



# Changing Development from the Inside-Out

**Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) for  
Development Justice in Asia and the Pacific**

Title: Changing Development From the Inside- Out

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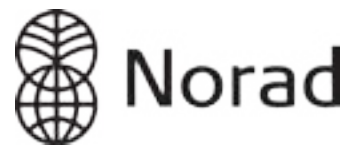
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# Changing Development from the Inside-Out

**Regional Feminist Participatory Action Research Report  
APWLD Breaking out of Marginalisation Programme**

**2015-2017**





# Executive Summary

Building social movements and increasing women's democratic voice is not easy. What tools do women in Asia-Pacific use to raise collective awareness, kick start action, and institutionalise change? How do women make deep changes to the structures that foster inequality in their communities and countries? Research has shown that movement building is the number one way to ensure women's rights are realised.<sup>1</sup> Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) is a network of feminist organisations and advocates that prioritizes movement building in all of its work.

Rural, indigenous, migrant, and urban poor (RIMUP) women in the region are seeing inequalities increase and seeing their marginalisation increase, as globalisation and economic growth-centred development strategies are prioritized over their wellbeing and needs. As a grassroots research participant said:

***“When money became the centre, then we became the periphery.”***

– Laxmi Kirsani, Bonda tribe woman FPAR participant, India

**Through Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) - a set of tools that grassroots women use to document injustice and inequality, to build momentum, and to bring about change - women in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Lao, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand united in 2015 and continue their fight today.**

**Women are demanding and claiming democratic spaces for women.** They have started to use those new spaces locally to change discriminatory realities and inequalities that are most acute in their contexts: statelessness in Bangladesh, migrant labour abuses in India, absent reproductive rights in Indonesia, rural poverty in Lao, labour exploitation in Yangon, Myanmar, patriarchal customary law in Chin State, Myanmar, unequal land

<sup>1</sup> M. Htun, L. Weldon (2013) “The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005” American Political Science Review, 106(3), 548-569.

rights in Nepal, privatisation of markets in the Philippines, discriminatory legislation in Taiwan, and an un-livable wage in Thailand.

They can't wait for government development agendas to catch up, and they can't wait for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be implemented. The changes they need are urgent and have large impacts to improve their lives. Women across Asia-Pacific **began a movement together calling for Development Justice**<sup>2</sup> in the region, and they **began movements in their communities and countries demanding their voices be heard**. A movement is “an organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change through collective action”.<sup>3</sup> RIMUP women are those “organised constituents”, and they are making their agenda for change clear. Combined with the increasing manipulation of domestic political institutions by corporate and elite interests, the onus on social movements to challenge and provide alternatives to the existing political and economic order and to return political sovereignty to people is greater than ever.

For too long women, particularly RIMUP women in Asia Pacific, have been ignored as development plans and priorities were made. Women's movements should have a key role in developing, implementing and monitoring development policies at local, national, regional and international levels.

<sup>2</sup> The call for Development Justice has been endorsed by hundreds of networks and organisations representing numerous constituencies in the region, and forms the basis of the advocacy platform of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM), which represents over 600 constituent organisations and networks. The core Development Justice principles underpin a broad range of reforms that have been articulated by networks in the region, including reductions in military budgets as a means to both address militarisation and to finance social goals; universal access to public care services to enable the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work; and redistributive land reform as a path to more democratised control of natural resources. See Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (2015) “What is the RCEM?” (AP-RCEM), <http://www.asiapacificrcem.org/about-rcem/what-is-the-rcem/>.

<sup>3</sup> S. Batliwala (2012) Changing Their World (AWID).

Grassroots women and their feminist movement in Asia-Pacific have 4 regional demands:

1. **Access to and Control over Resources** - Governments must ensure women have access to and control over productive resources, land, and water, ensuring that inheritance and divorce laws and policies are not working against them. Women need joint or sole land and other resource ownership.
2. **Decent Work and a Living Wage** - Governments must ensure that policy and monitoring are in place to ensure that labour rights, including workers' representation, sexual and reproductive health and rights, adequate and equal remuneration (a living wage), safe working conditions, and non-discrimination are guaranteed in those jobs. The region's gender pay gap must be reduced to 0%, and government goals to achieve decent work for all should not overlook an aim to redistribute the burden of unpaid care labour between women and men.
3. **Peace Based on Justice** - All forms of violence against women (VAW) must be eliminated, and countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region must ensure RIMUP women have access to justice. Peace and security of women are a precondition for just and sustainable development. Violence by state actors, employers, community and religious leaders, and family must be recognised as a major impediment to development. Each country in the region must have comprehensive, fully funded, national plans of action to eliminate VAW in all forms.
4. **Women's Voice in Decision-Making Processes** - Governments and development institutions must ensure that women, especially RIMUP women, are not only present in formal processes, but also contribute their perspectives and recommendations in decision-making at all levels of development issues. This must be done through a bottom up, decentralised process owned by peoples.





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# Introduction

Women are changing development from the inside-out and from the bottom-up.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) believes a new development framework must be derived from, with, and for the people that “development” is supposed to benefit. Only women can make a truly gendered analysis of their situation, and together they can form movements and raise up leaders to make change on their terms.

From 2015-2017 APWLD supported 10 grassroots organisations of rural, indigenous, migrant, and urban poor (RIMUP) women throughout Asia Pacific to change the way “development” works in their communities, their nations and the region. The grassroots organisations built movements using Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) as a tool to pursue Development Justice - a transformative and redistributive framework that aims to reduce inequalities of wealth, power and resources between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women.





FPAR is:

- Women **researching** which development frameworks can benefit them... and which ones do not.
- Women **uniting to demand** that development benefit them... and calling out the “development” that does not.
- Women themselves **mobilizing** systemic development changes that benefit them... and leaving behind old systems that do not.

RIMUP women see that the global model of development is not working for them. The architecture of globalisation that focuses on economic growth has led to unsustainable and unjust development practices. Globalisation has created rules that:

- Promote extractive industries, large scale land-grabbing, and environmental degradation
- Benefit multinational corporations
- Push down wages
- Weaken social protection
- Increase militarisation
- Privatised public resources and services, and
- Liberalise trade.

This growth-focused global economy has caused two global crises: a crisis of deepening inequalities and a global climate crisis. **This so-called “development” has helped a few, at the expense of many.** Gender inequality reinforces and is itself reinforced by the extraordinary levels of inequality in wealth, power and resources experienced in Asia and the Pacific.

Women living with this inequality and its development problems are best able to identify 1) the problems they face and 2) the solutions. In order to challenge the current development model, **strong movements of RIMUP women are needed. Their movements build capacity, evidence, and advocacy to bring about sustainable solutions.**



Box 1: What is Development Justice?

Development Justice reimagines “sustainable development” and takes it much further. The 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) alone will not bring lasting, just, and sustainable development to peoples across the globe. The SDGs do not take into account or remedy deep systemic problems. **A large movement is forming around Development Justice and its demands of five foundational shifts:**<sup>4</sup>



**Redistributive Justice** aims to redistribute resources, wealth, power and opportunities to all human beings equitably. It compels us to dismantle the existing systems that channel resources and wealth from developing countries to wealthy countries, from people to corporations and elites. It recognises the people as sovereigns of local and global commons.



**Economic Justice** develops economies that enable dignified lives, accommodate needs and facilitate capabilities, employment and livelihoods available to all. Economic justice is not based on exploitation of people or natural resources or on environmental destruction. It is a model that makes economies work for people, rather than compels people to work for economies.



**Social and Gender Justice** eliminates all forms of discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion that pervade our communities. It recognises the need to eliminate patriarchal systems and fundamentalisms, challenge existing social structures, deliver gender justice, sexual and reproductive justice and guarantee the human rights of all peoples.



**Environmental Justice** recognises the historical responsibility of countries and elites within countries whose production, consumption and extraction patterns have led to human rights violations, global warming and environmental disasters and compels them to alleviate and compensate those with the least culpability but who suffer the most: women, peasants, indigenous peoples, migrants and marginalised groups of the global south.



**Accountability to Peoples** requires democratic and just governance that enables people to make informed decisions over their own lives, communities and futures. It necessitates empowering all people, but particularly the most marginalised, to be part of free, prior and informed decision-making in all stages of development processes at the local, national, regional and international levels and ensuring the rights of people to determine their development priorities.

<sup>4</sup> The call for Development Justice has been endorsed by hundreds of networks and organisations representing numerous constituencies in the region, and forms the basis of the advocacy platform of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM), which represents over 600 constituent organisations and networks. The core Development Justice principles underpin a broad range of reforms that have been articulated by networks in the region, including reductions in military budgets as a means to both address militarisation and to finance social goals; universal access to public care services to enable the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work; and redistributive land reform as a path to more democratised control of natural resources. See Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (2015) “What is the RCEM?” (AP-RCEM), <http://www.asiapacificrcem.org/about-rcem/what-is-the-rcem/>.



# The Many Who People who Supported this FPAR Journey

**Nepal - Gramin Mahila Srijanshil Pariwar (GMSP) “Equal Land Rights in Sindhupalchok”.** GMSP, in English Rural Women Creative Forum, led this feminist participatory action research from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016 in 3 rural areas of Sindhupalchok District, Nepal: Chokati, Pangretar, and Thulopakhar. GMSP collaborated with the organizations National Land Right Forum, District Land Right Forum, Rural Development Society, as well as indigenous and rural poor women who live and work in these communities.

**Bangladesh – Naripokkho – “Raising Voices for Gaining Rights: Urdu-Speaking Women Struggle”.** Naripokkho led this feminist participatory action research project from August 2015 to October 15 in the Kurmitola Camp (KTC) in Kalshi (under Pallabi Thana) in Mirpur-12 of Dhaka City. Naripokkho partnered with women from the Urdu-speaking Bihari community living in the camp.

**Lao – Social Development Alliance Association – “Gendered Impacts of Poverty in Rural Khammuan Province”.** SODA led this feminist participatory action research project in Soppeng and Napang villages in the mountainous Bualapha district of Khammuan province. SODA partnered with the member driven women’s rights organization Lao Women’s Union (LWU), administrative representatives from Bualapha district, as well as poor community members working in these two rural villages.

**Taiwan - The Trans-Asia Sisters Association (TASAT) - “The Impact of Nationality Act on Marriage Migrants in Taiwan”.** TASAT led this feminist participatory action research in Northern and central parts of Taiwan from August 2015 to May 2016. TASAT partnered with immigrant women living in Taiwan as well as with the Alliance for Human Rights Legislation for Immigrants and Migrants (AHLIM)

**India – Regional Initiative for Tribal Empowerment and Solidarity (RITES) FORUM “GIRLS ON THE MOVE : Understanding Migration Among Bonda Women and Building their Collectives for Actions.”** RITES Forum led this feminist participatory action research program from September 2015 to March 2016 in the eastern state of Odisha. RITES partnered with members of the Bonda tribal group, a unique tribal community residing on a vast and dense hill forest tract on the Eastern Ghats mountain range. RITES collaborated with Bonda families and young migrant women from 9 Bonda villages in Odisha’s southernmost Malkangiri district.

**Myanmar – Ninu Women in Action Group “Customary Law and Practices among the Chins in Myanmar and its’ impact to Chin Women”.** NINU Women in Action Group led this feminist participatory action research from August 2015 to July 2016 in three townships of Southern Chin State of Myanmar; Kanpetlet, Mindat, and Matupi. NINU partnered with women’s community-based organisations working on Chin customary law and women’s rights issues in the region.

**Myanmar – Burmese Women’s Union “Is the Minimum Wage a Solution for Women Garment Workers? – Strengthening Movements to Demand Decent Work and Living Wage”.** The Burmese Women’s Union (BWU) led this feminist participatory action research from January 2016- April 2016 in the industrial zones of Mingalardon, Shwe Pyi Thar, and Hlaing Thar Yar in Yangon. BWU partnered with local labour organizations and women workers from nine garment factories.

**Thailand – MAP Foundation – “Living Wage and Decent Work for Burmese Migrant Women in Thailand”.** MAP Foundation led this feminist participatory action research in Northern, Southern and Central parts of Thailand from September 2015 to June 2017. MAP Foundation worked together with its Women’s Exchange programme to lead this FPAR.

**The Philippines – Tanggol Bayi – “Gendered Impact on the Privatisation of Market on Women in the Urban Poor Community in Sampaloc, Manila”.** Tanggol Bayi led this feminist participatory action research from August 2015 to March 2016 in Sampaloc, Manila. Tanggol Bayi partnered with women living in various urban poor communities who work in the informal economy as market vendors in the Maisan section of Sampaloc. Tanggol Bayi also collaborated with local vendors associations and engaged with hundreds of vendors and consumers to inform this research.

**Indonesia – Gerakan Serikat Buruh Independen (GSBI) “The Rights of Reproductive Health for Women Workers in Sukabumi, West Java”.** GSBI led this feminist participatory action research from August 2015 to March 2016 in the industrial district of Sukabumi in West Java. GSBI partnered with workers from 3 different garment and textile factories in the district.

## What They Say about the FPAR Journey

The FPAR journey is a personal journey. Young women researchers and mentors in each country not only increase their capacity to use FPAR methodologies, feminist theory, and advocacy skills, but also find that FPAR enables them to better understand themselves, their activism, their politics, and their connection and solidarity with grassroots women in their communities. The community can choose a young woman researcher or a research mentor from the community, who then works with an NGO counterpart. When young women researchers come from the community, they value FPAR for the knowledge, methods and regional solidarity it gives them, as well as the ability to learn more about feminist practice. When young women researchers come from outside the community, they value the learning and perspective that the community provides, and they deepen their motivation to be an activist ally throughout their lives.

*“The research affected me in personally understanding the perspective of a feminist researcher. I have learned how to add participatory and feminist ideas in action research. I also like the theory of change which helps me plan effectively whenever I work in my organisation.”*

– Ei Mon Phyo, Burmese Women’s Union, Myanmar

*“The (FPAR) project, in totality, made me a better person. Before the research, I had not had much interaction with urban poor communities. Coming from the university, I had ideals and ideas that many people are poor and suffering, but it is a different thing when you live their reality. I go comfortably inside their homes now and eat with them and play with their dogs and children, and I am a better feminist for knowing their struggles and thoughts on the ground. I admire these women because they are strong and resilient and brave. They are people I want to be.”*

– Geri Cerillo, Tanggol Bayi, Philippines



## What They Say about the FPAR Journey

*“Joining FPAR, I became a better feminist. I was a university student when I started, and then I learnt about the idea of a living wage, and about women migrant workers’ issues. Now I am more conscious about what I’m buying and what I’m consuming - Is the wage fair for workers? How are their working conditions? How is workplace safety? I talked to women in different parts of Thailand about their situation and demands. We also [are going to] bring women migrant workers together across Thailand so they can share their stories and don’t feel isolated. Now they realise the importance of living wage and their human rights.”*

– HayMann Zaw, MAP Foundation, Thailand



*“I’m an indigenous woman from Chin State. I thought I was the only one who wanted to change the customary law and fight the discrimination against women. During the FPAR, I met many women, even men, who dislike the discriminatory customary laws. I realised I am not the only one. We have many big organisations and Community Based Organisations that want to work to change the situation. It gives me strength. Through our discussions in the FPAR, I can see that the FPAR process connects the community; we learn and plan together, community members want to join our movement. In Chin State, a [broad] FPAR movement is coming soon!”*

– Mai Naomi Thang, Ninu Women in Action Group, Myanmar





# Inequality: Bad for All, Worse for Women, Horrendous for RIMUP Women

## Growth-Based Development Creates Inequalities

*“When money became the centre, then we became the periphery.”*  
– Laxmi Kirsani, Bonda tribe woman FPAR participant, India

Most RIMUP women engage in subsistence activities which make their lives and livelihoods susceptible to climate change events, environmental degradation, ethnic and religious discrimination, and unsustainable economic policies. In addition to structural and systemic discrimination and inequalities tangibly worsening the lives of RIMUP women in the region, they block sustainable development that states have agreed to build through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**SDGs were adopted in**, but neither states nor the UN Secretary General's report are reviewing, addressing, or even mentioning the **systemic barriers** to achieving this agenda.

**In fact, many states are doing the opposite:** embedding **neoliberal economic systems** that drive inequalities further by signing onto far-reaching trade and investment treaties right after the adoption of SDGs; by increasing **military spending and engaging conflicts**; by enabling greater **land and resource grabbing**; by ignoring and even fueling **fundamentalist and extremist practices**; by **reducing the space for civil society to prosper**; and committing or enabling **attacks on that civil society**.

With civil society across the world, APWLD succeeded in pushing for the SDGs to address the inequality between and within countries; a dedicated gender goal and also gender targets reflected throughout other goals; and also the need to ensure a more just an equitable financing for development. However, the current development paradigm centred on economic growth inherently benefits

### Box 2: Examples of systemic barriers to just and sustainable development are:

- Corporate Capture
- Trade and Investment Agreements
- Land and Resource Grabbing
- Militarism and Conflict
- Patriarchy and Fundamentalism

**Unless these are dismantled, sustainable development is out of reach.**

the wealthiest few and relies on exploitation of peoples – particularly RIMUP women – in order to generate growth.

Recent research by UNCTAD confirms that if we rely on growth alone to increase the income of everyone in the world to USD\$5 per day—which is still below the poverty threshold in many developing countries—it would mean increasing our current level of production and consumption by at least 175 times.<sup>5</sup> This is impossible in an energy-constrained world with finite environmental resources. **Growth without redistribution will not eradicate poverty.**

The current amount of wealth - and power - concentrated in the hands of a small minority is not only politically, economically and socially destabilising,<sup>6</sup> it is corrosive of democratic political processes that are needed to correct our trajectory of social and economic inequality and ecological disaster.

For this reason, **redistribution of wealth, power, and resources**, is at the heart of a call by the women's movement and broader civil society in Asia Pacific for **“Development Justice”**.<sup>7</sup>

**Redistribution of wealth, power, and resources is the only way to even up inequalities between men and women, between rich and poor, and between countries.**

<sup>5</sup> D. Woodward (2015) “Incrementum ad Absurdum: Global Growth, Inequality and Poverty Eradication in a Carbon-Constrained World” World Economic Review, vol 4, 43-62.  
<sup>6</sup> J. D. Ostry, A. Berg, C. G. Tasangrides (2014) “Redistribution, Inequality and Growth” (IMF Staff Discussion Note); J Stiglitz (2012) The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers our Future (Norton & Co).  
<sup>7</sup> See Box 2 in Introduction section.



## Inequality of Wealth

The richest 1% began holding more than half of global wealth in 2015<sup>8</sup> when APWLD started the 2015-2017 FPAR project. Women in RIMUP communities across Asia Pacific are tangibly feeling the effects of increased levels of wealth inequality.

In 2016 the world's richest eight men held a net wealth of 426 billion USD, which is equal to the net wealth of the bottom half of all people on the planet.<sup>9</sup> In 2016 Asia-Pacific led globally with the most High Net Worth Individual wealth. This wealth grew 9.9 percent in the region in 2015 amounting to 17.4 trillion USD.<sup>10</sup> Inequality between countries and regions globally is just as stark: People in America are at least 80 times richer than South Asians.<sup>11</sup> Corporate wealth is also growing apace: in 2016 Apple's wealth was greater than the GDPs of two-thirds of countries globally.<sup>12</sup> If we look at countries in **Asia Pacific**,

<sup>8</sup> Oxfam (2017) “An Economy for the 99%” Oxfam Briefing Paper (Oxfam).  
<sup>9</sup> Oxfam calculations using wealth of the richest individuals from the Forbes Billionaires list and wealth of the bottom 50% from Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook (2016).  
<sup>10</sup> CapGemini (2016) “Asia-Pacific Now Leads the World in High Net Worth Population and Wealth, Finds the Asia-Pacific Wealth Report 2016” (CapGemini), available at: <https://www.capgemini.com/news/asia-pacific-now-leads-the-world-in-high-net-worth-population-and-wealth-finds-the-asia-pacific>  
<sup>11</sup> Jason Hinkel (2016) “Global Inequality May Be Much Worse than We Think” The Guardian, 8 April, drawing on 2000 data from the Maddison Project database available at: <http://www.ggdc.net/maddison/maddison-project/home.htm>.  
<sup>12</sup> Parag Khanna (2016) “These 25 Companies are More Powerful than Many Countries” Foreign Policy, 15 March, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/15/these-25-companies-are-more-powerful-than-many->

we see this wealth inequality is at an emergency level:

- In one day **Vietnam's** richest man earns more than the poorest Vietnamese person earns in 10 years.<sup>13</sup>
- **Indonesia's** 4 richest billionaires have as much wealth as 100 million Indonesians.<sup>14</sup>
- The amount of money that the richest **Indonesian** billionaire can earn off the interest of his wealth per year is enough to lift 20 million Indonesians out of extreme poverty.<sup>15</sup>
- The CEO of **India's** top information technology services company earns 416 times the salary of an average employee in his company.<sup>16</sup>

If we look at wealth inequality **between women and men**, things compound for the worse:

- According to the World Economic Forum, there are only 5 countries globally that have closed the **gender wage gap** to less than 20%.<sup>17</sup>
- As a region, Asia has one of the world's largest gender wage gaps, with women earning an **average 30-33% less than men**.<sup>18</sup>

countries-multinational-corporate-wealth-power/.  
<sup>13</sup> Nguyen Tran Lam (2017) “Even It Up: How to Tackle Inequality in Vietnam” (Oxfam).  
<sup>14</sup> Oxfam (2017) “Towards a More Equal Indonesia” (Oxfam).  
<sup>15</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>16</sup> M. Karnik (2015) “Some Indian CEOs make more than 400 times what their employees are paid” Quartz India, 6 July, <http://qz.com/445350/heres-how-much-indian-ceos-make-compared-to-the-median-employee-salary/>  
<sup>17</sup> World Economic Forum (2016) “The Global Gender Gap Report”(WEF).  
<sup>18</sup> Gaps are different in Asian sub-regions. World Economic Forum



ASEAN Economic and Population Statistics			
	GDP (US\$ billion)	Population (million)	Per capita income (US\$)
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>2,395</b>	<b>625.1</b>	<b>3,832</b>
Indonesia	863	251.5	3,460
Thailand	387	68.5	5,679
Malaysia	312	30.5	10,421
Singapore	298	5.5	55,183
Philippines	269	100	2,707
Vietnam	171	90.6	1,909
Myanmar	56	51.4	888
Brunei	16	0.4	39,679
Cambodia	16	15.3	1,037
Laos	10	6.6	1,548

Source: ASEAN Secretariat, IMF

- ActionAid calculated that **women in developing countries** could be 9 trillion USD richer if they had pay and access to paid work on par with men.<sup>19</sup>

In this world the current reality is that wealth inequalities build on each other based on a persons’ place of birth and gender—not to mention their ethnicity, access to education, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, occupation, citizenship or migration status, marital status, etc.

In 2016, APWLD made a submission to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women that called on States to fix systemic economic barriers to gender equality in wealth. We said:

*In Asia Pacific, export-led economies depend on the exploitation of women workers as a comparative advantage, often driving investment marketing. The attraction of low paid, less unionised, more “flexible” (or desperate) workers has driven large profits in the global supply chain. The capacity to pay women lowly rests on the historical assumption that women are dependents rather*

(2016) “The Global Gender Gap Report” (WEF).

19 ActionAid (2015) “Close the Gap! The cost of inequality in women’s work”(ActionAid).

*than breadwinners. Relatedly, capitalism rests on the assumption that work to sustain households and communities will be provided by unpaid women.*<sup>20</sup>

**RIMUP women across Asia Pacific who participated in the APWLD FPAR did their own research on wealth inequalities in their countries and communities. This is what they found as they dug for data on inequality:**

### Inequality between countries

Myanmar grassroots women researched wealth inequality to find that per capita income in Myanmar is the lowest among all Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

### Inequality within countries

In the **Philippines**, urban poor women found that, like them, 26% of the Philippines population lives below the national poverty line.<sup>21</sup>

20 APWLD (2016) UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on the Status of Women: Statement submitted by Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, 9 November, E/CN.6/2017/NGO/45.

21 Philippines Statistics Authority (2015) “Poverty incidence among Filipinos registered at 26.3%, as of first semester of 2015 – PSA”, [https://psa.gov.ph/content/poverty-incidence-among-filipinos-registered-263-first-](https://psa.gov.ph/content/poverty-incidence-among-filipinos-registered-263-first-semester-2015-psa)

Chin women in **Myanmar** knew they lived in poverty, and confirmed through research that their situation is the most severe in Myanmar. Mountainous Chin State has the highest poverty rate in Myanmar, with 73% of its population living below the poverty line compared with 26% of the population in the country as a whole in 2014.<sup>22</sup>

**Indonesian** women working in Sukabumi district in West Java see glaring injustice in national legislation that allows Sukabumi district’s minimum wage of 1,834,175 IDR (138 USD) to be set nearly 50% lower than the Jakarta minimum wage of 3.36 million (252 USD).<sup>23</sup>

### Unequal access to decent work and unequal pay with men

Women who work in **Myanmar** garment factories found estimates that 90% of workers in garment factories in Myanmar are women.<sup>24</sup> Especially when these jobs are in

Special Economic Zones, they are insecure and not paid minimum wage or overtime per the Myanmar law.

semester-2015-psa.

22 UNDP, “About Myanmar” UNDP <http://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/countryinfo.html>; and UNICEF, “Chin”, UNICEF, [https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/overview\\_25055.html](https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/overview_25055.html).

23 2016 Provincial Minimum Wage for Sukabumi at: <http://www.berberita.com/2015/11/daftar-umk-umr-di-jawa-barat-2016-lengkap-pdf.html>. 2017 Provincial Minimum Wage for Jakarta; Regulation 227/2016.

24 MGMA Export Data, MGMA, <http://www.myanmargarments.org/events-news/export-data/> (accessed 15 July 2016).



**Lao** women in rural Khammuan Province recorded through their research survey that women earn less money than men. Lao male-headed households earn a monthly average of 110 USD, while female-headed households earn a monthly average of 78 USD.

Migrant women in **Thailand** studied pay inequality among them finding women in the construction sector are paid between 220 – 240 Baht (6.4 – 7 USD) per day, which is less than the Thai minimum wage and less than men’s average wages.

**RIMUP** women researchers are trying to figure out why their incomes are insufficient, why they work harder than men to meet their basic needs, why their jobs are less secure than their husbands’ jobs, why some of them have to migrate in order to find better incomes, and why different towns or countries they migrate to have better jobs and more money than they can get at home.

*“I am afraid to stay here, but still I want to earn money. In Myanmar, I can’t earn this amount of money by working in the field.”*  
– Myanmar migrant woman in Mahar Chai, Thailand

Wealth inequalities stack the odds against RIMUP women in Asia Pacific.



Inequality of Power

Men claim most spaces of power throughout the world - from national to family spheres.

As of January 2017, only 23.3% of all national parliamentarians globally were women. While this is higher than the 1995 rate of 11.3% women in parliament, it is nowhere near the equal representation that women demand. In Asia the situation is worse, with only 19.3% women in parliament in 2017. And in the Pacific, even more gender inequality exists with only 17.4% women in parliament.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, in other government offices, only 17% of government ministers globally were women in 2015. Most women ministers oversee social sectors - governing education and family.<sup>26</sup> While these are not unimportant, women are siloed into this work and rarely see significant power over other any issues.

At household and family levels, the situation is similar. Household data shows women across Asia Pacific have most power over what to cook, and varying or little power over other facets of life.<sup>27</sup> In a survey in India in 2012, 4/5 of women said they needed a male family member’s permission to visit a local clinic, and 52% felt it is normal for a husband to beat his wife.<sup>28</sup>

**RIMUP women across Asia Pacific who participated in the APWLD FPAR did their own research on power inequalities in politics and in their families. This is what they discovered:**

Inequality of political power

In **Myanmar** women make up only 10% of Parliament, with only 64 of 664 seats in the upper and lower houses held by women.<sup>29</sup>

25 Both houses of government. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2017) “Women in national parliaments, as of 1 January 2017” (IPU).  
26 Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women (2015) “Women in Politics: 2015” (IPU).  
27 DHS database, analysis by A M Goetz (2009) “Progress of the World’s Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women?” (UNIFEM).  
28 The Economist (2017) “The Missing Middle: Women in South Asia”, The Economist, 25 Feb.  
29 F Macgregor (2015) “Woman MPs Up, but Hluttaw still 90% male”, Myanmar Times, 1 Dec, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/17910-woman-mps-up-but-hluttaw-still-90-male.html>



**Nepal’s** constitution mandates that women make up 33% of the country’s Constituent Assembly. However, in rural communities women are excluded from local decision-making bodies such as School Management Committees and forestry user groups.

**Lao** women in Khammuan Province recorded their exclusion from village meetings and discussions regarding public investment projects. They are not allowed to actively participate, and are instead made to serve snacks, tea, and alcohol at meetings.

Bihari women in **Bangladesh** have no representation in any local mediation committees, and men dominate all mediation processes.

Inequality of power in families

*“Men think they are head of the family and want other family members to obey meekly to their decisions. Among Chin marriages, there is no gender equality yet.”*

– 38 year old woman divorcee, Myanmar

In **Myanmar**, the Chin practice of bride-pricing reinforces the subordinate position of women in Chin society and families. The prices are negotiated only by male family

members and Aungtamans (men who serve as community negotiators).

Reformation of **Taiwan’s** Nationality Act is currently deadlocked because ethnocentric parties particularly do not want Chinese spouses to have full suffrage or full naturalisation rights. This xenophobia leaves all foreign spouses without legal and social protections, much less inclusion in processes to develop laws that affect them.

**Through their research RIMUP women are trying to find the root cause of why their concerns and needs are not addressed at home, in their communities, or nationally; why they have so little decision-making power over their own lives; why they have so little decision-making power over issues that directly affect them.**

All 10 of the grassroots communities that participated in the FPAR mapped power structures in their communities. They saw patriarchal power structures that stop RIMUP women having equal power to men, and through the power mapping they identified powerful actors supportive of their agenda to ally with.

Inequality of Resources

Within Asia, sub-regional averages of women working in the agriculture range from about 35% in South Asia





Table: Distribution of Agricultural Landholders by Gender

Country	Year	% Women
Armenia	2007	29.7%
Bangladesh	2008	4.6%
Georgia	2004	29.1%
India	2010-2011	12.8%
Indonesia	1993	8.8%
Kyrgyzstan	2002	12.4%
Laos	1999	9.1%
Malaysia	2005	18.0%
Myanmar	2003	15.0%
Nepal	2002	8.1%
Philippines	2002	10.8%
Sri Lanka	2002	16.3%
Thailand	2003	27.4%
Vietnam	2001	8.8%

to almost 50% in East and Southeast Asia.<sup>30</sup> However, the percentages of women who own land in Asia Pacific countries do not match the percentages of women who work the land. In no Asia Pacific countries do 35%, or even 50%, of women own agricultural land (see table below).

**Women are working the land in Asia Pacific, but they do not own it.**

In many parts of Asia women are dying in their attempts to preserve these resources from corporate takeover, land grabbing, and environmental destruction. Protection International has recorded 4 women have been killed in Thailand in the last 20 years defending environmental resources.<sup>31</sup>

**In their own research RIMUP women across Asia Pacific who participated in the APWLD FPAR uncovered further and context specific details on resource inequalities in the region. This is what they found:**

30 FAO (2012) The Role of Women in Agriculture (Rome: FAO).  
31 Protection International (2017) For Those Who Died Trying, Presentation, March 2017 (Bangkok: PI).

Land resource inequality

**Nepali** women researchers found that only 19.71% of women have access to land (both agricultural and non-agricultural land). The problem of women’s restricted right to land ownership is particularly bad in Sindhupalchok district, where only 11.99% of women have ownership over land.<sup>32</sup>

In **Lao** land-grabbing has resulted in a major loss of land for poor people in rural villages. 1.4 hectares per person are considered the minimum necessary to meet and sustain the food needs of a five-person household. Poor families in Khammuan Province have an average of 0.25 hectare of land per person- far below the livelihood minimum. There are also gender disparities in land distribution, as 77% of male-headed households have access to two plots of land versus 68% of female-headed households.

In **Bangladesh**, Bihari women researchers recorded that although their community has lived on a particular piece of land for over 40 years, they have no rights to the land.

32 DDC Profile Sindhupalchok, 2014.

Inheritance and property inequalities

In Chin State, **Myanmar**, men maintain ownership of all property as well as custody of all children in a divorce.

Further, Chin customary law in **Myanmar** dictates that only men may inherit properties, lands, and other valuable family assets. Because women usually change clans when they marry, they are not permitted to receive inheritance from their own family, as this would constitute transfer of property between clans.

**Why do RIMUP women have so little access to land? Why do RIMUP women have no fair access to inheritance or to property? Women across Asia Pacific are uncovering reasons why they work land but do not own it.**

**They demand change, redress and equality!**

Without equality over resources women are overly dependent on men and have no security in cases where they are living on their own. Their lack of ownership of resources reinforces their already subordinate position to men. Resource equality brings women power in other parts of their lives and independence.

Our Solutions

**Feminist movements - grounded in local struggles and experience - are the key to making real change.**

**RIMUP women in Asia Pacific gain the least but suffer the most from globalisation and the inequalities it causes. RIMUP women do not want to live under these injustices anymore. They are determined to change the systems that are rigged against them!**

Women in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand **used the FPAR process to research and then build movements.** APWLD and the grassroots researchers believe that the research process itself is a collective process that strengthens solidarity and empowers women to work collectively for long term structural changes.





### Box 3: What are Movements? What are Feminist Movements?

In 2012 the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) studied the characteristics of feminist movements, looking at women uniting for change across the globe. AWID looked first at what social movements in general.

**Social movements nearly always have these characteristics:**

1. "A **constituency base** or membership that is mobilized and collectivized;
2. **Members collectivized in either formal or informal organizations;**
3. Some **continuity over time** i.e., a spontaneous uprising or campaign may not be a movement in itself, though it may lead to one;
4. A **clear political agenda** i.e., the constituency has a shared analysis of the social / structural conditions that have disempowered them, and the changes they seek to make in these structures;
5. **Collective actions and activities** in pursuit of the movement's political goals;
6. Use a **variety of actions and strategies** from confrontational, militant actions (including violent protests), or peaceful protest / non-cooperation (a la Gandhi), public opinion building or advocacy strategies; and
7. **Clear internal or external targets** they will engage in the change process."<sup>33</sup>

**Feminist Movements have all of the above qualities, but with *feminist characteristics*:**

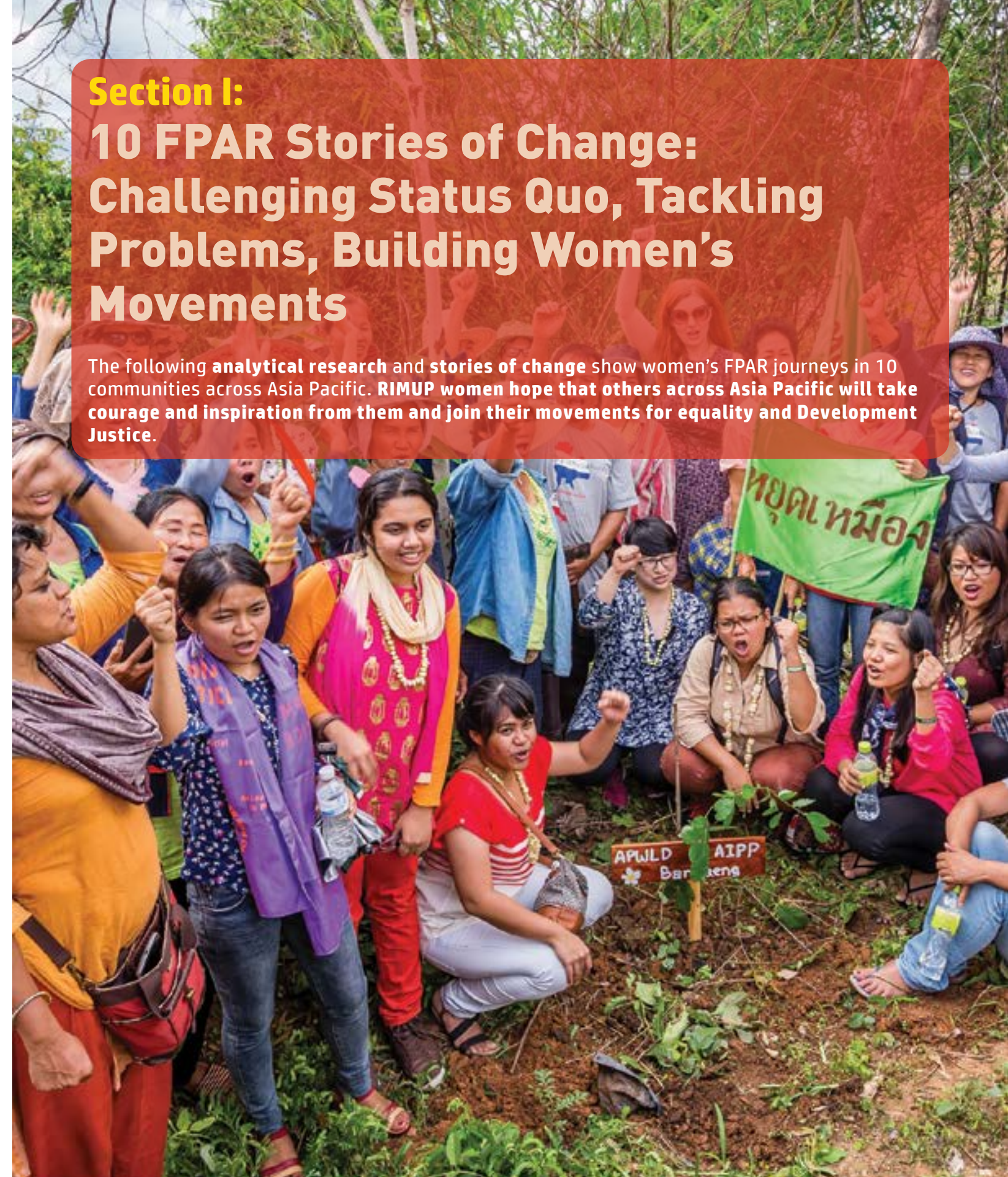
1. "Their agenda is built from a **gendered analysis** of the problem or situation they are confronting or seeking to change;
2. **Women form a critical mass** of the movement's membership or constituency, women are the subjects, not objects or targets, of the movement;
3. They espouse **feminist values and ideology**. Gender equality, social and economic equality, the full body of human rights, tolerance, inclusion, peace, non-violence, respectful spaces and roles for all, etc., even if they don't call themselves feminist or articulate these values in more culturally specific ways;
4. They have systematically built and centered **women's leadership** in the movement. This is in contrast to movements that treat women's participation instrumentally—in the sense of adding the strength of numbers at rallies and marches, or to promote a more inclusive, gender-sensitive image of their movement but not giving women any real decision-making power or meaningful leadership roles.
5. The movement's **political goals are gendered**. They seek not only a change in the problem, but a change that privileges women's interests and seeks to transform both gender and social power relations;
6. They use **gendered strategies and methods**. Strategies that build on women's own mobilizing and negotiating capacities, and involve women at every stage of the process; and
7. They create more **feminist organizations** i.e., organizations that create more transparent systems and structures, consciously address the distribution of power and responsibility across roles, build a feminist practice of leadership (e.g. Batliwala, 2011), strong internal and external accountability and learning systems, and actively experiment with change within their own structures."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> S. Batliwala, 2012, Changing Their World (AWID), pp. 3–4.

<sup>34</sup> S. Batliwala, 2012, Changing Their World (AWID), p. 6.

## Section I: 10 FPAR Stories of Change: Challenging Status Quo, Tackling Problems, Building Women's Movements

The following **analytical research** and **stories of change** show women's FPAR journeys in 10 communities across Asia Pacific. **RIMUP women hope that others across Asia Pacific will take courage and inspiration from them and join their movements for equality and Development Justice.**





# Bangladesh:

## Urdu-Speaking Bihari Women Stateless in Kurmitola Camp in Dhaka



### Who are the Women?

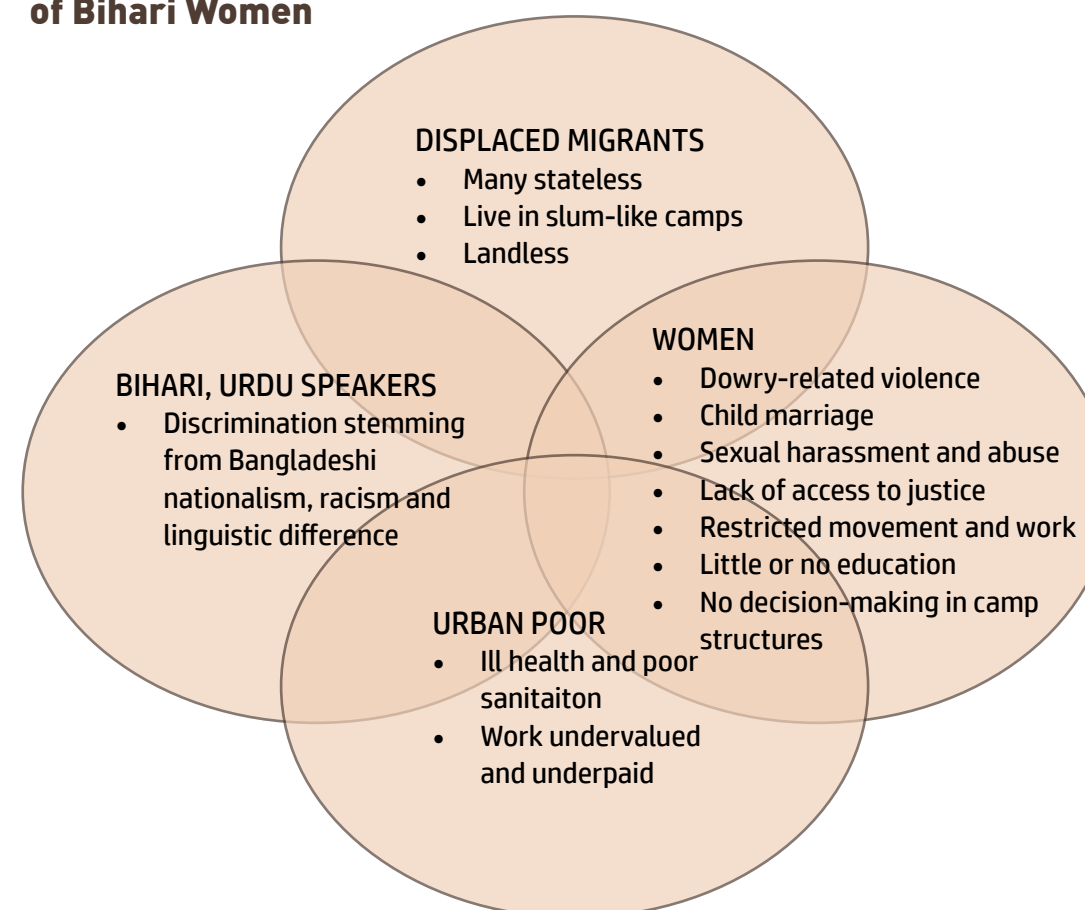
Urdu-speaking women from the Bihari community live in the Kurmotola Camp (KTC) in Kalshi in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Most Bihari people are stateless, living in 116 camps across Bangladesh. They came as refugees during the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, and then were labeled as Pakistani collaborators in 1971 during the liberation war of Bangladesh. They continue to be stigmatised.

Biharis are culturally, politically, and linguistically isolated from the mainstream Bengali community due to anti-Bihari national sentiments that remain after the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.

Their multiple identities each carry with them problems that Bihari women in Dhaka must face daily. They intersect to create a perfect storm.

The camps for Bihari peoples are congested and lack sufficient resources and services. Urdu-speaking Bihari women also face the interconnected problems of: exclusion from decision-making processes, widespread discrimination, pervasive poverty, and rampant sexual harassment.

### Intersecting Identities of Bihari Women





Women in KTC Camp identified the following as main problems, collecting data to document them:

### Sexual harassment and abuse

Women in the camps live in constant fear of sexual harassment and violence, especially at communal restrooms and at night. Sexual harassment of women in public spaces reduces women's freedom of movement and security. A 2014 nation-wide study by Action Aid found that 88% of women face sexual harassment in urban areas.<sup>35</sup>

### Lack of access to justice or remedy

Women do not trust the local police to address incidents of sexual harassment and abuse. There have been instances of sexual harassment by police officers themselves. When police do respond, they make victims negotiate directly with their harassers, demand bribes to take action or go forward with prosecution, or blame victims.

*“It is not easy to file a GD [General Diary complaint against a perpetrator]. Lots of things are involved here. A woman/ girl alone cannot make a GD. Her family has to support her for that. If you file a GD, you are going against the society. Society teaches women to keep silent and tolerate any type of gender-based violence against them. If you make a police complaint, you are not a ‘good woman.’”*

-”S”, a woman who filed a police complaint against her harasser at the Pallabi police station

### Inability to own land

KTC camp is made up of self-constructed homes on government-owned land. The Bihari people have been living on the land for over 40 years but have no rights to it. They were allowed to live on the land as “internally displaced people,” but mixed government efforts to grant citizenship to the Urdu-speaking minority strip them of this classification and make women and their families more vulnerable to eviction. They want ownership of the land.

<sup>35</sup> The Daily Star (2014) “Cities mostly unsafe for women” The Daily Star, 29 Oct, <http://www.thedailystar.net/cities-mostly-unsafe-for-women-47878>.

### Child marriage and no right to education for girls

Urdu-speaking people in the KTC camp cannot afford education costs beyond the primary school level. Girls usually only receive a primary school education, but sexual harassment on the way to school sometimes forces parents to stop their daughters' education. Parents instead marry girls off at an earlier age to protect them from street harassment. Poverty also motivates child marriages, and after primary school girls are usually married off as soon as possible in order to reduce the cost of living for families.

### Poverty wages and lack of reliable income

Women primarily make paper packets, embroider, and tailor for income. They earn a minimal income: 40 Taka (0.5 USD) for making 1000 paper packets and 50-60 Taka (0.6-0.8 USD) per piece of embroidered cloth. Corruption prevents women from accessing full employment opportunities. In order to apply for a job, women need to have a certificate issued by the local chairman, but the chairman will not issue these certificates without money.

### Women's exclusion from spaces of power

There are no female representatives in any local mediation committees. The root cause of women's problems is that their concerns, needs and issues are not recognised or addressed in the patriarchal environment that dominates in the community.



## Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

The NGO Naripokkho is working to **empower and organize Urdu speaking women and girls to stand against gender based violence**. During the FPAR, Bihari women gained collective awareness on women's rights issues and started to challenge the restrictive fundamentalisms and patriarchy in households, their community, and the country more broadly.

### New women's group and direct action in response to violence

Under their own initiative, women meet every 15 days to talk about their problems and identify collective solutions. Women established the Bihari Women Community Group and formed a **committee called “Mukti Nari Songgothon”**. **“Mukti” means release, signifying that they want release from harassment, violence and threats. They want to stand on their own feet.** After identifying many problems during the FPAR as well as

mapping power structures and what is most needed and possible to change, they agreed to focus efforts on gender-based violence and representation in the community decision-making body.

The group now responds immediately to any incident of violence against women. Group members support the victims and their family members, talking with them, and accompanying them to the police station and hospital if needed.

### Bi-monthly protest and human chains

Community women's voice is increasing. Women planned and organised a Stay-In Protest and Demonstration on 28 May 2016 called **“Reclaiming Public Spaces for Women”**, preparing slogans and placards. The Bihari Women Community Group made the rally a bi-monthly event, demonstrating in different places throughout KTC camp. They make posters and stickers, placing them in locations of the camp where sexual harassment is prevalent.

*“We have never seen this type of demonstration inside our camp. It felt really good to see community women carry out the protest.”*

–Sharmin

*“It will be great if this type of demonstration can reduce the gathering of men in front of public toilets.”*

–Rani

After several months of organising fortnightly demonstrations, women changed tactic to organise a human chain in protest of significant violent incidents whenever possible. As a result of the women group's involvement, many women are participating in the human chain events.

### Lobbying politicians

The Bihari Women Community Group secured meetings with local authorities (Stranded Pakistani General Repatriation Committee; and KTC Community Police Unit) to demand immediate actions on gender-based violence in the camp and to increase women's role in decision-



making. The women's group is lobbying the all-men Shanti Committee (local committee that maintains connection with the police) to include women as committee members. On 4 May 2017, 35 Urdu speaking women at KTC camp met with representatives from City Corporation, Dhaka North, including Md. Anowar Hossain Bhuiyan, Slum Development Officer of Dhaka North City Corporation.

### **Securing Government Commitments for Support**

Bihari women had a face-to-face meeting in KTC camp with female ward commissioners and the local chairman. The ward commissioner promised to visit the camp to assess and address the issue. In her subsequent visit to the camp, women discussed their problems with her. The commissioner promised to support them whenever needed as well as to visit the camp again. She asked the KTC women to notify her about their problems and incidents frequently, sharing her contact number for easy access and support.

Further, on 21 May 2017 the women's group shared findings of the research with the Bangladesh Department of Women Affairs (DWA), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, at the DWA offices in Dhaka. They advocated for the government's assistance to empower and organize

Urdu speaking women and girls.

Shahin Ahmed Chowdhury, Director General (DG) of DWA, supported organization and registration of the women's group. After its official registration, members of the organization can receive trainings on dowry, domestic violence, violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, including at the Rajshahi Training Academy. Further, once an association is formed, KTC women will come under DWA's microcredit programme and can get various allowances such as mother allowance, maternity allowance etc. DWA can further provide finance to establish a training centre or a health centre at Kalshi for the KTC community within a budget of 100 million BDT.

### **Educating the Community**

Community researchers organised a discussion on women's rights on 8 March 2016 and 2017 to celebrate International Women's Day. They held small group discussions or "Courtyard Meetings" with community women using visual aid cards created by NGO Naripokkho. The cards had a visual on one side and relevant laws explained on the back, aiming to provide both legal knowledge as well as knowledge of avenues for legal support and redress.



## **India**

### **Distress Migration and Labour Exploitation of Bonda Tribal Women**





Who are the Women?

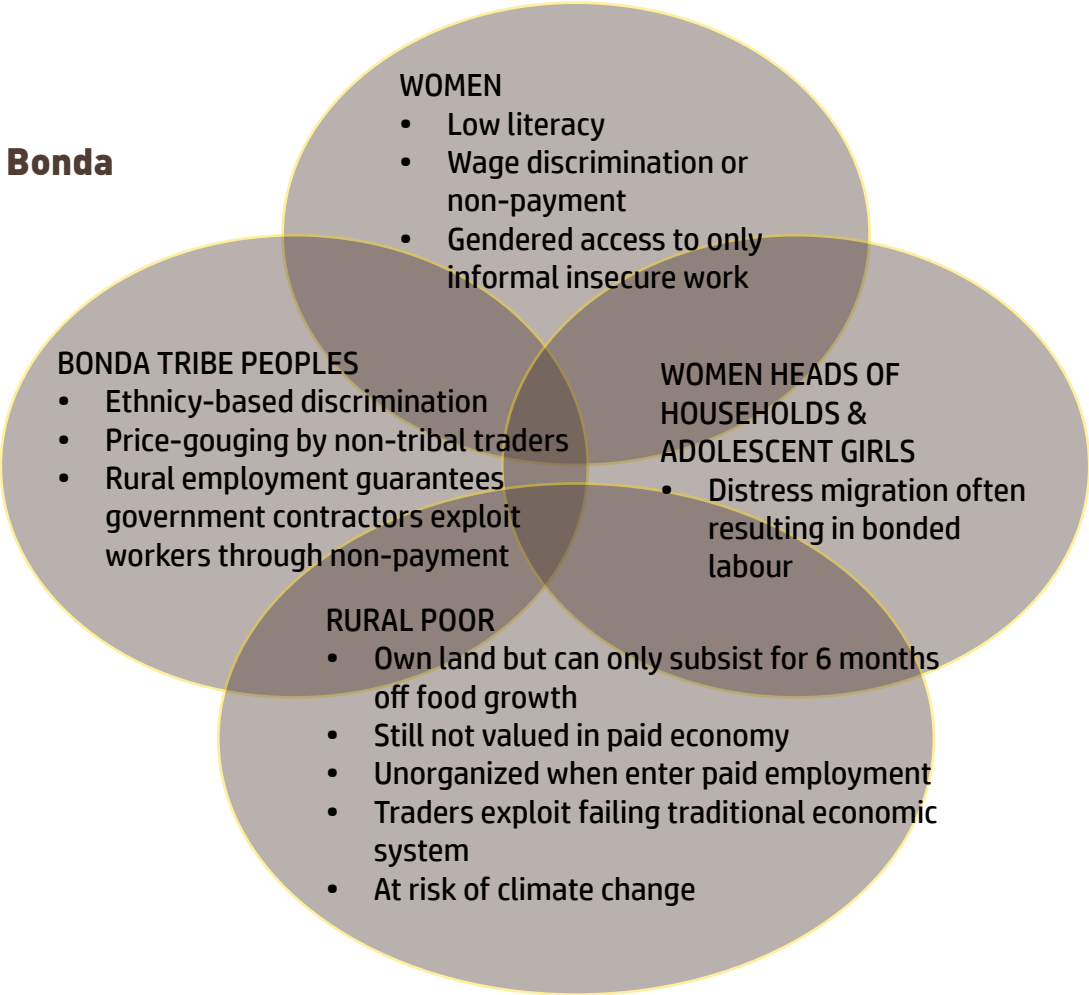
The Bonda tribal group is an indigenous community residing on a vast and dense hill forest tract in India on the Eastern Ghats mountain range in Odisha’s southernmost Malkangiri district. About 47% of Odisha’s land is designated as tribal areas, and Scheduled Tribe peoples are guaranteed specific constitutional rights.

For the last decade, single and young women from Bonda villages have migrated and experienced labour exploitation in destinations. They traditionally had subsistence livelihoods from forestry and sustainable mixed crop agriculture, thus not needing to migrate for cash income. The economy and the climate are changing, however, and disrupting this stability.

Bonda women’s multiple identities as Indigenous, rural poor, and as women carry with them varying burdens or discrimination. This research focused on adolescent and single women heads of households, who are the majority of women migrating. They have extra pressure to bring in cash income to support dependents and other family members.

This is the first known study on Bonda women’s migration and the changing economic systems causing that. 564 families were surveyed. Out of 156 migrants in those families, 125 (or 80%) were women. All were under 30 years old.

Intersecting Identities of Bonda Women



What are the Problems?

*“Earlier we never felt the urgent need for cash income, but today it has become a major push factor for forced migration.”*

– Chanki Kirsani, Baunspada Village

Bonda women in 9 villages identified the following as main problems, collecting data to document these:

Factors Leading to Distress Migration

In the last decade Bonda people have faced chronic hunger, endemic exploitation by outsiders in the marketplace, administrative apathy, and major rights violations with regards to implementation of Government livelihood and employment generation programmes. Distress migration is a coping mechanism.

The Bonda economy has shifted from an agricultural and barter economy to an industry-led and cash economy. This new capitalist development model is failing women, as is the State’s social safety net that should guarantee them decent employment opportunities throughout the year.

• Insufficient Income from Agriculture

Bonda people traditionally source their livelihoods from agriculture, labour, and forest foraging. Recently there has been a decline in reliability of income from agricultural products, as changing top-soil, drought, and the destruction of indigenous seed stocks from flash flooding have reduced the number of crops the Bonda people are able to grow.

Bonda women traditionally sell forest products at local markets. Yet, due to reduced crop variety, as well as price-gauging by non-tribal traders, this once-reliable income no longer covers household costs.

• Non-Payment in Government Employment Programs

In 2005 the Indian Government enacted a guaranteed employment program, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Every rural family is guaranteed 100 days of work at a rate of Rs 175 (2.6 USD) per day. Though 82% of Bonda households surveyed in this research have registered for and received a job card, yet no one

Box 4: Flooding & Seed Stocks

A woman in Badpada village reported that in 2010 she cultivated a total 123 different crops on her two-acre shifting cultivation plot. But Badapada has seen consecutive floods since 2012, and now she has barely 20 varieties of seeds left. The floods not only washed away her standing crops but also her stock of diverse seeds. This is the case with majority of households in the village, therefore they cannot replenish their seed stock through seed exchange. The result is that crop outputs have fallen, affecting annual food security and availability of surplus produce to sell at weekly markets. This has pushed many families into sending youths to either the shanty hotels of Malkangiri or to the rice mills of Korukonda for supplementary cash income.

has received the government-guaranteed 100 days of work. This research documented that contractors and Government officials fail to pay wages, take major wage cuts from labourers, and delay wage payments. The wait for wages documented ranges from 1 month to even 2 years, and wage cuts result in workers receiving actual wages of 150 INR (2.2 USD) per day.

Failure by government agencies to pay for completed work is the main factor contributing to women’s migration. Women suffer harassment and intimidation if they confront contractors to demand due wages. Corruption among local leaders, private contractors, and government agencies is reportedly at the core of these wage violations.

*Laxmi Kirsani of Bodvel village said she had been working in a hotel at Malkangiri for the past three years as a cook. She gets 300 INR (4 USD) per day though she works 11 hours a day and suffers under the heat and oil of the kitchen fires. She gives all of her savings to her parents for household expenses.*



## Labour Violations at Migration Destinations

*“Private companies do not cut wages like Government contractors, so Bonda people prefer to migrate to work with private agencies.”*

– Sanya Dhangdamajhi, Mudulipada Village

Adolescent girls and women travel to towns and cities in search of work in hotels, shanty restaurants, and rice mills. Without government enforcement of existing labour policy, Bonda women workers are at risk of labour exploitation.

In the absence of alternative opportunities for tribal communities, women find themselves taking loans or burdened with hereditary/intergenerational loan debt, which is paid off through bonded labour. Policies aimed at abolishing bonded labour migration remain unimplemented because the Government does not recognise distress migration as indicative of - or as a form of - bonded labour. District committees responsible for conducting regular surveys of bonded labour are not functional in any districts.

## Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

**Bonda women are addressing forced migration, demanding living wages and employment alternatives in their villages.**

With FPAR, Bonda women gained leadership skills to push for **collective action**. The NGO Regional Initiative for Tribal Empowerment and Solidarity (RITES) is working together with Bonda women in Odisha.

### Women’s Groups in 4 Villages

**In four villages, for the first time ever, Bonda women and girls have decided to form groups to fight for recovery of their lost wages** and advocate for alternative livelihood plans in their villages.



## Media Campaign, Reporting, and Confrontations about Bonda People’s Issues

In the first half of 2017, local media featured six stories on the RITES campaign for Bonda women’s lost wages, highlighting increasing forced migration in search of cash incomes. Journalists from Durjyadhan Patra of Dharitri, a regional Odia daily newspaper, and Ratnakar Das of Prameya, a regional Odia daily newspaper and bi-monthly magazine, visited Bonda Hills women and NREGS worksites to cross verify wage complaints. The journalists also met Manga Panna, Project Leader of Bonda Development Agency (BDA) and Block Development Officer of Khairput Block, to not only raise issues they saw in the hills but also to get their side of the story.

On 7 March 2017 local media covered women and men from Bonda Hills travelling to Malkangiri to file labour cases. The labour cases received further attention due to a confrontation between a journalist and the Project Director (PD) of District Rural Development Agency, the nodal department for NREGA implementation. In response to a journalist asking about the Bonda women’s situation, the PD got angry with the journalist and snatched the camera of another journalist. After local police got involved, the PD apologized and promised to act on the Bonda wage complaints with urgency.

RITES organised a second media visit to Bonda Hills on 30 April 2017 for Labour Day. Four local media persons visited five villages. A local TV channel carried the women’s story on 1 May, and print media carried half page features.

### Waging A War Against Unpaid Wages: Labour Cases and Responding to Threats

Migrant youths, women, and Bonda elders have filed **labour cases against contractors and officials who have been cheating them of their wages**. This is the first time Bonda women have taken cases against labour contractors. They are acting as paralegals and conducting labour litigation. They are preparing reports and have learnt procedures for filing cases.





On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017 a group of Bonda people from Tulagurum, Kirsanipada, Bandiguda and Baunspada villages filed four labour cases through the NREGA Ombusman for Malkangiri District Durga Prasad Tripathy. Women also met the District Labour Officer to submit a copy of the cases, and they held a press conference.

Later the RITES team learned that the Mudulipada Panchayat Executive Officer (PEO), who is responsible for releasing wages for NREGA projects had gone to the four villages and threatened the complainants. Bonda women responded to the threats with strength and warned the PEO of consequences if he repeated his threats to any complainants. In response to this situation, the NREGA Ombudsman conducted an investigative visit on 25 April 2017. Ramakrishna Gond, Project Administrator of Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), has now taken charge as nodal officer in charge of Bonda Hills. As part of his responsibilities, he visited all the four villages and met the complainants. He has assured them of quick action.

ITDA officials responsible for development of Bonda Hills have begun regular inspections of hotels employing girls and women from Bonda Hills, enforcing minimum wage and age for work. RITES now reports that no hotel in Malkangiri or nearby towns are employing staff under 18 years old, and the hotels are paying women regularly for fear of ITDA sanctions.

### Cashing in on an Environmentally Sustainable Economy in Bonda Villages

The FPAR team is strengthening village economies to make agriculture and marketing of its products sustainable. **Agricultural livelihood security first requires community-based disaster prevention systems.** Village meetings have been organised in 5 of the 9 FPAR villages to plan for land development and flash flooding.

District Administration officials have started working with the RITES team and Bonda women to look for ways to bolster local economies. Government officials have agreed to start a **centre for traditional arts and marketing**, particularly of ringas (cotton shawls and waist wraps) and bead jewelry. Brick making units and leaf-plate making

units are to start in different villages of Bonda Hills where Bonda girls will be trained to make mud bricks and sew plates and cups made of certain kind of leaves called *siali* which are collected by women. The government has also set up a local cashew nut processing unit at Mundiguda village for Bonda migrants. The work pays INR 200 (USD 3.09) per day, significantly more than the INR 175 (USD 2.71) minimum wage.

### Development Funds for People – Not Overheads

A report of Tribal Development Department of Government of Odisha states that Bonda people are getting financial assistance through the Bonda Development Agency (BDA), in receiving between 162,580,000 – 281,650,000 INR (2,502,424 – 4,335,145 USD) per year since 2010. When this information was shared with the BDA Project Leader, he explained that **the majority of the BDA development funds allocated was used for administrative and other expenses and very little went as livelihood support to Bonda families.** Another official said he would raise this issue with the Government officials responsible for tribal welfare and development and ensure that a major chunk of development assistance goes directly to people, in particular to the families of Bonda migrant women and men.

### Reaching Out to the UN System for Redress

RITES submitted its FPAR research report to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Ms Urmila Bhoola, and to a member of UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, Mr Surya Deva. Both have assured they will look into the report, write to respective country representatives asking for clarification, and initiate redress mechanisms so that migrant Bonda women are able to realise economic and social justice.

## Indonesia

### Missing Reproductive Rights for Women Workers





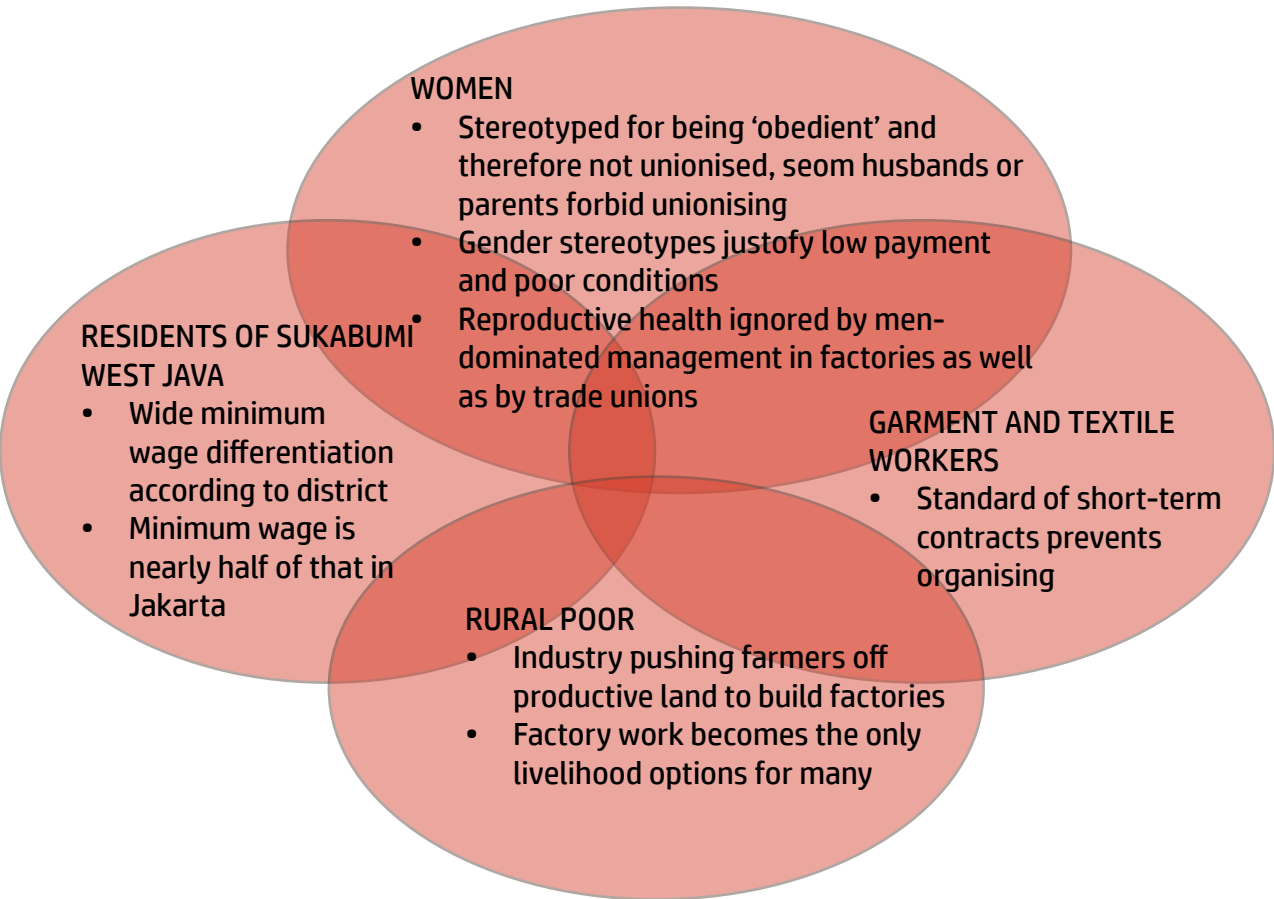
## Who are the Women?

Women working in 3 different garment and textile factories in the industrial district of Sukabumi in West Java joined forces with organised women in the union, Gabungan Serikat Buruh Independent (Federation of Independent Trade Unions, GSBI).

Women comprise 51% of Indonesia’s registered labor force.<sup>1</sup> Though women now make up the majority of workers, they continue to be excluded from decision-making processes at all levels, reinforcing their social and political subordination.

<sup>1</sup> As of 2014. International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database, See: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=ID>.

## Intersecting Identities of Women Workers in West Java



## What are the Problems?

Indonesia is shifting from an agrarian to an industrialised economy. Transnational corporations are flocking to the country to exploit cheap labour. As the labour market undergoes this structural transformation away from an agriculture base, more women are entering the labor force.

Women workers in West Java factories identified the following as main problems, collecting data to document them:

### Wage Discrimination by Geographical District

District-level governments may decide their own minimum wage. This leads to a “race to the bottom”, where some districts enact a low minimum wage to attract industry. Sukabumi district has a minimum wage of 1,834,175 IDR (138 USD), strikingly lower than the minimum wage in Jakarta of 3.36 million (252 USD).<sup>36</sup> Because more jobs go to the districts with cheaper labour, more workers are forced to take on lower paying jobs.

This low minimum is even not met, as women workers are often not paid fairly for long hours of overtime.

### Job Insecurity Obstructs Freedom of Association and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

Most factories use short-term contract systems or outsource to small subcontractors, practices which keep women in a state of uncertainty and prevent them from standing up for their rights. Under the threat of having contracts not renewed, women are afraid to collectively organise to address wage discrimination and underpayment. These are such pervasive problems that they overshadow sexual and reproductive health rights, which labour organisations and government overlook.

<sup>36</sup> 2016 Provincial Minimum Wage for Sukabumi at: <http://www.berberita.com/2015/11/daftar-umk-umr-di-jawa-barat-2016-lengkap-pdf.html>. 2017 Provincial Minimum Wage for Jakarta; Regulation 227/2016.

## Legislated but Missing SRHR

*“Of the 200,000 formal sector enterprises that exist in Indonesia, only around 20 companies actually provide guarantees for the reproductive rights of women - including sufficient maternity leave and facilities for breastfeeding.”*

- Health Minister, Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih<sup>37</sup>

Many Indonesian laws guarantee reproductive rights of women. National legislation recognises women’s right to quality and affordable comprehensive reproductive health services;<sup>38</sup> establishes that women must be enabled to breast feed their babies for 6 months through workplaces provision of safe and decent places for women to breastfeed or pump and store their breastmilk; guarantees 3 months maternity leave; and grants the right to take off work for the first two days of their menstrual cycle.<sup>39</sup>

However, there remains a gulf between what laws technically exist on paper and the actual real benefits women workers experience. Women workers often have low levels of formal education and are not informed of their rights as women or as workers. In the absence of government inspection and enforcement, many companies fail to implement reproductive health policies.

The allotted three months for maternity leave is rarely granted: Many women receive only two weeks off prior to giving birth, and are told they can instead have more time off after giving birth, but this rarely actually is given. Women are shown no leniency during pregnancy and must meet the same output target points while pregnant. Similarly, women are not allowed to take off days for their periods; nor are they provided access to good health facilities or adequate facilities for breastfeeding.

<sup>37</sup> Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih (2011) Seminar on Reproductive Health in the Workplace, <http://m.detik.com/health/read/2011/03/01/161359/1582279/763/perusahaan-abaikan-kesehatan-reproduksi-pekerja-perempuan>.

<sup>38</sup> Law no. 36/3009.

<sup>39</sup> Law no. 13/2003.



## Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

The Federation of Independent Trade Unions (GSBI) and women from 3 factories in Sukabumi, West Java, are demanding change:

### Organising for SRHR

On International Women's Day in March 2016, 250 persons joined a rally to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Presidential Palace. The rally was the first GSBI union campaign on exclusive breastfeeding and 6 month maternity leave.

### Demanding Change at Ministry of Women's Empowerment

Women workers met with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment to discuss major gaps in women's reproductive health policy implementation. The ministry promised to assess the problem and ensure that the relevant policies are implemented at the district level and below. GSBI is engaged in policy discussion with the Ministry of Women Empowerment to protect reproductive rights of women workers in garment and footwear industries.

### Feminists and Trade Union SRHR Policy

At the GSBI National Congress in May 2015, GSBI passed a resolution to campaign and struggle for 6-month maternity leave. GSBI faces internal and external challenges to support for this.

### Radio Advocacy

GSBI women workers partnered with the local radio station to run a talk show session, promoting SRHR for women workers.



## Lao

### Gendered Impacts of Poverty in Rural Khammuan Province



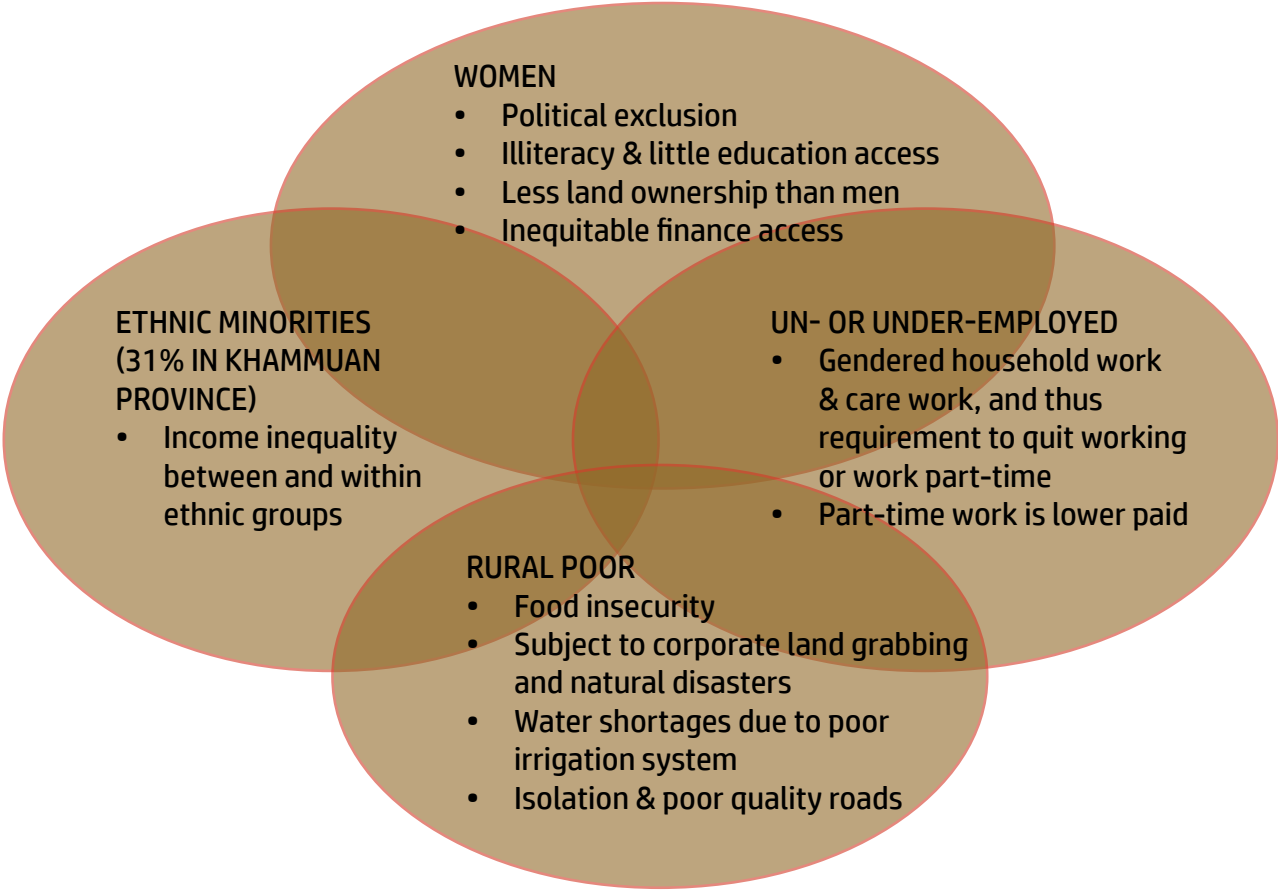


Who are the Women?

Women from Soppeng and Napang villages in the mountainous Bualapha district of Khammuan province are ethnically diverse. Social Development Alliance Association (SODA) partnered with the Lao Women’s Union (LWU) and poor community members working in these two rural villages for the FPAR.

Women are moving toward wage-earning employment as the labor market undergoes a structural transformation and becomes less reliant on agricultural work. They work as farmers, forest product collectors, domestic workers, or work in the trade and service sector. Women in rural Khammuan Province see mutually reinforcing issues of gender inequality, lack of employment, and poverty affecting their lives. They live with multiple dimensions of marginalisation as women, rural poor, ethnic minorities, and un- or under-employed workers, as in the below chart.

Intersecting Identities of Women in Khammuan Province, Laos



What are the Problems?

Women in Laos collected data to document rural poverty:

Poverty, Income Inequality, and Lack of Resources

Women in rural regions face gross levels of gender-based economic discrimination. Women in this research do not have equitable access to financing, and have a much more difficult time than men obtaining micro-credit. They are often only able to take on lower-paying part-time work because they have the household and care responsibilities. When they can take on full-time jobs, income inequality is common. Male-headed households in this research earn a monthly average of 110 USD, while female-headed households earn a monthly average of 78 USD.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity and rice shortages are frequent and serious problems for rural communities, with women most often impacted. The research found that 37.5% of female-headed households surveyed experience rice shortages

versus 28.3% of male-headed households. Low yields of rice, lack of access to arable land, labor shortages, and natural disasters are common factors that lead to food insecurity.

Land-Grabbing and Other Resource Inequalities

Land-grabbing and the expansion of corporate plantations and energy projects have resulted in a major loss of land for poor people in rural Bualapha district. Families rely on the land to farm to meet their food needs and as a source of livelihood. 1.4 hectares per person are considered the minimum necessary to meet and sustain the food staple needs of a five-person household.<sup>40</sup> Poor families surveyed in this research have an average of 0.25 hectare of land per person- far below the minimum. There are also gender disparities in land distribution among them, as 77% of male-headed households have access to 2 plots of land versus 68% of female-headed households.

Water shortages are a prevalent and recurring issue the villages, and the income from agricultural work is made even less stable without water and sufficient irrigation. Poor irrigation systems caused the shortage of water.

40 SODA (2015) Title (SODA).





**Limited Access to Health and Education Services**

42% of women in the surveyed villages have not attended school and remain illiterate. The remote location and the poor quality roads leading in and out of the villages increase women’s isolation from formal employment opportunities and access to resources like health centers and good schools.

In the absence of proper health clinics, the duty to care for the sick falls to women. Women often have to miss work or quit their jobs if a family member is hurt or injured. Female-headed households are especially vulnerable if health problems arise, as they do not have a second income-earner to help meet household needs if the woman is forced to stop working. Lack of adequate maternal health care also cuts into women’s ability to earn and manage family income.

**Women’s Political Exclusion: More than Tea & Snacks!**

Women are excluded from village meetings and discussions on public investment projects. They are not allowed to actively participate, and instead serve snacks,

tea, and alcohol at meetings. The few public investment projects that do take place in the village thus fail to recognise or support the particular needs and interests of women.

**Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!**

Women’s role in the community changed when **they became more mobile**, as a result of the changing economy from a subsistence to wage-earning system in the last decade. This has **produced some resentment among men**, though they claim it has not increased violence against women. It has also prepared women to take action!

**Women’s Power, Decision Making, Freedom of Movement!**

In the opinion of women’s groups, their **increased earning power improved their decision-making capacity** within both the household and the community (though not in formal meetings, as above). Now they are consulted or make final decisions about how family assets are used, what to buy for their children, where to send them to



school. Their increased mobility and ability to earn has given them more **freedom of movement** and exposure to useful social experiences.

**Newsboards... to Increased Women’s Participation and Organisation**

By theorizing how change works in the FPAR, women decided to improve the newsboards in their villages. Increased income for female head of households as a result of livelihood fund. (The newsboards now include gender information on such as rights of women in local planning, encourage women to be the leaders, and provide a space for organizing the sharing of household work. in the news board)

**Media**

SODA sent their Lao language research brief to the Lao Women’s Media Department of the Lao Women’s Union. LWU published it in the May 2017 Gender Equality Column of the Lao Women newspaper.

**Input to Community Development Plan**

Information and survey results will be incorporated into the village campaign and Community Development Plan.

**Networking and Movement Building in the Forest Sector**

Through a collective movement, women in the community are articulating their voices and needs. A new network was formed at the village level, and this was connected to other existing forest sector projects. The Lao Youth Union is cooperating with SODA through the Lao Youth Training in Khammuan province. When SODA has undergone the training, the Youth Union will support and work together with SODA in the community.

**Women’s Employment Advocacy**

The FPAR strengthened SODA by building new relationships with the local authority. The FPAR policy dialogues on gender issues in rural employment also created advocacy relationships with national government. A workshop on 28 April 2017 in Vientiane disseminated research findings and discussed best practices on employment as well as

how networking can increase women’s participation in employment.

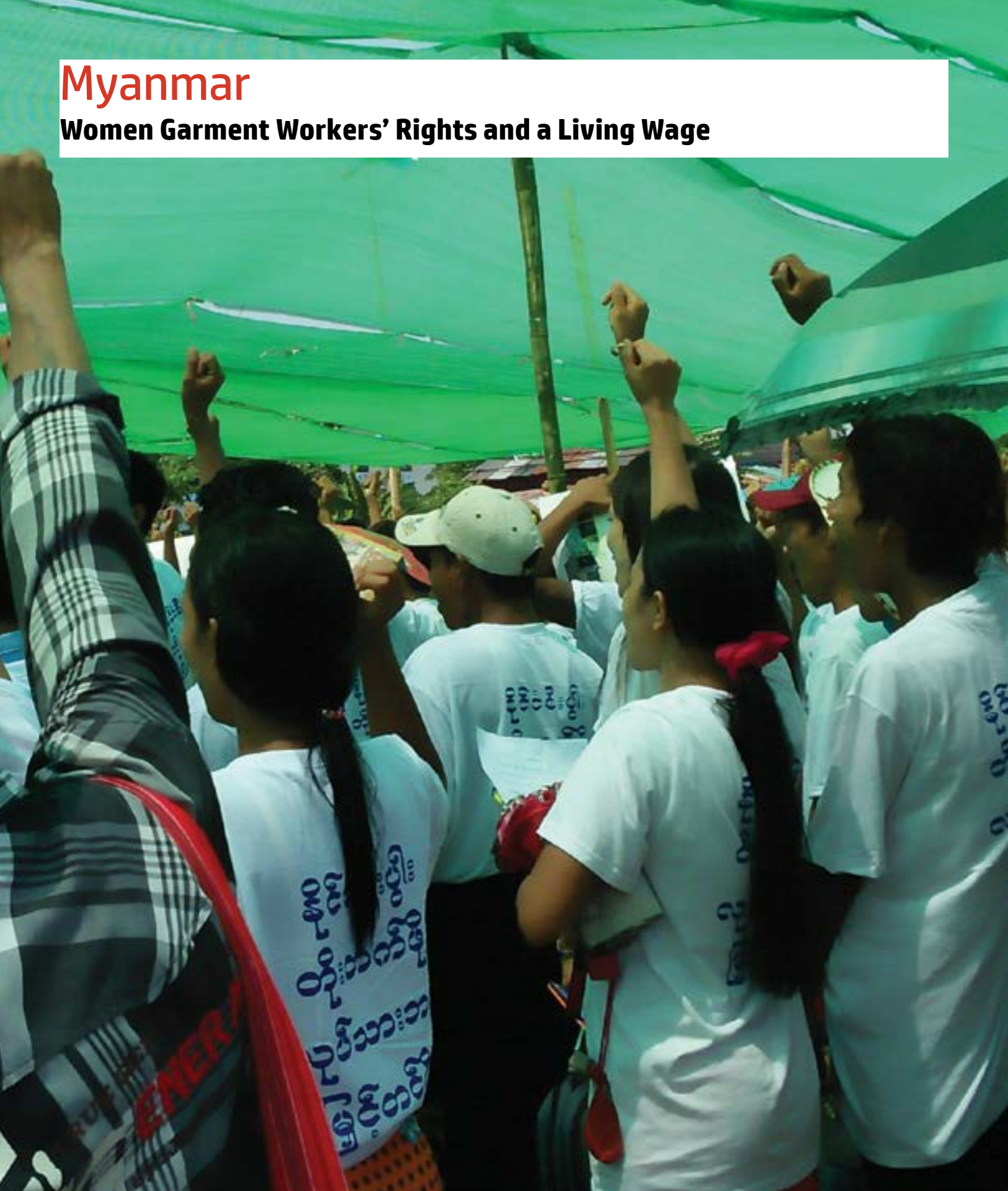
The advocacy phase of the FPAR broadened how women see their role in the community. They now say they have an obligation to develop themselves as well as the community. Women’s concerns have been amplified, and the FPAR created waves of more and continued women’s participation in decision-making at the grassroots level.





# Myanmar

## Women Garment Workers' Rights and a Living Wage



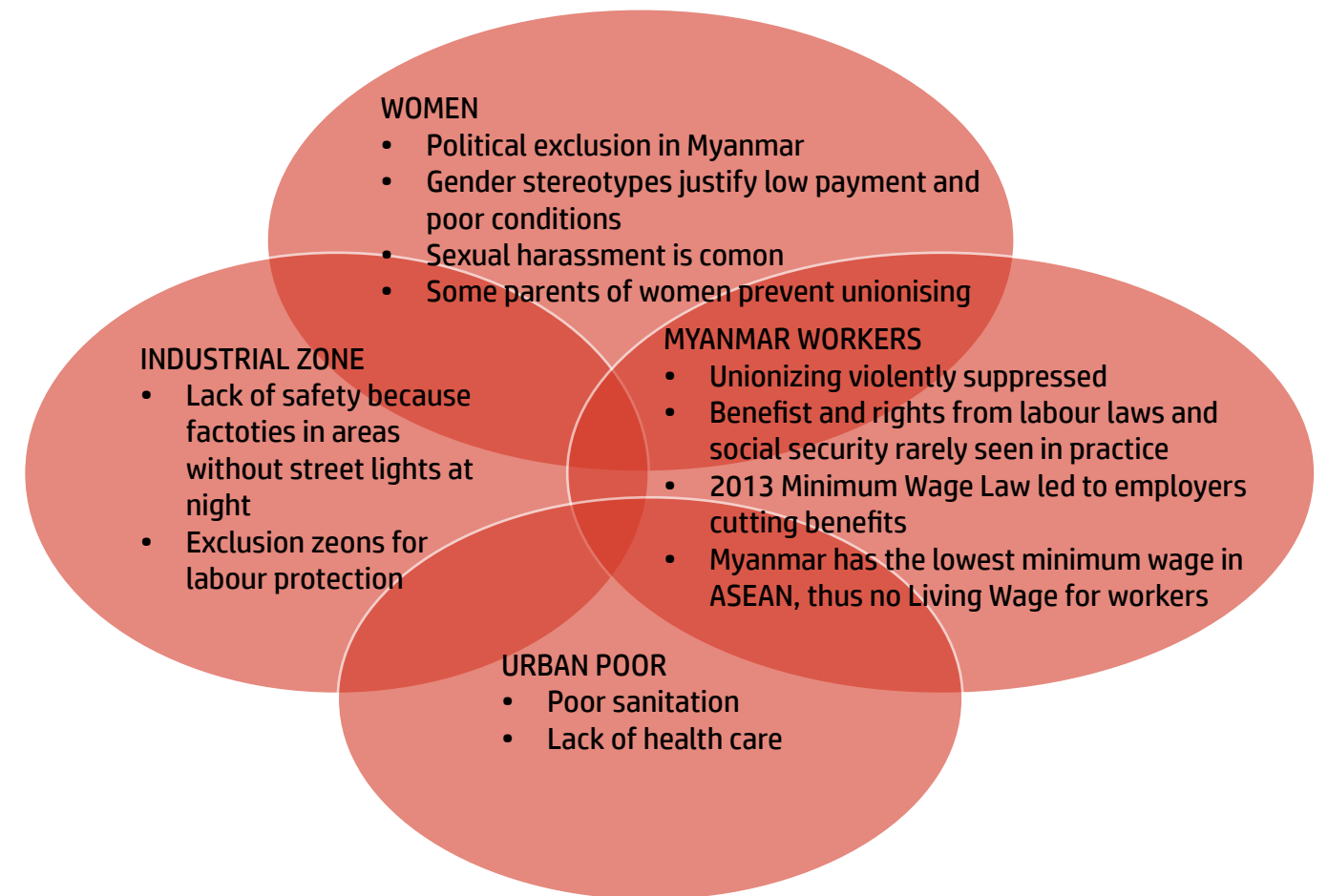
### Who are the Women?

In all, 65 women workers from 15 garment factories in 3 industrial zones of Mingalardon, Shwe Pyi Thar, and Hlaing Thar Yar in Yangon, Myanmar, partnered with the Burmese Women's Union (BWU) and local labour organisations to document conditions in the garment factories.

An estimated 90% of workers in garment factories in Myanmar are women.<sup>41</sup> Women garment workers suffer from the intersecting problems of political exclusion, discriminatory work environments, labour exploitation and violence against women.

41 MGMA Export Data, MGMA, <http://www.myanmargarments.org/events-news/export-data/> (accessed 15 July 2016).

### Intersecting Identities of Garment Workers in Yangon





What are the Problems?

Women in Yangon’s Industrial Zone garment factories have collected data to document the following main problems:

Women’s Political Exclusion in Myanmar

Burma has undergone a major political transformation in the past decade that has brought with it an influx in foreign investment and development projects. Women have been largely excluded from the process, and their meaningful participation in decision-making remains extremely limited at both the local and national level. This is reflected at the national level where women make up only 10% of Parliament, with only 64 of 657 seats in the upper and lower houses held by women.<sup>42</sup>

This lack of women’s representation results in national labour and development policies that fail to uphold and protect the rights of poor women workers and reinforce the marginalisation of women in general.

Negative Impacts of a New Minimum Wage

In August 2015 the Myanmar government implemented a minimum wage of 3600 MMK (3 USD) per day for 8 hours of work. This is not a sufficient income to meet women workers’ basic household and food needs. The law is not enforced, and many do not receive the set minimum salary.

*“Our salary is not enough. I have to borrow money from other people. The people who have more money loan to the people who have less money. Only by staying together as a group is it possible to have enough.”*  
– Woman worker, Tristate factory

The minimum wage policy has had many unintended consequences for women. Workers saw benefits - such as commuter costs, food, overtime pay, tips, and bonuses - lowered or cut in response to the new minimum wage. Some employers instituted a blanket minimum wage for all workers; thus skilled and mid-level workers who used

42 F. Macgregor (2015) “Woman MPs Up, but Hluttaw still 90% male”, Myanmar Times, 1 Dec, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/17910-woman-mps-up-but-hluttaw-still-90-male.html>



to receive a higher salary saw their pay lowered to the minimum.

The enactment of a minimum wage caused a spike in commodity prices. Women who did not see an actual rise in take home pay are not ability to afford food, accommodation, and other basic needs.

*“Product prices were raised after the minimum wage became 3,600 MMK (3 USD). Before, I got the same amount of salary which I get now. But my accommodation fee was only 5,000 MMK (3.8 USD) per month. Now, my accommodation fee has increased to 15,000 MMK (11.5 USD) per month. Food and transportation fees were also raised after the minimum wage law came out.”*  
– Woman garment worker, Myanmar Solamoda Garment Factory

Poor Working Conditions

Conditions inside factories are deplorable. The factories lack an adequate number of emergency exits. One factory in the research had 4 emergency exits for 2,000 workers. Workers are often packed into confined rows. Windows remain shut so women are forced to work in hot temperatures with no fresh air. Drinking water in the factories is not properly filtered, and workers risk illness if they drink it.

Lack of Health Care & Social Security

Women workers have very limited access to health clinics and medical services. Even when a clinic is present there is a severe shortage of skilled health workers and an insufficient supply of medicine – to the extent that basic paracetamol remains unavailable to many women who participated in the study.

The 2014 Social Security Law includes health benefits, maternity leave, and coverage in case of death or injury on the job. Workers pay 2% of their monthly wages into a health and social care fund, which they should be able to access using their Social Welfare Card. Many women workers reported never receiving their welfare card or said that they do not know how to access the fund.



Safety & Night Work

Women workers often get off late at night and must walk home in the dark, exposing them to the threat of sexual harassment and robbery. Police fail to persecute perpetrators of sexual harassment and have created an environment of impunity for such offenses.

Organising is Dangerous

The 2011 Labour Organisation Law adopted establishes that workers may form unions and stage protests if they give 14 days’ notice. It provides penalties for employers that punish the unionisation of workers. However, efforts by unions to organise are stunted by the threat of employer retaliation or by the presence of employer-created unions that masquerade as workers collectives. The law fails to protect and uphold workers’ rights to unionise. The security forces meant to uphold those rights are often responsible for violently suppressing them. This was apparent during workers protests in 2014 and 2015 when police responded by beating and arresting participants, including women. In addition to all of this, the research found some women’s parents do not allow women to unionise.

Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

Women workers educated themselves on the differences between minimum wages and a living wage, agreeing to lobby and organise for a wage on which they could live. Women workers organised and initiated meetings for this research, sending out photograph documentation of factory conditions, and organising meetings for discussion and rights training with their colleagues.

Protests & Union Organising

In January 2017 a union leader at one of the factories in this study was fired for having a day off without permission. In December 2016 the leader had led a protest successfully gaining 70 million MMK (51,570 USD) in backpay for overtime wages for 570 workers. After the leader was fired, women workers from the factory in Yangon protested demanding better healthcare and a

performance review system. The factory, which makes H&M brand clothes, has been closed since February, and conflict has escalated.<sup>43</sup>

Women are Speaking Out

We were able to encourage the female factory workers to express their difficulties that they faced in their working place with confident and were able to highlight and raise awareness about labour rights violation by the foreign investment companies through media. Moreover, we were able to advocate the need of law and policy reforming by the Burmese government thought out the process.

As part of the outcome of the process, the female factory workers gained more self-confidence to express their obstacles at their working places even though there were so many situations that forbid them not to speak out about those conditions. With the process, these factory workers gained opportunity to communicate with outside world and link with the media to send message through.

Meeting with Government

Women workers in the Yangon industrial zone research area secured a meeting with government officials on the issue of implementation and enforcement of minimum wage.

Digital Storytelling: “Forgotten Voices of Women Garment Workers Behind the Reform in Burma/Myanmar”

In April 2017 BWU women produced the documentary “Forgotten Voices of Women Garment Workers Behind the Reform in Burma/Myanmar”.<sup>44</sup> It focuses on women garment factory workers in the industry zone with attention to insufficient salaries, social security, health, and working hours. Women interviewed work at Tristate Garment Factory, Shwepyithar Great Lucky Star Garment factory, and Myanmar Yock Factory.

43 The Guardian (2017) “H&M supply factory in Myanmar damaged in violent labour protest”, The Guardian, 8 March, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/mar/07/hm-hennes-mauritz-supply-factory-in-myanmar-damaged-in-violent-labour-protest>.

44 <https://youtu.be/XkyJCSNGLBk>



Launch and Press Event

On 25 April 2017 at the Orchid Hotel in Yangon BWU launched their documentary and FPAR research, translated to Burmese. 300 people from Embassies, CSOs and the media were invited, and 89 joined, including 62 journalists from 41 different news agencies. A women garment worker and FPAR local researcher spoke to the media. BWU printed 1000 copies of the briefing paper and 500 copies of the digital story/documentary.

Media Coverage and Response from H&M in Sweden

Swedish *OmVarlden* covered the BWU research<sup>45</sup>. According to *OmVarlden* journalist Axel Kronholm “When confronted in 2015, H&M promised to act and make sure these problems stopped. The fact that you through your investigation now, two years later, found the same problems, shows that H&M is not capable of addressing these problems in their suppliers.” After his article, Kronholm published a subsequent interview with Ma Tin Tin Nyo.

H&M responded to *OmVarlden*, saying: “This is totally unacceptable, and we will follow up on this information immediately. We demand that people are treated with respect and that our suppliers offer their employees good working conditions. It is immensely important for us that all our suppliers follow national legislation and ILO conventions. All our suppliers commit to follow our strict code of conduct, and we conduct regular inspections of the factories. If a supplier does not live up to our demands, we will take action and in some cases even terminate the business relation.”

May Day Campaign and Event

BWU staff and interns in Yangon co-organized International Labour Day on 1 May 2017 in Hlaing Thar Yar township with other 9 labour organizations. 2500 workers and activists joined the event. The FPAR briefing paper and documentary were shared, and BWU activists encouraged all the workers from various sectors to fully work for better safety conditions, sufficient payment, and labour rights.

45 <http://www.omvarlden.se/Branschnytt/nyheter-2017/kvinnliga-arbetare-utnyttjas-i-burmas-textilindustri/>



# Myanmar

## Chin Customary Law Impeding Women’s Rights

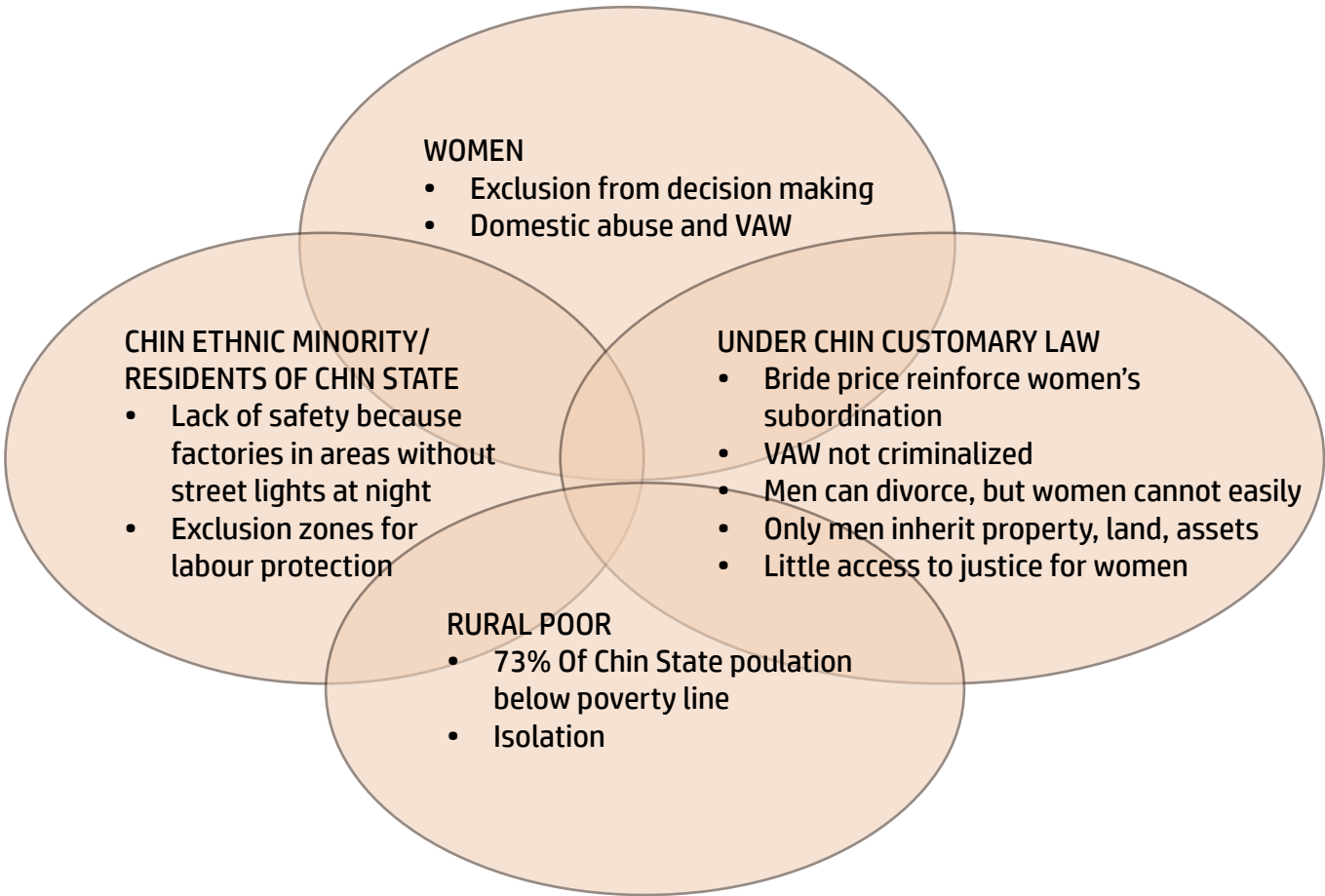


### Who are the Women?

Women in three townships of Southern Chin State of Myanmar (Kanpetlet, Mindat, and Matupi) worked with NINU Women in Action Group to document Chin Customary Law and its effects.

Mountainous Chin State, bordering India and Bangladesh, is Myanmar’s poorest state. Chin State has the highest poverty rate in the country, with 73% of its population living below the poverty line, compared with 26% people nationally. The Chin people have long been subject to conflict over land and resources, forced labor, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, religious repression and other restrictions on fundamental rights. Chin women bear the brunt of these conflicts, as economic and political policies set by government or Chin Customary Law, are fundamentally discriminatory in addition to excluding women from decision-making processes.

### Intersecting Identities of Chin Women





# What are the Problems?

Gender inequality remains a large problem amongst rural ethnic groups in Myanmar. Chin people follow customary law that has been passed down through generations. Issues of governance and inheritance fall under the purview of customary law under the Chin Special Division Act (commonly known as the Chin Act). The customary laws perpetuate a patriarchal system that excludes women from decision-making processes and deprives them access to justice and resources.

Chin women researched these main problems:

## Bride-Prices Reinforce Women’s Oppression

Chin customary law dictates that grooms must pay a bride’s family before a marriage. The practice of bride-pricing reinforces the subordinate position of women in Chin society. The prices are negotiated by male family members and male community negotiators. Women are entirely excluded from discussions regarding the price that then has a major influence over the power structures of their marriages.

The practice also reinforces traditional domestic obligations, perpetuating the idea that a woman must “deliver” on her high bride price. Upon marriage a woman is expected to move in with the husband’s clan where she is made to do farming work, fulfill household chores, bear and tend to children, and care for her in-laws.

*“...It was like buying and selling of a business. The groom’s family would propose the marriage, and the bride’s family would name the price. If the groom’s family could afford it, they paid and took that woman to their house. After that, her husband owned her and forced her to work as hard as possible because he bought her already.”*

— 58 year old married Chin man

## Violence Against Women and Lack of Access to Justice

Chin customs that reinforce men’s dominant position in society and deny women’s access to opportunities



and resources leave women at risk of domestic abuse. Violence against women is not a criminalised offence under Chin customary law, and therefore no pathways to justice or remedy exist for women who fall victim to domestic abuse. Women’s exclusion and lack of access to justice perpetuates the cyclical nature of violence and discrimination against women.

## Repressive and Discriminatory Divorce Customs

Chin customary laws regarding divorce further reiterate men’s dominant position as primary controllers of assets, resources, and children. Under Chin customary law men can freely decide to divorce their wives, while many obstacles prevent women from divorcing husbands. Many women remain stuck with husbands, even in situations with domestic abuse or alcoholism. Women wanting a divorce must go through local negotiators in order to settle with their husbands.

When women do manage to initiate a divorce, their family must return the received bride-price. Men will maintain ownership of all property as well as custody of all children. If men initiate a divorce, they must pay the family of the wife. In Kanpetlet and Mindat Township, if the man refuses a divorce initiated by a woman, or is unable to pay a divorce fee, the two are not considered divorce.

## Women Denied Inheritance and Property Rights

Chin customary law dictates that only men may inherit property, land, and other family assets. Because women change clans when they marry, they are not permitted to receive inheritance from their own family. This would be transfer of property between clans. They are also excluded from inheritance in the case of a husband’s death, as ownership of property goes to sons or other male relatives. Daughters and widows may continue to live at the deceased husband’s home, but any daughters must vacate the home when the widow passes away.



## Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

### Movement Building

**Chin women used the FPAR process to build momentum for women's rights** to resources, inheritance, and a fair divorce. **The FPAR facilitated these events happening:**

- A current **woman MP spoke about women's rights** to 50 people at a community event.
- Chin Women Society Development (CWSD) committee members and NINU went to Samatha village to talk about the research and about women's issues. Men at the meeting also spoke about the importance of women's participation in the community.
- Women **formed a CWSD branch committee** in Samatha village after the discussions on women's rights.
- In Kyindwe village, **women in a focus group felt they**

**were excluded from village affairs and decided to form a women's group** in order to raise the collective voice of women in their community. They formed a women group that day with one of the focus group discussion participants as its leader. They made plans to demand that the village authority include women in their committee and in meetings about village affairs. They also promised to support the NINU/FPAR led effort to change customary practices which discriminate women.

- After the researcher met with the Chin Women's Organisation of Mindat, they made a **plan to give gender awareness trainings** in order to raise collective voice of women for gender equality and women's human rights.
- In Lailenpi, members of the Mara Women's Organisation decided to **demand inclusion of women in village level decision-making processes**. They also gave support to the movement to change customary law, saying they would meet their community leaders to advocate for change.



### Workshop for Action: Chin Women leaders at Mindat

Ninu organized a Workshop for Action on 7 March 2017. Nine women leaders from across Chin State, seven women leaders from Mindat, and one woman from Yangon attended the workshop. Women leaders spoke out about themselves, discrimination they face in their respective communities, why they become women activists and what action they take. A plan was made for meeting capacity building needs of women and a further forum on Chin customary practice.

### Documentary Film: "Wild Flower from Chin Land"

Soe San Htike, a female documentary film maker created a documentary with NINU women about a divorced woman from Mindat. According to Chin custom, she has lived with her in-laws where she had to perform household chores while working to earn a living. Later she left her husband, took the youngest of her 3 sons, and returned to live with her parents. She opened a small restaurant, developed an interest in politics and contested in the 2015 election (but lost). Later she joined the Chin National Front (the political wing of Chin National Army) and became one of the central committee members. The film focused on

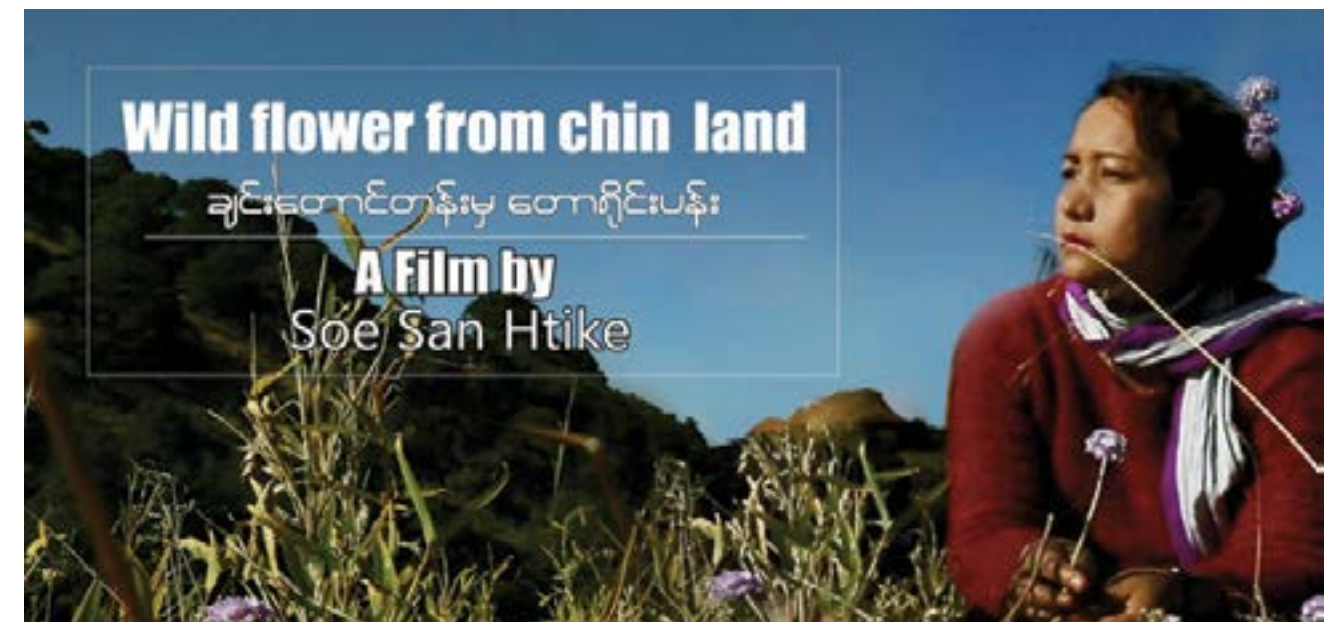
social, financial and political challenges she faced as a divorcee and mother, as well as how she overcomes them and works for her personal dream instead of traditionally sacrificing for the sake of her children. The documentary was shown at the 2017 International Human Rights and Dignity Film Festival in Yangon.

### Attitude Change in the Community

Women are noticing a change in customary practices in the Chin community on marriage, divorce and inheritance. **Women and community members started to change their thinking about inheritance** – seeing that women should also benefit. **Young people in Chin villages are also starting to advocate for inheritance rights of women in families.**

### Demanding Legal Change

With Chin women, NINU was able to **advocate for an amendment to Chin customary law** to ensure women's equal rights to inheritance, marriage and divorce. An **amended bill was approved** and submitted by the Chin State luttaw to the Pyidaungsu (central) Hluttaw for their consideration in January 2016. Currently Chin women group are watchful over the process to ensure women's demands to receive fair treatment.





# Nepal

## Unequal Land Rights in Sindhupalchok



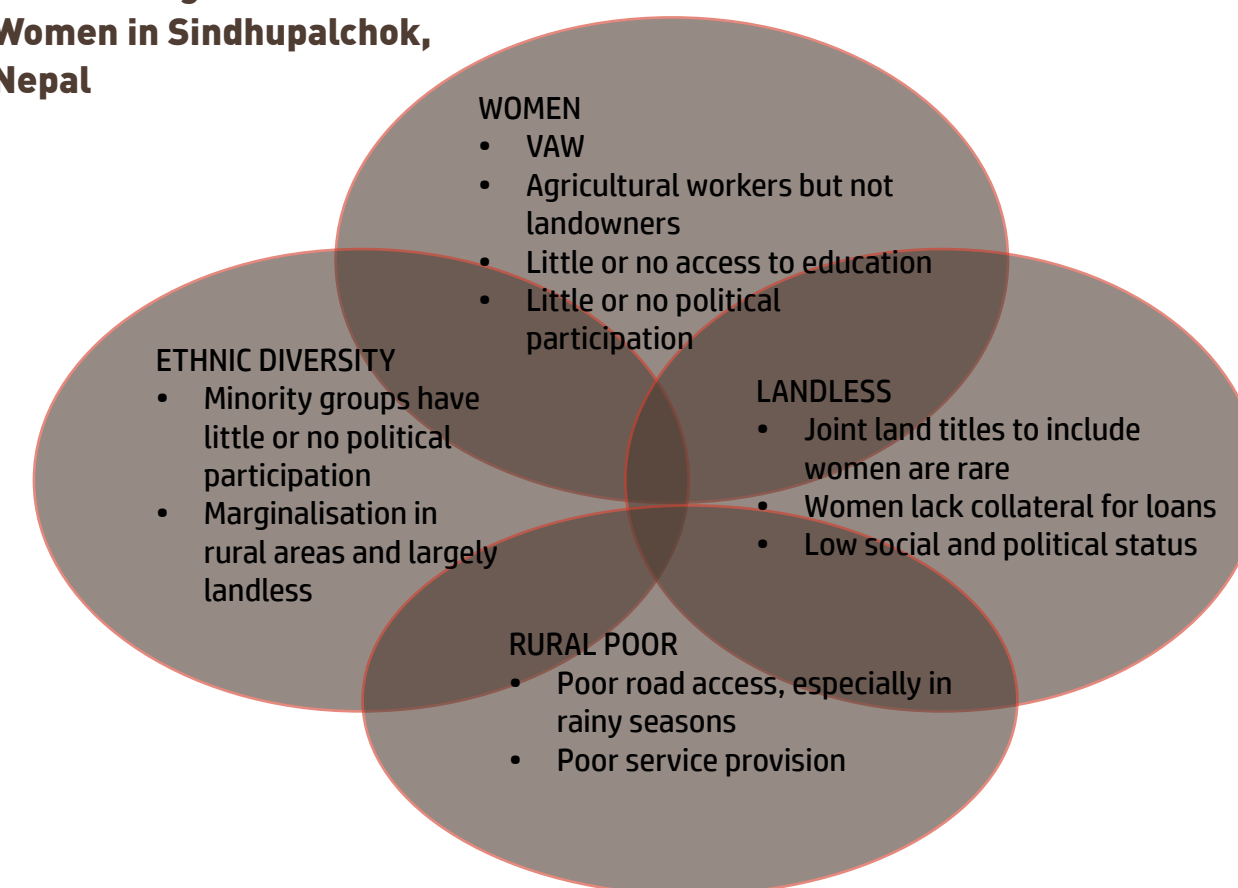
## Who are the Women?

Indigenous and rural poor women live and work in rural areas of Sindhupalchok District, Nepal. Women from Chokati, Pangretar, and Thulopakhar communities worked with rural women from the grassroots NGO Gramin Mahila Srijanshil Pariwar (Rural Women Creative Forum, GMSP) and collaborated with the National Land Right Forum, District Land Right Forum, Rural Development Society for this research.

Rural and indigenous women in Nepal are deprived equal rights to use, inherit, control and own land. Despite being an agricultural country, Nepal consists of only 29.7% of arable land.<sup>46</sup> This resource scarcity makes landholding rights even more vital. Rural women's landlessness is coupled with political and social marginalisation, and, for some, compounded by Indigenous ethnic minority identities. 60% of Sindhupalchok's population are Indigenous (or Janajati).<sup>47</sup> Indigenous Peoples in Nepal have little political representation or participation and are largely landless.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> World Bank, "Agricultural Land (% of Land Area) – Nepal", FAO open license data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.AGRI.ZS?locations=NP>.  
<sup>47</sup> UN Women (2016) "Sindhupalchok Gender Profile (August, 2016)", UN Women, [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/district\\_gender\\_profile-sindhupalchok-\\_2nd\\_august\\_2016.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/district_gender_profile-sindhupalchok-_2nd_august_2016.pdf).  
<sup>48</sup> P. Abrahams (2014) "Closing the Gaps: Nepal's Marginalised Communities" Fair Observer, 12 Jan, [https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central\\_south\\_asia/closing-gap-nepals-marginalized-communities/](https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/closing-gap-nepals-marginalized-communities/); UN (2012) "Endangered and Highly Marginalized Indigenous Populations", UN Nepal Information Platform, <http://www.un.org.np/oneun/undaf/endangered>.

## Intersecting Identities of Women in Sindhupalchok, Nepal





# What are the Problems?

In May 2012 over 1,000 poor and rural women participated in a historic 50-district march called the National Movement for Timely Constitution Writing and Land Reform. The rally gave pressure to the government to include the right to land in the new Nepali constitution. After the rally, the government declared it would enable joint ownership of land for both husband and wife and would offer discounted land registration fees for women living in rural areas. However, these provisions have not been properly or adequately implemented, and women remain without land rights.

**Rural Nepali women in Sindhupalchok researched land inequality and found these effects on women:**

## Landlessness

In Sindhupalchok district, in 2014 only 11.99% of women had land ownership.<sup>49</sup> The 2011 census recorded that

49 DDC Profile Sindhupalchok, 2014.

nationwide this figure is higher at 19.79%, meaning that the gender unequal access to land is more pronounced in Sindhupalchok than in other areas of Nepal.<sup>50</sup> The right to land is directly connected to family welfare, food security, gender equality, economic stability, political power, and poverty alleviation.

## Land Inequality Reinforces Oppressive Gender Roles

Women must rely on relationships with male relatives (husbands, fathers, brothers, etc) for access to land they rely on for food and income. This dependency reinforces women’s subordinate position to men and contributes to high rates of violence against women in the district. Land rights bring about security, independence and confidence, which enable women to be independent and to participate in all social and political arenas.

50 The Himalayan (2016) “Joint Land Ownership Campaign in Sindhupalchok”, The Himalayan, 17 Sept, <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/joint-land-ownership-campaign-sindhupalchok/>.



*“Now I have the full authority in my house and have property only after 26 years of marriage. There are some women who are neglected by their husband and society.”*

– Rita, Sindhupalchok

*“I am very happy [to discuss] the topic of joint land ownership. It is needed for us. If we have joint land ownership most of the domestic violence will decrease.”*

– Thami, Sindhupalchok

## Landlessness Limits Women’s Economic Opportunities

Ownership of land provides women productive resources and income as well as enables them to access loans to expand or start businesses. Women without ownership or joint ownership cannot access credit because they cannot provide land certificates as collateral.

## Landlessness Reinforces Exclusion from Decision-Making Spaces

Nepal’s constitution mandates that women make up 33% of the country’s Constituent Assembly. However, in rural communities including Sindhupalchok women are excluded from local decision-making bodies such as School Management Committees and forestry user groups. Gender equitable land rights for women would place them on an equal economic and political standing with men. Women are the primary agricultural workers in Sindhupalchok and thus take the brunt of impacts when land or social policies change to their detriment. However, women are not included in the development of such policies.

## Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

Rural Nepali women in Sindhupalchok are taking action, claiming their land rights and encouraging other women to do the same. FPAR women say that their “rights do not readily fall from trees, but are fought for”.





## District and Local Level Forums on Land Rights: Capacity Building and Awareness Raising

In Tamang and Thami communities women held district level forums on land rights. These forums allowed them to network and collaborate with organisations working on land rights and re-structuring.

Women participated in capacity building programs on land certificates, as well as violence against women. They mobilised delegations to village development committees and other women's organisations.

Research sharing meetings in three communities in 2017 heightened awareness of joint land certificates and contributed to creating an environment for equal access to property for poor, indigenous and rural women.

## Advocacy, Rally and Demonstrationies and Demonstrations

In September 2016, women conducted rallies, had community meetings, and demonstrated for equal access to land ownership throughout Sindhupalchok district.<sup>51</sup>

A 2017 rally was organized from 8-10 March in Pangretar jointly with Land Rights Forum, and Humanitarian Accountability Monitoring Initiatives (HAMI). 250 community members, social leaders, and teachers participated in the rally, and women chanted a slogan for equal rights to property, using play cards.

An more formal advocacy meeting with 52 stakeholders was held on 30 May 2017 at the district headquarters, with representatives of the District Land Registration Office, the District Administration Office, District Police, and other government officials along with the other stakeholders such as Political party representatives and the media.

Women's Meetings in 3 Communities

In Chokati, Pangretar and Thulopakhar women's groups are holding regular meetings. In the first half of 2017 157 people participated in six meetings on joint land certificates and women's access to property. The meetings

<sup>51</sup> See news coverage: The Himilayan (2016) "Joint Land Ownership Campaign in Sindhupalchok", The Himilayan, 17 Sept, <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/joint-land-ownership-campaign-sindhupalchok/>.

have been participatory so that women have been able to share their views. With understanding of the issues, local women are advocating with GMSP and campaigning for equal land rights.

## Knowledgable Women Elected

The community women who participated in the Advocacy meeting have been elected as local representatives in recent local elections. The joint land certificate issue is to be raised in the Village Rural Municipality and community level.

## Women Named on Land Certificates!

In addition to changing law, changing community practices is essential. In Tamang, during 2016 FPAR meetings, 18 spouse couples converted men-only land certificates to joint land certificates in both men and women's names. This served as a role model for others.

Women have begun to apply pressure on their families, particularly husbands, for joint land certificates. In GMSP's work on women's empowerment in the past, the issue of property rights was ignored. After awareness raising in 2017, 35 women prepared joint land certificate.

## A Women's Movement that is Spreading

As a result of GMSP's lobbying and advocacy, and of women uniting for access to land, women have begun a movement for joint land certificate in the community. They have begun to feel that guarantees of access to property offers dignity in society.

Most importantly, the movement has made the issue of land central to political discussion. The movement on equal access to land has spread to farmers, teachers, and social leaders.

# Philippines

## Privatisation of Public Markets in Manila





Who are the Women?

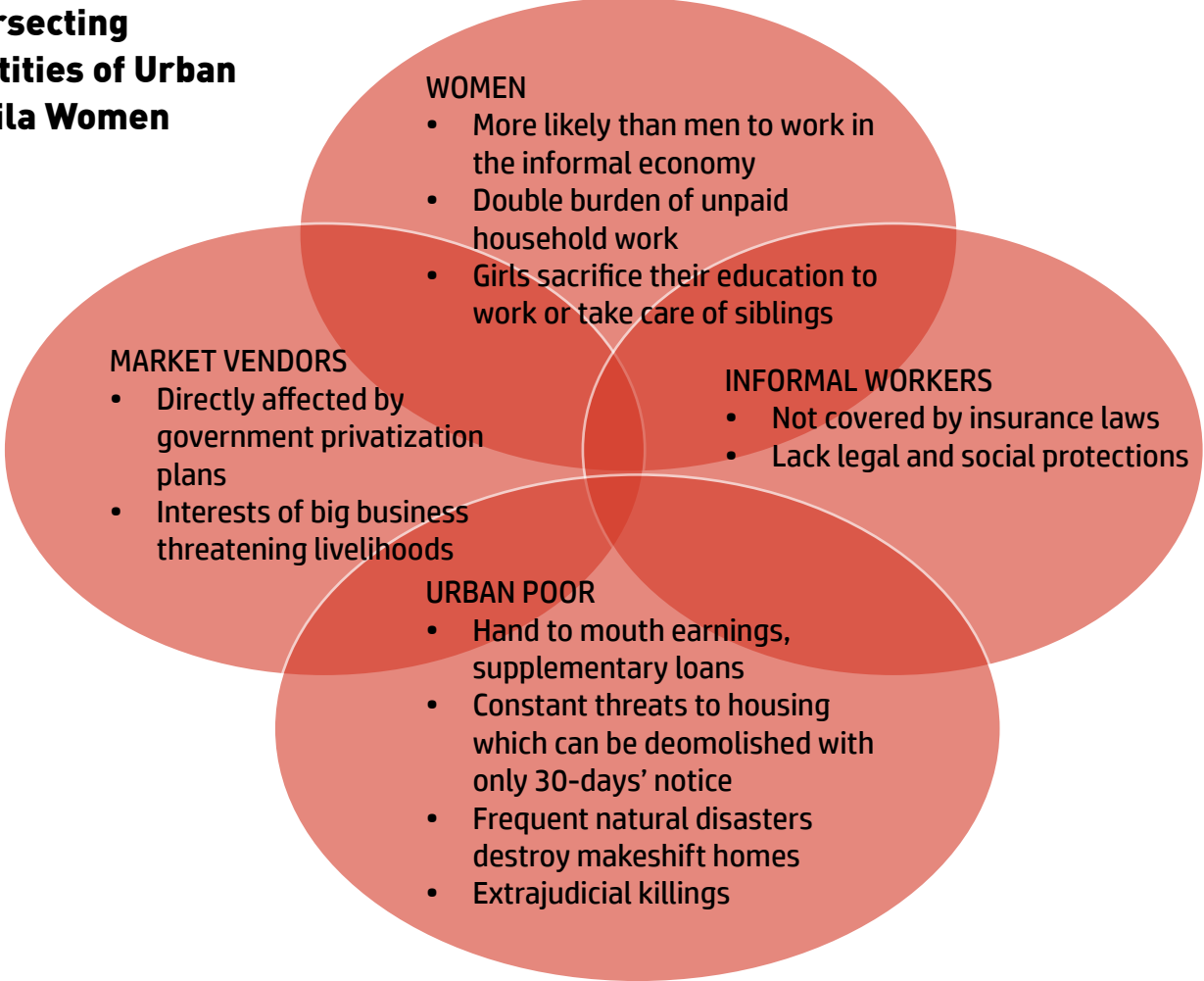
In Sampaloc, Manila, women living in various urban poor communities work in the informal economy as market vendors. They work inside and outside public markets, paying daily rent to market “masters”. As informal economy workers they are not covered by insurance laws. They depend on the provision of basic social services and maintenance of public facilities and utilities by the government, including public markets where they work.

In the Philippines, 26% of the population lives below the national poverty line.<sup>52</sup> Government narratives portray the urban poor as lazy people responsible for their own poverty. In reality, the struggles of the urban poor are perpetuated and reinforced by an absence of social protections and by the governments’ failure to protect and fulfil their rights.

Local vendors associations and hundreds of women vendors and consumers took part in this FPAR, working together with Tanggol Bayi, an organisation of women human rights defenders.

52 Philippines Statistics Authority (2015) “Poverty incidence among Filipinos registered at 26.3%, as of first semester of 2015 – PSA”, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/poverty-incidence-among-filipinos-registered-263-first-semester-2015-psa>.

Intersecting Identities of Urban Manila Women



What are the Problems?

*“Is it impossible to modernise without private contractors? We want modernisation, we want development; but we want a kind of development in which we are included, in which we are thought of, and our situations and capacities taken into consideration.”*

– Faela Esponilla, Manila market vendor

The Philippines Government promotes its Joint Venture Ordinance as a plan to renovate and modernise Manila’s markets, but by privatising public utilities and services the government is giving power to profit-driven private entities that have no obligations or motives to protect the rights of the urban poor. The privatisation of public marketplaces threatens the lives and livelihoods of urban poor women and further exacerbates their insecure position as workers in the informal economy who lack legal and social protections.

*Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada told vendors to sacrifice in the name of progress. Women vendors ask him: “Progress for whom?”*



Women in Sampaloc, Manila, are fighting privatisation of the public market in which they work. They collected data on gendered impacts of privatisation:

Privatisation Exacerbates Women’s Economic Struggles

Approximately 6.6 million women work in the informal economy as providers of a wide variety of vital goods and services.<sup>53</sup> In the informal economy, women act as parking attendants, taxi-retrievers, food vendors, newspaper deliverers, clothing sellers and repairwomen, and more. Women who work as vendors in or outside of the Manila markets pay a small rent for their stalls and therefore rely on the low prices afforded by public markets. Women dominate unpaid family work, as four in every seven unpaid family workers, equivalent to 2.4 million, are women.<sup>54</sup>

53 ILO and WIEGO (2013) Men and Women in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, Second Edition (Geneva, ILO).

54 Gabriela (2015) “March 8 Privilege Speech: The Situation of Filipino Women and Women Workers”, Speech, 8 Mar, <http://gabrielawomensparty.net/content/march-8-privilege-speech-situation-filipino-women-and-women-workers>.



Women vendors earn an average daily take-home pay of 140 PHP (3 USD). With this, they have to manage all of their household expenses. If women do not work or if this income drops, they and their families do not eat. Higher rent prices under market privatisation would hurt women workers doubly as both vendors and consumers. Women workers would be unable to afford the commodity goods they purchase for resale, let alone their own food, water, and other basic needs. Women would have to increasingly turn to loans that reinforce and lock them into poverty cycles. They would then have to work double hours or seek additional forms of income to handle the added burden of loan repayments.

Privatisation Threatens the Right to Education for Girls and Children

Any increased economic strain poses a direct threat to workers’ abilities to meet even their most basic needs. Women often must sacrifice the education of their children due to inability to afford related costs or because they need an older child to care for their younger siblings while the parents work.

Privatisation Threatens Women’s Right to Housing

Urban poor communities live under the constant threat of losing their homes to demolition and/or of facing unfavourable relocation initiatives that move them to provinces far away from urban centres and their livelihoods. Demolition teams often fail to provide 30 days’ notice as required by law, and women must act as immediate negotiators to protect what little they have.



Threats from Natural Disasters and Climate Change Are Not Priorities of Private Actors

The Philippines is prone to natural disasters, and the urban poor are highly affected frequent, destructive typhoons. In 2013 Typhoon Haiyan killed over 6,000 people and left an estimated 1.9 million homeless. The Maisan area of Sampaloc is particularly prone to flooding, with short bouts of rain causing much damage. Many women live in makeshift homes built from light and fragile materials. As climate change enhances major weather events, economic insecurity leaves urban poor women particularly at risk.

Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

2015 Change Demanded: Statement to Government, Video, Flyer

Sampaloc women market vendors made their demands to local government and produced a statement that they distributed during a rally and through a 2-minute video. Their flyer as below explains that a pro-poor framework for developing the market is possible.

2015 Change Granted

In December 2015, dialogues between the local vendor’s association Save Manila Public Market Alliance and local government officials resulted in a series of concessions in favour of vendors:

- Rent increases halted for two years.
- Supervision and control of market administration continue under auspices of the local government.
- A new seat on the market management board for a vendors association representative.
- Vendors allowed to continue to work during renovations, and more.



2017 Further Advocacy and New Wins

Advocacy has continued, and on 10 April 2017 urban poor women held two dialogue meetings.

**National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC):** Tanggol Bayi, along with vendor organizations from Sampaloc, Manila held a dialogue with NAPC. As outcomes, the NAPC:

1. Agreed to review Manila Ordinance No. 8346 and monitor concessions made between vendors and the Manila local government in December 2015;
2. Agreed that policies that seek to privatize public facilities and utilities, such as the M.O. No. 8346, give no attention to urban poor women;
3. Agreed to schedule and facilitate a meeting with Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada, with the vendor associations in attendance, to have the latter directly raise privatisation issues;
4. Will recommend processes to accord vendors a temporary permit, at the minimum, and permanent permits at the maximum to assure vendors that they will not be driven away;
5. Is willing to negotiate an accreditation process instead of the informal agreements between city hall officials and the vendors;
6. Committed to use the publication and raise the issue to President Rodrigo Duterte during an en banc session. The President is the chairperson of NAPC;
7. Committed to set another meeting with Tanggol Bayi to discuss the results of NAPC’s commitments and to map steps for future collaborative work.

**Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor (PCUP):** Prior to the dialogue with PCUP, PCUP had been planning a vendors’ conference for consultation. PCUP further committed to:

1. Include Tanggol Bayi community members and other partnered vendors organizations in their vendors’ conference on 25 May;
2. Give credence to the experiences of women market and street vendors;





3. Suggest an **accreditation process to the local government so vendors can be safe from police and other extortion;**
4. **Monitor** the concessions made on December 2015;
5. Look into the implementation of Manila Ordinance No. 8346;
6. If needed, **mediate a dialogue** between the local government and vendors.

### Capacity Building Through Successful FPAR Advocacy

In April 2017 women assessed the FPAR advocacy noting the **following additional gains** for their community:

1. The dialogue **boosted the morale of the leaders.** They immediately went back to the community to report the Agencies' commitments.
2. The dialogue gave the leaders a **positive experience of what lobbying is.**
3. Community members and involved organizations are **more intent in continuing protest actions and starting dialogue** with government agencies. They intend to include two more government agencies to cover an even wider range of urban poor concerns.
4. The meetings provided future opportunities for the community and the Agencies to work together.
5. A May meeting was set to officially relay the results of the dialogue to members and other organizations.

### Strengthening, Expanding and Deepening the Urban Poor Movement

The FPAR contributed to **expanding and strengthening the urban poor movement in Sampaloc, Manila.** Sampaloc women, who organised through this FPAR, gained **paralegal training** with understanding about women's rights and now make the link between their situation and neoliberal policies including privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation.

Like-minded groups formed an **alliance of the local organisations addressing urban poor issues.** The alliance working with urban poor communities is opposing the privatisation of local markets as well as **increasing their membership base among the urban poor.** For instance, 18 new members were recruited to the local chapter of Tanggol Bayi over the FPAR research period.

### Self-Funding their Protest

Women members of Tanggol Bayi set up a bank account to be used for emergencies and protest activities. Women collected PHP 10 (.2 USD) from every member per month, putting it in the bank under the watch of a designated treasurer. This has boosted the morale of women members, seeing that they can go through with actions and can rely on immediate help if in an emergency as a result.

### Women Human Rights Defenders Maintain Fight for Pro-Poor Modernisation Despite Grave Risks

Urban poor **women are at the forefront** of community initiatives and unified efforts by vendors to oppose the privatisation of local markets. When there are stand-offs between demolition teams and residents, women, usually mothers, are at the forefront of negotiating with police, and unfortunately also the targets of police case reports. Out of 18 victims of **extra-judicial killings** perpetrated against the urban poor sector in the last 6 years, 8 of the victims were **women.**<sup>55</sup> Women vendors are dedicated to **remaining vigilant in monitoring the implementation of concessions and fighting for public modernisation initiatives that are not implemented in the interest of big businesses but as a form of livelihood development for vendors who have small capital and cannot afford costly rent.**

55

KADAMAY, cited in FPAR report





# Taiwan

## Impact of Nationality Act on Marriage Migrants

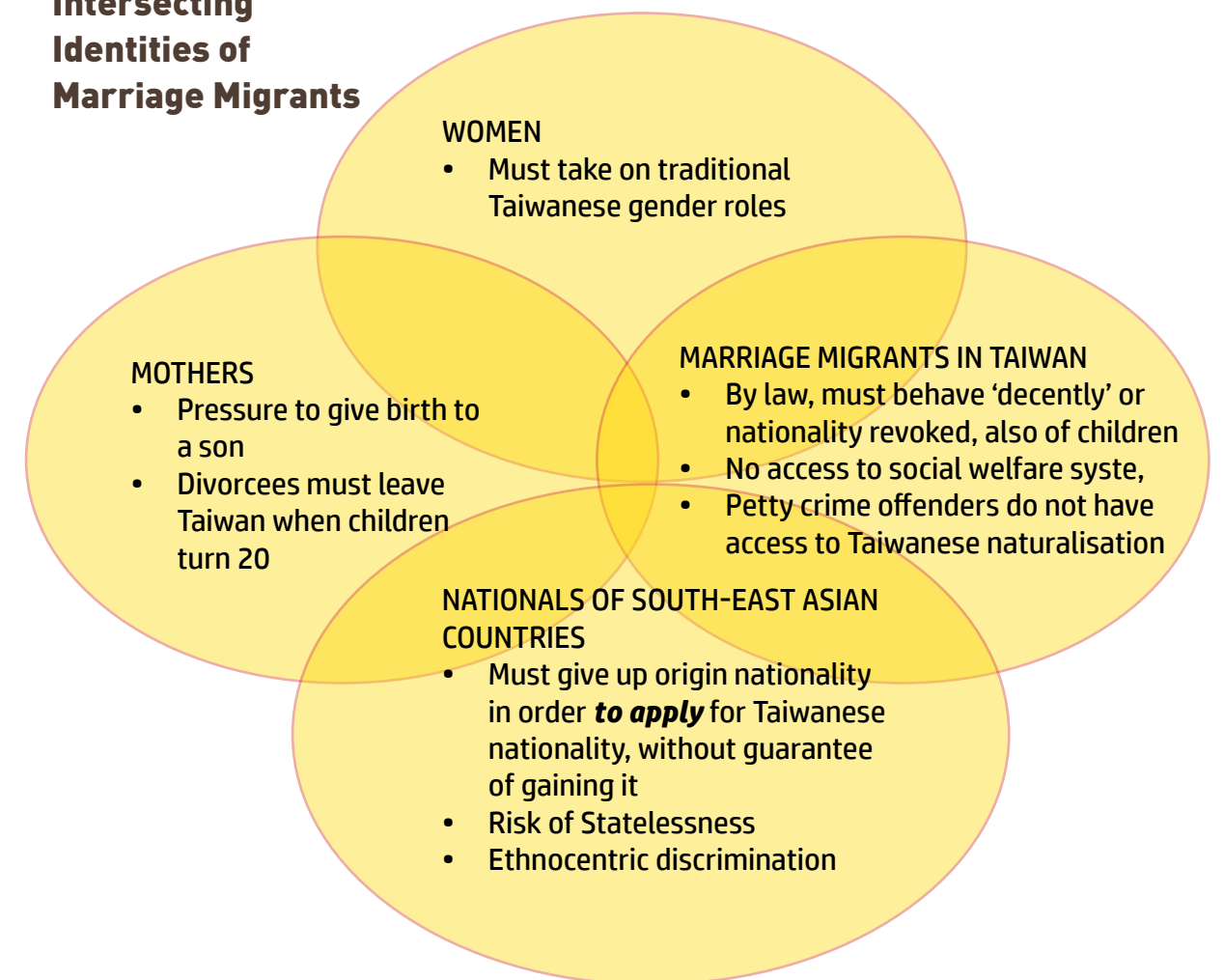


## Who are the Women?

Married migrant women living in Northern and central parts of Taiwan partnered with the TransAsia Sisters Association (TASAT) as well as with the Alliance for Human Rights Legislation for Immigrants and Migrants (AHRLIM). TASAT uses the term 'marriage migrants' to mean people who marry foreigners and live outside their home countries.

Neoliberal globalisation has affected both developing countries and relatively affluent Taiwan recently, with many Southeast Asian peasants and workers leaving the countryside to find jobs overseas or to start different lives via international marriages. Migration for marriage between Southeast Asian countries and Taiwan has emerged in the context of Taiwan's continued urbanisation and industrialisation of the agricultural sector, which has left low-skilled agricultural and industrial male workers in a disadvantaged position in Taiwan's domestic marriage sphere. Patriarchal pressure that a man must marry and have a son to carry on his ancestral line has resulted in these Taiwanese men marrying women from Southeast Asia, who are expected to take on traditional gender roles in the family. Today, of a total of 169,423 marriage migrants live in Taiwan 56% are from Vietnam, 17% from Indonesia, 5% from Thailand, 5% from the Philippines and the rest from other Southeast and East Asia

## Intersecting Identities of Marriage Migrants





# What are the Problems?

Taiwan’s Nationality Act in its current form imposes flawed and discriminatory regulations that reinforce the marginalisation of marriage migrants and deprive them adequate legal and social protections. Marriage migrants’ inclusion in the process to develop the laws must be enhanced so that their particular issues are recognised. A draft Nationality Act amendment that addresses many issues faced by married migrants was announced by AHRLIM in 2012, and women have been lobbying Congress for support since.

**Women who migrated to Taiwan for marriage identified problems they face under the Nationality Act:**

## Vague, Moralistic Wording of Law Can Revoke Women’s Citizenship

Provision 3 of Article 3 of the Nationality Act requires that an immigrant behave “decently”. This vague term gives authorities subjective power to decide what is decent and what is not. The provision disallows petty crime offenders from becoming naturalised. Nationality can be revoked if an immigrant is deemed to have behaved “indecently,” for instance if a woman has an affair. The nationality of a woman’s children may also be withdrawn.

**Chui Heng was successfully naturalised for a couple of years, but the government withdrew her nationality after finding out she had an affair before divorcing her husband. Foreign spouses like Chui Heng remain stateless for a long time, because it is very difficult to regain original citizenship once it has been relinquished as a prerequisite for the Taiwan nationality application process. The Taiwan nationality was also revoked from Chui Heng’s children. Children without nationality cannot access education, healthcare, and fundamental protections.**

## Statelessness Must be Risked to Apply for Citizenship of Taiwan

Article 9 of the Nationality Act requires that foreign spouses give up their original nationality in order to apply for nationality in Taiwan. But there is no guarantee that their applications for Taiwanese nationality will be successful, and women are left stateless when applications



are rejected. There are no protections for persons made stateless through this process, and regaining original nationality is hard once it has been renounced. Stateless women who remain in Taiwan are excluded from social benefits.

## Penalties for Divorcees

The Nationality Act makes naturalisation difficult for foreign spouses who report domestic abuse, who suffer the loss of a spouse, or who divorce. Women in these three categories face hyper-inflated fees if they choose to apply for naturalisation because Article 4 regards them as “regular foreigners” not spouses of Taiwanese nationals. Further, the law establishes that a divorced woman who has custody over her children can stay in Taiwan to raise her children, but must return to her home country once the children turn 20. These strict penalties against divorcees prompt many women to overstay illegally in Taiwan because they want to stay near their children.

## No Naturalisation for Married Underage Daughters

The existing law allows naturalised foreigners’ underage children to apply for naturalisation, but prohibits married underage children from applying.

## Ethnocentrism Thwarting Reform

There are two separate Acts that regulate migrants in Taiwan: the Act Governing Relations Between People of the Taiwan Area establishes laws relating to immigrants from China, Hong Kong, and Macau; and the Nationality Act applies to those from other countries. Reformation of the Nationality Act is deadlocked because of disagreements between political parties regarding Taiwan-China relations. Ethnocentric sentiments persist, and some do not want Chinese spouses to have full suffrage or full naturalisation rights. For this, reformation of both acts remains stilted, and all foreign spouses lack adequate legal and social protections.





## Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

### Theatre, Talks, Awareness Raising, Music Album

Women produced an **educational theatre** highlighting nationality-related issues. The group plans on traveling and sharing the performance widely to spread awareness. Now due to the FPAR, more married migrants and lawmakers' assistants are now aware of the gaps and problems in the Nationality Act, as well as the impact it is having on the lives of migrants in Taiwan.

Marriage migrants themselves – facilitated by TASAT – **spoke in various forums** such as colleges, police station, elementary schools, and teachers and student groups to reduce stigma and gain support for their call to amend the Nationality Act. Their advocacy and campaign had **Chinese and English news coverage**.

Migrant women created a **music album called “Drifting No More”**. It illustrates women gathering strength through music. Women's stories were written as songs, expressing how they transformed their frustrations and suffering into courage and wisdom.

### Advocacy for Amended Nationality Act

Marriage migrants and advocates **secured meetings with key legislators** and organised political actions to advance calls for an amended Nationality Act that addresses the specific issues of marriage migrants seeking naturalisation in Taiwan. This resulted in the **decision of new ruling party elected on 31 May 2016 to make amendment of the Nationality Act as one of their priorities**.

### Problematic Ammendments and Renewed Advocacy

The amendment of Nationality Act passed on 9 December 2016, but it **did not redress problematic nationality issues of marriage migrants** for which TASAT had lobbied. TASAT regrouped and developed a more focused advocacy plan on the amended law particularly on Article 19, which has the potential to create even more statelessness, and Article 3 related to “good moral character”. New versions of advocacy materials emphasise that:

1. Petty crime offenders shall not be deprived of naturalization rights.
2. Adultery should not result in revocation of Taiwanese nationality.
3. Putting a wrong age on a marriage certificate should not be deemed “a fraudulent marriage”.
4. Final court rulings must have a vigorous investigation from the civil court.

TASAT women **contacted more organizations and lawyers to form a broader network** to support marriage migrants. Lawyers from Legal Aid Foundation and Judicial Reform Foundation helped TASAT's **case clients to write petitions to legislators**. TASAT further held **press conferences** on 9 March and 11 April 2017, and made phone calls and sent faxes to 14 members of the Internal Administrative Committee, personally visiting three.

### United Nations Shadow Reporting

Together with organised migrant women, TASAT prepared a shadow report for the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). However this was submitted to the Committee prior to the amendment of the Nationality Act in 2016. TASAT spoke at a Committee review session for 3 minutes on 18 January 2017, however their issues were not highlighted in the Concluding Observations and Recommendations.

### Public Hearing

Legislator Chih-cheng Lo held a public hearing on the Nationality Act on 25 April 2017. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) uses the Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws, 1930, to defend that they have arbitrary power regarding nationality issues. TASAT argued that all human rights conventions after 1930 do not recognize any domestic laws that create stateless people, and our congress already passed the Act to Implement ICCPR and ICESCR, which gave these two conventions domestic legal status. MOI is not yet persuaded, but this public hearing has over 6,200 online views as of June 2017.

## Thailand

### Living Wages and Decent Work for Migrant Women in Thailand





## Who are the Women?

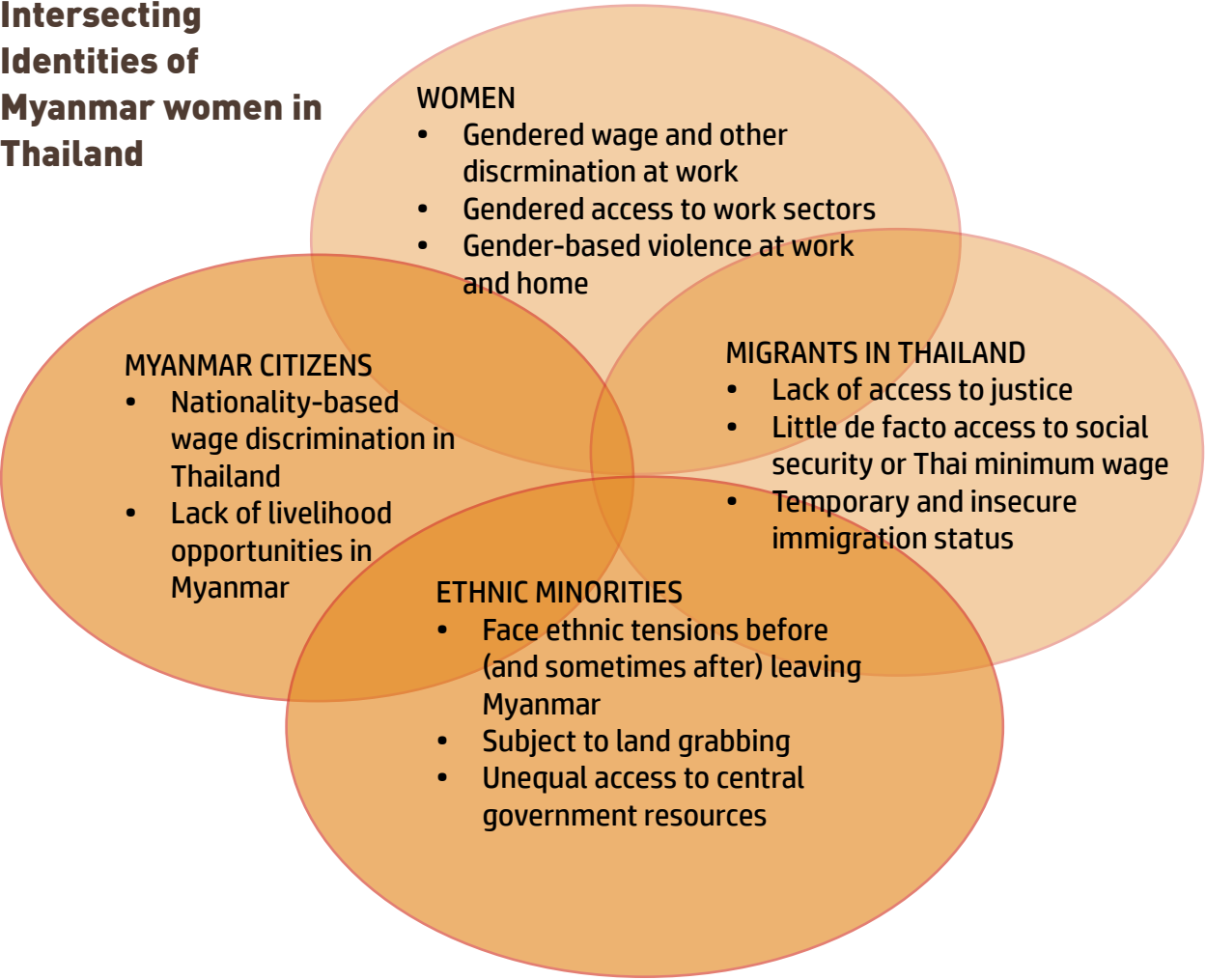
Myanmar migrant women in 3 Thai regions – Southern Thailand, Chiang Mai, and Mae Sod – worked with MAP Foundation (MAP) and its Women’s Exchange programme to lead this FPAR.

Due to on-going civil wars, pervasive poverty, lack of resources, economic hardship and ethnic tensions, many women from Myanmar move to Thailand seeking safety, better economic opportunities, and a higher quality of life. Women take work in the service industry, fisheries, seafood processing, rubber plantations, domestic work, and construction. There are an estimated 3 million migrants in Thailand, and the 2014 Myanmar census suggests that 43% of Myanmar migrants in Thailand are women.<sup>56</sup>

Migrant women face several dimensions of discrimination for their status as both women and migrants, which compounds if they are from ethnic minority groups in Myanmar or do not have documentation to be in Thailand.

56 ILO (2015) Myanmar citizens abroad: What the 2014 census tells us about migration (Yangon, ILO).

### Intersecting Identities of Myanmar women in Thailand



## What are the Problems?

A minimum wage of 300 baht (8 USD) is guaranteed to all workers, including migrants, under the 2013 Thai Minimum Wage Law. A 2016 Memorandum of Understanding governs regular outward migration from Myanmar to Thailand. The MOU governs the length of time Myanmar workers can stay in Thailand (4 years) and aims to make travel within Thailand possible for migrant workers through the issuance of national identity certificates. However, despite the MOU, women migrant workers remain an extremely marginalised group as only 19.5% of Myanmar citizens registering to work abroad are women.<sup>57</sup> Since actual ratios of women abroad are closer to equal with men, this indicates that more women than men migrate irregularly. Without documentation, women continue to be deprived of basic labour and other rights. However, even with documentation, labour exploitation and wage discrimination are not uncommon, and migrants rarely access redress.

**Migrant women in Thailand collected evidence of this discrimination and the urgent need for a living wage:**

### Wage Discrimination

Migrant women are unable to meet their daily needs, due to the lack of a living wage. Even if women receive the low Thai minimum wage of 8 USD per day, they are regularly paid less than men doing the same work. Many women work in the construction industry, where they do heavy labour. For this, Myanmar women recorded data showing they are typically paid between 220- 240 Baht (6.4 - 7 USD) per day- less than minimum wage and less than men construction workers receive. Workers are entitled to 56 Baht (1.5 USD) per overtime hour, but many women report that they receive only 36 Baht (1 USD) even when they work 12-hour days for 6 days a week.

As traditional gender roles dictate that women be the main caretakers of the household, migrant women suffer under the combined burdens of earning income to meet basic needs of them and their dependents with them in Thailand; sending remittances back home to support families; and paying debts borrowed for immigration documentation fees.

57 ILO (2016) International Labour Migration Statistics Database in ASEAN, June (Geneva, ILO).

## Gender-Based Violence and Lack of Access to Justice

Women rarely have information on what policies and legal remedies are available to them if they face gender-based violence. This leaves women at heightened risk of domestic violence and of harassment or violence outside the home. Most women do not file reports or charges when they suffer abuse creating an environment of impunity for perpetrators and depriving women access to justice and remedy.

### Exploitation in Migration Processes

Without adequate access to migration-related information, migrants turn to expensive brokers, as well as predatory loan providers. The overall cost for migrant workers to enter Thailand, register to work, and receive all necessary documents is around 4,300 Baht (120 USD). But many migrant women end up paying 7,000-14,000 Baht (196-280 USD) to brokers. High costs entrench cycles of debt for many migrant workers.

## Feminist Movement, Feminist Action!

In Thailand the Myanmar migrant women’s movement has been strong for decades, particularly facilitated through the Women’s Exchange Programme. Migrant women lead monthly meetings in 12 communities throughout Thailand, supported by the MAP Foundation. Through information sharing, monthly solidarity gatherings, and demonstrations, thousands of Myanmar women in Thailand participate in a movement calling for change to their living and working conditions. The FPAR worked to strengthen their movement and sharpen their demands.

### Calculating Their Needed Living Wage and Gender Pay Gaps

Women workers in the FPAR previously thought that the Thai minimum wage was a living wage. They are now able to calculate and **determine their living wage** based on their own living expenses. They also have calculated **gender pay gaps** in their work places – **documenting daily workplace inequality**.





### Advocacy on Living Wage

Migrant women have **joined UN conferences and other forums in Thailand** and speak with confidence from their experience on the issue of living wage. Women migrant workers delivered their **demand for a living wage to the Chiang Mai Mayor** in December 2015 and May 2016.<sup>58</sup>

### Movement Strength

After calculating their living wage and seeing the gulf between a living wage and the legal minimum wage, Myanmar women have **joined with workers from Thailand and other nationalities in advocacy and campaigns for a living wage** in the country. The FPAR contributed to a bigger movement to demand living wages.

At the 2016 International Women's Day rally in Chiang Mai, attended by 250 participants migrant women, FPAR researchers presented on what it would mean to have a living wage. The news has spread among migrant women through MAP publishing magazine and website information on living wage in Shan and Burmese languages;<sup>59</sup> through info sessions at Women's Exchange meetings through the country and at the national event the Women's Exchange Get Together. In 2016 the national event session on living wage was attended by 100 women, and in 2017 by 75 women.

<sup>58</sup> MAP Foundation (2016) Statement for International Women's Day, "Living Wage for Women", 8 March; MAP Foundation (2016) Statement for International Migrants' Day on Living Wage, 18 December; MAP Foundation (2016) Press Release for International Domestic Workers' Day on Living Wage, 16 June. See also Marie McCoy-Thompson (2017) "International Women's March" City Life Chiang Mai, 10 March, <http://www.chiangmaicitylife.com/citylife-articles/international-womens-march1/>

<sup>59</sup> An article on living wage for women was included in the October 2016 issue of MAP's Knowledge for Daily Living Magazine. The article covered the issue of living wage for migrant women workers, and included a discussion of a public living wage campaign event held in August 2015 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The event jumpstarted the Women Exchange consultation meetings and surveys on living wage.

## Section II:

# Movements for Development Justice





**A movement is** “an organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change through collective action”<sup>60</sup> (See box 3: “What are Movements? What are Feminist Movements?”). RIMUP women are those “organised constituents” and their common agenda is Development Justice.

It is now well established that autonomous feminist movements are key drivers of progressive women’s rights policy.<sup>61</sup> Social movements, including women’s movements, play an increasingly central role in catalysing social and political change given the weakness of key national and international political processes globally. 2016 and 2017 have seen a sharp rise in fundamentalisms – with populist leaders from America’s Trump to the Philippines’ Duterte elected across the world. Social movements are key to changing these retrogressive political environments. At the UN level, while the adoption of the SDGs and their purported universality is an important multilateral commitment, the absence of effective financing and the ongoing failure of international climate change negotiations underline a basic absence of will on the part of developed countries to cede their historical power and privilege. Combined with the increasing manipulation of domestic political institutions by corporate and elite interests, **the onus on social movements to challenge and provide alternatives to the existing political and economic order and to return political sovereignty to people is greater than ever.**

**As part of an Asia Pacific-wide feminist and social movement for Development Justice, FPAR is:**

- **Gathering women together.**
- Increasing personal awareness – ie. **Feminist political education.**
- Transforming personal awareness into **collective awareness.**
- Increasing **democratic ownership.**
- **Elevating voices** of women most affected by regressive policies.
- **Organising action** around issues for change

60 S. Batliwala, 2012, Changing Their World (AWID).

61 M. Htun, L. Weldon (2013) “The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005” American Political Science Review, 106(3), 548-569.

that rural, indigenous women, migrant and urban poor **women identify.**

- Engaging in **multi-level advocacy.**
- Building **collective power.**

In the country case studies in Section 1, we saw how the FPAR in Thailand contributed to a wider living wage campaign in the country, seeking economic justice for migrants and Thais, women and men. We saw how FPAR strengthened alliances among the urban poor in the Philippines, and we saw how Chin women in Myanmar actively used the FPAR process to build momentum for women’s rights to resource equality through forming local groups, engaging a woman MP to speak at community events, and supporting sister movements on related issues. All of the 10 FPAR groups contributed to the movement for Development Justice in their communities and countries. **Women demanded and claimed democratic spaces for women and started to use them locally to change their realities and reduce wide inequalities.**

They did not stop there. Women are using strength gained locally to speak out internationally and demand Development Justice at global and regional platforms. **National level organising strengthens global and regional movements.**

**From 2015 to 2017 RIMUP women spoke to global power holders, united to support each other in both global and local campaigns, bolstered their local advocacy with international knowledge, pushed their way into global spaces, and championed young women in the movement.**

## Women Researcher-Activists Speaking at International Fora

A young Myanmar woman researcher from NINU Women in Action Group – Naomi Thang – was **selected as the youth speaker during the opening plenary at the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) 2016.** She spoke to **300 government officials** from the region about issues in Chin State, Myanmar, and similar problems faced

by women throughout the region. This is the first time UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) allocated a space for CSOs to speak in the panel of APFSD’s Opening Session. Naomi made a compelling speech starting with description of her FPAR work in the community, and ending with the need to challenge global political and economic rules and to take a stand for Development Justice. Naomi’s video can be seen online.<sup>62</sup>

***“It was my first - and unforgettable - experience to speak in front of the regional governments, and it was my first time to meet leaders of the social movements from our region. In my opening speech, I was able to convey the issue of indigenous women in Chin State and for them to take the stand for Development Justice. Some governments, like India, came to greet and congratulate me after the speech.”***

– Naomi Thang on her role as youth opening speaker at APFSD, 2016

At the 14<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2016 another young researcher – Gerifel Cerillo – from Tanggol Bayi, Philippines, shared FPAR research findings with governments present. This was the first time that either APWLD or Tanggol Bayi had engaged with UNCTAD. Geri presented on the gendered impact of privatisation of markets in the urban poor community of Sampaloc, Manila, in two side events: 1) “Trading Inequalities: The impact of preferential trade and investment agreements on inequality and Development Justice” organised by APWLD, Third World Network, Ibon International and Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM); and 2) a side event organised by Public Services International on privatisation and public private partnerships.<sup>63</sup>

62 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CTX2yl9AS8>.

63 PSI (2017) “Public Sector Unions to Oppose Asia-Pacific Mega Trade Deal RCEP”, 20 October, PSI <http://www.world-psi.org/en/public-sector-unions-oppose-asia-pacific-mega-trade-deal-rcep>.



***“Public-Private Partnerships are a mechanism to use people’s funds to guarantee private profits instead of basic social services that can directly benefit the people. It did not work to improve the lives of the marginalised, but further aggravated the lack of access to basic services.”***

– Geri Cerillo, Tanggol Bayi, Philippines, at UNCTAD-14

## Grassroots Women Demanding and Increasingly Getting Recognition at the UN

The participation and meaningful engagement of RIMUP women at the international level has led to APWLD seeing a shift in how the UN engages with grassroots communities. RIMUP women consistently speaking up has meant that **UN officials are increasingly recognising and giving attention to grassroots experiences, expertise and inputs.**

Global leaders are beginning to see that **development discussions cannot be complete without the people who will be affected** by that policy. **In 2016, 12 grassroots women spoke in 10 high level meetings.**



## Global Movements Strengthening National Movements

Both young women researchers who spoke at the global events mentioned above went back to their communities knowing more about global politics and how to leverage global commitments for local change. Chin woman Naomi Thang went back to Myanmar having heard what the Myanmar Government committed to when the SDGs were agreed and is ready to play a part in holding her leaders accountable.

*“The Myanmar Government was absent from the APFSD meeting, but now I understand about the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and what my governments has promised to deliver. I can go back to my community to share with them about the SDGs and take necessary actions to hold my government accountable.”*

- Naomi Thang on her role as youth opening speaker at the APFSD

Geri Cerillo gained perspective at UNCTAD on the diverse approaches taken to development. She solidified and deepened her knowledge that the work she is doing with grassroots women nationally and locally is vital to systemic change.

*“My engagement in UNCTAD-14 is my first engagement with the United Nations. Aside from the disappointing fact that CSOs were given only limited space to speak in the formal forum, this trip has grounded me and made me believe even more in the important work we do in the local and national level. I met with a lot of other civil society from different parts of the world, with different kind of politics, but I could only be proud that I was with APWLD who never steered away from the view that there is a systemic problem that needs to be addressed, rather than just increasing the statistics of women in global supply chain.”*

— Geri Cerillo on speaking at UNCTAD

Finally not only did individuals take back lessons from global to local levels, but the FPAR process also allowed regional actors to come together during an FPAR meeting and rally for and with the National Living Wage Movement in Thailand. In August 2015, all FPAR member groups from across Asia Pacific gathered in Thailand and organised a **Solidarity Action and Seminar on “Living Wage for All Migrant Workers”**. The 10 FPAR women’s groups organised to support migrant women in Thailand, giving them strength and international visibility in their fight for a living wage.

## Ensuring Long-Term Sustainability of National Movements Through Training Young Women Leaders

**Movements too often fail because their leaders do not share power, and leadership does not get passed on to younger generations.** FPAR intentionally builds the capacity of young women researchers. As a feminist tool, FPAR teaches young women to interrogate the



intersection of patriarchy, globalisation, fundamentalisms and militarism. The new analytical skills and sharp critical perspective increased leadership skills of young women researcher-activists participating in the FPAR. Some of them quickly became leaders of their organisations; others are sure to be in the future.

**Latdaphone Phengsavanh – the 23-year old young researcher from SODA, Laos – was appointed as SODA’s Director in 2016. SODA is an organisation that works with the Lao state women’s machinery, the Lao Women’s Union, to support its gender equality work.**

**Gerifel Cerillo – the 24-year old young researcher from Tanggol Bayi, Philippines – was also appointed as Tanggol Bayi’s National Coordinator. Tanggol Bayi is a prominent association of women human rights defenders in the Philippines.**

The FPAR programme increased the capacity of these women in terms of knowledge and skills, and crucially it also strengthened their activism, connection and solidarity with women throughout their community. Through Feminist participatory Action Research, the **young women researchers gained:**

- Capacity on rights-based approaches.
- Feminist frameworks.
- Principles of feminist participatory action research.
- Skills of organising and campaigning.
- Direct advocacy opportunities.
- Critical analysis on inequalities, as well as Development Justice.







PC: Carlo Manalansan

## The Cycle Continues: 2012-2014 FPAR Women Continue to Lead Internationally & Support New Women in the Movement

**Supporting feminist leaders and young women researcher-activists is crucial to long-term sustainability of the feminist movement in Asia Pacific.**

Women from APWLD's 2012-2014 FPAR are still engaged. They are mentoring, training and supporting the 2015-2017 FPAR participants. And they are maintaining continuity in advocacy, thus sustaining the movement they joined in 2012.

**FPAR researchers from the 2012-2014 FPAR from Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and the Philippines**—Dewi Amelia Eka Putri (SERUNI), Aizhamal Bakashova (PA Shazet), and Vernie Yocogan Diyano (CWEARC), — have **become FPAR trainers**. They led and facilitated training sessions for the 2015-2017 FPAR researchers, and they even worked on finalising a series of FPAR Workshop Training Modules with APWLD.

Together with women from the 2015-2017 FPAR as well as with other women across the Asia Pacific movement for Development Justice, Dewi Amelia Eka Putri (SERUNI) and Vernie Yocogan Diyano (CWEARC) engaged with the 2016 CSO Forum and APFSD. And at APWLD's 2016

Regional Consultation that enables connection between advocates and the UN Special Procedures, 2012-2014 FPAR participants – PA Shazet and SERUNI – took their concerns to UN mechanisms that address human rights concerns. APWLD's Regional Consultation increases FPAR partners' capacity and knowledge about UN mechanisms and the mandate of specific mandate holders and special procedures that are relevant to their work. It also informs UN experts and bodies about issues researched in the FPARs. **In 2016, new and old FPAR researcher-activists took these issues to UN Special Procedures:**

- Bonded labour for girls and women in Bonda tribal community and demand wage loss, living wage and livelihood rehabilitation (RITES Forum, India – 2015-2017 FPAR)
- The situation of Burmese women migrant workers working in seafood and construction industry in Thailand and their demand for decent work and living wage (MAP Foundation, Thailand – 2015-2017 FPAR)
- Issue of land-grabbing due to palm oil plantation and criminalisation of women human rights defender by police and military in Olak-Olak Kalimantan (SERUNI, Indonesia – 2012-2014 FPAR)
- The issue of early marriage and bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan (PA Shazet, Kyrgyzstan – 2012-2014 FPAR).





## Section III:

# Why Feminist Participatory Action Research?



The women who participated in the FPAR **used their research** and **created change**. They did not put the finished report on a shelf and leave it there to collect dust.

FPAR emphasises local knowledge and not that of outside “experts”. We use FPAR as a tool because it is a **democratic, non-hierarchical mutual learning process** that invites women across Asia Pacific to participate in the struggle for social transformation. **It looks at the power relations in women’s daily lives and society and challenges gendered power asymmetries**. By inviting women to own and conduct the research, FPAR turns patriarchal norms upside down – norms which normally keep women out of such processes.

RIMUP research participants are not objects on whom research is conducted but rather the **subjects of the inquiry who set the agenda, participate** in the data collection and analysis, and **control the use** of the outcomes, including deciding what future actions to take or directions to go in.

**RIMUP women are Researcher-Activists.**

## The F in FPAR: Feminist

*“RITES’ approach has always included participatory action, but not necessarily guided by feminist theory because sometimes we have given priority to tribal customary governance systems – which are not always woman friendly. Now RITES members are redefining their strategies putting women at the core of every action revising the idea of rights from the point of view of women.”*

– RITES Forum, reflection on 2015-2017 FPAR

**Research is political.** It can prioritise or ignore women’s voices. But **FPAR does not just prioritise women’s voices, it is made up almost entirely of women’s voices**. It is led by women, validated by women and used by women.

*“My experience with FPAR was really good because before when I used Participatory Action Research, there were not many women participating because they were not given any chance to talk. But this time we only focused on women. We want to empower them, but I also feel like the FPAR is empowering me too because I am learning a lot from them.”*

– Haymann Zaw, young researcher, MAP Foundation, Thailand

**FPAR has a gender transformative agenda that starts with the often very socially disruptive act of women (vs. men) setting the research agenda and conducting the research.** FPAR aims to empower women as advocates and authors of policy solutions, thus challenging patriarchal systems.

FPAR almost always includes consultations with women in women-only spaces to ensure that discussions of gendered power relations and of issues that may not be easy to speak about in front of men are explored.

### Box 5: What is a Feminist Approach in FPAR?

A feminist approach ensures that gendered power relations at all levels are interrogated.

A feminist approach means that we recognise and validate women’s experiences.

A feminist approach means that we consider the practical barriers to women’s participation in the project and take steps to ensure all are able to contribute.

But there are also many women’s voices – those of privileged authorities and those of women who are systemically and consistently marginalised. This FPAR has been intentional about giving voice to rural, indigenous and migrant women, and among those, to women who do not usually get a turn to speak.



*“FPAR takes into consideration the layers of oppression that women experience more than men. The FPAR principles were a solid grounding, but it was the feminists I met in the trainings, the wonderful women of APWLD, and the women in the research community that made me see this unequal struggle concretely.”*

– Geri Gerillo, young researcher, Tanggol Bayi, Philippines

**The P in FPAR: Participatory**

**FPAR challenges the idea that communities do not have enough understanding of their own issues and that they do not have enough knowledge for critical analysis. They do.**

FPAR centrally involves marginalised women and **hands over project ownership** to them. FPAR **breaks down hierarchies** through its emphasis on and modeling of women’s participation.

*“The Bonda migrant women and girls have developed a relationship of trust with the RITES team, and it is heartening to see that they feel more confident in challenging their own exploitation because the entire FPAR research programme is being carried out with their involvement at all stages.”*

– RITES Forum, India, reflection on FPAR



**Box 7: We Created & Supported Democratic Spaces: Local Researcher Teams**

Local women formed a local researcher team in each country. This good practice of FPAR inclusive principles provided democratic spaces for rural indigenous migrant and urban poor women to raise their issues and increase their skill to self-advocate their cases and to claim their political spaces in local and national decision-making processes.

NGOs supported the local researchers throughout the FPAR process. **In India, a young women researcher from the NGO lived in together with 4 local Bonda women researchers in the community – their house was always full with community women visiting and having a discussion.** In Burma, two garment workers in Yangon worked together with the Burmese Women’s Union in organising meetings to discuss the issue of minimum wages vs. living wages. In Bangladesh, 2 local Bihari researchers routinely attended weekly meetings on women’s rights at the supporting NGO Naripokkho’s office and shared information with the rest of community.

*“We can see that the local women researchers have come out of their shell. Aside from increasing their skills on how to do FPAR, organise and mobilise a village discussion, they also told me that they are now more confident to speak in front of public and articulate their opinion. They also took the initiative to come to our office every Friday and join our weekly discussions on women’s rights issues; they met and built networks with other organisations working with Bihari women to support each other.”*

- Labiba Islam, young women researcher, Naripokkho, Bangladesh

**Box 6: Why is Participation an Aim?**

Because women have not been allowed to participate in decision-making, and now is the time to change that.

Because we believe in equity.

An added benefit is that when groups take over decision-making in FPARs, there is a stake in making sure the FPAR happens and works.

The dilemma many NGOs and facilitators have with participation is that it means the processes are less controllable and planning processes are going to be slow. We leave room for that and value it as an empowering process.



FPAR methods evolve through participatory processes. Decisions about methods are made by the community. FPAR methods are designed to give the strongest voice to the community, and marginalised members within it, and to illustrate the experiences and structural barriers they experience.

Community members are involved in validating findings of research and in final analysis. It is important to involve people at all stages of research. As far as possible, FPAR researchers held a meeting or several smaller gatherings at the end of FPARs to present and discuss findings and analysis, allowing for the community to change them and to “own” them as theirs. At these meetings, researchers got feedback from community members on the accuracy (are the facts correct?), validity (does the analysis hold

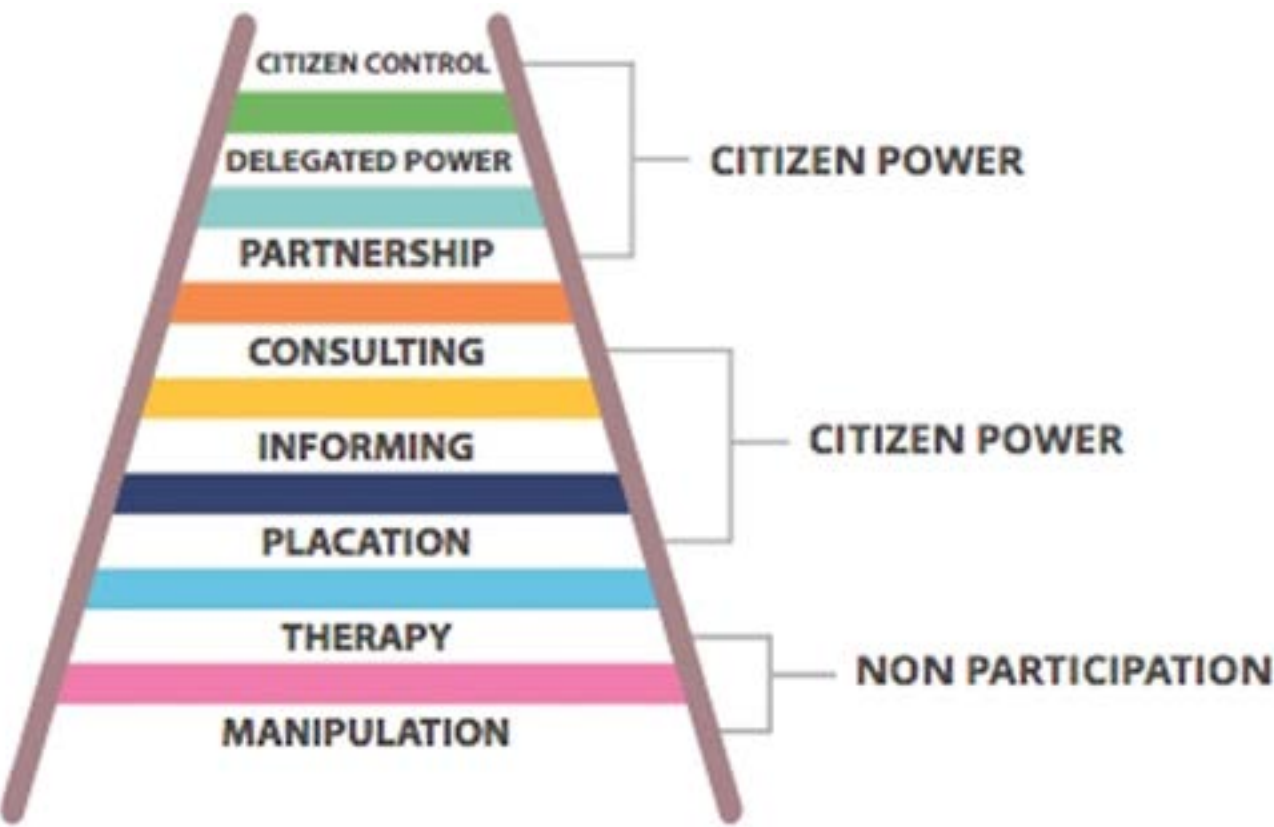
true?), and the appropriateness of the research findings (will these findings help or hurt the community? Are there ethical implications in making the conclusions public?). Then, FPAR NGOs and research teams fully integrated the community as the central actor of their advocacy plans.

*“We have helped shift the power to women workers. After the research, the report is owned by the community. We will publish it only after making an agreement with the community. Our research will show the solidarity between women workers, BWU, and labour organisations.”*

– Ei Mon Phy, young researcher, BWU, Myanmar

Illustration:

Levels of “Participation”: Get to the Top of the Ladder!



Source: Arnstein, Sherry R. “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Vol. 35, No.4, July 1969, pp. 216-224

The A in FPAR: Action

APWLD firmly believes that feminist movements, grounded in local struggle and experiences, are the key to making real changes. FPAR is rooted in **movement building. It builds feminist women-led movements in local communities** and raises their problems (and solutions) to national and international levels.

*“This FPAR has changed my view regarding the community’s strength and unity. Now I understand that social change can happen if community people work together for their cause.”*

– Naripokko, Bangladesh, reflection on FPAR

Through FPAR women collect evidence about what is happening in their communities and collectively take action. Backed with strong, locally produced research and documented evidence, women challenge rights violations and gendered power imbalances. FPAR is a potent tool for enabling women to take control of development agendas and programmes that are affecting their lives.

Our principal purpose of doing FPAR is to change systems and structures to improve the lives of women. We interpret “Change” as “Structural Change”, ie. change to structures and systems of oppression particularly patriarchy and the fusion of patriarchy with globalisation, fundamentalisms and militarism.

Box 8: Who Should Make the Change Happen?

Action in FPAR includes advocacy to **make others change things**: asking government to make policy change, asking employers to change company practice, asking patriarchs to change customary law.

And Action in FPAR includes women **making direct change themselves** in their communities: taking over decision-making spaces, setting up collectives, shifting local power structures.

The FPAR process is not a simple two-step process of Research and then Action, but the **research itself is an action.**

- In determining what problems to research and in asking questions about inequality in a community, the research process starts to **raise consciousness and awareness** of that inequality.
- By holding a focus group or interview with government officials, asking them about why development is not just and creating gender equality, women start **holding government to account** and demanding change.

*“In RITES Forum’s earlier work, the Action phase always came after the Research phase, but we have learnt to weave in Action into Research so that both go hand-in-hand.”*

– RITES Forum, India, reflection on FPAR

The R in FPAR: Research

APWLD began using FPAR several years ago as a way to move beyond simple documentation of human rights violations, a method it had used successfully in the past. Documentation lacked politicisation of the documenters, and it lacked built-in methods for action afterwards. APWLD’s shift to FPAR has allowed it to better hear and raise up grassroots women’s voices and priorities, at the same time as provide them with capacity building that enables them to fight for their rights and work to create lasting and deep changes in their communities.

FPAR insists that **women, not outsiders or experts, have knowledge** and are researchers in their own right.

FPAR methods used this research include focus group discussions (FGD), narration of personal histories and use of diaries, cognitive mapping of problems (or participatory problem structuring), power mapping, and community mapping. Methods were tailored where communities had limited literacy, using case images, drawings, pictorial maps, and oral histories.





### Box 9: Choosing Methods that Build Trust

**Methods like Participant Observation and Immersion help build trust and relationships.** Through building trust, women conducting FPAR often find that they are able to present **more factual information than would have come out in a traditional survey.** Both external (NGO) researchers living for a time in communities and women researchers from those communities are able to gain more trust from women in the community to find out what is really happening in a place. Women share more with people they trust. Further, because they invest time in a place, researchers are present to hear more aspects of women’s stories when women feel ready to tell them. Women also know that the information they share will be used responsibly and for their benefit, since they have been part of setting FPAR plans.

### Box 10: NGO Researchers “Walk Alongside” Local Women Researchers

In FPAR, any external researchers (in our case, researchers from local NGOs) see their role as “walking alongside” women and their communities. Both the external CSO and community researchers learn from each other and both “develop capacity” through trainings and information sharing. As much as possible, external researchers **immersed** themselves in the RIMUP participating communities, with community permission. They lived with and in communities for part of the research period.

### Box 11: How FPAR Research is Different: It is Explicitly Political

FPAR draws on a school of thought called critical theory, which is **explicitly political, not only descriptive.** Its goal is the empowerment of the disempowered by enabling undistorted dialogue and resolving unjust power asymmetries.

Qualitative research in FPAR is centred on **social transformation where women engage in self-reflection and evaluate their conditions.**

Qualitative research in FPAR includes:

- Discussion on the relevant historical and cultural **struggles** between class, gender, ethnic groups etc under study.
- Analysis of practices of **power**, ranging from extreme coercion to active constraint of minority voices.
- Analysis of the “**tactics**” of the powerless as they accommodate, appropriate, resist and transform the strategies of the powerful.
- Reflection on how research can lead to **changes in oppressive power relations and the empowerment of the powerless.**

### Box 12: Women Decide & the Research is Flexible for their Learning Process

Because FPAR is community-led, their learning and discussions are able to shape the research framing. In the 2015-2017 FPAR several groups of women started out researching one problem that they identified as most urgent in their communities. As they investigated those problems and identified systemic causes, they were able to change and shift their research to focus on the underlying systemic problems that had to be tackled if their everyday realities were going to change.

In **Bangladesh** Bihari women started out identifying sexual harassment in public places as the most critical problem in their lives. Through research and analysis they saw that the underlying and bigger problem is their disadvantaged position in the community. They have little power to raise their voice, claim their rights, express their concerns and needs - in their families as well as wider society and political spheres.

In **India**, researching women saw that behind Bonda women’s immediate problem of wage violations are several layers of deeper economic development failures.

*“These findings have forced us to look at migration not as an individual choice but as a result of a structural failure to defend and protect the rights and livelihoods of tribal and rural peoples. In RITES’ earlier experiences we actually did not get deep into the structural causes of migration or bondage and saw it as a failure of families’ livelihood systems. Therefore the advocacy strategy of RITES will have to look at rehabilitation from structural point of view where the family’s capacities are enhanced to deal with failure of NREGA [India’s rural employment guarantee scheme] as well as exploitation by middlemen. Besides that, there has to be a social dialogue in Bonda villages in order to re-establish the system of community labour exchange and enhance economic value of products.”*

– RITES Forum, India, reflection on FPAR





### Box 13: Our FPAR Principles:

- **Purpose is structural changes:** the purpose of our research is to bring about structural changes that women identify as critical to their enjoyment of human rights
- **Amplifies women's voices:** the research gives voice to women as the experts and authors of their own lives and policy decisions. It strategically places them as researchers and experts and promotes them into policy dialogue.
- **Owned by the community:** research decisions are made by the community of women who are stakeholders of the research project;
- **Takes an intersectional approach** to identify experiences of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation; recognising the diversity of women's experiences, identities and power.
- **Aims to shift power:** the research seek to reconstruct traditional power imbalances such as researchers / subject and also aims to challenge and shift gendered source of personal, political and structural power;
- **Fosters movement building / collective action:** the research process itself should be seen as a collective process that strengthens solidarity and empowers women to work collectively for long term structural changes;
- **Build capacity of all:** FPAR always involves capacity building but also recognises that capacity building and learning is a collective, political action of all the actors involved.
- **Free Prior Informed Consent** of all participants is prioritised in FPAR
- **Safety, care and solidarity** with participants is essential.



## Our Recommendations





RIMUP women in this FPAR are part of a social movement that is inspiring new movements and new activism. As the FPAR has shown, women's movements are loudly demanding change. **Women's demands for just and sustainable change throughout Asia-Pacific are clear, and women are ready for 'development' planners to listen.**

**At the core of Development Justice** is a call for **equality of wealth** between and within countries, as well as between women and men; **equality of power** in political structures and in families; **equal access to resources and land**. **Women in Asia-Pacific need Development Justice. They are demanding it, and they are fighting for local, national and regional changes to make it happen.** For too long women, particularly RIMUP women in Asia Pacific, have been ignored as development plans and priorities were made. Women's movements should have a key role in developing, implementing and monitoring development policies at local, national, regional and international levels.



## Women in this FPAR have 4 Regional Demands

### 1. Access to and Control over Resources

**Governments must ensure women have access to and control over productive resources, land, and water, ensuring that inheritance and divorce laws and policies are not working against them.**

Customary laws too often hand inheritance and wealth only to men. **Women need joint or sole land and other resource ownership**, rather than dependency on male family members who own land. Divorced, single or widowed women are particularly negatively affected by patriarchal norms and legislation governing flows of resource wealth.

Land tenure reform throughout the Asia-Pacific region must stipulate women's equal right to land and property ownership. Not only must women have equal access to the increasingly small percentage of land available to poor people, governments must also work to ensure that a just and proportionate amount of land is available to small landowners who have increasingly seen land appropriated by government and corporate developers and wealthy landowners.

Further, **urban poor**, including stateless people, ethnic minorities, migrants, and refugees, are systematically marginalized and pushed into retrenched poverty without land titles, including in slums and displacement camps. They risk eviction daily.

Urban and rural poor must have economic and gender justice through fair control over resources. Without redistribution, wealth only continues to accumulate among men and the already wealthy people in our societies.

### 2. Decent Work and a Living Wage

**Governments must work to ensure that all people have access to decent work that pays a living wage in the Asia-Pacific region.**

Throughout the region people are migrating because

they do not have access to a sustainable livelihood at home, as well as because their local economies are being transformed from subsistence to cash economies. Sustainable livelihoods and decent work must be available for all women and men. Governments must ensure that policy *and* monitoring are in place to ensure that labour rights, including **workers' representation, sexual and reproductive health and rights, adequate and equal remuneration, safe working conditions, and non-discrimination** are guaranteed in those jobs. **The region's gender pay gap must be reduced to 0%**, and a government's goal to achieve decent work for all should not overlook an aim to **redistribute the burden of unpaid care labour between women and men.**

In June 2016 at the ASEAN World Economic Forum, the Government of Indonesia supported an "ASEAN-wide minimum wage" to halt the race to the bottom in the region. Cambodia and Vietnam also laudably showed support.<sup>64</sup> A regional minimum wage and all national minimum wages should be a living wage calculated on the cost of a basket of goods that includes sufficient calories for a family (using local dietary habits) and non-food costs including housing, clothing, energy and material goods.<sup>65</sup> **Minimum living wage policy must cover 100% of workers, particularly workers in Special Economic Zones, migrant workers, and informal sector workers.** Care must be taken that when minimum wages are legislated, cuts are not made to employees' benefits and inflation is controlled for or reflected in wages.

**Governments must work to deliver universal social protection (including sexual and reproductive health and rights) with a dignified standard of living regardless of people's employment, citizenship or other status.**

Growth neither automatically reduces poverty nor creates decent work, and that the model of resource-intensive, consumption-driven growth that has precipitated the climate crisis has relied on the exploitation of women's unpaid care work and cheap labour. We must remedy this. Economic justice depends on it.

<sup>64</sup> Oxfam, 2017, "An Economy for the 99%" Oxfam Briefing Paper (Oxford, Oxfam), p. 31.

<sup>65</sup> Asia Floor Wage, 2009, *Stitching a Decent Wage Across Borders*, Accessed 22 September 2014, <http://www.cleanclothes.org/resources/publications/afw.pdf>

### 3. Peace Based on Justice

**All forms of violence against women (VAW) must be eliminated, and countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region must ensure RIMUP women have access to justice.**

Peace and security of women is a precondition for just and sustainable development. Violence by state actors, employers, community and religious leaders, and family must be recognised as a major impediment to development. **Each country in the region must have comprehensive, fully funded, national plans of action to eliminate VAW in all forms.**

Governments must ensure legal and judicial environments that lead to higher rates of successful prosecution of perpetrators, and that protect women human rights defenders. Women survivors and their families must be able to access to justice including services and reparations. Currently too many women are punished further if they report domestic abuse or any sexual violence. Migrants in some countries face difficulties with naturalization if they report abuse. In other places police, themselves, are too often offenders, take bribes and engage in victim blaming.

### 4. Women's Voice in Decision-Making Processes

**Governments and development institutions must ensure that women, especially RIMUP women, are not only present in formal processes, but also contribute their perspectives and recommendations in decision-making at all levels of development issues.** This must be done through a bottom up, decentralised process owned by peoples. Women in this FPAR realized that many of their problems stem from the fact that their concerns, needs and issues are not recognized or addressed in the patriarchal decision making spaces in their communities and countries.

**Genuine inclusion must involve more than only political representation, but also meaningful consultative process at all levels of development policy and decision-**



**making.** Governments must ensure that gender equality and guarantees of Free, Prior and Informed Consent are included in decision-making over development. And they must ensure that all naturalized migrants have suffrage/ voting rights.

Women's participation and leadership starts in the home and must extend to the highest levels of government, ensuring women's rights enjoyment, gender equality, sustainable development and genuine democracy. Issues of voice are also crucial in workplaces throughout the region. Increasingly flexibilized systems of work are using short-term contracts or day-based pay to prevent workers from having job security that would allow them confidence to join and form unions and exercise freedom of association.

### Women in this FPAR have Country-Specific Demands

Through the FPAR, women have carefully documented violations related to land and control over resources, working conditions, violence, and silencing of their voice. These issues are inextricably intertwined in their research and realities. They make the following national recommendations for systemic change:

**BANGLADESH. Urdu-speaking Bihari community in a camp in Dhaka demand the following changes:**

- Elimination of gender-based violence.
- Access to justice and remedy for victims, as well as an end to impunity for perpetrators including police.
- Elimination of child marriages and realization of the right to education for all children.
- Ownership of the land they have lived on as displaced peoples for over 40 years.
- Greater inclusion of women in decision-making processes.
- Elevation of the position of women in personal, familial, and social spheres, including through



- camp-based educational initiatives.
- Space to organize amongst themselves in order to demand their rights.

**INDIA. Bonda tribal women in Odisha, India, demand the following changes:**

- Government initiation of strict labour cases against all contractors who have cheated, harassed, and abused the Bonda people with recovery of all lost wages.
- Rice mill and hotel owners increase wages, limit shifts to 8 hours per day, rotate work in shifts, and provide separate and decent living conditions.
- Government collaboration with Bonda community leaders and elders to implement land development initiatives, flash flood prevention and a seed savers' group, based on the input and needs of the community.
- Government address the current crisis in agricultural production and trade. This is the primary way the Bonda peoples can be supported for a better cash income to avert distressed migration.
- Government agencies, including the district labour office, child welfare committee, and district vigilance committees, function effectively to listen to people's grievances, as well as take timely and strict action against exploiters to deter recurrence.

**INDONESIA. Women workers from garment and textile factories in West Java, Indonesia demand the following changes:**

- Enhanced regulation of company compliance with national policy governing health of workers, primarily reproductive health.
- Implementation of strict sanctions for companies in violation of the national health policy.
- Women's access to proper facilities for lactation at the workplace.



- 6 month maternity leave to ensure 6 months exclusive breastfeeding.
- Recognition of 6 month exclusive breastfeeding as children's basic rights.
- Elimination of sexual violence against women and children.
- Enhanced sanitation in workplaces.

### **LAOS. Women in rural Laos demand the following changes:**

- A gender perspective mainstreamed in employment initiatives to create decent work for women in rural areas.
- Options to seek employment in rural areas, through creating and improving the quality of employment in the agriculture sector.
- Promotion of an enabling environment for women in waged labour and/or self-employment.
- Promotion and dissemination of information, opportunities, and services to rural poor women through relevant and appropriate outlets including social media, radio, television, newspapers, the internet, and through schools and training institutions.
- Enhanced employment assistance and career guidance for rural women by creating and improving facilities in rural areas with trained professionals and access to technologies such as internet-based information databases.
- Women's access to micro-credit schemes, financial training, business development services, and market information.
- Implementation of gender equitable land allocation policies that improve agricultural land access for all rural poor.
- All development stakeholders focus on quality services for the poor that provide livelihood and economic opportunity and sustainable growth, as per the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020. Policies should seek to deliver inclusive growth, fair resource allocation, and good governance.
- Enhanced national mechanisms of coordination



### **MYANMAR. Women in southern Chin State living under Chin customary law demand the following changes:**

- Abolition of the practice of bride-prices.
- Modification of divorce customs so women are free and able to initiate divorce proceedings.
- Equal division of properties when a divorce does take place.
- Child custody rights and child support for women after a divorce.
- Equal inheritance and property ownership rights for daughters and sons.
- The right to co-ownership of homes for wives.
- The Chin State Hluttaw withdrawal of the draft Chin Special Division Act submitted to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in 2016; followed by discussion of amendments with women leaders before redrafting and resubmitting a new version.
- The Chin State Hluttaw consider CEDAW in amending or enacting new laws, giving women equal rights with men.
- National government action to reduce and address the problem of violence against women.
- National government implementation of laws that protect women from violence.
- Inclusion of women in decision-making processes at local and national levels, partly through a quota system for Hluttaws.



**MYANMAR. Women workers in garment factories demand the following changes:**

- The Myanmar government follow international legal standards and uphold their obligations under treaties to which they are a party.
- ASEAN labour organizations support local labour organizations to build capacity particularly in campaigning.
- The Myanmar government ensure labour laws are fully implemented and that workers have a means of redress in the event of grievances.
- The minimum wage raised to a living wage.
- The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population operate actively and without corruption.
- The government and employers lift restrictions on labour unions and labour rights. Workers’ right to collectively organize must be protected and fulfilled.

**NEPAL. Indigenous and rural poor women in Nepal demand the following changes:**

- Women’s access to and control over land. This is increasingly recognised as the strongest poverty eradication measure.
- Proper implementation of the Joint Land Certificate Policy at the community level.
- Local level implementation of the interim constitution of Nepal’s clause on equal rights on property.
- Male members of households educated on advantages of joint land certificates.
- Measurement of the concentration of land ownership, which is needed to address the phenomenon of land-grabbing. This has severely diminished the amount of land available to local communities including women.
- Sustainable Development Goals target 1.4 used

as the basis for policy formulation: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance”.

**PHILIPPINES. Urban poor who work in the Manila informal economy as market vendors demand the following changes:**

- Reassessment of the Private-Public Partnership model, in relation to its impacts on and exclusion of marginalised sectors of society.
- Full implementation of the Urban Development and Housing Act or Republic Act 7279 which calls for the proper relocation of urban poor dwellers with proper regard and consideration for their needs and situations.
- Livelihood projects always implemented in conjunction with relocation initiatives.
- All of the December 2015 concessions fulfilled, and the Manila Ordinance revised in accordance with the concessions.



- Transparent development of all market modernisation schemes and full consultations with the urban poor community.

**TAIWAN. Migrants for marriage in Taiwan demand the following changes:**

- Deletion of vague naturalization requirements.
- Petty crime offenders allowed the right to naturalization.
- Divorced and widowed foreign spouses allowed to enjoy the same naturalization rights as other foreign spouses.
- Right to naturalization for married underage children.
- Foreign spouses’ ability to maintain original nationality when applying for naturalization.
- Naturalized people’s suffrage.
- Reduction of the government review time for withdrawing a naturalized person’s nationality.



**THAILAND. Myanmar migrant women in Thailand demand the following changes:**

- Elimination of wage and other discrimination at work against migrants, women, and particularly migrant women.
- Minimum wage raised to a living wage.
- Extended paid maternity leave and paid family leave.
- State-supported child care centres to which all people have access.
- Adequate access to migration information.
- Adequate access to access to justice, particularly when migrants face gender-based violence or exploitation in the course of labour migration.
- De facto access of all migrant workers to Thai Social Security.
- Recognition and labour protection of women’s work, particularly in domestic work and sex work.







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