Women’s Leadership Pathways, Longitudinal Research Project
2017 - 2020

Terms of Reference

June 2017

IWDA gratefully acknowledges support of the WAVE program from the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands through the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) Programme.
Draft Terms of Reference - Women's Leadership Pathways, Longitudinal Research Project 2017 - 2020

Research Project Title
Women’s Leadership Pathways (WLP) – a multi-country longitudinal study across Asia and the Pacific (Australia, Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Cambodia, Myanmar)

Introduction & Background
The Women’s Action for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE) program is funded by the Government of the Netherlands through its Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (FLOW) Program. This Terms of Reference provides an overview of the Women’s Leadership Pathways research project which delivers on a key component of the WAVE Research, Evidence and Learning Framework.

The WAVE program contains a pillar which focuses on research, evidence and learning, and in this the program has developed a Research, Evidence and Learning Framework (RELF) to guide investments in research and evidence across the four themes of the program: individual women, individual CSOs, women’s movements and policy and legal reform.

In the theme of individual women’s leadership, the RELF seeks to build evidence about the role of the program in supporting diverse women’s leadership journeys and to develop greater understanding of the nature of these journeys, through both tracking of women program participants as well as research with individual women leaders. This research responds to these program imperatives.

Leadership Definition
For the WAVE program, Leadership is defined as “a political process of women mobilising people and resources in pursuit of shared and negotiated goals within government, private sector and civil society”. This can include formal leadership positions as well as informal leadership that is not assigned a position but where women lead mobilisation as outlined in the above definition.

Problem Statement
Globally women in leadership face multiple barriers to attaining and retaining leadership roles in political, economic and social spheres. Where women do achieve leadership positions, the nature of these journeys is still not well understood. There is limited information about the nature of women’s journeys in civil and economic spheres, and while the political sphere is comparatively more researched, this is uneven across regions and frequently fails to capture the complexity of individual women’s experiences. There is also a lack of longitudinal data to enable analysis of how individual women’s leadership journeys, in political, economic and social spheres, change over time.

Beyond understanding the nature of the journey, bringing visibility to the experiences of women once they are in leadership roles is also crucial, including the violence and threats of violence which are frequently directed at women in visible positions within societies. Existing evidence indicates that women are specifically targeted for violence as their participation in public life increases. This backlash is designed to control, limit or prevent women’s full and equal participation.

Violence is targeted at individuals but has a meaning beyond the individual’s own experience. It is used to target women across social, political and economic spheres. NDIs work shows that the motive behind the violence is important. In relation to political violence, this can include to intimidate other women who are politically active, to deter women who might consider engaging in politics and to

1 Leftwich (2009), Bringing agency back in: politics and human agency in building institutions and states—synthesis and overview report, research paper 06, Developmental Leadership Program, Canberra.
2 Domingo et al (2015), Women’s voice and leadership in decision making: Assessing the evidence, Report, Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
3 National Democratic Institute, (2016), Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics: Action Plan
4 National Democratic Institute, (2016), Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics: Action Plan
communicate to society that women should not participate in public life. In this way, violence against women in the political sphere has three major impacts, which form a reinforcing cycle:

Longer term analysis of this impact of violence on women’s leadership journeys is crucial to shed light on the nature of this cycle and to examine the strategies which are being developed in response and their effectiveness.

Significance of the Research

Addressing some of the identified gaps in existing research:

Across the existing research, there is coverage of the barriers that women face in attaining leadership positions across economic, social and political spheres. What is less well understood is how women individually navigate into leadership positions despite these barriers and issues. These two areas are gaps in knowledge particularly in the Pacific region. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) report, *Women’s voice and leadership in decision-making: Assessing the evidence* (Domingo et al, April 2015) provides a launching point for understanding the evidence regarding women’s leadership. This report provides an overview of global evidence, but is scant on evidence directly from the WAVE countries. The review also notes that very little research explicitly addresses women’s leadership capabilities in relation to productive and financial resources (p68). A supplementary desk review by IWDA shows that in the Pacific there has been some research into women in political leadership, but less exploration of women’s leadership in other spheres (Tavola).

Research by ODI has identified a number of evidence gaps in relation to the nature of women’s leadership journeys which will inform our approach to research design. These include:

**Women’s Pathways to Leadership**

- What are individual’s skills, competencies, confidences, fears, aspirations?
- How do women navigate time poverty and rigid social norms in leadership?
- How do women work alone or with others in their leadership journeys?

**Political Leadership**

---

3
• How does political negotiation take place and how do women navigate it, including how they navigate informal institutions and norms – at each stage of the political process – seeking candidacy, running for election, and once in office?
• How do women become effectively engaged in peace processes or constitutional reform?
• How do women access the ‘hard’ ministries (such as defence or finance) rather than ‘soft’ and executive branch positions?

Social Leadership
• How does activism lead to leadership?
• How does social leadership lead to other forms of leadership / leadership in different spheres?

Economic Leadership
• What are women’s experiences of economic leadership?
• What impact does women’s leadership have in relation to decisions around productive and financial resources (p68)?
• How do women navigate male-dominated economic spaces?
• How can positions of economic leadership advance women’s economic empowerment?

Inter-relationships
• Is there a level of economic empowerment associated with political leadership?
• Does economic autonomy relate to women political leaders’ ability to champion women’s rights?

The research design will consider how best to contribute to these identified gaps as well as drawing attention to the inter-relationships between different spheres of leadership. For example, the relationship between economic empowerment and political leadership and the extent to which economic autonomy impacts on women political leaders’ ability to champion women’s rights.

In relation to the relationship between violence and women’s leadership journeys, the National Democratic Institute through its campaign #NotTheCost has highlighted the importance of developing indicators and collecting data on prevalence, forms and impact of violence against women in politics in particular\(^5\). The research on violence against women in politics is increasingly compelling but is not generally high on agendas, often seen as normal rather than unacceptable. ODI’s literature review shows that socio-cultural norms, which can be enforced through threats, violence or other exclusion, are the primary constraint on women’s voice and activism (p 56). Research in the Pacific suggests that women in public service are subject to considerable threats of violence. However, while there is an increasing global research on violence and threats against women in politics, there is little research on violence against women in economic leadership positions. Further, while, there is some research on violence against women in social / civic leadership positions this has tended to focus on human rights defenders.

Understanding change over time

This research will also demonstrate the importance of collecting qualitative and quantitative data over time in order to understand the nature, scale and significance of issues impacting on women and gender equality. The longitudinal nature of this study will enable women’s pathways to leadership and their experiences within different facets of leadership to be tracked and monitored over time.

Longitudinal tracking will form the heart of the research. Working with partners, the program will identify a cohort of women across six countries (Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Australia) and return to the same group three times over the course of the research. The emphasis will be on giving voice to these women and the importance of valuing women’s individual experiences and perspectives to extend available knowledge in relation to

\(^5\) ibid
leadership journeys. This will involve using innovative research methods including video diaries, blogs, photography, as well as more traditional key informant interview and focus group methods.

**Contributing to reflective evidence-based practice**

Given IWDA’s focus and the aims of the WAVE program, we are particularly interested in how women’s rights actors can better support individual women. It is proposed that the research will consider how, if at all, development projects can support women with skills, capabilities and confidence to navigate this terrain and how could development projects such as WAVE do this better?

As outlined in the figure below, the research has multiple desired outcomes and audiences in pursuit of this outcome.

**Program Evidence and Learning Objectives**

The Research will inform program implementation through contribution to evidence base and corresponding learning about what is / isn’t working. This will be supported by IWDA and partners in common and complementary ways.

- **IWDA** – supporting IWDA in developing the quality of programs, to engage with partners in dialogue about improvements. Demonstrating IWDA’s value add to the sector, positioning IWDA as a leader in women’s civil and political programs and expertise in leadership pathways, through providing insights into effective program and project responses.

- **Partners** – Supporting partners to engage in dialogue with diverse women to ensure that their programs respond to their needs. Enabling partners to reflect on project quality and contributions to leadership pathways of diverse women and adapt projects accordingly. This will be supported by IWDA as needed.

**Advocacy Objectives**

As findings emerge, these will be used to inform advocacy with relevant stakeholders within individual contexts, in regional and global contexts on the needs and issues of diverse women on leadership pathways. Advocacy may be undertaken by Partners, IWDA, WAVE program, and research participants. It is envisaged that advocacy will engage stakeholders in productive dialogues to challenge negative gender norms that prohibit women’s full participation in leadership spheres, and provide greater support to individual women in leadership pathways. Advocacy will be contextualised and will respect the confidentiality and safety of research participants.

**Engagement with Leadership and Research Discourses**

Through the research, the program expects to engage with leadership and research discourses in ways that will make both more empowering, feminist and appropriate to the needs of diverse women in leadership pathways.

- **Research Discourse** - IWDA can make contributions that demonstrate the value of feminist participatory research as a process which is empowering to participants and local partners at all stages of research (design through to dissemination).

- **Leadership Discourse** – The project seeks to make a genuine contribution to the gaps in understanding individual women’s leadership journeys and pathways in order to contribute to improvements in support to those diverse women, as well as more nuanced understandings of women’s leadership pathways. Individual longitudinal research will provide insights for further research by identifying research gaps and any emerging trends across different country contexts.
Audiences
Desired Outcomes
Sites of Engagement
Key uses
Research

Program Evidence & Learning
For IWDA
For Partners
Partners, IWDA, WAVE, Research Participants
Research Methodology

Data Pool

Advocacy following findings
Engagement with Leadership and Research Discourses

IWDA guides practice with our own programs and with others engaged in leadership programs
Insights into improvements in work, supported by IWDA
Individual women are more supported in leadership roles
Gender norms are challenged
Demonstration of Feminist Research as a valuable process
Individual women are more connected and supported
Governments and others understand the journey for women leaders

Donors, development policy spaces, women's rights actors, universities
Shared with women in their constituencies
Governments, Donors, Civil Society in all contexts
Communities, Governments, Donors, Civil Society in all contexts
Donors, research partners
Participants, partners, civil society
Government, donors, academic and leadership institutes in each context

About the journey for women leaders - Women Leaders in all their diversity are more visible

Partners, IWDA, WAVE, Research Participants

Partners, IWDA, WAVE, Research Participants

Partners, IWDA, WAVE, Research Participants

Partners, IWDA, WAVE, Research Participants
Research Questions
This research will seek to address the gaps outlined above with a focus on two areas:

(a) The nature of individual women’s leadership journeys in economic, social and political spheres over time; and
(b) The experiences on the journey - extent to which violence against women in political, economic and social / civic spheres impacts on these leadership journeys.

As the above discussion of evidence illustrates there is great scope for investigation in relation to individual women’s leadership journey’s. For the purposes of guiding the limits of the research i.e. setting boundaries for what could be included, it is anticipated that the research questions will fall within the broad boundaries of the following questions. The research also has a program evidence co-requirement and should contribute to relevant indicators in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the WAVE program.

Nature of the Journey
- **Description of the journey** - What is the nature of diverse women’s leadership journey in political, economic and social spheres across the research contexts and at different life cycles? i.e. what enabling factors and barriers do they face. What, if any, critical turning points are there in these journeys?

- **Skills cultivated and /or used on the journey** - What skills, in particular political, influence, negotiation skills are developed and used by diverse women in each of these sectors? How are they used? Are there commonalities in development and deployment of these skills sets?

Experiences on the journey
- **How experiences are managed, in particular threats of violence** - What are common experiences within this journey, including in particular experiences of threats of and/or experiences of violence. What resources do women call on to navigate these experiences? What strategies are employed for self-care and resilience / harm minimisation?

- **Support from external actors** - What are the lessons for how women’s rights organisations and other actors support individual women leaders? And how have external actors, such as the WAVE program or other leadership development organisations supported these individual journeys?

The specific research question(s) will be defined with the WAVE research team and participating partners. The research project will seek alignment with relevant WAVE and IWDA frameworks. The analytical framework developed by ODI (see below) will also be useful in undertaking the final research design.

---

6 ODI refers to these as an arsenal, that includes, deploying oppositional voice to give visibility to =demands and gender injustices; strategic recourse to international norms and discourse and transnational social action; strategic engagement with individual and groups with the power to redefine the political settlement, nurturing buy in from potential veto players, ensuring trade offs remain palatable to original constituency. Lefwich refers to “all the practices and skills of networking, conflict management, negotiation and cooperation involved in the politics of building … .”

7 We note that this may involve the dynamic of the funder / donor relationship and may affect respondents information on relevant questions, this will need to be sensitively managed by the research teams
Method / Research Activities

This is a multi-stakeholder feminist research project. Feminist research uses a research framework which enables an understanding of women’s multiple perspectives, engages with diverse actors, builds local capacity and works towards inclusion, transformation and social change through the research process. The project will be conducted as a longitudinal research which will involve quantitative and qualitative information being collected from participants three times over the course of the research – 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Research subjects/participants will include women leaders working in partner organisations, women leaders in the WAVE program, and other women leaders as relevant and available in each context.

The number of research participants across the program is not expected to be significantly high. In total the number is expected to be less than 100 individuals, spread across up to eight (8) partners this is approximately 5-10 women per partner. These numbers are estimates only and will be informed by both partner participation decisions and research methodology. A partner engagement plan has been prepared alongside this document. Further engagement plans will be developed once partner participation is known.

This research will use a participatory research approach and will be guided by the IWDA research guidelines. This will include a participatory approach to research question development, field research design & tools, information collection, analysis and distribution of the research findings.
The project will adopt a mixed methods methodology, using quantitative and qualitative information as appropriate to the research question, with a case study methodology expected to be integrated into the overall approach. The research team will be expected to work through questions related to sample size and approach with IWDA and the final methodology for the research will need to follow IWDAs Research Ethical Guidelines.

The research team will work with partner organisations to determine the appropriate method or technology in each context. This is anticipated to include video diaries, blogs, photography, as well as more traditional key informant interview and focus group methods. This is an exciting aspect of the research – making the case that using innovative research methods which give voice to women’s individual experiences over a defined time period is a valuable and necessary research method.

Ethics
The research will go through an approved ethics process in line with IWDA guidelines. Part of the ethics process in undertaking the research will include immediate steps to link women who are part of the research to civil society organisations, support organisations and networks to enable their ongoing support beyond the research project.

Literature Review
IWDA has conducted a preliminary desk review which scopes evidence on women’s leadership journeys across social, economic and political, for Asia and the Pacific (including Australia). This will be made available to the research team. The research team is expected to build from this scoping review to develop a detailed literature review as part of the report. The research team’s literature review is expected to highlight the value add of the research to WAVE, IWDA and the women’s leadership discourse.

Research Outputs
The research outputs are to be interactive and engaging to inform advocacy and policy influence activities while still providing sufficient content / data for case study analysis for written products. These are expected to be developed and agreed with participating partners (subject to resource constraints). Examples of alternative media could include
- Video blogs
- Written blogs
- Small documentaries
- Photo documentary
These will be agreed post-research question finalisation and as part of the research methodology confirmation.

In addition, the research project is expected to produce one final report with, as relevant, smaller policy briefs for advocacy and influence activities, to be produced while the research is under way. Examples of milestone outputs will include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>2017/18</th>
<th>2018/19</th>
<th>2019/20</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publication</td>
<td>Lit Review</td>
<td>Summary of results from 2017 interviews</td>
<td>Summary of results from 2018 interviews</td>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution of supporting video / photo materials</td>
<td>Distribution of supporting video / photo materials</td>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Paper /</td>
<td>Feminist research methods</td>
<td>Feminist research methods</td>
<td>Feminist research methods</td>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Communications Strategy will be developed by IWDA which addresses the products to be completed throughout the project lifespan, this will cover the target groups, actors, product, distribution channel and timeline.

This will support outputs per country and for the region which will include:

- Press releases
- Local events
- Media interviews
- Social Media

**Research Team**
The Research Team will consist of IWDA Staff Members, IWDA Partners and Research Specialist support.

**IWDA Staff Members**
The proposed IWDA staff members are

- Senior Program Manager WAVE
- Research, Policy and Advocacy Advisor
- Senior Program Manager Quality

The team will be supported by IWDA Program Managers for relevant country partners, the WAVE Program Manager and WAVE Program Coordinator. Implementation plans will be agreed with teams once Partner participation is confirmed.

**IWDA Partners**
Due to the nature of the project, IWDA’s partners will be key members of the research team. They are anticipated to be partners participating in the WAVE program to contribute to gathering evidence on the effectiveness of the program. However, all IWDA partners could have the potential to participate.

Partners may participate through being consulted on research design, as research participants (i.e. within the pool of women subjects) and/or as facilitators of access to research participants.

Partners who agree to participate in the project as research facilitators will be trained in information collection and supported with administering survey tools. The partners engaging with the research are being identified in parallel to selection of the external research team but are expected to include partners from Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Myanmar. Partners will have wide variation in relation to key factors for successful delivery of the research including: skill levels with research, access to internet, experience working in English, experience with multi-media.

**Research Specialist Support**
The Research team is expected to:

1. Support the refinement of the research questions
2. Lead development of the research proposal and design including research ethics review processes
3. Support implementation
4. Lead analysis
5. Lead writing
6. Support publication

**Researcher Qualifications/ Experience**
Specific requirements for the research team (which may consist of more than one individual):

- Significant knowledge of the sector(s) as demonstrated by a track record of publication of academic standard literature and/or research publications
- Significant experience in developing country contexts
- Significant experience in research implementation
• Experience in supporting partners in developing countries with research projects
• Experience in training and quality control of research
• Excellent research design and analysis skills including a proven track record using relevant methodologies, including feminist, quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
• Demonstrated understanding of feminist research principles and feminist partnerships.
• Excellent report writing skills including ability to simplify complex concepts

Indicative Project Timeline / Field Implementation Plan
The research project is longitudinal research. Work with women engaged in the research is expected to take place on annual cycles for 3 years 2017 – 2019 with 2020 (the final year of the program) completing distribution of the research and advocacy in relation to the findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish IWDA Team</td>
<td>Consult with Partners</td>
<td>Consult with Partners</td>
<td>Data Quality Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek Research partner &amp; Confirm methodology</td>
<td>Commence Field Work</td>
<td>Write Up and Analysis</td>
<td>Write up and Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More Information
For more information please contact:
Sharon Smee, Research, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, ssme@iwda.org.au
Suzi Chinnery, Senior Program Manager, schinnery@iwda.org.au

Leftwich, A. (2009), Bringing agency back in: politics and human agency in building institutions and states—synthesis and overview report, research paper 06, Developmental Leadership Program, Canberra.