



## **Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development**

NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

### **Asia and the Pacific Regional FEMINIST LEGAL THEORY & PRACTICE (FLTP)**

**July 2025**

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) is the leading network of feminist organisations and individual activists in Asia and the Pacific. Our over 300 members represent groups of diverse women from 31 countries and territories across the region. Over 35 years, APWLD has been empowering women to use law as an instrument of change for equality, justice, peace and development. For more information please check [www.apwld.org](http://www.apwld.org)

#### **Feminist Legal Theory and Practice**

Feminist Legal Theory and Practice (FLTP) is an APWLD training initiative which is designed to foster feminist analysis, strengthen human rights foundations and employ legal strategies to protect and promote women's human rights. This training incorporates participatory methodologies that effectively challenge structural and systemic barriers hindering women's human rights. A key feature of FLTP is its reliance on the lived experiences and perspectives of diverse groups, including rural, indigenous, migrant and urban poor women, as well as Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) within the APWLD network and across Asia and the Pacific region. This approach ensures that the training remains relevant, dynamic and grounded in women's everyday realities.

As APWLD's longest-running training since 1994, FLTP evolved from the earlier 'Beyond Law' programme and is now one of the central components of the Feminist Law and Practice (FLP) programme. Rooted in the founding members' vision of using law as a transformative tool for equality, justice, peace and development, the FLTP training seeks to cultivate a network of legal activists, lawyers, policymakers and practitioners dedicated to advancing women's human rights through legal mechanisms and processes. Over the years, APWLD, through the FLP programme, has consistently organised and facilitated FLTP sessions at regional, sub-regional and national levels. This multi-tiered approach ensures the sustainability of a well-equipped resource pool capable of addressing emerging challenges in women's human rights. In recent years, FLTP graduates have demonstrated remarkable commitment and courage in utilising legal frameworks to uphold and enforce international human rights standards, showcasing the training's lasting impact on legal activism.

#### **Asia and the Pacific Regional FLTP: Context**

APWLD is going to organise the Asia and the Pacific regional FLTP training in (Venue to be decided) July 2025 targeting young lawyers, attorneys, activists, human rights advocates and Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) across the region. Most of the countries in the Asia and the Pacific region are committed to international human rights obligations and have ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) among others. Most of the Asia and the Pacific



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countries have included these conventions into their national laws to protect women's human rights and promote gender equality but the reality and implementation mechanisms at the ground level projects the picture differently.

Globalisation, while often celebrated for its economic and technological benefits, has had contradictory consequences for women across Asia and the Pacific region. For instance, global economic integration has not translated into gender parity in labour participation or agency or ownership of resources. According to the Labour Force Survey 2022, women in Bangladesh spend eight times more hours on unpaid care work compared to men and comprise only 42% of the labour force, with merely 13% owning land.<sup>1</sup> South Korea, despite its technological advancement, has one of the highest gender pay gaps globally, highlighting the persistent undervaluation of women's labour.<sup>2</sup> In Uzbekistan, young women face higher unemployment rates and wage gender gaps are significant, with women earning 34% less than men, exceeding the global average of 20%.<sup>3</sup> The promise of digital globalisation is also overshadowed by expanding state surveillance under the guise of security. India's [Personal Data Protection Law \(2023\)](#) and the amended Information Technology Rules have enabled unchecked governmental control over online spaces, directly affecting women's freedom of expression and right to privacy. As globalisation reinforces state power through digital authoritarianism, it simultaneously marginalises women by sustaining exploitative economic structures and shrinking civic spaces.<sup>4</sup>

Environmental degradation and climate induced crises, often exacerbated by global industrial practices and trade policies have disproportionately impacted women's livelihoods. In Nepal, over 200 people were killed during flash floods in 2024 which was intensified by climate change.<sup>5</sup> In Pakistan, the economic fallout from such disasters has led to a spike in forced child marriages, as families adopted harmful coping mechanisms to deal with economic insecurities.<sup>6</sup> The unequal global distribution of environmental risk and the burden of adaptation falls disproportionately on women, particularly in regions where gender roles are rigidly prescribed. In the Pacific Islands, the threat of complete submersion due to rising sea levels, as in the case of Tuvalu, presents existential challenges. Yet, women remain largely excluded from decision-making processes in climate governance, as data shows that only 11% of parliamentary seats in Fiji were held by women in 2023.<sup>7</sup> These gendered consequences of globalisation demonstrate how macroeconomic and environmental processes, driven by global capital and governance systems, are deeply entangled with local gender injustices.

Militarism continues to be a defining force in the political landscape of many Asia-Pacific states, intensifying the risks faced by women in both conflict and peacetime settings. In Myanmar, the resurgence of armed conflict has led to an increase in sexual violence, not only by state military

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.undp.org/bangladesh/blog/over-99-percent-bangladeshis-hold-least-one-bias-against-women>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/biz/2024/05/602\\_370268.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/biz/2024/05/602_370268.html)

<sup>3</sup><https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099052824010093257/pdf/P1756961bcc2a50811a9d21c373fd390418.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/india#4ebb48>

<sup>5</sup>[https://x.com/jagan\\_chapagain/status/1839983444052594853](https://x.com/jagan_chapagain/status/1839983444052594853)

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/environment/article/2024/09/01/forced-marriages-on-the-rise-in-pakistan-due-to-climate-change\\_6724203\\_114](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/environment/article/2024/09/01/forced-marriages-on-the-rise-in-pakistan-due-to-climate-change_6724203_114)

<sup>7</sup>[https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?end=2023&locations=FJ&start=1997&view=chart&year\\_high\\_desc=true](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?end=2023&locations=FJ&start=1997&view=chart&year_high_desc=true)



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actors but increasingly by resistance groups as well.<sup>8</sup> Such patterns of violence are deeply rooted in militarised masculinity, where women's bodies become battlegrounds in both symbolic and literal terms. Military regimes frequently normalise gender-based violence as a strategy of control, discouraging legal recourse and emboldening perpetrators. In Central Asia, state complicity and negligence are evident in the lack of accountability for femicide and domestic violence. In Kyrgyzstan, 75% of femicides were committed by individuals known to the victim, often in contexts where the state has failed to provide meaningful protection or justice.<sup>9</sup>

Another phenomenon is state autocracy which is often facilitated by militaristic governance, extending beyond war zones into the everyday policing of civil society. Mongolia, for example, has witnessed the criminalisation of women environmental rights defenders, as seen in the case of those protesting the Erdeneburen hydropower plant.<sup>10</sup> The use of legal systems to punish dissent is a hallmark of autocratic states, where laws intended for national security are manipulated to silence women's voices. The international context further intensifies these local challenges. With the Trump's government's decision to freeze 90% of their [International Development's foreign aid](#) contracts and \$60 billion in overall assistance globally hit the international development ecosystem hard and civil society organisations in these autocratic contexts have been severely weakened. This not only limits the ability of women's groups to respond to immediate threats but also undermines long-term movement building and advocacy efforts.

In East and Central Asia, the convergence of authoritarianism and patriarchy has manifested in shrinking democratic spaces and systemic violence against women. In China and Hong Kong, women's rights defenders are increasingly criminalised under national security frameworks, with repression extending to basic forms of dissent such as slogans, posters or peaceful assemblies.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in Central Asia, deep-rooted patriarchal traditions contribute to widespread femicide and domestic violence. Kyrgyzstan reports that 75% of women murdered in 2024 were killed by someone they knew, often intimate partners or relatives.<sup>12</sup> Despite the adoption of legal frameworks, such as Tajikistan's Law on the Prevention of Violence in the Family, impunity persists due to a lack of victim-centred approaches and prosecutorial will.<sup>13</sup>

Patriarchy remains a pervasive structural force underpinning all other forms of women's oppression across the region. Deeply embedded societal norms dictate gender roles, limit mobility, and reduce access to opportunities for women and girls. Across Southeast Asia, traditional expectations define women's primary role within the home, leading to systemic underrepresentation in decision making roles. These disparities are further imposed by unpaid care responsibilities that disproportionately fall on women, hindering their economic independence and reinforcing cycles of poverty. Patriarchy also manifests in political and

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/07/un-womens-rights-committee-urges-action-end-gender-based-violence-against-women>

<sup>9</sup><https://cabar.asia/en/the-women-keep-being-killed-why-does-kyrgyzstan-not-recognize-femicide-at-the-legislative-level>

<sup>10</sup><https://rightsinddevelopment.org/news/joint-letter-mongolia-sukhgerel-dugersuren/>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/28/china-passes-law-imposing-security-controls-on-foreign-ngos>

<sup>12</sup><https://cabar.asia/en/the-women-keep-being-killed-why-does-kyrgyzstan-not-recognize-femicide-at-the-legislative-level>

<sup>13</sup><https://iphonline.org/articles/un-experts-examine-tajikistans-womens-rights-record>



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institutional structures, where women remain chronically underrepresented. In Central Asia, countries like Kazakhstan have seen fluctuating female parliamentary participation, peaking at 27.4% in 2022 but falling to 19.4% in 2023. This inconsistency reflects not just electoral dynamics, but a broader cultural resistance to female leadership. In Thailand, the underrepresentation of women in elected office, judiciary, and law enforcement underscores how structural barriers limit women's agency in decision-making roles. Indigenous and ethnic minority women are particularly marginalised, with limited consultation or inclusion in projects affecting their communities and land.<sup>14</sup> These exclusions are symptomatic of a patriarchal system that systematically devalues women's knowledge, experiences, and leadership, reinforcing the cycle of gender-based oppression across socio-political domains.

It is crucial to continue amplifying marginalised voices and expressing solidarity while holding states accountable for violating rights. Women human rights defenders must use feminist legal strategies to reclaim their spaces and challenge restrictions on freedoms. The FLTP will not only provide opportunity to the participants for building capacity but also a space for sharing the ongoing situations, cases and stories of the WHRDs who are faced with different legal threats and challenges. Attending the FLTP training will broaden paths for building strong networks, alliances and support groups amongst the participants which are vital for mobilisation and movement building.

### Objectives

The main objectives for having the Asia and the Pacific Regional FLTP are as follows:

- To develop greater understanding of gender, gender based discrimination, feminist theories, intersectionality, equity and equality, law and international human rights mechanisms;
- To enable participants to share their experiences of feminist legal advocacy and feminist legal strategies;
- To identify and address the limitations and challenges encountered by women's rights advocates in their use of legal strategies to address women's rights issues;
- To enhance the capability of participants to effectively challenge discriminatory laws and practices in their countries by feminist, rights-based legal practice and by applying international conventions and precedents for advancement of women's human rights;
- To bring WHRDs and women rights activists to the Regional level feminist movement and build a network of feminist legal practitioners and activists;
- To create a pool of regional FLTP graduates (FLTP Grads) who will use the FLTP framework as part of the movement to support substantive legal change that uphold women's human rights.

The training will be for 5 days focusing on the following themes: analysis of women's lives and realities; feminism and women's movement; structural and systemic forces of oppression (globalisation, fundamentalisms, militarisation and patriarchy); feminist analysis of the Law,

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<sup>14</sup><https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/wgdawg/statements/2024-12-13-eom-thailand-wgdawg-en.pdf>



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women human rights and developments in international law and feminist legal strategies and approaches for supporting women human rights defenders.

### **People can apply based on the following criteria:**

- Training is open to women in all their diversity, and we prioritise women from the most marginalised constituencies and countries
- APWLD members as well as non-members from Asia and the Pacific region.
- Judges, lawyers, young feminists and activists, prosecutors, case workers, academics, media persons, women human rights defenders, writers, researchers, activists and development workers from grassroots who engage with law or use law for women's human rights and social justice and support feminist values.

### **Participants will be selected based on the following considerations:**

- Balance in representations of Asia and the Pacific countries and sub-regions;
- Balance in sectoral areas of work;
- Combination of judges, lawyers, young feminists and activists, paralegals, case workers, para-legal volunteers, prosecutors and academics engaging with the law for women's human rights and social justice;
- Preference would be given to Women Human Rights Defenders in all diversities, specially young WHRDs below the age of 35;
- Preference given to individuals with institutional/organisational affiliations and/or recommendations from APWLD networks;
- The participant group size will be limited to maximum number of 20;
- The main language of communications and instructions during the training will be English; therefore level of proficiency in English is required.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System**

APWLD recognises a key contribution of FLTP training is building the capacity of women's rights organisations and advocates to challenge discriminatory laws, policies and practices. Programme planning and implementation is guided by APWLD'S Theory of Change captured in the following domains of change: a) capacity building; b) creation of new knowledge, tools and resources; c) changes in law and policy and d) movement building for structural change.

Through the years the FLTP has developed M-E-L tools and methodologies to measure FLTP as a capacity building programme:

- Pre-test and Training Needs Assessment (TNA). This is distributed at the beginning of the training. The tool comes in two parts:
  1. the pre-test that has been designed for participants to share their self-assessment of their knowledge and skills on different aspects of the training and
  2. TNA where some questions are added in order to ask participants of the particular learning areas that they would like to focus on in the training. Outcomes of the training needs are discussed with the participants in terms of what can be accommodated and how this can be achieved.



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- Post-test and Evaluation. This is distributed at the end of the training. The tool comes in two parts: the post test that has been designed for the participants to assess their knowledge and skills after the training, (2) the evaluation where the participants are asked of their significant/new knowledge and/or learnings after the training and their recommendations for improving the training.
- Personal action plan. At the last session of the FLTP training, participants are required to develop a personal action plan that describes how they plan to apply and implement FLTP framework to their future work. This becomes a connecting point for APWLD Secretariat and participants to seek ways for collaborative work or support to achieve personal action plans.