

FEMINIST MOVEMENT STRENGTHENING FRAMEWORK



IWDA INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

INTRODUCTION

IWDA is part of the global feminist movement and our work contributes to progressive change towards gender equality. We also resource others in the movement, particularly women's rights organisations primarily in Asia and the Pacific, to do their work. This Feminist Movement Strengthening Framework outlines IWDA's understanding of the elements of resilient and vibrant feminist movements as well as our approach to resourcing and contributing to them.

WHY FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

Resilient and vibrant feminist movements, including those led by trans, intersex and nonbinary people, racialised people, indigenous women, women and people with disability, young feminists, and other historically excluded and marginalised people, are critical to defending and advancing gender equality. Resourcing and contributing to resilient and vibrant feminist movements will move IWDA towards achieving our vision of gender equality for all.

PURPOSE

The Feminist Movement Strengthening Framework outlines five key elements of a strong feminist movement based on IWDA's own learning, research and practice since 1984, and building on the foundations of feminist movement scholars and activists around the world.¹

The framework articulates the variety of roles IWDA will take to help strengthen each of the five key elements of a strong feminist movement. These roles are organised into the categories "Stepping up, Standing with, Stepping back" (3Ss).



STEPPING UP

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



STANDING WITH

Standing with feminist movements in solidarity and amplifying the work of Global South actors



STEPPING BACK

Stepping back when others are better placed to take the lead.

¹ Mama Cash, 2020; Htun & Weldon 2013; Batliwala, 2012; Womankind Worldwide, 2017; Just Associates 2013.

The 3Ss have been applied to this framework because the inequalities we seek to address through our movement strengthening work are both a result of, and perpetuated by, historical and contemporary forms of colonialism. As an organisation based in the Global North, working in and with the Global South, IWDA acknowledges the damaging human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonised people and their lands through the process and ideology of colonisation. We also recognise the reality that international development has often been an instrument of neo-colonialism, which has reinforced structures of global and local inequality, maintaining the dominance of “developed nations” (the Global North) over the “developing world” (the Global South).

Stepping up, Standing with and Stepping back is IWDA’s approach to acknowledging and mitigating these structural issues. The 3Ss can be seen as a dance, the steps we take will be different depending on who we are dancing with. Depending on our positional power within any given relationship, at any moment in time, we will inhabit each role to varying extents.

The lists under each key element are illustrative of some of the actions that IWDA can take within each role. They are not exhaustive, but they do attempt to define the types of activities IWDA should be investing time and resources in as a feminist movement strengthening organisation.

AS AN ORGANISATION BASED IN THE GLOBAL NORTH, WORKING IN AND WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH, IWDA ACKNOWLEDGES THE DAMAGING HUMAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONTROL AND EXPLOITATION OF COLONISED PEOPLE AND THEIR LANDS THROUGH THE PROCESS AND IDEOLOGY OF COLONISATION.



RESILIENT, VIBRANT FEMINIST MOVEMENTS ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WHO...

Illustration by Sonaksha Iyengar
(<https://sonaksha.com>)

... HAVE SOME CONNECTION
TO CONSTITUENCY...



...CAN LEVERAGE THEIR DIVERSITY...



... HAVE CO DEVELOPED AN
INTERSECTIONAL, FEMINIST
ANALYSIS OF ISSUES...

... TO COLLABORATIVELY
REALISE A COMMON
VISION FOR
CHANGE.



... INVEST IN
RELATIONSHIPS
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This element recognises that the individuals most impacted by structural inequalities must drive any movement for change. As such, feminist movement actors and Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) must foster connections to diverse constituencies and mechanisms to ensure their priorities drive movement objectives and action.

To strengthen this element, IWDA will 'step up' to ensure we strengthen and expand connections to our constituency; Global South WROs and feminists primarily in the Asia and Pacific regions. This includes work to ensure that IWDA is accountable to Global South WROs and feminists and that their voices are included in our decision making mechanisms. We will 'stand with' Global South WROs to prioritise support for regular and meaningful engagement with diverse constituencies. We will also support collective consciousness-raising and power analysis with diverse constituencies.

We will develop internal systems and processes that ensure constituency-led analysis drives movement activities and programs, while 'stepping back' from imposing program priorities that are not driven by Global South movements and their constituencies.

STEPPING UP

- Strengthen and expand IWDA relationships & accountability mechanisms with our constituency; WROs, Feminists & WHRDs primarily in Asia and the Pacific

STANDING WITH

- Support Global South WROs to engage diverse constituencies
- Support Global South WROs to do feminist consciousness raising with constituencies
- Support the centering of constituent voice in MEL processes

STEPPING BACK

- Step back from imposing program priorities that are not informed by movement constituencies



RESILIENT, VIBRANT FEMINIST MOVEMENTS ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WHO...

...CAN LEVERAGE
THEIR DIVERSITY...



This element recognises that feminist movements need to be diverse to be strong, but navigating diversity is often difficult and requires skills and support. This element also focuses on the need to connect with other social movements and ensure the feminist movement isn't siloed and overly inward looking.

To strengthen this element, IWDA will 'step up' to prioritise rigorous, power-aware relationship design processes that acknowledge and help to navigate difference, whenever we engage in partnerships, collaborations or consortia. We will 'step up' to foster connections with other social movements and weave these connections into our partnerships and collaborations.

We will 'stand with' WROs in the Global South by engaging in mutual consciousness raising on the power of diversity to fuel movements, particularly the need to ensure movements are intergenerational. We will prioritise resources for the deliberate and consistent navigation of difference and power within movements, whether they include IWDA or not.

In many circumstances, it will not be appropriate for IWDA to mediate the internal power dynamics and diversities of Global South movements. We will ensure we build systems into our work that enable us to understand when this is the case, and 'step back' from this work.

STEPPING UP

- Foster connections with other social movements, including youth, queer, trans, disability, environmental, anti racism, labour rights, sex worker etc
- Prioritise resourcing for rigorous relationship design processes that acknowledge and address difference and power

STANDING WITH

- Prioritise time and money for negotiation of power/difference within coalitions
- Regular reflections between IWDA & Partners to engage with power and difference
- Mutual consciousness raising on the power of diverse movements
- Support intergenerational accompaniment to ensure a movement leadership pipeline

STEPPING BACK

- Ensure any mediation of internal Global South movement dynamics is invited and acknowledges IWDA power
- Manage the tension between promoting diversity and maintaining cultural sensitivity

RESILIENT, VIBRANT FEMINIST MOVEMENTS ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WHO...

...HAVE CO-DEVELOPED AN INTERSECTIONAL, FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF ISSUES...

This element acknowledges that feminist movements, in contrast to other social movements, aim to transform gendered power structures as their primary goal. As such, there must be space for movement actors to co-develop an intersectional, feminist analysis of issues.

In our 'standing up' role, IWDA will undertake consistent critical self-reflection, knowledge creation and learning processes, to deepen our own intersectional, feminist analysis. Where possible, we will undertake this knowledge creation work in partnership with others.

In our 'standing with' role, IWDA's role is not to impose a specific analytical or political framework on our partners, but rather, to facilitate processes and enable space for movement actors, particularly those from the Global South to co-create their own feminist analyses.

We will build accountability mechanisms into our processes to ensure we 'step back' from work that risks imposing colonial knowledge systems or undermining the political perspectives and agendas of Global South women and movement actors.



STEPPING UP

- Deepen IWDA intersectional feminist analysis and decolonising practice through ongoing training & reflective practice
- Undertake decolonising feminist knowledge creation & translation in collaboration with movement actors
- Contribute feminist intersectional data to the movement

STANDING WITH

- Co convene spaces for Global South WROs, and IWDA to articulate, share & analyse our world and experience
- Support the use of intersectional feminist materials, toolkits & resources for analysis
- Support Global South WROs to deepen their organisational practice through ongoing training & reflective practice

STEPPING BACK

- Resource Global South led joint learning, knowledge creation & exchange activities
- Refrain from imposing analytical frameworks on Global South WROs

RESILIENT, VIBRANT FEMINIST MOVEMENTS ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WHO...

...INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST...



We know that movements move at the speed of trust and therefore we must intentionally nurture personal and institutional relationships in order to foster resilient, vibrant movements.

IWDA will 'step up' to ensure relationship and trust building is prioritised for all staff and board members. We will 'step up' to prioritise working in coalitions and partnerships, even when acting alone may be easier. We will also support global movement convening events and contribute to ensuring these have relationship and trust building objectives at their core.

In our 'standing with' role, IWDA will prioritise support for activities that build relationships and trust between movement actors. This may be through convening collaborative spaces, supporting peer support networks or using our locational power to introduce and connect movement actors with each other. IWDA will ensure priority is given to resourcing for rural and remote movement actors to attend collective spaces. At the same time, with the global climate crisis escalating and the impact of COVID-19, long-distance travel is becoming increasingly inappropriate. As such IWDA will leverage technology to facilitate online convening, while balancing the needs of rural, remote and poorly internet connected communities.

We recognise that investing in relationships with IWDA is not always the most effective use of Global South WROs' time. IWDA will respect this and 'step back' from time-intensive relationship building processes where that is not appropriate.

STEPPING UP

- Engage in feminist working groups/ communities of practice
- Invest in IWDA staff relationship building with regional and global movement actors
- Work in consortia with other movement actors
- Prioritise transparency and honesty in coalitions & partnerships
- Contribute resources and support to global feminist movement convening spaces

STANDING WITH

- Resource regular movement convenings with a focus on relationship and trust building
- Foster solidarity and systems of collective care across movement organisations
- Create regional peer support networks
- Support organisational exchanges/ internships
- Convene digital and face-to-face forums/ platforms for collective strategy amongst Global South WROs

STEPPING BACK

- Fund and encourage partner-led coalitions that don't include IWDA
- Don't impose time intensive trust building processes when not appropriate

RESILIENT, VIBRANT FEMINIST MOVEMENTS ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WHO...

...COLLABORATIVELY REALISE A COMMON VISION FOR CHANGE.



This element acknowledges that collective action is a powerful mechanism for transformative change and that joint action can be strengthened by intentional planning and strategy with a feminist lens.

IWDA will 'step up' to undertake joint advocacy with global feminist actors and use our locational power to advocate for the interests of Global South feminist movements. IWDA will ensure that our global advocacy efforts are informed by the needs of Global South feminist movements, whether through direct consultation, drawing on global evidence, undertaking research or engaging in co-design. We will use our 'standing with' role to undertake joint advocacy, facilitate access to decision making spaces for Global South women and to support the intentional design of strategic joint advocacy initiatives.

In a world where backlash against feminist movements is escalating and civic space is shrinking, IWDA will 'stand with' movement actors to ensure flexible program management and funding that allows movement actors to respond quickly, creatively and collectively to emerging threats and opportunities.

We will embed accountability mechanisms into our advocacy work to ensure that it does not encroach on the advocacy territory of Global South WROs and movement actors, and 'step back' if and when it does.

STEPPING UP

- Undertake joint advocacy with global feminist actors
- Use IWDA's locational power to advocate for more and better funding for feminist movements
- Use IWDA's locational power to advocate on priorities of and issues that impact Southern Women and WROs targeting Australian Government, Northern Donor Agencies, Companies

STANDING WITH

- Use IWDA's locational power to facilitate access to decision making spaces for Global South WROs
- Undertake joint advocacy initiatives with Global South WROs
- Support the planning and implementation of partner joint advocacy initiatives
- Flexible program management & funding that allows Global South WROs to respond collectively to emerging threats & opportunities
- Agile support to partner movements in closing civic space

STEPPING BACK

- Ensure our knowledge creation and advocacy work doesn't encroach on Global South WROs territory
- Resource joint advocacy amongst Global South WROs, not including IWDA

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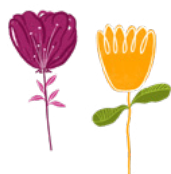
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