

International Women's Partnership For Peace And Justice (IWP)

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Organization Overview

International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP) is a local feminist organization based on spirituality and social activism. The organization is working at the grassroots level, focusing on women's activism in Thailand and other Asian countries. The organization was founded in 2002 (Khuankaew, 2022).

Core Principles and Programs

The women-led organization has three fundamental principles. The three core principles are feminism, social activism, and spiritual practice. IWP holds workshops, retreats, and other training courses that are focused on discourses on feminism, social actions, and spirituality. The organizational work started in the year 1997, usually freelancing work by working systematically and strategically with groups at the grassroots level, practicing the culture of participation and social activism. Working at the grassroots level is to decrease the hierarchal culture that is dominating the institution and several social movements. IWP focuses on transforming and sustaining lives and perceptions at the individual, group and community levels. The organization currently works in different Asian regions other than Thailand, such as Burma, Sri Lanka, and India. In these countries, the organization collaborates with the organization, community peace groups, and other social activists working in these particular countries. The core principles are enacted through consultation and power-sharing, respecting and valuing diversity, combining personal practices and social transformations, understanding structural violence, unlearning internalized patriarchy, and experiential learning (Khuankaew, 2022).

Communication and Mindfulness Practices

The organization usually communicate through workshops, training, articles, podcasts and other announcements. Also, the organization integrates different mindful practices and meditations to help the participants or the focused groups develop internal peace, which will lead to a balance in personal and activist life. The working methodology usually combines various learning activities, discussions, and practices. In consultation and power-sharing, the individuals are involved in the decision-making process, and sharing of wisdom, information, skill, and resources is carried out at all levels. This is particularly enacted to develop trust and friendship among participants. In our programs, we also work with people with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, such as diverse in religion, sexuality,

race, ethnicity, and other belief systems. Intersectionality is a concept where the lives and experiences of individuals and groups are understood in their diversity and complexity (Nedera, 2023). The work of IWP in a diverse environment and respecting the diversity of the community member relate to their concept of intersectionality. The training programs of the IWP understand the differences in women based on race, class, geography, and other aspects and investigate how these factors shape the lives of women in the region.

Social Impact and Women's Empowerment

The organization is important as it works to bring change to the lives of women living in Thailand and other Asian nations. The organization offers various anti-oppression courses, meditation retreats, women's allies for social changes, women's natural building workshops and Buddhist Education for Social Transformation (BEST). The organization is working effectively and efficiently in realizing and fulfilling its mandate and standard priorities, as most of the courses and training workshops are surrounded by those priorities. There are different ways in which the organization works towards reducing inequality among women. The work of IWP also emphasizes on the patriarchal society and devising the training and courses to unlearn the internalized patriarchal society. The centre of the work is that women and men should dissolve the internalization and other power dynamics as they negatively impact the communities and individuals. The concept of unlearning a patriarchal society is relevant to the concept of defining feminism in this world as defined in Gender and Women's Studies in Canada. According to this definition, it is believed that men and women are of equal worth, social movements are essential to achieving equal status in the patriarchal society, and women's changing role will transform the social and political lives of individuals and communities (UN Women, 2022).

Diversity, Identity, and Inclusion

The organization takes up the identity question by working with individuals from diverse backgrounds. The concept of the organizational principle of respect looks at spirituality, gender and other sexualities. Also, the communities work with marginalized groups and help them see and change as well as resist structural violence. The voices are being heard at the grassroots level, where IWP are working with women's health by offering courses on gender and sexuality. It also implies the work of IWP on gender justice and helps women raise their voices to bring social change. The organization works toward social change by providing a comprehensive 10-day training course to women, primarily focusing on utilizing the Buddhist feminist framework. The purpose of this framework is to bring inner peace while women are working towards social change in the community. The course is open to women from all cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds as well as with any sexual preferences. The 10-day course aims to provide a platform to build a supportive community for the women who are willing and committed to bringing social change. The course also helps women develop personal growth, mutual respect, and some skill sets to work in the community for social change. Buddhist Education for Social Transformation (BEST) is a yearlong course that focuses on feminism, non-violent

activism, and spiritual practices. The course covers the topic of power and analysis of powers in the society. The concept of this course material is related to the social construction of gender and gender roles as described in the book *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada*. Gender is constructed socially, and the roles of women are defined in relation to their traditional roles, such as childbearing and household work (UN Women, 2022). The BEST course is related to understanding gender roles, violence, oppression and internalization, as well as self-awareness of those women participating in the course. The organization incorporates Buddhist teachings as well as their practices. The organization is working for social change by empowering women and helping them fight against social and structural violence in the patriarchal community. The work on experiential learning is a thoughtful process where women participants usually learn through their intellect and their emotions and also build new skills. The organization is women-led, and the lead trainers usually provide counselling and workshops to the women who are oppressed (Ratcliffe, 2024). During these workshops, the women share their experiences of structural violence and social roles and how these have led to the transformation and commitment towards social change. The focus on activism also provides a supportive environment for women's groups and a comfortable environment while training. In other words, the organization led by empowered women is working towards empowering other women at all levels in the country and neighbouring countries.

References

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