



CONCEPT NOTE

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) 2019 - 2021 ***Support to Rural, Indigenous, Migrant, Urban Poor Women's Movements*** ***in Central Asia***

Background

Central Asia remains relatively underrepresented compared to other sub-regions of Asia. Central Asia consists of five culturally and ethnically diverse countries that have followed different paths to political and economic transformation since achieving independence from the Soviet Union (USSR). Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have in relative terms made strides in market reforms, while Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have not yet completed their transitions to market economies. Tajikistan represents an intermediate case.

Central Asia is also surrounded by regions with internal/cross-border conflicts, including the continuous civil war in Afghanistan (since the mid-1970s), the separatist movement in the Xinjiang region of China, the India-Pakistan conflict in Kashmir, frozen conflicts in the Southern Caucasus and the long-lasting economic and political isolation of Iran. Given these regional realities, Central Asia is part of several struggles that intermittently see external actors compete for attention, power control and ultimately for access to land and resources¹, which can partially contradict each other (as One Belt One Road (OBOR), Eurasian Economic Union, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc.). Furthermore, the transition period to market economies in all these countries brought unique fusion of political, economic, and social transformation that further increase inequalities and negatively impacting women's lives and livelihoods.

With rapid changes in political, economic and social structures and policies, there is a growing body of evidence on the violations of human rights, fundamental freedoms and threat to participatory democracy. In Kazakhstan authorities jailed peaceful protesters, targeted outspoken activists with criminal charges, and prosecuted independent journalists. Parliament adopted laws placing burdens and restrictions on non-governmental organizations². In Uzbekistan authorities maintain rigid control over the population, severely curtailing the freedoms of association, expression and religion. Turkmenistan remains among the world's most repressive and closed countries. The recent reform in 2016 removed term limits for the presidency, rendering ultimate, unchallenged power to the president. The government ruthlessly punishes any alternative political or religious expression, despite the constitutional protection for freedom of expression and exerts total control over access to information and mass media. In Kyrgyzstan, while there have been some meaningful improvements in its human rights record such as the Parliament's rejection to a draft law on "foreign agents" that would have demonised many non-governmental groups, it still struggles with deeply patriarchal and heteronormative gender norms as evident in the currently pending bill that allows prosecution of

¹ Central Asia: where power, politics and economics collide. Dr. Tamara Makarenko, Associate Lecturer University of Dundee and Partner, West Sands Advisor LLP, 2009

² This includes the crackdown of trade union activities, closing of Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Kazakhstan, and new restrictions on the right to strike; Additional regulations governing NGO funding were adopted, requiring non-profits to report all foreign grants to the government within 10 days and to submit financial report after completion of the activities

LGBTIQs. Tajikistan has had ongoing, severe human rights crackdowns, with further arrests of government critics and violent retaliation against the relatives of dissidents abroad.³

The region is seeing rapid spread of Islamic fundamentalism, such as in the Ferghana Valley (which is situated partially in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan), while governments have been inadequate, if not missing, to respond to the growth of religious fundamentalism. Instead, the governments use Islamic fundamentalism as an excuse to arrest and imprison their political enemies in order to consolidate their rule in the region.

Such economic, social and political context of the region does not bring benefit to the situation of women. The Central Asian countries recognise gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development as emphasized in the national development programmes. Each country has necessary institutional and regulatory frameworks such as national actions plans, gender action plans, gender-sensitive policies, however challenges remain to advance women's human rights, especially those most marginalised including rural, indigenous, migrant and urban poor women and their communities. The political will for women's human rights has been largely declarative and has not generated significant structural changes in Central Asia.

Gender discrimination and patriarchal values towards women and their gendered roles largely directs many spheres of public and private life of women in Central Asia. It has further denied women's rights to property, land and livelihood including their rights to inheritance, decision making and management over natural resources. Customary and/or family laws and marriage related practices in Central Asia impede women to own land and property.

Furthermore, land grab by large (foreign) corporations facilitated by trade and investment agreements are removing people from their own land, significantly violating women's rights to land and their livelihoods. Land degradation, deforestation, pollution of land and water, loss of biodiversity, water related issues are major problems of the sub-region, which aggravate the health and poverty situation of women. Since USSR times Central Asian countries were used as nuclear waste storage, sites for uranium and antimony mining and testing ground for different nuclear experiments. Countries of the region have underground deposits of chemicals and minerals attracting exploitation from foreign mining corporations, which do not care for environmental, social and economic costs for the countries and local communities.

In most countries in the region, gender wage gap is high, e.g. women receiving in average only 60-80% of their male counterparts. Women are also confined to the "glass ceiling", which limits opportunities for them to take leading positions; and they often face so-called "hidden" discrimination in the labor market. Majority of women labour migrants live in worst conditions without any guarantees for their right protection.

Poverty, high unemployment and low wages force women from Central Asia to go into labor migration within and outside the region. Most of migrant women from Central Asia find themselves working in informal, precarious and often slavery-like working conditions as domestic workers, care and service providers as nanny, nurses, sex workers, as well as sales persons at local markets and garments factories.

Women's political participation has been seeing a sharp decline. Women's representation in national parliaments averaging about 27,1 percent in Kazakhstan, 25 percent in parliament of Turkmenistan, 19 percent in the parliament of Tajikistan, 16 percent in Uzbekistan and 19,2 percent of seats have

³ World Report, Human Rights Watch, 2018

been taken by women in Kyrgyzstan.⁴

Violence against women is pervasive, in the forms of domestic violence, sex trafficking, bride kidnapping and early marriages, condoned by state and non-state actors. Governments failed to adequately respond to sex trafficking while polygamy is becoming a de facto reality for women in Central Asia⁵.

Sexual harassment at workplace has also seen significant increase and women's access to justice remains as a systemic challenge given the dominant patriarchal values in society as well as the reality that most of working women are engaged in informal, unregulated and unprotected sectors.

APWLD believes that 'development' is supposed to benefit poor, marginalised women in Central Asia. They are best able to identify both the problems and solutions. Since 2013, APWLD together with rural, indigenous, migrant, women workers and urban poor women organisations and other movements in the region has made a unified call for **Development Justice**. Development Justice promotes peoples' rights, dignity, wellbeing and solidarity while addressing the inequalities of wealth, power, and resources between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women.

APWLD believes in the power of local feminist movements. In order to challenge the current development model and to claim women's rights, strong movements of rural, indigenous, migrant, urban poor women are needed. They must be supported to build their capacity to document the impact of loss of access in resources, their lives and livelihood, have meaningful engagement in decision making processes and are able to form strong local feminist movements that work with other movements to demand accountability from state and non-state actors, and able to push governments in tackling systemic barriers to women's land rights and sustainable development.

To address the need to increase the evidence base advocacy and the need to have women as vocal and effective organisers, advocates and campaigners in human rights, APWLD supports 8-10 local organisations to conduct **Feminist Participatory Action Research for Change "Support to Rural, Indigenous, Migrant, Urban Poor Women's Movements in Central Asia"**.

Why Feminist Participatory Action Research?

APWLD firmly believes that feminist movements, grounded in local struggle and experiences, are the key to making real changes.

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) is rooted in **movement building**. Through FPAR women collect evidence about what is happening in their communities and collectively take action. FPAR is conducted by and for women. With strong, locally produced research and documented evidence, women challenge rights violation 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.

⁴Women in politics, <www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2019-03/women-in-politics-2019>, UN Women and Inter Parliamentary Union, 2019

⁵ Although no country has legalised polygamy, but the number has increased. Many poor women support polygamy to find relief from difficult social and economic situation.

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.

FPAR facilitates democratic, non-hierarchical mutual learning processes situated in struggle for social transformation. It emphasises local knowledge, shares and develops knowledge and skills based on experiences of participants. It looks at the power relations in our daily lives and society and challenges the gendered power asymmetry which intersects women's socially/culturally constructed locations and multiple identities.

Our principal purpose of doing FPAR is to change systems and structures to improve the lives of women. We interpret 'Change' as 'Structural Change' or change to structures and systems of oppression particularly patriarchy and the fusion of patriarchy with globalization, fundamentalisms and militarism. The 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.

For BOOM FPAR programme 2019-2021, the selection committee of APWLD will select **eight to ten** organisations that together with the community will conduct action research on:

- a. The impact of **human rights violations on rural, indigenous, migrant, and urban poor women at the local or country level**, specifically on the following three thematic focus areas:
 - i. **Access to and control over land and resources** - - includes the issues of land grabbing, forced displacement, loss of livelihood, unsustainable agriculture, land degradation, impacts of extractive industries and energy projects, women's land ownership/inheritance rights, etc.
 - ii. **Decent work and living wage** - includes the issues of labour rights of women, especially working in informal sectors, migration, trafficking, etc.
 - iii. **Women's Voice and Autonomy** - includes the issues of women's democratic participation in decision makings in the family, in community and at society at large, violence against women, bodily autonomy, peace and access to justice, etc.
- b. Community-owned solutions and demand for Development Justice.

Selected organisations will have opportunity to employ a young woman researcher and carry out the research including salary and on-costs with the approximate amount of USD 10,000-12,000. Research partners will need to appoint a mentor to assist this young women researcher throughout this research programme.

APWLD will also support the young women researcher and their mentors to participate in capacity building workshops and provide advocacy or network opportunities. They will access training in International Human Rights standards and rights-based approach on their area of research. Through a combination of face-to-face and online modules, they will share the frameworks within their communities, learn practical research skills, and developed a community-based research plan.

Overall objective of the programme

To advance rural, indigenous, migrant and urban poor (RIMUP) women's human rights by increasing the capacity of RIMUP women in Central Asia to author evidence-based community research and be vocal and effective policy advocates for human rights and development justice.

Specific objectives

- Develop the capacity of RIMUP women and their 8– 10 organisations to research and document evidence for use in engaging decision-making processes on women's rights at local, national, regional and international levels;
- Foster knowledge and resources on violation of women migrants' human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels;
- Establish strategic advocacy plans and opportunities to share evidence-based results and support women's own positions and solutions for policy change at national, regional and international levels; and
- Strengthen institutional development of partner organisation through leadership development and movement building.

Participants

- Eight to ten RIMUP women's organisations of Central Asia.
- Two representative from each organization will form a team to conduct FPAR on evidence-based advocacy using the skill they learn from the regional trainings.
- The team should consist of one young woman researcher and one mentor – one of them must be from the RIMUP community involved in the research - from the same organisation or APWLD member organisation. One of team members should have spoken and written abilities in Russian and English languages.
- Organisation participants should have experience in organisational work and advocacy for women's rights and commitment to women's movement.

Programme activities

A. 1st Regional Feminist Participatory Action Research Training

Methodology and approach

Through the 1st sub-regional training, participants will gain skills and knowledge on the framework of human rights and RIMUP women's rights, feminist analysis of law, feminist development justice and feminist participatory action research. The training particularly encourages young women researcher to build their leadership and foster a generation of women rights advocates. The training will use a simple, clear and participatory methodologies, to ensure that participants to be comfortable in new concepts and issues.

Expected outputs

- Participants understand about the objective, approach, and timeframe of Feminist Participatory Action Research for RIMUP women's human rights 2019-2021;
- Training participants gain skills and capacity on the key concepts on framework feminist participatory approach, human rights based approach, international human rights and RIMUP rights framework, feminist analysis of law, and Development Justice;
- Participating organisations have a more detailed research plans for research in their respective communities;
- Training participants gain skills and capacity on the tools of Theory of Change, Power Mapping and Critical Pathway to be used together with the community to plan the research and the impact objectives.

B. Pre-research consultation with communities

After the 1st sub-regional training workshop, appointed young women researchers will go to their constituency for consultation. All FPAR projects should start with consultation at their community before the research has been designed and commences. There may need to be a series of consultations with various stakeholders. FPAR almost always includes consultations with women in women-only space 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.

The objectives of pre-research community consultations should include:

- Gaining the support, collaboration and ownership of the community / stakeholders;
- Forming a research team with researchers from the constituency;
- Identifying the problem to be the focus of the research;
- Designing methods for the research, questions and objectives;
- Developing advocacy plans for long term change (ongoing throughout research process).

Based on the consultations, the young women researchers are expected to prepare the draft Research Design and submit to APWLD.

C. 2nd Regional Training on FPAR Framework and Methodology

Young women researchers will present the Research Design and advocacy plan formulated together with the women in communities, and will gain inputs from facilitators and other participants. This training will provide skill building and capacity on the framework and methodology on Feminist Participatory Action Research, data analysis and reporting. The training will also build the skill on participatory monitoring and evaluation with the community.

Expected outputs

- Participants gain their capacity on feminism and feminist framework – as a core concept to practise and analyse the research in their respective community.
- Training participants gain skills and capacity on the framework and methodology on feminist participatory action research – including research designs, methods to gather data and participatory data analysis, as well as feminist analysis
- Participants able to self-reflect and refine their evidence-based advocacy plans and strategy, in particular to work with the community to advocates their rights on access to and control over natural resources, decent work and living wage, peace and security and women’s voice and democratic participation in development agenda.

D. Field Research with the Community

After the 2nd sub-regional training, appointed young women research coordinator will work with women in the community to gather data/information needed for their advocacy, conduct participatory data analysis as well as conduct capacity building and women organising works in relation with their thematic focus.

At the end of this stage, a zero draft of country research report with preliminary findings and analysis need to be submitted before the 3rd regional training on advocacy and ways forwards.

E. 3rd Regional Training on Advocacy and Ways Forward

The 3rd sub-regional training will be a mutual learning process where participants’ can share their understanding and experiences on qualitative data analysing, identifying the gaps and challenges, and further improving their research report. The training will reflect the impact of the research, starting from the personal, organisational, and community level. The reflection will discuss on the success stories, best practices, the lesson learnt, the threat and challenges and ways to address these challenges.

Furthermore, the 3rd training will an important venue to discuss the ways forward, including advocacy and campaign strategy, be it in local, national, regional and international level; and also identifying ways to work together sustainably – cross issues, cross countries – to strengthen feminist and migrants movement building in the region.

Expected outputs

- Participants able to share their experience on their research, analysing the data, identifying the challenges and ways to address the challenges.
- Participants are able to identify the gaps in their research report and gain concrete recommendations for the improvement of their research report.
- Participants are able to refine their evidence-based advocacy plans and strategy, in particular to work with the community to advocates their rights in the local and national level; and also have a concrete plan with APWLD for advocacy in the regional and international level.

F. Research Reporting

The team will conduct research on their specific focus. Based on the activities conducted,, the team will make an interim narrative and financial report and submit to APWLD for review by June 2020.

The final country report will need to be submitted by October 2020. The country report can be written in any language but English version is expected to be sent to the APWLD secretariat. Guidelines for the final country research report will be discussed and finalised at the training.

The final programme narrative and financial report along with financial receipts will need to be submitted by December 2019.

G. Advocacy Phase (Additional Sub-Grant)

APWLD will also provide modest amount of additional sub-grants to Central Asia FPAR partner organisations that submit advocacy proposal. The 6-months advocacy period will focus on their advocacy work in local and national level, while APWLD will continuously support advocacy opportunities in regional and international forum.

The final narrative and financial report along with financial receipts will need to be submitted by September 2021

H. 4th Regional Meeting on FPAR: From Personal to Structural Change

This meeting will provide a chance for young women researchers and mentors, to showcase their research and advocacy result, and also to reflect, self-assess, evaluate and appreciate our journey of FPAR, documenting the changes they have experienced and seen, be it in the personal, organisational, community or structural level.

Expected Outputs

- Participants are able to self-reflect on the impact of the research, be it in the personal, organisational, community level.
- Participants able to share their progress of implementing their evidence-based advocacy plans and strategy in the local, regional and international

Timeline and process

Call for applications	May- June 2019
Selection process	June 2019
Agreements with selected partners:	July - August 2019
1 st Sub-regional Training:	September 2019
2 nd Sub--regional Training:	December 2019
3rd Sub-regional Training	July 2020
Finalisation of reports:	October 2020
Advocacy Phase	December 2019 - July 2021

Evaluation Meeting	September 2021
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