

What does
**GENDER
JUSTICE**

mean to IIED...
...and to ME?



PERSPECTIVES FROM CONVERSATIONS
WITH IIED'S GENDER JUSTICE NETWORK



CONTEXT & AUTHORS



“What does gender justice mean to IIED and to me?” is a zine that was inspired by a series of discussions with staff in 2024. The editors of this zine heard that colleagues wanted to deepen their understanding of gender justice, and were keen to share and learn about how to translate theory into practice.

In April 2025, colleagues from Gender Justice Network met for two one-hour discussions that explored what gender justice means, the language we use to convey gender justice and what gender justice looks like in their collaborative work with partners. The content of this zine draws directly from these conversations, key IIED resources and examples that were submitted for inclusion.

The zine is intended as a resource for IIED colleagues, but a wider audience may find the content interesting. We encourage you to get in contact if you want to learn more or simply give us feedback at IIED’s Gender Justice Network.

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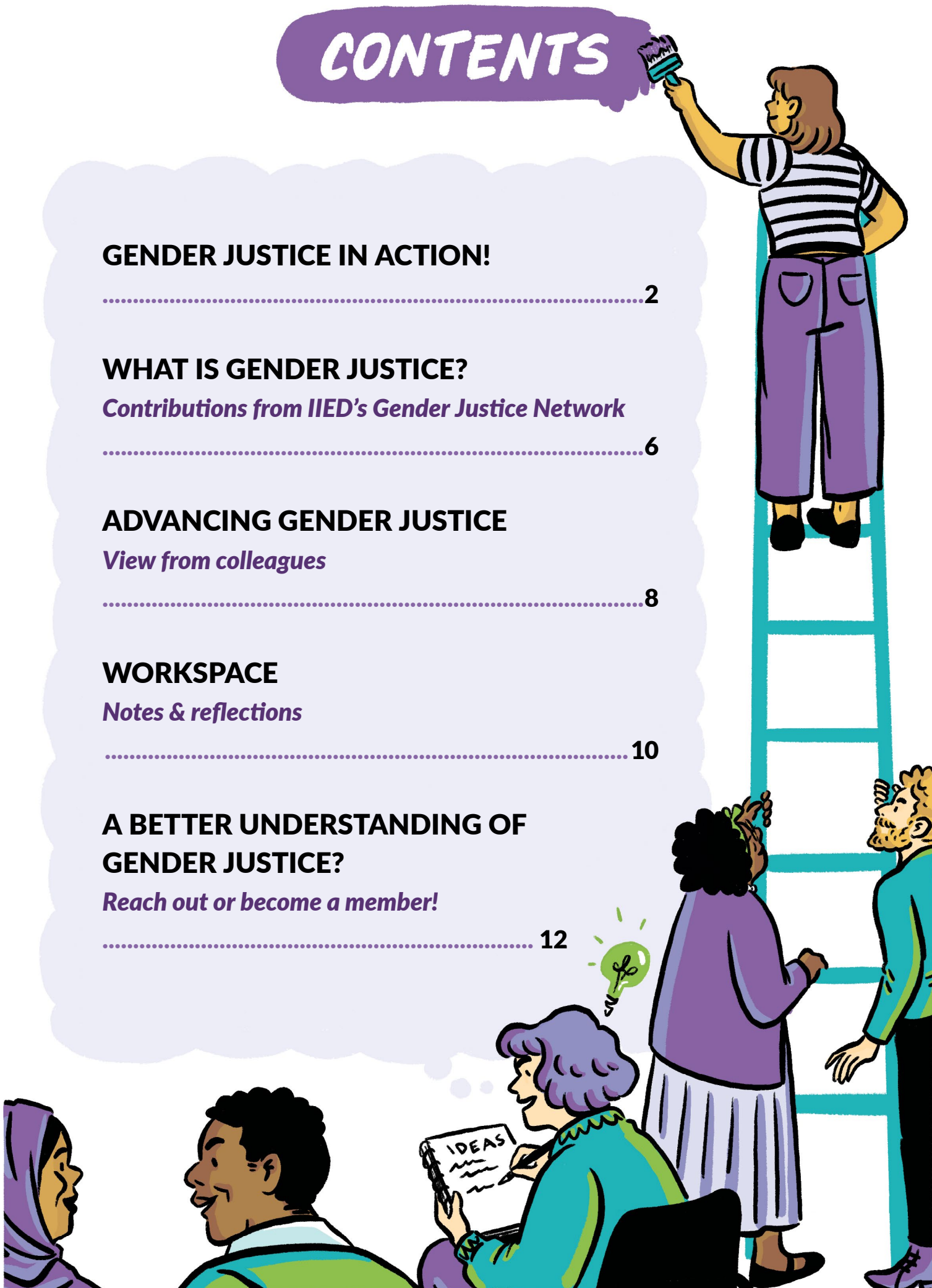
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GENDER JUSTICE

LEARNING FROM OUR PARTNERS ABOUT HOW TO NAVIGATE COMPLEXITIES (Camila Cociña, senior researcher)

I participated in a project about diverse youth engagement in urban governance led by the University of Sheffield, in partnership with members of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights in India and Nepal. As part of the project, local partners had been organising workshops on civic media with diverse youth from marginalised neighbourhoods, including women. In Bhuj, Gujarat, a significant barrier to gender justice is the polarisation around religion, and how it intersects with cultural and family norms. Our local partners invested a lot of time and energy in finding strategies to promote the participation of young women from religious minorities in the project's civic media workshops.



One strategy they used was to involve their mothers or other members of their families as guardians – with them accompanying the young women to the workshops. What came out of this was a shift from focusing on the individual (that is, the young women only), to engaging with the wider social fabric of the community. This created momentum to increase participation of young women and strengthen their leadership. Key to achieving this was the leadership of local partners in finding ways of working that were suited to the context and allowing enough time to ensure a patient approach, which was crucial to building trust with families.

LGBTQI+: STARTING FROM THE END OF THE ALPHABET (Tucker Landesmann, senior researcher)

A few years ago, we launched a new project with partners in Kenya focused on the urban worlds of LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers living in Nairobi. One of the first steps was a sensitivity training run by Kenyan experts and activists. Often (at least in Western countries), these trainings focus on the 'L' and 'G' – operating under the assumption that cisgender heterosexual participants are most open to change when they can relate to gays and lesbians as 'normal' people. The approach by our partner, Amka Africa, surprised me; it began with the 'I'. In a follow-up conversation, the lead trainer explained that in Kenya, public conversations are quite advanced when it comes to intersex people. Starting from a place of empathy around intersex babies and children, her method extended compassion step-by-step to the broader range of LGBTQI+ identities. This experience underscored to me the importance of geography to experiences of gender and sexuality, and how those differences impact strategies employed by social movements.



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION APPROACHES TO ADVANCE GENDER JUSTICE (Rosalind Goodrich, head of strategic research communications)

Much of gender justice work is about careful communication and deep listening – taking time to understand and creating space for connection. Gender justice is understood differently, so it's important not to assume a shared understanding. A useful tool from communications is the audience models approach. This is about recognising starting points: discovery (basics, 'beginner' level of knowledge), interest (sufficient to work with and wanting to know more) and action (well informed and confident to act). Recognising where collaborators sit across this spectrum (including oneself) will help to identify appropriate entry points.



GENDER JUSTICE

A FEMINIST APPROACH TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT (Sydney Church, senior project manager)

A feminist approach to project management is crucial for gender justice. It means focusing on working methods, not just deliverables, as well as recognising power imbalances inherent in contracts, budgets and project management structures. For example, a small grants programme for climate adaptation in the majority world which I led on, was initially designed with English-only contracts and placed financial and delivery risk on grantees. After negotiating with the funder, our redesign incorporated translation, gender considerations, hands-on support, and extended timelines.

This led to a stronger gender responsive second round of grants, including addressing reproductive health and climate justice for women with disabilities. In another instance, while processing payments to gender-based violence mentors, a trauma triggering incident surfaced. A feminist approach to management meant including rapid referral counselling, in both the project plan and budget. Building appropriate support systems into project architecture is key, recognising that effective delivery requires attending to the whole person, not just deliverables.



PROMOTING HEALTH INCLUSIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE (Genita Motichande, people management and development advisor)

Natural life stages like menstruation and menopause can significantly affect experiences in the workplace. These experiences are often stigmatised, leaving many to suffer in silence, further impacting wellbeing, performance and career progression. It's important to foster open dialogue, educate ourselves and others, and create supportive, inclusive environments if we want to break barriers and set colleagues up for success. Simple but meaningful steps like flexible working, access to period products or a desk fan, as well as having compassionate, informed managers can make a real difference. When we acknowledge and understand the challenges some people face, we move towards building inclusive and empowering workplaces.



GENDER JUSTICE IN CLIMATE FINANCE*(Sejal Patel, senior researcher)*

A persisting gap in climate finance is the integration of gender justice. One example of where this integration has come together well is in the Community Resilience Partnership Program, a 10-year initiative in which we are partnering with the Asian Development Bank, a multilateral development bank, and Huairou Commission, a grassroots organisation. The initiative began with a scoping study to understand the specific issues in the target region and the gaps in coverage in addressing those issues, and to therefore shape the initiative as a way to usefully fill a need in the funding landscape.

Based on the study, the initiative decided to centre on the nexus of climate, poverty and gender. As part of this focus, the initiative has developed a 'gender window' – while the whole initiative will seek to support gender equality, this window provides an earmarked pot of funding for programmes that will put money directly into the hands of women or women's groups. The window represents around 10% of the total technical assistance funding. This commitment to getting money down to women at the local level is a significant step forward in climate finance delivery.



Intersectionality is key – resist the binary (for example, women and men). Look across the many characteristics of identity that interact to shape people’s experiences of discrimination and disadvantage.



It’s messy, we don’t have all the answers. But it’s about being open to learning, challenge and considering differing perspectives.



It’s personal, subjective and context specific – and because of that, with it comes confusion, contradiction and contestation.



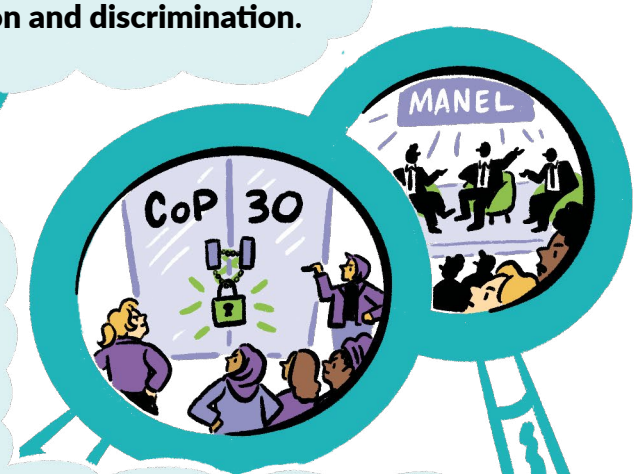
WHAT IS GENDER JUSTICE?

It’s about uncovering the root causes of injustice and not just the symptoms (for example, differences in access to resources). Gender equality and equity are part of gender justice – but gender justice is a broader framing.*



It’s a series of lenses that we can use to understand inequality, exclusion and discrimination.

Other analytical lenses include scope (for example, expanding scope to understand relationships in addition to differences in power, resources and interests within an entity) and timeframe (for example, building an understanding of historical processes that shape inequality and power).**



Rather than merely an additional concept to be implemented, mainstreamed or operationalised, gender justice can be thought of as a fundamental approach to the way we work.





Maybe we need to obsess less over definitions and instead focus our attention on **simple, practical strategies and tactics** that we and others (partners, peers and so on) are using to advance gender justice.

Language can also be a barrier – the term itself, ‘gender justice’, can be unhelpful at times. It can feel like jargon or be loaded with preconceptions. There’s a lot of fear of **saying the wrong thing**, or of holding a differing perspective. This is stopping us from discussing gender justice in a way that leads to **impact**.



CONTRIBUTIONS FROM IIED'S GENDER JUSTICE NETWORK



It isn't just relevant to research, it cuts across IIED. It's important to be thinking about gender justice in **budgeting, procurement, tracking engagement, fundraising...** we have a lot more work to do across the organisation.



It's about **navigating significant challenges** – rights are being contested, freedoms are under attack...

It's integral to our commitment to becoming an anti-racist organisation, including through exploring decolonialisation. Gender justice can't be defined solely by IIED. It's vital to listen, understand and be open to being challenged by others, especially partners and peers located in the regions and countries where we work.



WHAT DOES GENDER JUSTICE MEAN TO YOU?



* Listen to Karen Wong Perez discuss 'Gender justice: why is progress so slow' on IIED's *Make Change Happen* Podcast: <https://tinyurl.com/4vx8b4tr>

** Read more about these lenses developed in the IIED Backgrounder *Moving Towards Gender Justice* by Karen Wong Perez and Giulia Nicolini: <https://www.iied.org/22296iied>

ADVANCING GENDER

small VERSUS BIG

STRIVING FOR THE **BIG** OR THE **BOLD** CAN MAKE ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE FEEL CONFUSING OR DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT...

CREATE DIALOGUES ON PRIVILEGE, POWER & BIAS

PRACTICAL STEPS

ALLOCATE **DEDICATED BUDGETS**

COLLECT GENDER DISAGGREGATED DATA

1001101010110100

AGILITY..

THERE IS **NO FIXED TEMPLATE!**

CULTURAL CONTEXT

REFLEXIVITY

A DECOLONIAL APPROACH

CRITICALLY REFLECT ON

YOUR OWN BELIEFS

ASSUMPTIONS !?

AND POSITIONALITY!

CONTESTATIONS

... ARE INEVITABLE (AND NECESSARY!)

CHANGE CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE

PUSH BOUNDARIES collaboratively

DISCUSS & UNDERSTAND + NUDDGE & CHALLENGE!

DIALOGUE IS KEY!

-SPEAKING-

SPEAKING ABOUT GENDER JUSTICE DIFFERENTLY TO FRIENDS, FAMILY AND IN PROFESSIONAL SPACES IS OK!

IT'S AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY...

JUSTICE

VIEW FROM COLLEAGUES

IN INTENT



CREATE SPACE FOR NOT KNOWING



Empathy AND Openness



EMPATHY IS NEEDED FOR DEEPLY PERSONAL

TENSION

CLASHES BETWEEN CULTURAL, FAMILIAL & RELIGIOUS NORMS

THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT SUGGESTED ACTIONS!

"REMEMBER YOU CAN LEAVE ~ BUT THE WOMEN CAN'T"

SUPPORT LEARNING BY DOING



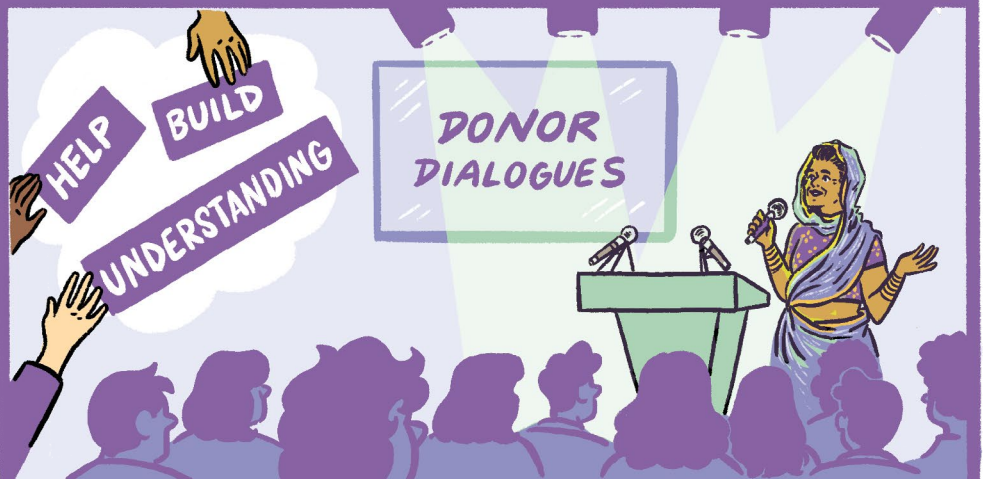
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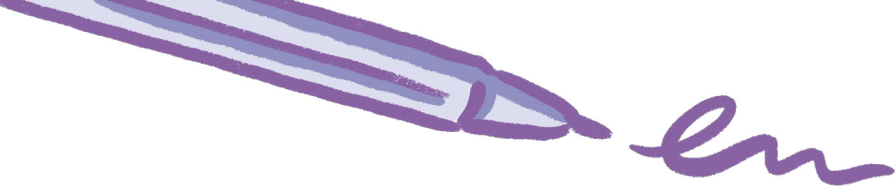
IT OPENS UP CONVERSATIONS



IT CAN BE CRITICAL TO PERSONAL SAFETY ~ IT'S NOT DISINGENUOUS!

SPEAKING ABOUT GENDER JUSTICE TO FUNDERS

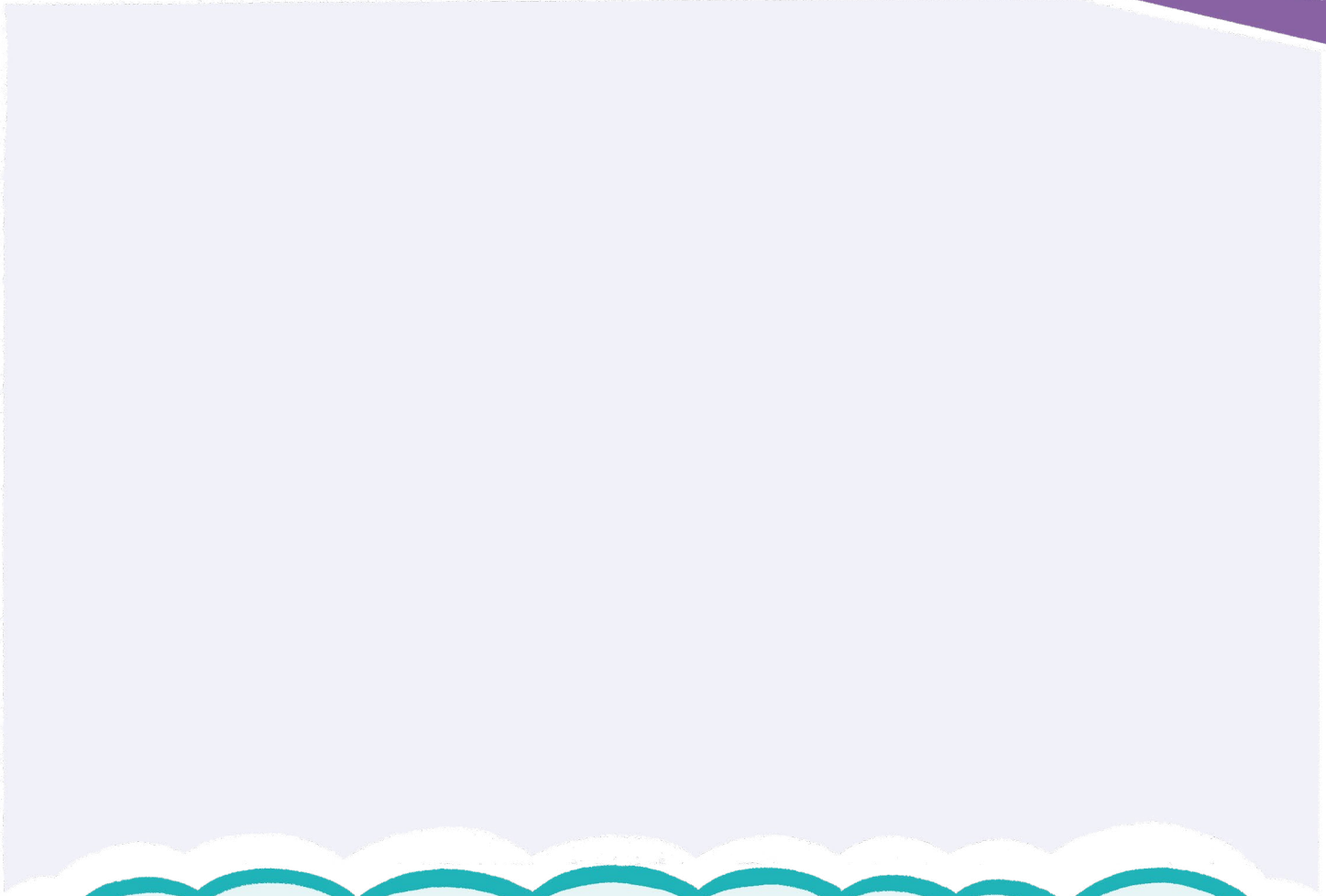
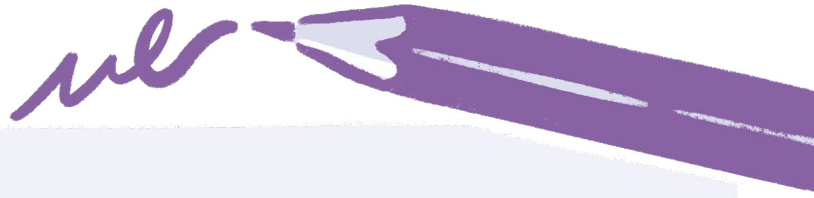




What examples are there of advancing gender justice in your work with partners and peers?

What questions are unanswered? What uncertainties remain?

What's next for you to advance gender justice in your work? What do you need?



NOTES/REFLECTIONS



DO YOU FEEL YOU'VE GOT A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER JUSTICE?

Yes!

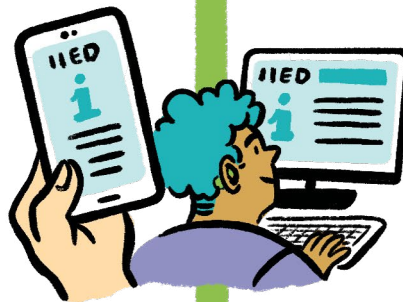
Why not join the IIED Gender Justice Network and share your knowledge and experience with your peers?



Not got time?
Then consider featuring your work in our internal or external learning events.

Not sure... maybe?

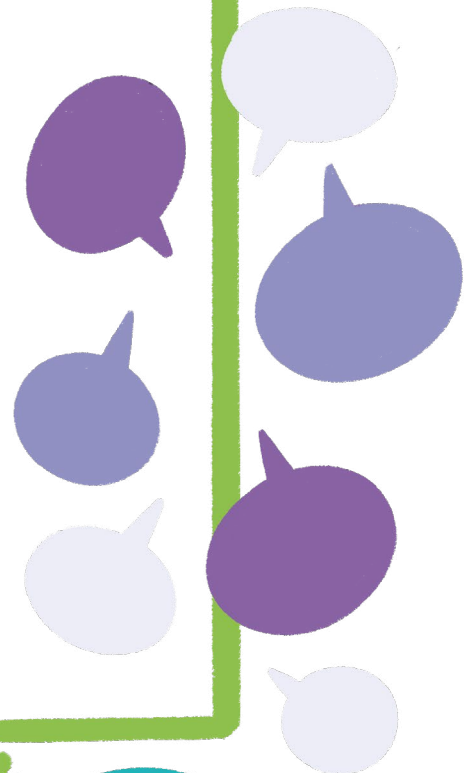
Check out further learning resources on the IIED Gender Justice Network resource page on the intranet.



Is there something missing?
Something more you need?

No...

That's ok.
Want to chat? Members of the Gender Justice Network are more than happy to informally chat with individuals, or attend team meetings.



ALL PATHS LEAD TO THE IIED GENDER JUSTICE NETWORK ~ REACH OUT OR BECOME A MEMBER!

This network is for everyone at IIED. We are a bunch of people who are interested in advancing gender justice. We're at different stages of our discovery and we come together to connect, exchange learning and inspiration, and to provide resources for IIED colleagues. You can join us at our monthly meetings, attend our learning events (watch out for invites), request a conversation, check out our resources and/or request help. This isn't an exhaustive list, we want to hear from you. So no matter your query, reach out.



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