

# **TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY FOR ALL**

**IWDA** INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY

**Strategic  
Framework  
2025-2035**



Lilly Be'Soer of Voice for Change.  
Photographer: Gemma Carr



# WHO WE ARE

**IWDA exists to defend and advance the rights of women, girls and gender-diverse people. Within the ecosystem of women's rights organisations, we are both for and of feminist movements.**

As an Australia-based organisation, we work for feminist movements by resourcing diverse women's rights and aligned organisations\*, primarily in Asia and the Pacific, with the money, skills and access they need to achieve their priorities. Their work is changing the reality on the ground for women, girls and gender-diverse people – providing life-saving services to those escaping violence, supporting women to lead and transform societies, equipping communities with the skills and knowledge they need to access their rights, and working from the local to the global to change the systems that limit them.

We are also part of feminist movements, making our own contributions through knowledge creation, advocacy and movement strengthening, to advance our vision of gender equality for all.

Our strength lies in how all aspects of our work connect and build on each other. Our focus on systemic change makes us a valued partner to women's rights and aligned organisations above and beyond funding. Through our locational power, and our standing as a trusted dialogue partner, we amplify Majority World\*\* priorities within the spaces we have access to and support more informed and responsive decision-making. Our long-term partnerships also provide opportunities for mutual learning and growth, making us a more effective, responsive and accountable partner.

In 1985, IWDA was founded to demonstrate that a different way of doing things was not only necessary – it was possible. With this strategy, we carry this history into the future of our work to advance gender equality for all.

\*We define 'aligned organisations' as those led by people facing intersectional marginalisation, such as Organisations of People with Disabilities and LGBTQIA+ organisations, who, through their distinct work, are bringing us closer to achieving gender equality for all.

\*\*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-used terminology.

# OUR STORY

**Over 40 years ago, gathered around a kitchen table, three Australian women came together to set in motion a powerful ripple for change. Our founders' idea was simple, but bold: an organisation for women, by women, in pursuit of gender equality.**

From the outset, Wendy Rose, Ruth Pfanner and Wendy Poussard embraced a different way of doing things. Believing in the power of partnerships rooted in respect, reciprocity and power-sharing, they prioritised working with local women's rights organisations who were driving change in their own communities.

This approach has deeply shaped the organisation we are today. Over the past four decades, IWDA has worked in partnership with 201 local, national and regional organisations across 37 countries and territories. Rather than establish country offices, we choose to stand alongside local organisations as they lead the way. Building these trusting, long-term partnerships have made us sharper, smarter and more effective. Together, we are building a wave of collective power demanding a more just and equitable world.

Feminist knowledge creation and advocacy to address the root causes of inequality have always been at the heart of our work. From early campaigning to ensure legislation in Australia was informed by the voices of those most affected, to our work today to advance intersectional feminist foreign policy approaches and transform the way poverty is measured – we believe that progress towards true, lasting gender equality for all can only be achieved by transforming the structures that underpin inequality.

While our roots lie in the development sector, our journey has brought us into global feminist movements. We define our unique identity as an organisation both for and of feminist movements – a dual role that allows us to challenge power structures while directly resourcing those working on the frontlines of gender justice.



A critical part of this journey has been recognising international development's deep roots in coloniality and the role that we, as a Minority World organisation, have played in perpetuating harm. Over the past decade, we have taken an intentional approach to understanding how we can decolonise our partnerships to create more equitable, power-aware relationships that model a different way of being for the development sector and ourselves. This has meant grappling with how these systems of power operate within IWDA. Since 2021, our River of Change – a plan for organisational culture transformation - has guided IWDA towards becoming an explicitly anti-racist organisation, nurturing a values-aligned culture and embedding feminist care in our work and practice. We know that there is no end-state to this work – it is something we continuously strive towards as we grow and learn.

In all that we do, IWDA is committed to challenging and disrupting the systems of oppression that negatively impact the lives of women, girls and gender diverse people. Throughout our history, we have not always gotten this right and know that we will make mistakes again – but we commit ourselves to always take accountability, learn, and repair.

**Together, we are building  
a wave of collective power  
demanding a more just  
and equitable world.**

# OUR VALUES

**As a feminist organisation deeply committed to decolonial values, how we work is as important as what we do. Our values are at the core of our unique identity and guide us in everything we do:**



## **FEMINIST**

We are inclusive and power aware, taking an intersectional and rights-based approach that not only addresses symptoms but also transforms the structures that underpin gender inequality. We centre collective care and wellbeing in all that we do as part of our work to dismantle systems of oppression in our practice and ourselves.



## **DECOLONIAL**

We are on a journey to decolonise our feminism and development practice, and continually take steps to acknowledge, dismantle, reimagine and transform the colonial structures that are present in all aspects of our work, our internal practice and within ourselves.



## **ACCOUNTABLE**

We are honest and transparent and are committed to evaluating and communicating the outcomes of our work with integrity. We are accountable to our partners, our supporters and, most of all, the diverse women we work with.



## **COLLABORATIVE**

We build trusting relationships and strong partnerships as we believe that advancing together with women's rights organisations and networks is crucial for achieving progressive change.



## **TRANSFORMATIVE**

We are determined to make real, lasting improvements in women's lives by working to transform the root causes of gender inequality and holding governments and decision makers accountable.



# HOW WE WORK

**Decolonisation is not an end state; it is ongoing and unlimited, and something we strive to apply to all aspects of our work.**

Through decolonial action, we seek to grow as an organisation, including deepening our capacities and capabilities. As part of this, we seek to understand and leverage our locational power so that we know when to:



## **STEP UP**

and use our power to leverage resources and access for women's rights and feminist organisations, and make our own contribution to feminist movements



## **STAND WITH**

feminist movements in solidarity and amplify the work of Majority World actors



## **STEP BACK**

when others are better placed to take the lead



## **SIT WITH**

uncertainty, embrace communal learning and deep listening, and accept that time is needed to collectively discern the best course of action\*

\*"Step Up, Stand With, Step Back" is an adaptation of the framework proposed by Shirley Walters and Shauna Butterwick in their 2017 publication *Moves to Decolonise Solidarity Through Feminist Popular Education*. We have added "Sit with" based on feedback provided to IWDA by Alfred Deakin Professor and Chair in Race Relations, Yin Paradies.

# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**By the time we reach our 50th year, we see IWDA standing in our power as a formidable force for feminist transformation.**

**In this future, our partnerships across Asia, the Pacific, and beyond, have deepened, and we are part of an interconnected ecosystem of solidarity and action. Our partners - resourced in a way that matches their true value - are transforming their contexts and communities while supporting women, girls and gender-diverse people to lead lives free of oppression. Feminist movements are more resourced, visible, and interconnected as they set the agenda for change at the local, national, regional, and global levels. The underlying drivers of gender inequality are widely exposed and challenged, with power holders accepting and adopting alternative systems that uphold feminist, decolonial, and anti-racist principles. Feminists across Australia and beyond see their values, ambitions, and power reflected in us. All this is enabled by a growing feminist funding base in Australia, alongside our continued collaboration with values-aligned philanthropy and global funders.**

**Together, we are reshaping the sector, proving that feminist-led development embracing decolonial values is not just possible—it is the future.**





To be a partner in this effort will require IWDA to **diversify** funding sources for ourselves and others in the ecosystem, and continually work to **decolonise** the sectors and movements we are part of, as well as ourselves. Our commitment to decoloniality is why we are choosing to no longer include thematic impact areas in our strategy, ensuring the work our partners are leading to create change in their contexts is not bound or siloed by our priorities.

Decolonising our approach will also mean using our locational power to make change in own backyard. We will expand our work in Australia, bringing skills and learnings from our experience to support a strengthened domestic feminist movement, connected to regional and global movements. Guided by the voices of our partners, we will advance gendered climate justice in Australia and bring our unique feminist lens to this work.

Creating transformative change will require us to **disrupt** the power structures that uphold inequality and marginalisation, working with feminist and aligned movements, and the allies who operate within these structures, to rebuild alternatives.

As an organisation, IWDA has always existed to **demonstrate** that a different way was possible. Guided by our values, our River of Change, our commitment to decolonisation, and the strength of our long history across the development sector and feminist movements, we believe that as our vision comes to life over the next 10 years, we will move closer to true gender equality for all.



**DIVERSIFY**



**DECOLONISE**



**DISRUPT**



**DEMONSTRATE**

# THE WORLD WE'RE OPERATING IN

**This strategy comes at a time of significant upheaval. Authoritarian and far-right political forces are gaining power across many parts of the world, targeting rights, sowing seeds of division and hate, closing civic space, and slashing funding to gender equality and social justice.**

Anti-rights movements are well-funded, organised, and deeply intertwined with anti-democratic forces. They are co-opting the language of human rights and infiltrating institutions, winding back or even reversing hard-won feminist gains.

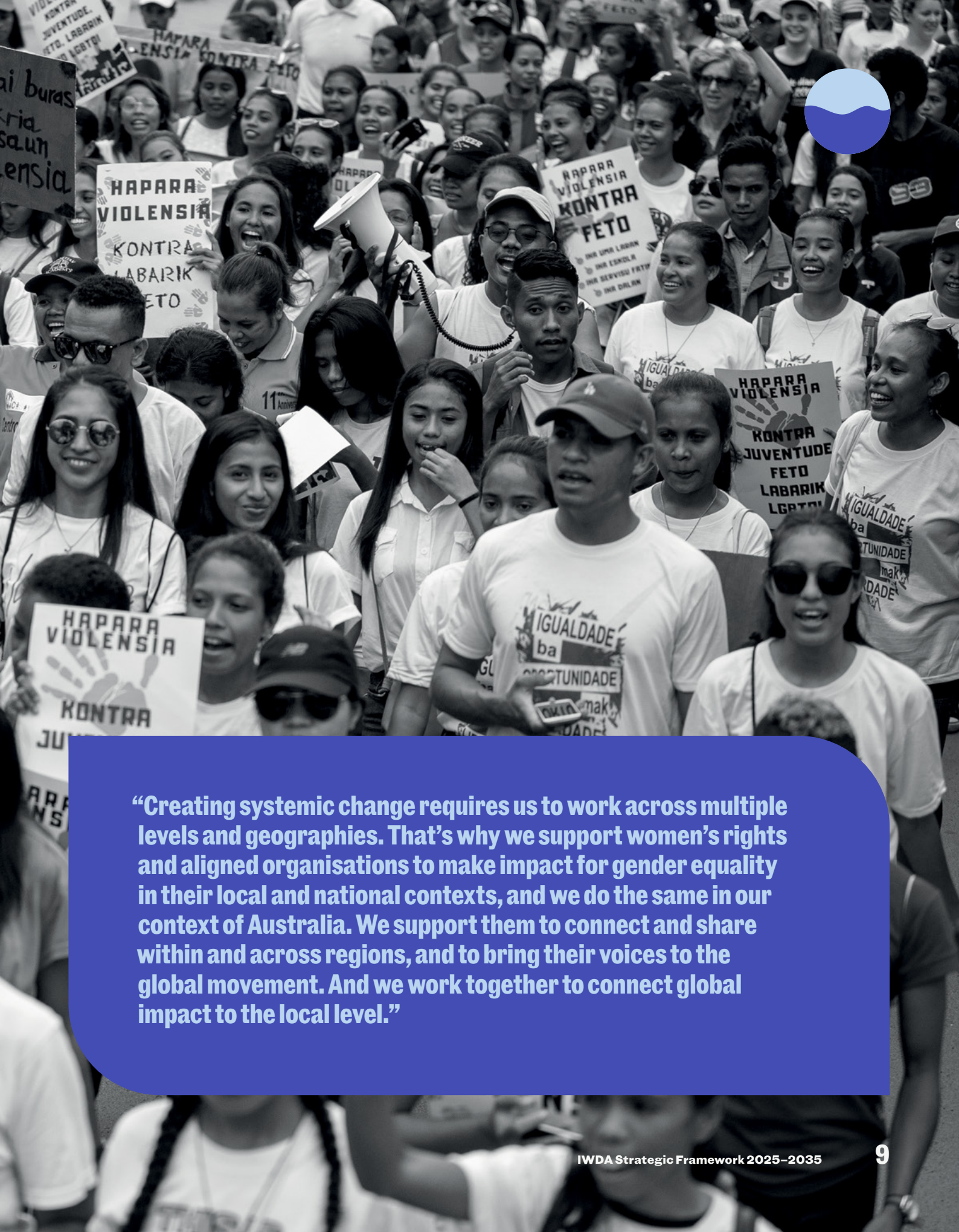
Economic downturns are creating a scarcity mindset, made worse by decades of neoliberal and extractive economic systems. This leaves women's rights and aligned organisations facing urgent, existential, and long-term threats, including to their funding sustainability.

The climate crisis is here: once-in-a-hundred-years disasters are now a regular occurrence, and conflict driven by resource scarcity is already impacting on women, girls and gender-diverse people. COVID-19 has highlighted our collective vulnerability to large scale disruptions, exacerbating the crisis of unpaid care and highlighting economic disparities.

Colonialism and imperialism are not things of the past – they are lived realities for many, whether enacted by physical violence or the insidious creep of structural violence via capitalist and digital colonisation.

**These trends are powerful forces of destruction. Our movements for justice must be stronger – acting as a powerful counterforce for resistance and renewal.**

Participants at an International Women's Day march in Dili, Timor-Leste.  
Photographer: Harjono Djoyobisono



**“Creating systemic change requires us to work across multiple levels and geographies. That’s why we support women’s rights and aligned organisations to make impact for gender equality in their local and national contexts, and we do the same in our context of Australia. We support them to connect and share within and across regions, and to bring their voices to the global movement. And we work together to connect global impact to the local level.”**

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

**From ripples to waves:  
feminist and decolonial pathways  
to gender equality for all**



**4S:**

**Step Up  
Stand With  
Step Back  
Sit With**



**4D:**

**Diversify  
Decolonise  
Disrupt  
Demonstrate**



## **Strategies**

- Shift resources to women's rights organisations
- Engage in movement strengthening
- Advance feminist & decolonial knowledge for change
- Demonstrate a values-aligned organisation



## **Grounding truths**

- Local knowledge matters
- Feminist movements are powerful
- Values matter
- Connected movements drive systems change
- Transform root causes and power structures





**Our Vision: Gender equality for all**

**Our Purpose: To defend and advance the rights of diverse women, girls and gender diverse people**



## Ripples

- Better & more equitably funded movements
- Majority World movements are centred
- More feminist-informed policy & decision-making
- IWDA models a different way of being



## Waves

- Systems of power uphold feminist and decolonial principles
- Diverse feminist & aligned movements set the agenda from the local to the global level
- IWDA stands as a formidable force for feminist transformation



## Guiding Star

Anchored by lessons from our 40-year history and guided by fiercely held feminist and decolonial values, IWDA's core strategies over the next 10 years will have created the interconnected waves of change required to address the root causes of injustice and, in solidarity with a diverse ecosystem of feminist movements, will be creating a gender equal future for all.

**Our values:**

★ Feminist @ Decolonial 👁 Accountable  
✿ Collaborative 🌱 Transformative



Sok Sreyleap, Sen Chanthou & Keo Tha,  
members of United Sisterhood Alliance,  
in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.  
Photographer: Erika Piñeros



# OUR THREE YEAR PLAN



## STRATEGY

# 1

## We mobilise, leverage and extend access to funding for diverse women's rights and aligned organisations, and engage in mutual learning and accompaniment

IWDA works to secure core, flexible, multi-year funding for local women's rights and aligned organisations, which are led by and working towards equality for those who are facing intersectional marginalisation such as Organisations of People with Disabilities and LGBTQIA+ organisations. As an organisation based in the Minority World, we use our locational power to open up access to funding, and to advocate for decolonising funding ecosystems.

We accompany partners on their organisational journey, providing support to increase their capacity in line with their own priorities. We facilitate learning between organisations and movements, and consolidate evolving best practice to support intersectional feminist organisational development, including through workshops and training. We approach partnerships with humility, engaging in mutual learning to improve our capacity for feminist, decolonial partnership.

### Key actions we will take over the next 3 years:

- ✧ Support partners' autonomy and resilience to funding shocks by embedding sustainability and partner-led priorities for capacity strengthening into program design and partnerships.
- ✧ Facilitate partner connections to alternative funding sources and advocate for funding structures that include core operational support alongside investment in innovation and growth.
- ✧ Strengthening opportunities for learning and exchange between partners and broader movements.
- ✧ Establish a proactive approach to forming new partnerships, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities and emerging areas of impact.
- ✧ Explore how IWDA's rapid response fund could be used and leveraged more strategically.





## STRATEGY

# 2

## We stand with and support feminist movements at local, national, regional and global levels to be stronger

IWDA is a feminist movement actor, working collectively to disrupt systems of power. We will expand our work in Australia, contributing to a local feminist movement which is vibrant and diverse, and collaborating across aligned movements - including First Nations, LGBTQIA+ and climate justice - to disrupt systems of power and resist attempts to undermine our rights.

We contribute to strengthening movements, supporting them to deepen their connection to constituency, leverage their diversity, build trusting relationships, co-develop an intersectional feminist analysis, and collaboratively realise a common vision for change. We help connect from the local, national and regional level to the global, and translate outcomes and learnings back to local movements.

### Key actions we will take over the next 3 years:

- ★ Strengthen connections between feminist and climate movements in Australia and influence systemic change with gender and First Nations justice at the core.
- ★ Use our position at the nexus of local and global feminist movements to build the transformative power of our advocacy at upcoming global events in our region, such as Women Deliver 2026.
- ★ Deepen feminist practice and leadership and contribute to shaping more feminist and decolonial organisations through Intersectional Feminist Workshops, including in Australia.
- ★ Unlock the transformative power of philanthropy to strengthen and sustain feminist movements across the region, galvanised by feminist collaboration in the ResourceFULL Collective.
- ★ Build the coalitions needed to combat the anti-rights movements, ensuring we are led by those most at risk of attack and exclusion, and strengthen our internal capabilities (including tech and digital security).

## STRATEGY

# 3

### **We create, support, share, and advocate for change based on feminist and decolonial knowledge**

IWDA creates, and supports others to create, feminist and decolonial knowledge which brings greater visibility to the underlying drivers of gender inequality. We use evidence and lived experience to transform discourse, bringing feminist analysis into mainstream debates and countering and resisting narratives that seek to undermine rights. We use our locational power to resist and counter the systems of power locking in gender inequalities, leveraging our strategic relationships with power holders and allies to advocate for alternatives, and build and contribute to coalitions that expand our collective impact.

#### **Key actions we will take over the next 3 years:**

- ✧ Seek funded opportunities to support and enable Majority World-led, feminist knowledge creation, building on lessons and good practice developed in past projects.
- ✧ Build IWDA's thought leadership, and support knowledge translation through timely feminist analysis and communications.
- ✧ Build a united coalition to influence the creation of an inclusive data framework for the post-2030 development agenda.
- ✧ Explore how AI can be used in service of feminist systems change, through the Equality Insights scoping project.



## STRATEGY

# 4

### We demonstrate a different way of being and doing by nurturing, developing & sustaining our organisation through values-aligned culture, systems and funding

IWDA strives to demonstrate a different way of being in everything we do, from our internal culture to our systems and processes. We are committed to practicing decolonial values through continual learning and action – within ourselves, our practice, and our sector. We will embrace the challenge of working to decolonise international development and feminist movements from within, holding ourselves accountable and inviting accountability from others.

Diversity, wellbeing and a vibrant organisational culture are critical to ensuring IWDA is an inclusive and resilient workplace. We will continue on the River of Change, our journey of organisational cultural transformation, and our commitment to being an explicitly anti-racist organisation. As an organisation based on unceded land, we acknowledge the deep and painful racism that stems from colonisation and continues to exist today, and commit to standing alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to advance First Nations justice. To enable us to demonstrate a different way of being and doing, we will diversify funding sources for ourselves and our partners and invest in systems and processes that facilitate our work and strengthen our organisational culture, guided by our feminist and decolonial values

#### Key actions we will take over the next 3 years:

- ✦ Expand access to diversified funding pools for IWDA and women's rights and aligned organisations in line with areas of strategic focus.
- ✦ Transform the way we work by exploring and implementing people and culture practices centred in feminist, anti-racist and decolonial principles that support IWDA to be a resilient, safe and progressive organisation with diverse, intersectional representation across all levels of our workforce.
- ✦ Promote lessons and practices from our culture and organisational transformation journey more broadly to support growth and change in the development and for- purpose sector.
- ✦ Develop a strategy to support IWDA in standing in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all areas of our work.

## The following cross-cutting actions will sit at the organisational level to support our deepened commitment to decolonial values and practice:

- ① Reform governance structures to centre First Nations and Majority World feminist leadership, with advisory roles and policy reviews ensuring strategic decisions reflect decolonial feminist values.
- ① Create a diverse, cross-functional group including staff, board, and feminist movement leaders—especially from Majority World and First Nations backgrounds—to guide, monitor, and hold IWDA accountable for embedding decolonial principles across our work.
- ① Embed decolonial and anti-racism learning through mandatory training, performance measures, and Majority World-led sessions, ensuring transformative growth at all levels of the organisation.
- ① Strengthen our equitable, trust-based partnerships and collaborations led by Majority World feminist priorities, with co-developed agreements, reduced extractive reporting, and meaningful partner influence on IWDA's strategy.
- ① Expand and diversify IWDA's funding model toward ethical, values-aligned sources by prioritising flexible funding, amplifying feminist-led giving, and advocating for systemic change in global funding ecosystems.
- ① Work to align IWDA's finance, risk, and compliance processes with decolonial values by challenging donor-driven norms, embedding relational accountability, and incorporating partner-defined risk and responsible resource management.
- ① Design a monitoring, evaluation and learning system rooted in feminist and decolonial values that prioritises partner-led, narrative-based evaluation methods, centres lived experience and power shifts, and ensures accountability to partners over donors.
- ① Implement a yearly, independent, and transparent review—grounded in partner feedback and co-created action plans—to assess IWDA's decolonial progress and drive continuous learning and change.





# ADAPTIVE PLANNING CYCLE

**It takes time to create the change we want to see. The factors sustaining and reproducing gender inequality and intersecting forms of marginalisation are deeply embedded and normalised, and progress is rarely linear.**

This Framework has a 10-year vision to guide us through coming challenging times, allowing us to be ambitious and build the momentum we need to create lasting change. Within this, adopting shorter 3-year planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning cycles will give us the flexibility to adapt as needed and stay relevant, sustainable and impactful throughout. Annual evaluations based on our feminist and decolonial approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning alongside independently conducted partner and stakeholder perceptions reviews will guide us to develop new actions at each review point to continue building our wave of collective power.

# GRATITUDE

**IWDA's work has always been a collective effort, nurtured by the powerful feminists, activists and changemakers who have been part of our story.**

**This strategy has come to life through the wisdom of our staff, partners and collaborators, whose vision, passion and dedication are an indelible part of this framework.**

**Thank you to our consultants, Skye Dobson, Relative Creative and One Future Collective, for your insights and sharp analysis. Your guidance has helped turn our ambitions into an actionable framework to advance our vision of gender equality for all.**

**In facing the challenging times ahead, we will continue to trust in the courage, resilience and wisdom of feminist movements who give us strength and keep us accountable on our journey. All that we are today is because of those that have come before us. Thank you for all that you do.**

Samantha Kenjue at a Women's Human Rights Defenders Forum in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.  
Photographer: Harjono Djoyobisono







**IWDA acknowledges that the land on which we work always was and always will be Aboriginal Land. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land our office stands on, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We extend that respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands where our staff work remotely, and to all First Nations people. We acknowledge the deep and continuing connections to Country, which have been cared for since time immemorial. We stand in solidarity with First Nations people leading the movements for Voice, Treaty and Truth.**

**IWDA** INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY

PO Box 64 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne VIC 8009 Australia

03 8373 2500  
[iwda@iwda.org.au](mailto:iwda@iwda.org.au)

[iwda.org.au](http://iwda.org.au)