, OPPRESSIVE AND VIOLENT IMPACTS OF COLONIALITY ON MAJORITY WORLD PEOPLE, AND THE FACT THAT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT HAS DEEP ROOTS IN MODERNITY AND COLONIALITY, IT IS CLEAR THAT ORGANISATIONS LIKE IWDA, LOCATED IN THE MINORITY WORLD AND ENGAGED IN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR, MUST TAKE ACTION TO DECOLONISE OUR PRACTICE.**

# **HISTORY MATTERS, CULTURE MATTERS, POSITIONALITY MATTERS.**

## SECTION 2

# STRATEGY

As individuals, organisations and partners we are embedded in systems of oppression that seek to limit our ability to think, feel and act outside of dominant paradigms. Success means being consistently attentive to, and honest about, how colonial paradigms are operating and the ways in which dominant ways of being, doing, knowing, relating and perceiving are playing out in our activities and relationships.





Though the *destination* of true decoloniality lies on the horizon, it is through *presence* and *practice* that we make progress towards this goal. We must take steps, sometimes circuitous, not often linear, to acknowledge, dismantle, reimagine and transform the colonial hierarchies and dominations that are present in all aspects of our work.

As such, the second section of this document draws on the analysis and principles outlined above and applies these to three sites of transformation; within our development practice, within our internal practice, and within ourselves. Each of the sections below outlines our aspirations for transformation within each site, the ways we seek to put decolonial principles into practice, as well as a set of commitments that we will hold ourselves accountable for within the period of our current strategic plan (2025).



## IWDA'S 4S FRAMEWORK AND DECOLONIALITY

Starting out as the 3S Framework<sup>28</sup> and expanded to the 4S Framework in 2023, this is a practical tool to support IWDA to determine when to:

<p><b>STEP UP</b> and use our power to leverage resources and access for women's rights and feminist organisations, and make our own contribution to feminist movements</p> 	<p><b>STAND WITH</b> feminist movements in solidarity and amplify the work of Majority World actors</p> 
<p><b>STEP BACK</b> when others are better placed to take the lead</p> 	<p><b>SIT WITH</b> uncertainty, embrace communal learning and deep listening, and accept that time is needed to collectively discern the best course of action<sup>29</sup></p> 

The 4S Framework aims to support IWDA staff and board to understand when our organisational whiteness, location in the Minority World and our cultural fluency within a white, colonial society confers power to us that we can wield to further the interests of Minority World women and political agendas (*step up*). Based on the principles of co-constitution, co-liberation and power-with, we can *stand with* women and feminist movements from the Majority World in solidarity, when we have common or shared goals or the opportunity for knowledge exchange. We *step back* from spaces, decisions and issues, where we are not best-placed and/or our positionality as a Minority World actor is unhelpful, unwelcome or damaging or simply unnecessary. When deciding to 'step back' and to 'sit with' we must be careful that we are not perpetuating injustices by remaining silent.

Being alert to the principle and practice of humility, we also need to lean into our own insufficiency, uncertainties as well as the unknown and imperceptible by experimenting with when to 'sit with' the perplexing, confusing or ambivalent. A decolonial approach should also ensure that we are challenging coloniality and applying decolonial principles to our work no matter whether we are stepping up, standing with, stepping back or sitting with.

## IWDA'S RIVER OF CHANGE

IWDA's River of Change commenced implementation in July 2021. The River of Change is a road map for action to address racism, diversity and inclusion at IWDA, and came about in response to allegations of institutional racism made against IWDA in late 2020.

28 A practical tool developed by IWDA based on the framework proposed by Shirley Walters and Shauna Butterwick in their 2017 publication *Moves to Decolonise Solidarity Through Feminist Popular Education* and introduced to us at the 13th AWID International Forum in Bahia, Brazil, in 2016. Walters, S., Butterwick, S. *Moves to Decolonise Solidarity Through Feminist Popular Education*. In: Kotze, A.v., Walters, S. (eds) *Forging Solidarity*. International Issues in Adult Education. SensePublishers, Rotterdam, 2017

29 IWDA is grateful to Professor Yin Paradies for his suggestion to adopt this fourth S.

As a result of these events, and an ensuing organisational culture review, IWDA staff co-created a plan to address 12 key cultural issues within the organisation including; representation of women of colour; reporting of racism; responding to micro-aggressions; equity in work contracts; First Nations and Reconciliation; and intersections (carers, language, age and belief/practice differences).

At the time of publishing this Strategy, IWDA has made the following changes as part of our River of Change plan:

### Strategy commitment & resourcing

- Published an organisational statement on our commitment to anti-racism, including an apology for harm done, on our website: [iwda.org.au/who-we-are/accountability/commitment-to-diversity-inclusion-and-anti-racism](http://iwda.org.au/who-we-are/accountability/commitment-to-diversity-inclusion-and-anti-racism)
- Hired IWDA's first Culture and Transformation Advisor
- Established new staff working groups focused on Women of Colour, First Nations justice, disability inclusion and LGBTQIA+ inclusion and rights
- Established a River of Change Steering group
- Developed a River of Change theory of change linked to organisational culture
- Commenced a review of Behavioural Competency Framework
- Participated in the Inclusion at Work Index survey from the Diversity Council Australia, achieving "Inclusive Employer" accreditation in 2021 and 2023

### Representation

- 50% Women of Colour on our Board
- First Woman of Colour appointed in the CEO role, increasing representation of Executive Leadership Team to 60%

### Process and system improvement

- Introduced a de-biased recruitment system (Applied) to ensure we are doing all we can to remove unconscious bias from our recruitment processes
- Tweaked the way we use Applied to take an affirmative action approach and boost candidates with relevant cultural competence in the regions where we work

### Capability development

- Introduced inclusion learning modules: First Nations, Cultural Diversity, LGBTQIA+, Disability, Generational Diversity and Gender Equity
- Introduced bespoke anti-racism blended learning program (6 sessions)
- Introduced First Nations cultural competence program
- Introduced annual Trans and gender diversity learning sessions
- Introduced a management development program to create consistent management practices

### Policy

- Adopted a new approach to employment contracts to ensure a majority of staff are now on permanent contracts
- Reviewed all people-related policies in consultation with staff to address and/or remove any systemic/process-related bias or discrimination
- Improved the following policies; Respect and Dignity at Work, Inclusive Leave, Performance Development, Code of Conduct, Recruitment & Selection, Personal & Professional Development
- Developed inclusive meeting guidelines

### **Safeguarding and incident reporting**

- Implemented the #NotMe misconduct reporting application to capture incidences of micro-aggressions
- Established Respect & Dignity at Work Contact Officer Network, with members also gaining Mental Health First Aid accreditation
- Introduced culturally responsive and intersectional wellbeing counselling services

### **IWDA AND FIRST PEOPLES JUSTICE**

As an Australia-based organisation, IWDA acknowledges the deep and painful history of racism, genocide, forced displacement, theft and dehumanisation in Australia that stems from our history as a settler-colonial nation state and continues to thrive in our institutions and communities today.

IWDA cannot talk about challenging coloniality without committing to First Peoples justice globally. This strategy will focus on IWDA’s understanding and commitments to decoloniality broadly. A First Nations Justice working group has been established at IWDA to develop a framework and strategy that looks specifically at what it means to be a white dominated organisation in a settler-colonial state and how IWDA should address the tensions inherent in doing international development work while living and working on unceded First Peoples Land.

### **SITES OF TRANSFORMATION**

The following three sites of transformation - Our Development Practice, Our Internal Practice, Our Selves - are nested, as illustrated in the diagram. Transformation in all three sites is necessary for IWDA to move towards the destination of true decoloniality.



## WITHIN OUR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

This site of transformation includes our grantee partnerships, movement strengthening, systemic change, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge translation work. As an organisation, we must regularly ask ourselves how we “reproduce [...] colonization [and coloniality] in our work”<sup>30</sup>. We must uncover the unconscious and implicit hierarchies, beliefs, practices and assumptions that are rooted in systems of whiteness and coloniality and embedded in international development practice. In order to do this, we must transform our practice under each of the following strategies included in our Strategic Plan 2025:

### STRATEGY 1

#### **We resource diverse women’s rights organisations primarily in Asia and the Pacific with money, skills and access**

IWDA’s approach has always been rooted in the belief that women’s rights and feminist organisations, firmly rooted in local communities and context are most effective at defending and advancing their own rights agenda. This is why we do not have offices in the countries where we work and instead work through partnership-based approaches with local, grassroots, women’s rights organisations. A decolonial approach acknowledges that context, culture and perspective are vitally important. As such, we strive to resource our grantee partners’ own strategies based on their own culturally embedded analysis and framing of problems/issues and solutions/responses. This type of decolonial support requires that we provide flexible, core, long-term funding to our grantee partners. As such, we have committed in our strategic plan to ‘sustain and improve flexible funding, which includes multi-year, core support for diverse women’s rights organisations’. In order to provide this kind of decolonial funding, we must also advocate to our back donors to encourage them to take a decolonial approach to their funding practices, so we can pass this on to our grantee partners.

Our strategic plan also commits us to work collaboratively with women’s rights organisations to identify effective support that goes beyond money, taking actions to decolonise our approach and focus on feminist methods of mutual learning and accompaniment, in the spirit of co-constitution/co-liberation and power-with(in).

### STRATEGY 2

#### **We support global and regional convening and strengthening of movements to advance gender equality**

IWDA defines resilient, vibrant feminist movements as groups of people and organisations who have connection to constituency, invest in relationships of trust, can leverage their diversity, and who have co-developed an intersectional, feminist analysis of issues to collaboratively realise a common vision for change. Our Feminist Movement Strengthening Framework outlines the ways in which IWDA can ‘step up, stand with and step back’ to strengthen diverse feminist movements.

The framework is built on the fundamental assumption that the individuals most impacted by structural inequalities must drive any movement for change. So, when there are shared or common struggles across Minority and Majority Worlds, IWDA can, and must, step up to address them. When issues are specific to Majority World grantee partner countries or communities, we can stand with those groups in solidarity and support, when invited. But, when there are struggles where our positionality as a Minority World actor with roots in coloniality is potentially harmful, unwelcome, or stagnating, we must step back to make space for the leadership of Majority World actors to lead.

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30 Dr Shose Kessi, “Decolonise Knowledge’ lecture, 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ammCLyIRjfQ>

### STRATEGY 3

#### **We transform discourse on gender equality through knowledge creation and translation**

IWDA's Knowledge Translation Framework outlines the variety of roles that IWDA will take across three different types of knowledge translation activities: knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination, and knowledge use for influence. The framework uses the "3S" typology to demonstrate the different ways IWDA can undertake each type of activity. IWDA may play different roles across various stages of knowledge translation. For example, IWDA may step back and support others with funding and resources to create new knowledge; stand with others by sharing that knowledge through our networks; and step up by putting that knowledge directly in the hands of policy-makers for targeted use and influence. This also means being willing to 'sit with' knowledge creation, dissemination and translation, until an appropriate ethically-sound application for it arises.

Where we produce or contribute to feminist knowledge production, dissemination or targeted advocacy for use, we must be informed by principles of anti-racist, anti-discrimination and anti-oppression, both/and thinking alongside holistic pattern-thinking combining reason, emotion, intuition and imagination. We also strive to utilise methodologies and approaches that move at the speed of trust, centre lived experience, dialogue, engagement and collaboration, are power-sensitive and reflect an understanding of the importance of framing, context, history and ripple effects.

### STRATEGY 4

#### **We leverage our locational power for advocacy and influence**

In certain spheres, our organisational whiteness, location in the Minority World and our cultural fluency within a white, colonial society confers power to us that we can wield to further the interests of Minority World women, feminist movements and political agendas. As such, we are committed to using and extending our identity, locational power and fluency by contributing to collective action coalitions for policy and advocacy influence and to influence formal and informal systems of power and individuals in support of changes to policy, resourcing and gender norms. However, we must also ensure that by using our locational power in this way we are not implicitly reproducing and reinforcing harmful systems, beliefs and practices of coloniality and power-over.

### STRATEGY 5

#### **We ensure our own organisational sustainability, wellbeing, diversity and feminist practice**

IWDA will work to ensure our organisation is financially-resilient with a diverse income base, able to navigate a constantly shifting economic landscape. We will strive for environmental sustainability, both as a business practice and to ensure our collective future in a climate-affected world. Diversity, wellbeing and a vibrant organisational culture are critical to ensure IWDA is an inclusive and resilient workplace. IWDA is committed to disability inclusion, helping make visible the nature and impact of overlapping sources of discrimination experienced by women, girls, trans and non-binary people with disabilities and addressing the barriers that undermine their full inclusion and participation. We are committed to addressing racial injustice wherever it pervades, including within our own organisation. We endeavour to listen, learn and act to become an explicitly anti-racist feminist organisation. We must first acknowledge that present-day Australia is built on a colonial legacy of oppression. We acknowledge the deep and painful history of racism in Australia that stems from colonisation and continues to thrive in our institutions and communities today, and commit to advancing First Nations justice. We will continually grow our feminist and decolonial practice so that we can contribute to the feminist movement and achieve our vision of gender equality for all.

**FRAMING MATTERS  
BECAUSE THERE IS A  
DIRECT RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE  
AND POWER.**

## Principles in Practice

This site of transformation sets out how IWDA understands and employs the decolonial principles described in Section 1.

Within IWDA's Development Practice we will:

1. **Reframe how we frame.** Framing matters because there is a direct relationship between knowledge and power. Whoever controls the framing, controls the narrative and controls what stories can be told at all, which parts of the story get told and how, whose problems, concerns and issues matter, and which are considered worth focusing on and addressing. This means we must challenge the knowledge hierarchy in all our design, monitoring, evaluation, learning and knowledge translation work. This means we must listen and be open to discomfort through courageous conversations with our Majority World grantee partners.
2. **Take a learning mindset.** We will seek to understand and acknowledge the rich diversity of indigenous knowledges, – ethical frameworks, social organisation and knowledge creation systems within the Asia and the Oceanic Pacific region and the rest of the Majority World, while remembering that colonisation has violently exterminated many of these systems. History matters, culture matters, positionality matters. This means championing language justice, championing culturally embedded design and practice, and taking a learning mindset to the people and cultures we engage with.
3. **Use 'Power With(in)' decision making.** This will require a constant evolution of our structures, systems and processes to ensure the decentralisation of power and ensure distributed egalitarian emergent consensus-based decision making is driven by the people and communities who will be most affected by our work, including the recognition of their skills, abilities and capabilities.
4. **Embrace Co-Constitution.** We acknowledge that the Majority and Minority worlds are inextricably linked, intertwined and mutually reinforcing. We embrace this pluri-directionality of knowledge and wealth in our development practice so as to attend to the ongoing multifaceted potential for co-liberations.

## Commitments

IWDA commits to the following actions within this site of transformation for (at least) the life of the current strategic plan:

1. To grant a minimum of \$4.5 million Australian dollars annually, including multi-year, core support to diverse women's rights organisations – a total of \$22.5 million over five years (between 2021-2026)
2. Integrate the recommendations in *Creating Equitable South North Partnerships: Nurturing the Vā and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean Together*<sup>31</sup> into our partnerships, systemic change and knowledge translation work
3. Ensure our practice adheres to the 4S framework embedded in organisational frameworks
4. Ensure our Monitoring, Evaluation and MEL systems differentiate our work from the work of the women's rights organisations we fund; utilise mixed methods that acknowledge diverse ways of knowing and hierarchies of power; and embed accountability in multiple directions.
5. Undertake a process to analyse and redress the types of power IWDA brings into its practice (symbolic, economic, political, knowledge/language, relational, material, positional)

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31 Guttenbeil-Likiliki, 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka, *Creating Equitable South-North Partnerships: Nurturing the Va and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean Together*, Melbourne, IWDA, 2020

6. Work with our grantee partners to ensure we all have a common understanding of, and vocabulary for, colonisation, coloniality and decolonisation

### WITHIN OUR INTERNAL PRACTICE

This site of transformation includes our internal policies and practices, including governance, people and culture, communications, fundraising and operations. Deepening our commitment to diversity and inclusion is important in the context of adopting a decolonial approach, because the more diverse our staff and board, the more multiple, diverse voices and perspectives will be involved in framing decisions and strategies. This diversity of perspectives will contribute to the broader project of challenging the systems of coloniality embedded in our internal culture, practices and policies.

As a feminist, decolonial organisation, IWDA must also work to decentralise its decision-making structures in line with the decolonial principle of 'power with', balancing this imperative with the need to manage workloads and maintain efficiency.

### Principles in Practice

Within IWDA's Internal Practice we will:

1. **Embrace Plurality.** We will ensure our staff, board, volunteers and external consultants are diverse and will value and embrace the complex, plural ways of being, doing, knowing, relating and perceiving that accompany this multiplicity.
2. **Unpack whiteness** modernity, power-over and coloniality and the ways in which they show up in and are reproduced by our culture, policies and practices. Create spaces for courageous conversations, unlearning, relearning and understanding.
3. **Use Power-with(in)** not power-over. We will strive to cultivate a culture of collective action and decentralised decision making and we will acknowledge, engage with and strengthen the varied abilities, skills and talents of those working with our organisation.

### Commitments

IWDA commits to the following actions within this site of transformation for (at least) the life of the current strategic plan:

1. Implement safe systems to enable reporting of racism at IWDA
2. Increase the presence, participation and inclusion of women of colour at IWDA through improved recruitment processes, regular demographic surveys and consideration of quotas
3. Amend IWDA Constitution to allow for a co-chair model and ensure at least one of IWDA's Chairs has cultural heritage, understanding and lived experience in Asia and the Oceanic Pacific, where IWDA has a primary focus (Recommendation)
4. Maintain 50% presence of women of colour on IWDA's Board, particularly women with cultural heritage, understanding and lived experience in Asia and the Oceanic Pacific (Recommendation)
5. Ensure equity in work contracts between white women and women of colour to include equity in pay, compensation, access, and opportunities
6. Invest in periodic processes of consultation with and learning from women's rights and feminist movement actors, subject experts and relevant allies, to inform IWDA's understanding and strategies
7. Undertake a process to decolonise IWDA finance, risk and compliance systems
8. Review IWDA Behavioural Competency Framework to incorporate decolonial expectations
9. Develop a First Nations Justice Action Plan to ask and answer what it means to be a white dominated organisation in a settler-colonial state



## WITHIN OURSELVES

Since racist and colonial systems and institutions are created and held in place by many individual people, we each have a duty to do the personal inner work to analyse our relationship with whiteness and coloniality.<sup>32</sup> We must work to understand our own assumption, beliefs, behaviours and positions in relation to colonialism and racial and knowledge hierarchies. We must ask ourselves how our nationality, our religion, our language, our sexuality, our gender, our racialised identity, our indigeneity, our conceptual frameworks and our practices etc. have been, and continue to be, shaped by colonisation and coloniality,<sup>33</sup> and how this informs our individual approach to development and feminist practice.

Doing this work as individuals within IWDA is necessary in order to reframe our understanding of how to relate to other peoples, other countries and other cultures<sup>34</sup> and to begin to decolonise our own ways of being, doing, knowing, relating and perceiving.

### Principles in Practice

As individuals at IWDA we will:

1. **Be humble and honest.** We are not the 'experts' because in a pluriverse there can be no one single 'expert' or 'authority'. Be open, transparent and vulnerable in sharing with, and seeking support from others, in the ongoing journey of decolonisation, including a willingness to make, and learn from, unique mistakes, with an intention to not repeat the same mistakes again.
2. **Be curious and courageous.** We seek out diverse perspectives, framings, and ways of being, doing, knowing, relating and perceiving in everything we do. We educate ourselves on the histories, cultures, and contexts in which we practice and engage. We attend with courage, to what arises within ourselves in relation to colonial or racist assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours.
3. **Be anti-racist and anti-oppressive.** We actively reflect on our own privileges and power and work to prevent oppressive assumptions, beliefs and behaviours in ourselves and others, without judgement or condemnation.

### Commitments

IWDA commits to the following actions within this site of transformation for (at least) the life of the current strategic plan:

1. Address discrimination and micro-aggressions through anti-racism training, First Peoples cultural consciousness training, improved induction processes, and review of Code of Conduct and Behavioural Competencies Framework with a diversity and inclusion lens
2. Undertake individual and team-based reflection on decoloniality in our individual development and feminist practice
3. Cultivate safe spaces for unlearning, relearning and courageous conversations with Majority World partners that lead to meaningful transformation

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32 Saad, Layla F, *Me and White Supremacy: How to recognise your privilege, combat racism and change the world*, Quercus, 2020

33 Walter Mignolo. 2017. Interview - Walter Mignolo/Part 1: Activism and trajectory; Part 2: key concepts.

34 Priyamvada Gopal, Prof of Postcolonial Studies, University of Cambridge. *Insurgent Empire* (2019) and various interviews.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Each of the commitments detailed above are embedded in frameworks and plans which we are accountable for within IWDA's Strategic Plan Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework.

Each year IWDA commissions external consultants to undertake two reviews: a grantee partner perception review and a stakeholder perception review. The objective of these reviews is to obtain external feedback in order to provide IWDA with insights about the effectiveness and impact of our work to promote organisational learning, including around our progress towards a decolonial approach.

Each year IWDA's key achievements, outcomes and areas for improvement are analysed using the 4S Framework to explore where IWDA has successfully been able to 'Step Up', 'Stand With', 'Step Back' and 'Sit With' in relation to our grantee partners, fellow movement actors, allies, and stakeholders. This analysis is based on internal staff and Board reflection activities, drawing on inputs from the perception reviews and quantitative and qualitative data collected as part of our Strategic Plan MEL system. This is written up into our Annual Strategic Plan MEL Report which is made publicly available. These documents can be found here:

- a. <https://iwda.org.au/who-we-are/accountability/monitoring-evaluation-and-learning-report>
- b. <https://iwda.org.au/resource/iwda-partner-perception-review-2021-2022>
- c. <https://iwda.org.au/resource/iwda-stakeholder-perception-review-2021-2022>

An independent, external evaluation activity will also be undertaken in year 2 of the Strategic Plan which will investigate how well IWDA has implemented a decolonial approach, in particular how we have implemented the 4S Framework.

This document will be refreshed in line with IWDA's Strategic Plan cycle at which time progress towards completing the commitments made herein will be reviewed.

We also invite all those reading this document to hold IWDA accountable for the principles, practices and commitments we have made here. Our contact details are:

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**WE ARE NOT THE  
'EXPERTS' BECAUSE  
IN A PLURIVERSE  
THERE CAN BE NO  
ONE SINGLE 'EXPERT'  
OR 'AUTHORITY'.**

**ANNEX 1. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Available in July 2024 at [www.iwda.org.au](http://www.iwda.org.au)

## ANNEX 2. PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE ON A PAGE

### Principles In Practice

Within IWDA's Development Practice we will:

1. **Reframe how we frame.** Framing matters because there is a direct relationship between knowledge and power. Whoever controls the framing, controls the narrative and controls what stories can be told at all, which parts of the story get told and how, whose problems, concerns and issues matter, and which are considered worth focusing on and addressing. This means we must challenge the knowledge hierarchy in all our design, monitoring, evaluation, learning and knowledge translation work. This means we must listen and be open to discomfort through courageous conversations with-our Majority world grantee partners.
2. **Take a learning mindset.** We will seek to understand and acknowledge the rich diversity of indigenous knowledges, ethical frameworks, social organisation and knowledge creation systems within the Asia and the Oceanic Pacific region and the rest of the Majority World, while remembering that colonisation has violently exterminated many of these systems. History matters, culture matters, positionality matters. This means championing language justice, championing culturally embedded design and practice, and taking a learning mindset to the people and cultures we engage with.
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6. **Unpack whiteness** modernity, power-over and coloniality and the ways in which they show up in and are reproduced by, our culture, policies and practices. Create spaces for courageous conversations, unlearning, relearning and understanding.
7. **Use Power-with(in) not power-over.** We will strive to cultivate a culture of collective action and decentralised decision making and we will acknowledge, engage with and strengthen the varied abilities, skills and talents of those working with our organisation.

As individuals, we will

8. **Be humble and honest.** We are not the 'experts' because in a pluriverse there can be no one single 'expert' or 'authority'. Be open, transparent and vulnerable in sharing with, and seeking support from others, in the ongoing journey of decolonisation, including a willingness to make, and learn from, unique mistakes, with an intention to not repeat the same mistakes again.
9. **Be curious and courageous.** We seek out diverse perspectives, framings, and ways of **being, doing, knowing, relating and perceiving** in everything we do. We educate ourselves on the histories, cultures, and contexts in which we practice and engage. We attend with courage, to what arises within ourselves in relation to colonial or racist assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours.
10. **Be anti-racist and anti-oppressive.** We actively reflect on our own privileges and power and work to prevent oppressive assumptions, beliefs and behaviours in ourselves and others, without judgement or condemnation.

## ANNEX 3. DECOLONIAL DECISION MAKING

### Questions to guide decolonial decision-making in international development

There is no manual that sets out how to make decolonial decisions because the decolonial and the Majority Worlds are vast, complex, and fluid spaces. In addition, to bureaucratise decision-making by encoding it to become a rigid, predictable pattern is to practice coloniality.

Decolonial decision-making is, in fact, ethical decision-making. And ethical decision-making is about making judgments, evaluations, and choices based on defined principles. It is also about being explicit and transparent about how one has arrived at the decision. Ethical decision-making is not mechanical and not reactive. It is a process of conscious reflection and transparency of both process and results.

Decolonial decision-making is guided by decolonial principles. In addition, there are some basic questions that can guide this type of ethical decision-making.

- What are the specific reasons this action is considered decolonial?
- What are the possibilities that this action/decision could be complicit with the different forms of coloniality and why?
- In what ways does this action/decision honour the decolonial principles? How specifically?
- In what ways does this action/decision dishonour the decolonial principles? How specifically?
- What diverse voices have been considered in taking this action/decision? Why these voices in particular? Why not others?
- In the context of coloniality, what specific harms does this action/decision cause?
- Why is it acceptable to justify causing these harms?
- In what ways will this action/decision generate or maintain the external party's dependency on me or my organisation?
- In what ways will this action/decision decrease the external party's dependency on me or my organisation?
- When do I plan to review the results of this decision/action to assess whether it is still relevant and appropriate?

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 internationalwomensdevelopmentagency  
 iwda  
 iwdaorg  
 International Women's Development Agency  
(IWDA)

IWDA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land our office is located on, the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respects to their elders past and present.

**IWDA** INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY