



UNIVERSALISING GENDER EQUALITY NORMS

**CEDAW's critical role in protecting
women's SOGIESC rights**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTION WATCH ASIA PACIFIC



Universalising Gender Equality Norms: CEDAW's critical role in protecting women's SOGIESC rights

A white paper by IWRAP Asia Pacific¹

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the landscape of women's human rights—including its violations and feminist advocacy—has changed drastically. Although the issues pertaining to women's civil, political, social, economic, sexual and reproductive rights (among others) remain the same, they have been compounded by forces both within and outside of the feminist movement which seek to fracture it into silos. Patterns observed mainly point towards the encroachment of exclusionary 'feminist' thinking into intersectional feminist conceptualisations and understanding of women's rights. Primarily, issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC), and advocacy for their recognition as women's rights issues, have become sites of contention in advocacy spaces.

Trans-exclusionary narratives, often referred to as trans-exclusionary radical 'feminism' (TERF) comprise one of the main ideologies which have co-opted the feminist movement and its language in an attempt to arbitrarily draw borders around women's rights based on cisheteropatriarchal and binary understandings of gender and sex.

Arguably the most worrying manifestation of this discrimination is the growing anti-gender movement which is gaining popularity in human rights discourse and setting its sights on women's human rights spaces. Stemming from the rise of right-wing and anti-rights actors co-opting human rights spaces at national, regional and international levels, the anti-gender movement peddles the false narrative known as 'gender ideology'.

The Association of Women in Development (AWID) has conducted extensive research and monitoring of anti-gender trends globally, and defines '*gender ideology*' as:

A tool to defend dogmas related to sexuality and gender and to oppose the advances made in the United Nations conferences of the 1990s. The reaction was particularly to the Cairo and Beijing conferences, where crucial advances in sexual and reproductive rights were achieved and gender was first placed on the global human rights agenda ... The crux of the 'gender ideology' narrative is that radical LGBT and feminist activists are conspiring to impose a worldview that subverts the natural, moral, and social order. In this discourse, the very notion of gender – as something socially constructed rather than something biologically determined by sex – is presented as a threat to society. (AWID,

¹ This white paper was developed by Pravind Premnath, Communications Officer, and Vashti Rebong, Programme Officer with substantive input and support provided by Audrey Lee, Senior Programme Manager, and; Nine, Programme Manager.

2021, '[Rights at Risk 2nd Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends \(OURs\) Report](#)')²

Meanwhile, the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy maps *gender ideology* as follows:

The concept of a 'gender ideology' developed by The Vatican, Catholic scholars, and activists in the 1990s, and disseminated and entrenched into mainstream discourse since then, is helpful to understand how actors with such diverse ideological positions, backgrounds, and goals can converge under a common umbrella. 'Gender ideology' refers to a set of notions revolving around the idea of radical 'gender feminists' and the homosexual agenda advancing an idea that dismisses the natural order of things (i.e., the natural hierarchy of men and women, for instance), which in pushing for individual identity over social expectations undermines the anthropological basis of the family and, therefore, society. This concept provided both a framework for understanding the advances of women's and LGBTIQ rights in international fora and an umbrella term for the anti-gender movement to mobilise around by framing gender as a threat to society. (Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, [Power Over Rights: Understanding and countering the transnational anti-gender movement Volume I](#))³

Although the descriptor 'anti-gender' was only mainstreamed over the past decade, anti-gender movements have long existed and thrived, working off varying degrees of transphobia, homophobia, interphobia (*anti-intersex narratives*), racism, ableism, anti-Indigenous and whorephobia (*anti-sex workers narratives*), among others. These can be traced back to colonial eras during which Global North colonial forces imported their cisheteronormative and patriarchal systems to their occupied territories across the Global South.⁴

The anti-gender movement is growing and gaining momentum at a worrying rate. It has successfully established itself across all regions globally, with Global North countries and their actors taking the lead in its implementation and export to the Global South. AWID's OURs Report maps some of the impacts of the anti-gender movement in Colombia, the African region and the United States of America, while an [article](#) by the European Student Think Tank tracks the movement across Europe. Additionally, the Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE) has published [research](#) on the movement's presence and impacts in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Asia and the Pacific, we see Global North-based anti-gender, and often faith-based, organisations establishing a regional presence in countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Myanmar and Nepal, where they work together with state and non-state actors to take anti-gender advocacy to global spaces such as the UN's UPR and treaty body

² [Chapter 3](#) 'Anti Rights Discourses: Gender Ideology', Paras 1 - 2, Page 55

³ Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy's [Countering Anti-Gender Campaigns](#), '[Power Over Rights: Understanding and countering the transnational anti-gender movement, Vol 1](#)', para 1, page 1.

⁴ [Transphobia is a White Supremacist Legacy of Colonialism](#) (2018) by Michael Paramo.

processes.⁵ For instance, at the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women in 2019, Bahrain and Malaysia, alongside the United States and the Russian Federation, demanded the removal of the word 'gender' in multiple parts of the Agreed Conclusions text.⁶

Anti-gender policies and practices thrive under laws and legal mechanisms which protect sex-based rights instead of gender-based rights. Frameworks drafted with specific mention of **equality between the sexes** are often used to diminish the rights of trans women and others with non-gender-conforming bodies. This is partly due to some state constitutions and human rights mechanisms using the term 'sex' as an identity marker instead of gender. Even the Charter of the United Nations, established in 1945, references "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, **sex**, language, or religion."⁷

The inclusion of sex over gender in early legal and human rights instruments is partially owed to the fact that mainstreaming of gender as an identity separate from sex only emerged in public feminist discourse in the early 1990s. The work of queer and gender theorists such as Judith Butler presented concepts such as 'gender performativity' which contested norms and ideas that gender was static.⁸ Concurrently, the work of Black feminist activist Kimberle Crenshaw in coining the term intersectionality in feminism was a critical paradigm shift from a homogenous concept of women's human rights towards a more nuanced understanding of intersecting identities and their impacts, both positive and negative, on one's access to full human rights.⁹

However, it is crucial to note that the introduction of gender as a specific identity marker does not aim to replace sex. Instead, it offers a more nuanced perspective and an added dimension when understanding the intersecting forms of discrimination women face. Thus, gender- and sex- based discrimination can neither be read alone nor in opposition to each other but must be read in conjunction with each other.

⁵ [Rights at Risk. Time for Action: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2021](#). AWID. Para 4 page 97

⁶ [Rights at Risk. Time for Action: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2021](#). AWID. Para 4 page 127.

⁷ Article 1, para 3, Charter of the United Nations, 1945

⁸ In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990) by Judith Butler, Butler offers this framing of gender performativity: "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (p.xv) and "gender is an 'act,' as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural'" (p.187).

⁹ Kimberle Crenshaw first coined the term 'intersectionality' in 1989 in her paper 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics' which focused on the oppression of African-American women at the intersections of gender and race.

Sinking its claws in: The anti-gender movement in international human rights spaces

The lack of a legally binding human rights convention safeguarding SOGIESC rights beyond binary understandings of gender paints a bigger picture of the lack of rights mechanisms for LGBTQI+ persons worldwide. The most marginalised members of the community, including trans and gender non-conforming persons, are left out of existing human rights frameworks due to the void of consolidated binding guiding principles.

Established in 2006 and 2017, the Yogyakarta Principles and the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 were hailed as a magna carta pioneering SOGIESC rights based on provisions across varying components in international human rights law. The principles cover a range of human rights provisions including extrajudicial executions, violence and torture, access to justice, privacy, non-discrimination, rights to freedom of expression and assembly, employment, health, education, immigration and refugee issues, and public participation. However, a technical flaw of the principles is that it is not a legally binding instrument and hence lacks authority and legal power.

This nature of the Yogyakarta Principles and Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 has also been cited as an excuse to reject SOGI-based rights and their recognition as women's rights.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem, caught the attention of feminists worldwide when she made a submission to the Scottish Parliament in 2022 regarding its Gender Recognition Reform Bill (GRR).¹⁰ This submission repurposed TERF talking points and insisted that the proposed easing of the gender recognition period and bureaucracy would “open the door for violent males who identify as men to abuse the process of acquiring a gender certificate and the rights that are associated with it. This presents potential risks to the safety of women in all their diversity (including women born female, transwomen, and gender non-conforming women) [...] the ongoing efforts to reform existing legislation by Scottish Government do not sufficiently take into consideration the specific needs of women and girls in all their diversity, particularly those at risk of male violence and those who have experienced male violence, as it does not provide for any safeguarding measures to ensure that the procedure is not, as far as can be reasonably assured, abused by sexual predators and other perpetrators of violence”. She justifies her stance by undermining the Yogyakarta Principles, stating that they “advocate for the right to define one's own gender with regards to legal gender recognition. They are however not binding.”¹¹

¹⁰ Passed in December 2022, the new law improves the system by which transgender people can apply for legal recognition through a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). “It simplifies and improves the process for a trans person to obtain a gender recognition certificate – which many currently find intrusive, medicalised and bureaucratic” - Social Justice Secretary Shona Robison. Read more [here](#).

¹¹ Ref.: OL GBR 14/2022. [Information concerning some aspects of the Gender Recognition Reform \(Scotland\) Bill \(GRR\) which is currently before the Scottish Parliament](#). Letter by Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences to Scotland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

IWRAW Asia Pacific joined 17 global feminist organisations in submitting a joint letter¹² to the Scottish Parliament to reaffirm the positive rights-based impacts the Bill would have on trans persons. The letter aimed to challenge the transphobic narratives and misconceptions surrounding the Bill and ensure that the state maintains its position on the right of trans persons to self-determination and self-identification.

The actions of the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW explicitly demonstrate just how deep the anti-gender movement runs, and her submission has been hailed as one of its biggest achievements. But it does not end there.

At the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27), State Parties argued over language in the Draft Conclusion Document which mentioned 'intersecting forms of discrimination' within contexts of climate change, with known anti-gender states taking the lead. This ultimately resulted in the removal of 'intersecting forms of discrimination' from the text. The Women and Gender Constituency observed that "[State parties allowed] any country who is anti-gender or intent on erasing progressive language on human rights and equality to steamroll the process for the sake of an outcome."¹³

We also see instances in which anti-gender actors are actively influencing the initial drafting of human rights conventions. In May 2022, the Human Rights Council's Working Group on the Right to Development¹⁴ removed all references to 'gender identity' and sexual orientation/sexuality' from the Revised Draft Convention.

Ecuador and the Legal Resources Centre suggested adding the words 'sexual orientation' after 'gender'. The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General on Disability and Vulnerability, the National Human Rights Institute of El Salvador, the Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the National Human Rights Commission of Mauritius, recommended adding the words 'gender identity' and 'sexual orientation'/'sexuality'. However, Iran, Qatar, Nigeria, Turkey, Egypt, the Russian Federation, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Holy See, ADF International, CINGOs all oppose the inclusion of the words 'gender' and/or 'sexual orientation' as grounds of discrimination, observing that these are not yet recognized in international human rights treaties.¹⁵

The Expert Drafting Group noted the deeply contested status of these grounds of discrimination in international human rights law, and their current omission from

¹² [Letter from Feminist Organisations to Members of the Scottish Parliament](#) published by CREA on 15 December 2022.

¹³ [No Gender Justice in the Gender Action Plan \(GAP\)](#). Press release by WGC on 11 November 2022.

¹⁴ "The UN Convention on the Right to Development is a multilateral framework currently being negotiated by the UN General Assembly Human Rights Council and drafted by a tasked drafting committee. It stems from the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development, which establishes development as a right and puts people at the centre of the development process" - [Investment Treaty News](#)

¹⁵ Para 2 page 54

international human rights treaties due to the extensive differences among states on these alleged bases of discrimination. Due to the contested nature of these terms and their legal status, they will not be introduced in this Revised Draft Convention to expand the prohibited grounds of discrimination under this provision.¹⁶

With this we see alarming trends of anti-gender actors having not only a seat at negotiation tables but also having some of the loudest voices, successfully influencing the direction, outcomes and narratives of human rights mechanisms. Their very presence in these spaces already constitutes a threat to human rights; their successful advocacy signals the backsliding of international human rights frameworks.

However, we take comfort in the UN's recognition of transnational 'gender ideology' movements as a threat to women's human rights. The UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (WGDAWG)'s [position paper](#) on 'Gender equality and gender backlash' shares that:

Twenty-five years since gender has been recognised as an important tool in combating discrimination against women in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the term is now seriously contested, putting in jeopardy many of the hard-fought gains that women have achieved."¹⁷

The WGDAWG also reiterated that it is committed to challenge the anti-gender movement and its attacks on the rights of women and girls:

WGDAWG considers it important to take stock of these developments, to counter the anti-gender attacks, and to clarify the use of the concept in relation to its mandate. The concept of gender is of a fundamental importance to the WGDAWG as a special procedure mechanism mandated to work on the elimination of discrimination against women and girls.¹⁸

CEDAW and the Treaty Body system's role in respecting, promising and fulfilling women's SOGIESC rights

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has set a global standard for protecting and fulfilling women's human rights for all women. It has been a critical tool for women's rights organisations worldwide to hold their States accountable and demand women's rights. Although CEDAW is built on the foundational principle of gender

¹⁶ Para 2 page 54

¹⁷ Mandate of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls. Gender equality and gender backlash by Ivana Radačić and Alda Facio on behalf of the WGDAWG. Para 1 page 11

¹⁸. Para 2 page 1

equality, the original text of the Convention—reflective of the ethos of its inception period¹⁹—also emphasises sex-based rights:

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term ‘discrimination against women’ shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex - CEDAW, Article 1

Despite its cisheteronormative language on women’s rights, CEDAW has proved to be a valuable tool for marginalised groups of women, especially LBTQI+ women, to advocate for their rights. This is reflected across varying concluding observations which make specific mention of the rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender women and intersex people within the lens of intersecting forms of discrimination. Ulster University’s Transitional Justice Institute’s [workshop report](#) on CEDAW and SOGI collates instances of the Committee’s positive recommendations on the SOGIESC-related rights of women.²⁰

CEDAW’s [General Recommendation No.28](#) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention was a landmark document which made clear that the Convention’s mandate extends to both gender-based and sex-based discrimination against women:

Although the Convention only refers to sex-based discrimination, interpreting article 1 together with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) indicates that the Convention covers gender-based discrimination against women.²¹

States parties shall ensure that there is neither direct nor indirect discrimination against women. Direct discrimination against women constitutes different treatment explicitly based on grounds of sex and gender differences.²²

GR28 was key in aligning the CEDAW framework with an intersectional lens which acknowledges intersecting forms of discriminations impeding women’s full access to their human rights:

Intersectionality is a basic concept for understanding the scope of the general obligations of States parties contained in article 2. The discrimination of women based on sex and gender is inextricably linked with other factors that affect women, such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste and sexual orientation and gender identity.²³

¹⁹ CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979

²⁰ Pages 5 - 7

²¹ Para 5 page 2

²² Para 16 page 2

²³ Para 18 page 4

In more recent times, the Committee has also issued positive recommendations and decisions on the grounds of SOGIESC rights; examples can be seen in its concluding observations for Armenia (2022), Mongolia (2022) and its Optional Protocol decision for Sri Lanka (2018/2022).

Following Armenia's constructive dialogue with the CEDAW Committee, the Committee expressed concerns over the gender-based discrimination faced by trans and intersex women in Armenia and called for the state to:

strengthen its efforts aimed at promoting women's rights and combating discrimination, including with regard to lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.²⁴

Combat gender-based violence and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, including hate speech and physical, verbal and emotional abuse; protect the human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in all areas covered by the Convention; and ensure that transgender persons, including women, can exercise the right to change the gender marker in their passport and other identity documents.²⁵

In the case of Mongolia, the Committee delivered seven recommendations pertaining to the rights of trans women and other marginalised groups. One of the recommendations was:

Enhance awareness among women of their rights under the Convention and the legal remedies available to them to claim violations of such rights and ensure that information on the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations is accessible to all women, including women belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as rural women and women herders, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and women with disabilities.²⁶

As for Sri Lanka, the Committee delivered its decision under article 7 (3) of the Optional Protocol, concerning the case of Rosanna Flamer-Caldera on the criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual activity. The decision explicitly spelt out that the criminalisation of same-sex sexual activity between women, and the stereotypes and prejudices of being a woman, a lesbian, and an activist constitute discrimination against women as defined by the parameters of CEDAW and its framework, and hence breaches Sri Lanka's legally binding state obligations to CEDAW:

In accordance with article 7 (3) of the Optional Protocol, the Committee is of the view that the facts before it reveal a violation of the author's rights under articles 2 (a) and

²⁴ CEDAW Committee's Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Armenia. Para 20 page 6

²⁵ Para 50(a), (b) and (c) page 17

²⁶ CEDAW Committee's [Concluding observations on the tenth periodic report of Mongolia](#). Para 11(b) page 3

(c)–(g) and 5 (a), 7 (c), 15 and 16, read in conjunction with article 1, of the Convention, in the light of general recommendations Nos. 19, 33 and 35.²⁷

Regrettably, anti-gender women’s rights organisations have attempted to hijack CEDAW, falsely claiming it as a sex-based Convention. Anti-gender organisations have structured their advocacy around the literal language of the Convention while choosing to ignore the Committee’s long history of SOGIESC rights-affirming work. This in itself is a misinterpretation of the Convention, as its application is contingent on a holistic understanding of women’s human rights, drawing on all its general recommendations, concluding observations and OP-CEDAW judgements.

Although the Committee has been steadfast in its use of both ‘gender-’ and ‘sex-’ based discrimination in its working language, concerns have been raised over a recent aberration. In the Committee’s concluding observations to Portugal during its State Review at the 82nd CEDAW Session in 2022, the Committee stated:

[The Committee] notes with concern, however, the gradual dilution of the concept of ‘sex’ and its replacement by the concept of ‘gender’ across policies and legislation.²⁸

In just the span of one year, the Committee has made positive strides in SOGIESC- affirming rights, but has also shown early signs of potential regression. It could be argued that this is ultimately a consequence of the lack of a clear articulation of the Committee’s position, which is instead scattered across varying communications.

Although concerning, this sole instance cannot be used to generalise the Committee’s views on SOGIESC rights and cannot be used to brand the Committee as an anti-gender actor. It instead points to the need for continued and determined rights-affirming, intersectional feminist advocacy to challenge anti-gender actors and hold human rights mechanisms, such as CEDAW, accountable to their promise of human rights for all.

Within the broader treaty body system, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), in its [General Comment No. 20](#), expands its definitional framework of ‘non-discrimination’ to recognise discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender stereotypes as a form of discrimination in line with Article 2 of the Convention²⁹:

²⁷ Views adopted by the Committee under article 7 (3) of the Optional Protocol, concerning communication

No. 134/2018 in the case of Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, para 10 page 11.

²⁸ CEDAW Committee’s [Concluding observations on the tenth periodic report of Portugal](#). Para 18, page 6

²⁹ Article 2 of ICESCR states “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

The notion of the prohibited ground 'sex' has evolved considerably to cover not only physiological characteristics but also the social construction of gender stereotypes, prejudices and expected roles³⁰.

"Other status" as recognized in article 2, paragraph 2, includes sexual orientation. States parties should ensure that a person's sexual orientation is not a barrier to realizing Covenant rights, for example, in accessing survivor's pension rights. In addition, gender identity is recognized as among the prohibited grounds of discrimination; for example, persons who are transgender, transsexual or intersex often face serious human rights violations, such as harassment in schools or in the workplace³¹.

Predating the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights's (CESCR) GR 20, [General Comment No. 16](#) can be viewed as a precursor to a shared understanding of intersecting discriminations and their adverse impact on gender equality:

Many women experience distinct forms of discrimination due to the intersection of sex with such factors as race, colour, language, religion, political and other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status, such as age, ethnicity, disability, marital, refugee or migrant status, resulting in compounded disadvantage³².

A similar extrapolation of discrimination against women is also found in the Human Rights Committee's (HRC) [General Comment No. 28](#) on equality of rights between men and women which extends the scope of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights's (ICCPR) Article 3:

Discrimination against women is often intertwined with discrimination on other grounds such as race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. States parties should address the ways in which any instances of discrimination on other grounds affect women in a particular way, and include information on the measures taken to counter these effects³³.

Although both general comments 16 and 28 of the ICESCR and ICCPR respectively lack specific mention of sexual orientation and gender identity, it establishes a nuanced understanding of intersectional discrimination which can guide women's rights advocacy to a more gender- and trans-inclusive conceptualisation of substantive equality.

Taking CEDAW's GR 28 (amongst others), ICESCR's General Comments 16 and 28, and ICCPR's General Comment 28, it is evident that sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC) is a protected category under international human rights and treaty body law. Attempts to interpret the scope of treaty body law, through

³⁰ Para 20, page 6.

³¹ Para 32, page 10.

³² Para 4, page 2.

³³ Para 30, page 7.

literal interpretation of language, as a sex-based rights framework, is in fact a misinterpretation and thus, null.

IWRAW Asia Pacific's role in challenging anti-gender capture in CEDAW and other UN Human Rights System

It is within this context that IWRAW Asia Pacific actively recognises the urgency to push back against the anti-gender movement steadily creeping into both rights and decision-making conversations. Our commitment stems from the fact that SOGIESC rights are women's human rights, thus affirming the rights of lesbian women, bisexual women, trans women, intersex women, queer women and gender-non-conforming people in all their diversity. Opposition to this breaches the very foundations of feminism as it is simply anti-rights narratives of transphobia, homophobia, interphobia, and queerphobia operating under the guise of concerns about 'sex-based rights'. Women's rights as defined by intersectional feminism are for *all* women, and any attempt to gatekeep them is a violation of basic human rights principles set out in Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW respectively:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or *other status [emphasis ours]* (UDHR)

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake (CEDAW)

The strategic timing of our stance is an intentional political move to actively reject the anti-gender and gender ideology movement in all its manifestations at the treaty bodies and special procedures in all levels.

We see the need to develop a proactive CEDAW advocacy and outreach programme which places LBTQI+ women at the centre of focused engagement. Although our work on CEDAW engagement already prioritises marginalised groups of women, it is necessary to provide customised support to LBTQI+ women in accessing their rights within the CEDAW framework, as these may not seem as explicit as other rights vested in the Convention.

We envision the co-creation of an advocacy brief and/or shadow report guidelines specifically for LBTQI+ women to promote movement and capacity-building initiatives within their engagement with CEDAW as a useful tool to leverage their rights. This will be done in collaboration with partners within the Forging Intersectional Feminist Futures (FIFF) consortium and other partners, both old and new, across the Global South.

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific is a feminist organisation committed to the full realisation of women's human rights through the pursuit of equality. IWRAW Asia Pacific supports the CEDAW Committee and OHCHR in facilitating participation of women's rights organisations in the CEDAW review process. We adopt an approach based on the universal nature of human rights, focusing particularly on the experience of women and girls from the Global South and recognising the need to eliminate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination at all levels.



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