



IAWG BELIEVES BLACK LIVES MATTER AND STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

JULY 2020

THE INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP (IAWG) ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN CRISES FULLY SUPPORTS THE CALL OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL “TO RAISE OUR VOICES AGAINST ALL EXPRESSIONS OF RACISM AND INSTANCES OF RACIST BEHAVIOR AND TO DISMANTLE RACIST STRUCTURES AND REFORM RACIST INSTITUTIONS.”¹

IAWG STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE SEEKING RACIAL JUSTICE AND CALLING FOR AN END TO SYSTEMIC RACISM AND RACIAL VIOLENCE ACROSS THE WORLD.

Systemic racism remains a primary cause of discrimination, indignity, and lack of equality for billions of people in the world today, including the women, girls, and gender non-conforming people in the crisis settings that IAWG serves. IAWG allies itself with the many long-standing global anti-racist movements that work in solidarity to address deeply entrenched racism in countries across the world, including in the countries where IAWG members are headquartered, and those in which they serve.

IAWG was formed following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), a watershed moment which positioned sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) at the center of the global development and humanitarian aid agenda. ICPD marked the first time that the global community explicitly committed to ensuring the SRHR of refugees and displaced populations. Since then, IAWG has worked to keep SRHR prioritized in all humanitarian responses, and has committed to addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that restrict and deny the SRHR of people affected by crisis, including on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, citizenship status, refugee status, age, and ability.

¹ [Message of the United Nations Secretary-General for 2020](#). Antonio Guterres.

We recognize that the humanitarian aid sector, including IAWG, has not realized these commitments in full. This is a long-overdue moment of reckoning which calls on us to examine and challenge the ways in which the humanitarian aid system is shaped by and perpetuates post-colonial power imbalances and systemic racism. This work encompasses the entire structure of the humanitarian sector, including funding flows, leadership, and accountability systems. Our work must include identifying, naming, disrupting, and transforming the entrenched power inequities and resource disparities between donor governments and Global North-based humanitarian actors, and the people and communities who are directly affected by crisis, to whom we are all ultimately accountable. In addition to formal commitments to localization, which is fundamental to ensuring effective, responsive humanitarian aid, we need more genuine and meaningful action to shift decision-making power and financial resources to crisis-affected communities.

IAWG must also tackle the uncomfortable work of honestly assessing and transforming the deeply embedded racial inequities and power imbalances in IAWG's membership, structures, and practices, as well as in each of our own organizations' leadership structures, policies, and practices. It is not enough to engage in reflection and awareness-raising about the history and legacy of racism; it is time for real, antiracist action to dismantle systems and policies in our coalitions and organizations that exclude Black Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and other women and gender non-conforming People of Color from leadership and pay equity.

As we undertake this work, we recognize, honor, and commit to the leadership of the Reproductive Justice Movement globally. Also launched in 1994, the Reproductive Justice Movement was conceptualized by Black Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and other women and gender non-conforming people of Color who recognized that the ICPD agenda fell short of addressing the racist, economic, and political oppression that profoundly restrict the reproductive freedom and rights of Black Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and other women and gender non-conforming people of Color. Reproductive Justice leaders demanded that those directly affected themselves needed to define, lead, and demand accountability for systemic change. This principle still holds true. To achieve real and lasting change, we must proactively commit to self-determination and remove the roadblocks and barriers that prevent the meaningful participation and leadership of Black Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and other women and gender non-conforming people of Color, at all levels of the humanitarian aid system.

As organizations primarily headquartered in the Global North who aspire to work in true partnership with governments, civil society, and communities in crisis-affected settings, IAWG membership must acknowledge and address the many diverse deep-rooted inequities, including racial ones, that exist in our own organizations and within the IAWG coalition structure. Without committing to this work internally, we cannot authentically use our voice to highlight inequities and disparities in responses in crisis-affected settings.

IAWG's global secretariat and steering committee commit to taking concrete action, including committing time and mobilizing resources to inform actionable next steps to make our membership, structures, funding, and programs more inclusive and equitable.