Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

CONCEPT NOTE
NATIONAL FEMINIST LEGAL THEORY & PRACTICE (FLTP)
2026

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.

Feminist Legal Theory and Practice

Feminist Legal Theory and Practice or FLTP, is an APWLD training which promotes the application of feminist analysis, a deeper grounding in human rights and the use of the law or legal strategies to uphold women's human rights. Participatory methodologies and approaches are carefully integrated into the training and effectively challenge systemic and structural barriers to women's human rights. As such the FLTP draws on the experiences and perspectives of women from rural, indigenous, migrant, urban poor women groups and Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in the APWLD network and those they work within the Asia-Pacific region, to make it rich and dynamic.

For APWLD, the FLTP training has been the longest standing training since 1994. It evolved from APWLD's earlier 'Beyond Law' training programme, now running as a core capacity building activity under the Feminist Law and Practice (FLP) programme. Inspired by the radically progressive resolution of our founding members to use law as a tool to achieve equality, human rights, peace, development and justice, APWLD has implemented the training with the purpose to build a community of legal activists, lawyers, policy makers and implementers who are committed to advancing women's human rights through law. Throughout the years, the FLP programme has organised and facilitated FLTP training in regional, sub-regional and national levels, as it is also important to maintain an active and up-to-date regional, sub-regional and national resource pool through the FLTP Training. FLTP graduates in the last few years demonstrated the bold use of law as a tool to uphold international standards of women's human rights.

Women's Human Rights in Asia and the Pacific

Across Asia and the Pacific, women's rights continue to be shaped by the convergence of authoritarian governance, shrinking civic space, and structural patriarchal norms that undermine equality and justice. Many governments increasingly rely on broad national security laws and digital surveillance measures that restrict civil liberties and criminalise dissent, placing women human rights defenders at particular risk. These political constraints intersect with widespread gender-based violence, discriminatory judicial cultures, and weak implementation of protective laws, producing environments where survivors face barriers to reporting, lack of access to justice, and systemic impunity.

Economic inequality remains a defining feature of the region, with neoliberal development policies, resource extraction, and globalised labour markets intensifying women's precarity. Women are overrepresented in informal, low-wage and insecure work, while also carrying the disproportionate burden of unpaid care that limits economic mobility and political participation. Rural, indigenous, and migrant women face compounded marginalisation, particularly in contexts where discriminatory family, personal status and customary laws restrict rights to land, inheritance, mobility and bodily autonomy. These structural inequalities are further amplified by environmental and climate crises, which heighten food insecurity, displacement, and threats against women environmental defenders resisting harmful development projects.

The rapid expansion of digital spaces has introduced new forms of inequality and violence, including online harassment, cyber-surveillance, and technology-facilitated abuse that target women, LGBTQI+ communities, journalists and young feminists. These digital threats reinforce traditional patriarchal constraints and limit women's safe engagement in public discourse. Combined with political repression, economic marginalisation, and environmental pressures, these dynamics reveal a multi-layered rights crisis in the region—one that requires stronger feminist legal analysis, coordinated national advocacy, and sustained movement-building. The 2026 National FLTP will respond to this urgent need by equipping women leaders and WHRDs with the tools to analyse discriminatory laws with feminist frameworks, challenge systemic injustices, and advance substantive equality within their national contexts.

Despite the grim reality of human rights and democracy at various levels, women and social movements in the region relentlessly challenge systemic and structural barriers to this through litigation, documentation and witnessing. In the face of this ongoing struggle, support for the women's movement, by way of capacity and knowledge building and strategising grounded in feminism, strategic use of the law, human rights and Development Justice is imperative.

National Feminist Legal Theory and Practice

APWLD, as a regional network, has acknowledged our mandate to organise the regional level of FLTP. However, throughout the years, there have also been our national and local members replicating the FLTP process and organising such training at the national and local levels through APWLD sub-grants. National modules were developed to respond to the needs of the members and considering national contexts such as those undertaken across Asia and the Pacific. For the Malaysia National FLTP (2010) sessions on the Shariah Law were included; while the Burma National FLTP (2013) incorporated case studies of actual cases on land grabbing, militarisation and extractive industries and scenarios that happened in the country. From 2013-2015, APWLD had an opportunity to hold National FLTPs with partner organisations in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Timor Leste, Thailand and Vietnam. This resulted in a strengthened capacity in feminist analysis and strategising sensitive to the needs of women at the national and/or local level.

In 2019, National FLTP was conducted in four countries through five partner organisations in Bangladesh, Malaysia, the Philippines and Pakistan. One of the most valuable contributions of the National FLTP trainings has been the provision of a platform for discussing, analysing, and drafting specific legislation: (1)In the Philippines, for instance, the national FLTP provided the opportunity for the participants to review the draft bill on the Protection of the Rights of Human Rights Defenders, and yielded a concrete recommendation that was taken up by legislators; (2) Similarly

in Malaysia, the training allowed for the participants to write an amicus brief for the Sisters in Islam (SIS) fatwa case; (3) In Pakistan, the network built amongst the participants of the national FLTP have been particularly impactful as it facilitated the mobilisation of various organisations in the AURAT March Movement; (4) In Bangladesh, the discussion on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) has been particularly impactful as it allowed participants who previously had difficulty in understanding the topic to build solidarity with transgender participants.

Throughout the years, the impact and importance of National-level FLTP training has been very prominent. Especially during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic when the capacity building opportunities were immensely hindered due to limited human resources, shrinking spaces, travel and other restrictions. In 2021, 7 National FLTPs were conducted in 6 countries (Bangladesh, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Nepal and Thailand) across Asia and the Pacific. It was also the first time that FLTP trainings were conducted using online platforms. The National FLTP participants from Indonesia along with other women's human rights organisations submitted a policy brief in support of the Sexual Harassment Elimination Bill and later in April 2024, the bill was passed into a law in Indonesia, where sections suggested in the policy brief were included.

The National FLTP trainings will not only provide an opportunity to the participants for capacity building but will also create space for sharing the ongoing situations, cases and stories of the WHRDs who are faced with different legal threats and challenges. Also, it is evident from previous national FLTP trainings that strong networks, alliances and support groups established amongst the participants during the training are vital for mobilisation and movement building at the national level.

OBJECTIVES OF NATIONAL FLTP 2026

APWLD will provide a small sub-grant support (US$8,000-10,000 per organisation) to 4-5 organisations to carry out the national FLTP training. Each partner organisation is expected to organise a national FLTP training within the period of May - October 2026, and collectively share the learnings and new strategies in November 2026. APWLD will provide a module for designing the national FLTP training and help national partners reach out to the FLTP trainers as well.

The national-level FLTP Trainings have the following objectives:

- To build the capacity to identify, analyse and scrutinise the discriminatory national laws and policies from a feminist and women's human rights perspectives among the 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;
- To develop feminist legal knowledge tools and strategies to support women's human rights defenders at the national level;
- To map out possible advocacy and national campaigns to challenge discriminatory laws and policies; and advance women's human rights and Development Justice in the country;
- To build a strong supportive network and movement of feminist legal practitioners and activists within the country.

SELECTION CRITERIA OF NATIONAL PARTNERS

APWLD is seeking to work with like-minded national partners from different countries within the

Asia and the Pacific region with the following background:

- Work for the realisation of women's human rights at community and national levels;
- Have a strong commitment to the promotion of women's human rights, particularly young, rural, indigenous, migrant, urban poor women and/or women in other marginalised or minority groups;
- Have strong networks and affiliations with feminist lawyers, activists, judiciary and the legal community in their countries;
- Organisational staff/members have attended FLTP training before and have ideas about the feminist legal strategies and feminist legal frameworks;
- Have experience in launching creative and participatory training and workshops in the areas of feminism, women's human rights or women and the law; and
- Have necessary organisational resources to coordinate and conduct the National FLTPs with support from the APWLD Secretariat.

SCOPE OF WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NATIONAL PARTNERS

National Partners lead in conducting the FLTPs in their countries with the support of the APWLD secretariat from April to October 2026. As the lead partners in this endeavor they will be asked to be responsible for the following:

- Lead, coordinate and organise for the successful conduct of the National FLTP.
- Provide the APWLD secretariat and resource persons the current context of women and law in their country to facilitate module development and ensure that the National FLTP is guided by the broader framework of the Feminist Legal Theory and Practice.
- Design their own selection criteria and process in consultation with the APWLD secretariat.
- Convene the trainers and work with them in the training design, implementation and evaluation of the National FLTP.
- The final narrative report and the financial report along with all necessary annexes should be submitted by the end of October 2026.
- Attend and contribute to collaborative monitoring, evaluation and learning meetings organised by APWLD in November 2026.

SUB-GRANTS OPPORTUNITIES AND POST TRAINING SUPPORT

National FLTP partners who successfully design and implement the National Feminist Legal Theory and Practice (FLTP) training will be eligible to apply for small sub-grants from APWLD to support follow-up actions. These sub-grants aim to enable partners to translate the learning, analysis and action plans developed during the FLTP into concrete feminist legal and advocacy initiatives at the national or local level. The sub-grant mechanism is designed to strengthen sustainability, encourage collective action and ensure that the FLTP leads to tangible outcomes that advance women's human rights.

Examples of activities that may be supported through sub-grants include strategic litigation or legal research on discriminatory laws; development of policy briefs or legislative advocacy campaigns; community-based legal education or feminist popular education initiatives; advocacy addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence; protection and safety initiatives for women human

rights defenders and coalition-building efforts that strengthen national feminist movements. Through this integrated approach, APWLD seeks to ensure that National FLTPs serve as a platform for sustained feminist legal action and transformative change.

Eligibility for sub-grants will be extended to national FLTP partner organisations and to be considered, proposed activities must demonstrate a clear feminist legal analysis, respond to a priority women's rights issue identified during the FLTP and align with APWLD's vision, values and programmatic priorities, including Development Justice and the protection of women human rights defenders. Initiatives should also show potential for collaboration, movement-building and longer-term impact beyond the immediate funding period.

The sub-grant application process will be simple and accessible. Eligible partners will be invited to submit a brief concept note outlining the issue to be addressed, the proposed strategy, timeline, main objectives, expected outcomes and a basic budget. APWLD will review submissions based on relevance, feasibility, feminist grounding and alignment with organisational priorities. In addition to financial support, selected initiatives may receive technical assistance, mentoring from FLTP trainers or APWLD staff (if requested) and opportunities to connect with regional networks to strengthen impact and learning.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

MONTH	ACTIVITY
April 2026	**Signing of Agreement and Transfer of the First Tranche**
May - June 2026	**Preparations/Call for Applications/Selection for the National FLTP Trainings by the National Partners**
July - September 2026	**Conducting the National FLTP Trainings by the National FLTP Partners**
October 2026	**Submission of the Final Narrative and Financial Reports**