



Partner Perception Review Report

2021 - 2022

IWDA INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

1

How has IWDA supported your work this past year?

2

Could IWDA have done anything differently to provide more support to your work?

3

Describe IWDA's approach to its work

4

In the past 12 months, did IWDA do anything that surprised you?

5

Best Practices

6

Things to Reflect On

7

Conclusion

Introduction

Brief Overview

This is the second time IWDA is undertaking a Partner Perception Review (PPR). Following the successful completion of the first PPR 2020-21, IWDA has made a commitment under its Strategic Plan Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework to ensure transparency and accountability to its partners (network of women's rights organisations that IWDA funds) by inviting partners to take part in a second review: 2021-22 Partner Perception Review (PPR).

IWDA is particularly interested in their partners' feedback on their experiences engaging with them over the last 12 months, and in order to achieve this, an independent consultant undertook a series of talanoa interviews to ensure honest and meaningful feedback was encouraged and documented confidentially. The responses and feedback from IWDA partners on IWDA and their work over the 2021-22 period will provide IWDA with insights into the effectiveness and impact of their work to promote organisational learning.

One of the key elements of the Equitable South-North Engagement Model, as a result of IWDA Creating Equitable South-North Partnerships Research (2020), is **Nurturing the Vā** or nurturing the spaces between the relationship which is a critical aspect of Oceanic identity. This PPR continues to focus on nurturing the vā. It provides a safe space for partners to reflect on both their personal and professional relationships with IWDA over the last 12 months of work.

Methodology

The Partner Perception Review (PPR) 2021-22 was undertaken with eight (8) partners.

The qualitative methodology was primarily individual partner interviews, carried out over Zoom, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Partners were given a set of four questions by an independent consultant to guide their responses:

1. **How has IWDA supported your work this past year?**
2. **Could IWDA have done anything differently to provide more support to your work?**
3. **How would you describe the approach IWDA takes to its work? Do you have any feedback about what you value most about IWDA's approach? Do you have any feedback on how IWDA could be a more effective ally?**
4. **In the past 12 months did IWDA do anything that surprised you (positive or negative) in their work? If so, what?**

As with the 2020-21 PPR, eight partners were approached to take part voluntarily. There was a 100% positive response rate to participate in this PPR, **"sorry my English not too good but I want to take part in this because IWDA important to us..."**. In addition to the PPR narrative report, a short video will also be produced to highlight key feedback on IWDA's effectiveness and impact.

1. How has IWDA supported your work this past year?



"The situation in my country over the last 12 months has been wars and wars and a lot of internally displaced persons, we've had coups and so our activities temporarily stopped and IWDA helped us relocate because of our situation we could not implement our activities in our own country ...". (Partner)

Overall, partners shared good stories about IWDA's support to their respective organisations this past year. Many of the partners described how exhausted and overwhelmed they felt over the past 12 months with the multi-layered and intersecting issues of COVID19 outbreaks, staff getting sick more than often, political

wars and tension, moving offices to another country, backsliding of women's rights, diminishing of women's rights movements, strengthening of patriarchal systems, and continued stress over the sustainability of their own organisations. There is a somewhat hopeful perception of IWDA because of the ongoing and constant support IWDA provides to its partners despite their situations and changing contexts. However, there is also a strong expectation that IWDA help these organisations survive, **"IWDA needs to also think about longer-term support to us because they have seen what we can do so we need their support to lobby for us to continue and be supported"** (Partner)

FINANCIAL	ACTIVITIES	PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
"our financial team needed a lot of support and IWDA was very flexible in providing this support even though they didn't have to".	"they understand the political situation in our country, can we still do our activity by our plan or do we have to change and what can IWDA help us with".	"from the institutional strengthening side we see their support has been very significant...being able to secure a salary for a key staff has been a huge bonus".
"taking time to explain systems and processes to us especially around our financial reports helped lessen the load on our staff".	"the support from IWDA this past year can be seen in how we have achieved all our planned activities and targets, despite COVID19 issues".	"we are afraid of what will happen when we no longer have IWDA support because we are working so well together and they are different from our other donors...".
"we get core costs support from IWDA...and they support us by building our capacity especially on management and administration of our whole project".	"IWDA has helped us grow our understanding around the issue of GBV in a regional and global context because mostly we only understand it from a local context".	"they even went out of their way to help us fulfill other donor requirements with mandatory policies we had to do for these donors and so IWDA were good like that, they always helped,".



2. Could IWDA have done anything differently to provide more support to your work?

Partners generally felt that IWDA was good at listening to their various experiences over the last 12 months.

"when we explained to them why we could no longer carry out our activities because of what was happening in our country, they understood and offered to help us with other options". (Partner)

because I could tell the difference when we would have planned face-to-face meetings, our relationship felt good and strong, so we did get worried about the bad connections... that is what upset me, the COVID interruption and how it was out of IWDA or our control so I don't know if IWDA could have done anything differently to provide more support". (Partner)

There were a few concerns about the interruption to working relationships due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, "I was frustrated sometimes when we would have telephone calls or zoom meetings and our connection was always not good,

Partners also agreed that this was an ongoing issue and possibly one that will continue and so coming up with 'other' alternatives to just zoom meetings and phone calls is a conversation that needs to happen.

FUNDING	PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	RELATIONSHIPS
"most of our provinces don't accept cqs...we have been struggling to get online banking with the bank an hours drive away, if IWDA could factor in this reality".	"we had two changes of IWDA officers and that had its own challenges because it's like we have to start the relationship all over again".	"Due to COVID-19 they couldn't travel here anymore so it held up some of our planned activities, perhaps if we could look at other ways of communicating".
"some of the staff salaries are not at what it should be at, but its hard because our budget is already limited, it would be good for IWDA to review this".	"would it be a loss to IWDA and us if we connect directly to donors instead of going through them? That's one thing we are unsure of".	"It would have been nice if IWDA connected us to other women's rights organisations around the Pacific so that we could share our experiences".
"I am not a project manger and I don't have those skills but I have leadership skills to motivate my team, so my financial skills is not up to scratch, I need a lot of support".	"with COVID restrictions we have used telephone and internet to communicate, but its been a headache, if IWDA could provide other ways of communicating during crises".	"we still felt disconnected from other women's organisations in country and across the region, not much has happened to connect us, I still feel disconnected".

3. Describe IWDA's approach to its work

"Another process we are going through which we feel is a new process because all the time we have been getting money from IWDA or other donors, but now like the Spotlight money, it is given to us and we are working with another team at IWDA...where we contract them to provide technical support and assistance using their expertise around feminist frameworks, development of policies and M&E frameworks and they have engaged different women to help us and we manage the contract, we check on them and then we pay them. I think this is a new model that they developed and they trialed it with us and so far we are doing ok". (Partner)

IWDA is looking at new ways of working,

of dismantling power-over and reflecting its decolonial approach of power-with.

This was evident in some of the reflections shared by partners who had mentioned their appreciation of IWDA's 3S approach.

Step Up, **Stand With** and Step Back. to decolonizing processes: "our project was a bit of a complicated project, a project on GBV that had many challenges but between IWDA staff and ourselves we managed it together....lots of people ask me why we work with IWDA and not go on our own, but we need their support, especially in the area of GBV and Gender Equality and we feel it is important for us to work closely with them especially around mentoring and coaching....we appreciate IWDA because they are an all women's organisation just like ourselves so this is unqive". (Partner)

VALUE THE MOST

"Our staff well-being activities like mental health support and staff self-care, to overcome the stress we were going through...we really appreciate how IWDA supports this because it is one of most critical needs".

"We value IWDA as our sista organisation who is our VOICE out there, they have been the ones who seek funds for us from the Australian Government, because the Australian Government doesn't know us..."

"they trust what I'm saying and they trust that I know what is needed for my organisation, they don't apply pressure and they accept where we are at and when we are struggling they have offered support and solutions and it always feels genuine".

NEED TO WORK ON

"helping us to connect directly to donors rather than coming in between and getting the bigger chunk of the money and we don't get that much... they need to help us grow so we can access the bigger funds and pay our staff properly".

"ensuring that we are speaking the same language and so it is important that IWDA continues to provide opportunities to learn about key concepts like feminism and these other terms you have said like decolonization because I am not too sure about what that means".

"I think they were afraid, they didn't want to step on toes, they didn't want to STEP UP but they need to understand that it's okay to step up, especially with us smaller organisations because we are not as advanced as some other bigger and longer standing orgs".

4. In the past 12 months did IWDA do anything that surprised you?

"We had to go all the way into the town to access Zoom and email, it was a big problem....added on to this was our ongoing transportation issues which we were facing and it was just a big challenge for us to get into town. IWDA helped us identify in the budget where we could use the funds to help us [set up internet connection] and that has really improved our communications". (Partner)

A few partners shared in-depth about their access to technology and internet issues and how this has caused stress and anxiety for their organisations because of how much they miss out on in terms of online meetings, training and capacity building. A couple of partners talked

about how much they felt IWDA went over and above their roles to provide additional support to their respective organisations during political crises that happened in their country over the last 12 months, as one Partner described: "We are not allowed to gather and talk about the politics happening in our country and IWDA helped us think of other ways we could continue as an organisation, I don't know if any other donor would have done what they did. (Partner)

Listening is key. The majority of partners said that the one key difference between IWDA and other donors that they deal with is that IWDA is good at listening and this reflects in how they go out of their way.

NEGATIVE SURPRISES

"The IWDA officer we were working with said she was moving and then all of a sudden we got someone new and it was a bit frustrating having to start over with a new person".

"We had to answer to more than one person about our finances and our finance manager lost her husband in October and was still in mourning during the financial reporting period & more than one person was asking her so many questions and she was not happy about this".

"through WE RISE they needed to recognise and understand that we are quite small and our country is different to other Pacific countries, signing up for the activities that we did and the work bestowed upon us, it was like we were set-up to fail...I reached a point of burn-out because of all the red tape that I had to sign on to...

POSTIVE SURPRISES

"IWDA said we were getting a new person to work with us and we think this is a good way to learn from other people as well not just work with only one person, good opportunity to work with different people".

"My organisation was not connected to many other organisations nationally, regionally and internationally and IWDA has really connected us and made us visible in the international space which we are truly thankful for otherwise no one would know about us and the work we do".

"someone would usually come from IWDA to help with our financial and narrative reports. Because of COVID they stopped coming but they sent someone based here in our country with the skills to help us so that was a good strategy but they should select carefully who helps us".

Best Practices & Challenges



"Because of our political situation, our activities had to temporarily stop and during that period, we were able to get support from IWDA to relocate our office to another country because it was not safe for us to implement our activities in our country which meant all our systems and management had to change....this continued from last year until now and without IWDA's support this would have been a huge challenge for us...this year we have started to find safe spaces for women to get together and talk about their experiences of human rights violations during the conflict".

(Partner)

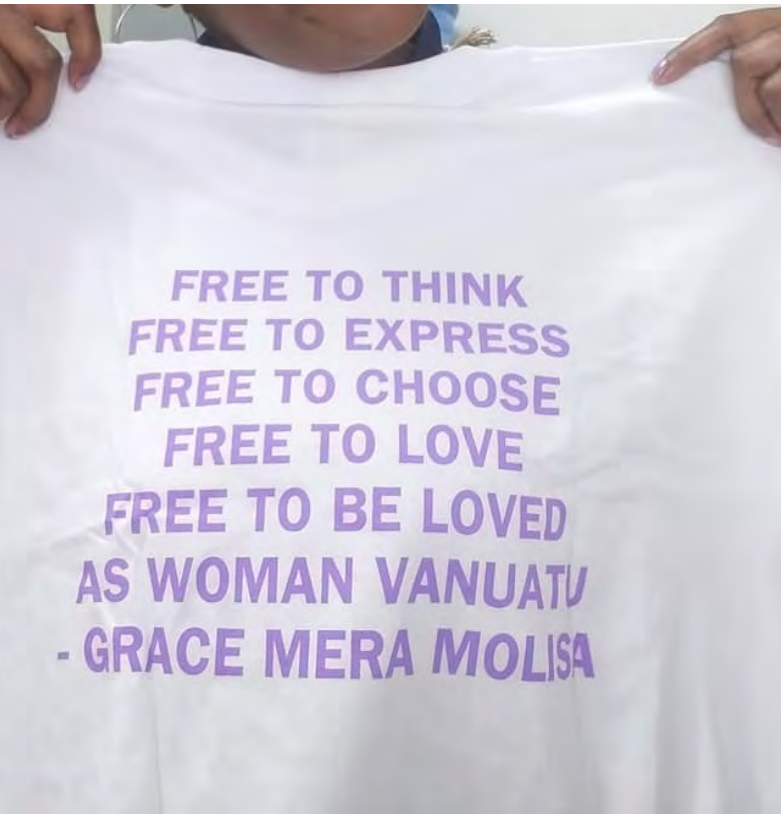
"IWDA have been able to guide us through what it looks like to work as a coalition but also with our organisational strengthening... everytime we've needed assistance whether its my finance team doing the budget and acquittals and not feeling sure about it, they provided a support person from IWDA to support her and with myself, when it comes to organisational strengthening and I'm not sure of things, I have been able to speak quite openly about my challenges with IWDA & they have provided me with resources & access to networks" (Partner)

"We have relied heavily on IWDA to help us understand on new terms and terminology around things that we have never heard before like the use of pronouns when you introduce yourself, you see because we were confused, and I had no idea what people were doing when they were doing that and I felt I was not on top of what is going on in the field of gender and gender equality.. so having IWDA explain these things was a huge help and made us understand things clearly because other issues like LGBTIQ is so sensitive in our communities so we need to always learn about these things". (Partner)

"Something changed last year, they started using after their name "SHE" or something else and I was wandering what is going on here? I didn't pick it up, living in the bush, it seemed strange to me but I tried to slowly work out what is this and I felt illiterate...I found out from another partner we work with what it meant and then I understood what it meant because IWDA didn't explain it to me" (Partner)

Most partners indicated that during this reporting period 2021-22, IWDA listened really well to their needs, wants, concerns, frustrations, success stories, and challenges AND felt that they could question IWDA without fear or intimidation. A couple of partners felt uncomfortable at certain points and/or challenged.

Photo credit: Ta'ang Women's Organisation



A few partners shared that during this reporting period 2021-22, IWDA could have provided more support to women human rights defenders in conflict situations, including internal displaced persons (IPDs) some who stay in camps and some in stay in short term emergency situations.

Photo credit: SISTA VANUATU

An interesting discussion around IWDA's 3S approach Step Up, Stand With and Step Back, where most partners had a mixture of a good understanding of, or limited understanding of, this approach in terms of decolonization or IWDA's approach to ensuring decolonial practices between themselves as Global North/Minority world partner and Global South/Majority world partners:

"IWDA is leading the way with this type of approach and my organisation has witnessed how they try and ensure our voices are at the forefront and listen to what we have to say and what we need for our country". (Partner)

"I know this is their approach but I am not really aware of how this fits in with decolonization and I feel I am behind on issues like this and others like feminism and not having a good understanding of it, I know a little bit but I wish I knew and understood more... don't get me wrong, I am sure we are already practicing it but just don't know how to express it using those fancy words". (Partner)

6. How can IWDA be an effective solidarity actor?

1

Based on IWDA's access to resources and information, they can provide help and support towards mobilizing the women's movement in Oceanic Pacific



2

Develop new ways of documenting women's lived experiences and sharing these stories with other women across the Oceanic Pacific



3

Continue working from IWDA's Decolonality Framework & Strategy AND Equitable South-North Engagement Model



5

Hold interval courageous conversations with partners to check where the power is



6

Support women human rights defenders in difficult and conflict situations

6

Partners from
Oceanic Pacific

2

Partners from Asia

5

Partners want IWDA to expand and work with more women's organisations in their countries so that they are all on the same page

7

Partners said that IWDA is very good at listening

6

Partners indicated that IWDA is their preferred Global North/Minority world partner, ranking #1 above all their other GN partners

7. CONCLUSION

This is the second time IWDA commissioned an independent consultant to undertake its annual Partner Perception Review (PPR). A total of eight partners were identified and initially contacted by IWDA inviting them to take part. All eight partners voluntarily agreed to participate in the review. To create a safe space where partners could freely share their responses, it was agreed that any quotes, by respondents, used in the report would be unidentified.

Smaller and newer organisations to IWDA shared about their experience with IWDA, mostly indicating that IWDA was understanding about where they were at and not feeling coerced to do things that they were uncomfortable doing, as expressed clearly by one partner: **"part of the process of actually getting more activity funds....was that we needed to have certain policies in place and from there, working with IWDA really helped me to think bigger...they provided me with the feminist toolkit which I reviewed and I realised that I didn't just want to develop these policies because we need them to access activity funding, I came to understand that I needed a strategic plan to be able to look at our human resources, how do we actually operate and what is our actual organisational culture and IWDA played a big role in being able to provide me some really good information and resource to reflect on my leadership and where I see my organisation going in the future"** (Partner)

IWDA's ability to provide feminist resources, information, and toolkits to partners, and provide them the space to unlearn, relearn, question, and reframe based on their own terms, is critical for the realisation of shared leadership, power, and decision making between IWDA and its partners. This is the biggest point of difference between IWDA and other Global North/Minority World partners. It has become more evident in the last few years with IWDA's investment in the development of its IWDA's development of a decolonial framework and strategy. No doubt, IWDA has had to go through a number of internalised changes to its own processes and ways of doing things, and this requires an openness to change:

"IWDA is a flexible organisation that understands what our organisation is doing, and they support our process because before we do apply for any grant from a donor we must consult with our communities first; what are their needs and what do they want from us, so we can work more effectively with them, and IWDA is the same because firstly, we are thinking about the people from the community...to come up with a good plan of working to reach our goal". (Partner)

"there are 3 organisations in my country who work on women's rights issues and we need to meet up with other women's rights organisations in other countries who have achieved things like getting women into decision making levels, into leading roles in policy making levels. We want to share our stories with other women's rights advocates and hear about their struggles.....we have to strengthen the women's movement, I have felt that it has started to disappear or gone silent during COVID-19, maybe IWDA can help with this?"

Partner



Acknowledgements

PARTNERS to IWDA:

"It was a big year with so much going on that we were all not prepared for but we got through it, together...thank you for standing beside us or supporting from behind us, never leading, always ready to listen and walk with us...thank you IWDA for what we have achieved in the last 12 months" (Collective Voices of Partners)

IWDA to PARTNERS:

"thank you to all the audacious women for the time they gave to this report and for providing honest feedback to IWDA as we continue our journey to be better at South-North partnerships"



IWDA

PO Box 64, Flinders Lane

Victoria, Australia 8009

1300 661 812

iwda@iwda.org.au

www.iwda.org.au