



Each country has its own path, story, and journey to share. Using feminist and participatory methods, the research teams are documenting historical trends and political milestones, hard-won achievements through political campaigns and landmark court cases, intersections with other social movements, as well as political backlash.

Appreciating and recognizing the patterns emerging from each of their countries, the WEAVE Collective members seek to learn from each other and co-create knowledge through papers, new theories, documentaries, and art.

## EMERGING CHALLENGES

WEAVE narratives and data show how women's movements contribute to progressive policies to end violence against women and girls (VAWG) and highlight current challenges they face.

Many countries have witnessed authoritarian backsliding and backlash against feminist movements. The shrinking of democratic spaces and the criminalization of activism have revealed that progress is not linear and that gains are often fragile.

Women in the margins, particularly indigenous women, are frequently excluded from policy processes on VAWG. The women's movement that should and previously did lead the fight for policies and reforms have been increasingly squeezed out by other "experts" shaping policies with minimal grassroots consultation.

As national action plans based on global instruments become more generalized, the practices to develop and implement such plans have often further widened the gap between the excluded and included.

The WEAVE Collective strives to ensure that the voices and experiences of marginalized women are heard and included in the policies that affect their lives.

The Global  
Women's Institute  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

# Women Engaged Against Violence Everywhere (WEAVE) Collective

Weaving stories from the margins  
 **weave**



The Women Engaged Against Violence Everywhere (WEAVE) Collective is forged out of a shared commitment to feminist movements that are addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) and to uplift and weave together the crucial stories emerging from the margins.

Researchers and activists from Australia, India, South Africa and Nicaragua have joined to explore how feminist movements contribute to ending violence against women and girls at a local, national and global level.

# THE WEAVE COLLECTIVE—EMERGING FINDINGS

## Australia

Indigenous women have shaped and influenced policy and programming for prevention of violence against women in Australia. Through WEAVE, the Australia case study, called the Indigenist Feminist Movements (InFem) project, will highlight Indigenist feminist work. Indigenist feminist methodology centers on the voices, experiences, and perspectives of Indigenous women and their work developing knowledge in ways that empower and support the priorities of Indigenous women.

The InFem project will produce three case studies. Two case studies will explore the work of grassroots organisations—Strong Women Talking based in Brisbane and Galiwin'ku Women's Space based in Elcho Island—to prevent violence against women. A third case study will review the advocacy that led to the development of a separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Action Plan to end violence against women and girls.

Guided by First Nations women, Chay Brown, Tracey Williams, and Emma Fulu from the Equality Institute are leading the Australia case study and providing research training.

## India

Indian women's movements brought to bear a critical feminist lens to reform the legal and policy frameworks on violence against women over four decades (1980 to the present). Through WEAVE, the India case study explores women's struggles against violence, and the policy engagement and contestation involving women's movements and the state around issues of violence.

The emerging narratives give more visibility to the intersectionality of struggles and how each struggle draws lessons that contribute to a collectively held pool of "movement wisdom", challenging the notion of a singular "Indian women's movement". Instead, protagonists represent multiple movements that hold different positions on the issues and highlight tensions around ideologies, strategies, and identities and their impacts. When woven together, the narratives and data also reveal a landscape of privilege and exclusion in which hierarchies of caste, class, and social location play out within women's movements and influence their trajectory at the national and local level.

Kalyani-Menon Sen, an activist and researcher from Gender at Work, and Uma Chakravarti, a historian and filmmaker, are leading the India case study, which will deliver a paper and a documentary film.

## Nicaragua

The women's movement in Nicaragua has a rich and diverse history with roots in the Sandinista Revolution of the 1980s. During the 1990s, the Nicaraguan Network of Women against Violence emerged as one of the most important social movements in the country. The network carried out massive public awareness campaigns and lobbied for legal reforms and services for survivors of violence.

In 1995, a landmark prevalence study found that over half of Nicaraguan women had experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. These findings were instrumental in the passage of the country's first domestic violence law. Two decades later, a new study discovered that physical intimate partner violence was reduced by 70% between 1995–2015. Feminist organizing played an important role in the enormous decrease in violence by increasing women's access to services and justice, as well as awareness of their right to live without violence.

Sadly, these gains have been jeopardized by the political and social crisis in Nicaragua that erupted in 2018, with the Ortega government's violent repression of opposition groups, including women's rights organizations. This has resulted in the dissolution of community networks and support services for survivors and has threatened the lives of women human rights defenders. The government has closed more than 1,000 NGOs over the last two years, including 130 women's rights organizations. The Nicaraguan case study builds on the experiences of feminist activists, particularly the young women who led the student protests that catalyzed the civic uprising in 2018 and its aftermath.

Mary Ellsberg, along with Nicaraguan researchers and activists whose names are withheld for their safety, are leading the Nicaragua case study.

## South Africa

Women's movements played a vital role in shaping a democratic South Africa, but the struggles for gender equality and women's experiences of gendered violence during apartheid are strikingly absent from the historiography of South Africa. Women's experiences of gender-based violence during the apartheid struggle were deliberately silenced for the bigger cause – to dismantle apartheid.

Many feminists who entered the first democratic government and led the formulation of progressive legislation and policies in support of women's rights left the state (1999–2008) and women who remained did not represent women's interests. Despite these obstacles, Shukumisa and other coalitions formed short-term alliances that mobilized around the Sexual Offences Legislation and other specific issues and legislation, but the alliances dissolved after reaching their goals.

Building intersectional feminisms and solidarities across differences is increasingly significant to mitigate racial tension and mistrust in South Africa and the region. Younger generations of black feminists have questioned the commitment of older, middle-class feminists to radical change and have raised questions about whose interests are protected through human rights policies, legislation, discourses, and practice.

In this context, intersectional feminisms and collaboration across differences are increasingly necessary to achieve impact. During the HIV movement, for example, the large-scale mobilization of poor, black women was an influential achievement.

Shanaaz Matthews, Benita Moolman and Thelma Oppelt from the University of Cape Town are leading the South Africa case study.

