

WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT

BUILDING BRIDGES

JUNE 2021 – DECEMBER 2022



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA

ABOUT THE WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK

Founded in 2011, the core purpose of WRN is to amplify the voices of unheard, marginalized women, and with them address the interlinked issues of peace, militarization, forced displacements, (in)security, justice and governance in South Asia. To this end, WRN connects women peace advocates, committed to working collectively within and across national borders and cultures in traditionally conflicted countries. WRN's pursuit is reflected in its history where its unique Community Conversations have been used to deliver specific advocacy campaigns to ensure grassroots women's concerns and their voices shape political discourse, policy development and program implementation which affect them.

Through a combination of comparative analysis, advocacy and capacity building, WRN seeks to promote a unique and valuable regional dialogue by documenting the experiences of women in zones of conflict across South Asia. For this purpose, WRN will continue to work in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India - countries consistently featured among the worst to live in as a woman in terms of inclusion (economic, socio-political), justice (formal laws, informal discrimination) and security (at family, community and society levels).

Emphasizing human security and a people-centric, gender-lens approach, WRN recognizes non-traditional crises and threats also qualify as "conflict" for women, where women's lives, security and peace are jeopardized, all the more so for those who are displaced, caught in armed-conflict, or face the brunt of exclusionary, divisive and aggressive politics.

The WRN model and approach aims to tap into and coordinate local and regional expertise on key topics related to women's human rights, peace and security across multiple and diverse movements and networks.

WRN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

- WRN is first and foremost a network of solidarity, speaking for and supporting women's human rights defenders across South Asia and beyond.
- Choosing to work with women's peace organizations and networks, we have contributed to strengthening the impact and influence of transnational activism around gender inclusive peacebuilding.
- Listening closely to what women living in the shadow of conflict and insecurity tell us, we amplify their voices and concerns in order to raise public awareness and positively influence government policies and actions.
- WRN has steadily expanded its capacity-building platform through discussion, training and outreach on issues relating to women, peace and regional security.



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REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Online Course:

After the successful conduction of the WPS 2, WPS 3 was launched successfully as part of the *16 Days of Activism* campaign in November 2021.

The course and the development of its curriculum were led by Dr. Saumya Uma, WRN India Core Group Member and Director of the Center for Women's Rights at Jindal Global University in Delhi, India. Pakistan WRN members and country-level teams contributed to the coordination & moderating of the sessions.

“

As someone interested in picking WPS agenda as a research topic for doctoral, the course provided by WRN gave me a very different perspective to look into the agenda. The topics of the course were picked up well and all the panel discussions triggered my mind to work for this agenda. I really look forward taking up the next WPS agenda course. — *Liza Gupta, India*

”

A total of 125 applications were received from across the globe, of which 60 participants were selected from nine countries. The course covered various topics, including the

WPD agenda, a feminist understanding of peacebuilding, justice and reparations, and South Asian country-specific discussions and case studies. The course brought together human rights and peacebuilding experts around the globe as resource persons, including government-level advisors, lawyers, award-winning activists, researchers, UN special rapporteurs and Nobel Peace Prize nominees. The course included lectures, seminars, assignments and open house sessions. Forty-seven participants completed the course and were awarded certificates. Over the last three iterations of the WPS course, a large number of young people have been trained in feminist





WRN Country Coordinators Shad Begum and Ananya Kundu at the World March for Women, Asia Regional Meeting, Nepal

peacebuilding, and they have become a part of WRN's community.

The course serves as an effective tool to expand our outreach by successfully engaging young men and women across South Asia to deepen their knowledge of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.

To date, 400 students have learnt of the struggles and successes of this WPS movement, which has helped build up a new generation of informed activists.

World March for Women – Asia Regional Meet, Nepal, 24th to 28th, August 2022

Country Coordinators of India and Pakistan represented WRN at the World March for Women's Asia Regional Meet, which took place at TEWA, Nepal. The three-day conference included discussions on the challenges facing feminist movements in Asia against rising authoritarianism, militarist imperialism and capitalist exploitation in the region. Country representatives from seven nations shared their ideas, lived experiences and perspectives

on pertinent issues, recognizing commonalities and strategizing ways to strengthen the feminist movement in the nation. Ananya Kundu was the lead speaker at the panel *Militarized Imperialism and Transnational Corporations*, while Shad Begum facilitated the panel *Review of International Context and Reality of Women*.

Webinar

A year of despair, women's security and Peace in Afghanistan – 15 August 2022

WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA

A YEAR OF DESPAIR: WOMEN PEACE & SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

15 AUGUST 2022

10:00 AM – EST
02:00 PM – GMT
06:30 PM – Afghanistan
07:00 PM – Pakistan
07:30 PM – India

womensregionalnetwork.org

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini
CEO, International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)

Dr Habiba Sarabi
Former Member of Peace Negotiation Team of Afghanistan

Asia Wardak
Former Diplomat & Human Rights Activist Fellow, Harvard University

Karima E. Bennouna
Former UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights

Nargis Nehan
Former Minister of Mines and Petroleum Women Rights Advocate

Homa Hoodfar
Board of Directors Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Moderator
Zarqa Yaffali
Executive-Director of WCLRF, Board Member WRN

JOIN THE WOMEN LEADERS

AFGHANISTAN

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, the country has plunged into spiraling humanitarian and human rights crises, with women, girls and other vulnerable minorities bearing the brunt of the deteriorating situation. The ever-increasing repression of women's basic rights and freedoms include exclusion from public space and political participation, and a near total loss of access to jobs, education, and free movement.

The Taliban has dissolved existing legal protection mechanisms and institutions such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the Ministry of Women Affairs, the police's Family Response Units, the General Attorney Directorate's Elimination of Violence Against Women Unit, and struck down laws within the country's Constitution, its Penal Code, and its Civil Code. This has stripped the country of its basic legal frameworks and now allows the Taliban to take the law into their hands and interpret Sharia based on their own understanding.

While the international community is scrambling to find solutions to support the Afghan people, the country itself remains on the brink of collapse. As such, much of the burden continues to fall on the citizens of the U.S. and other countries to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.

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Initiative to Protect Afghan Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)

In response to these threats, three Afghan human rights organizations — the Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization (SRMO), the Afghan Women Network (AWN), and the Afghan Women Skill Development Centre (AWSDC) — joined together to protect at-risk women human rights defenders in the country. WRN launched a Go Fund Me (GFM) campaign to raise funds for these

organizations and provide fiscal sponsorship. Thousands of activist donors showed immediate, tangible solidarity with the women of Afghanistan at a critical moment and raised \$510,000 USD in the space of a few weeks. Those funds have been distributed equally among the organizations.

The GFM campaign provided rapid, flexible, lifesaving support and entrusted Afghan women with the ability to directly protect



other Afghan women. Through this initiative, AWN, AWSDC, and SRMO were able to directly protect over 450 WHRDs and their families and preserve the Afghan women's rights movement both in the country and internationally. All WHRDs and threatened family members included in these efforts are alive and safe after months of enduring violence, terror, and trauma.

WRN and its partners continue to develop strategies to get cash into the hands of Afghan women through cell phone apps, charity donations, Western Union and most commonly the "Hawala" method.

We hope this initiative's success will inspire further generosity and solidarity among our activist donor community as our organizations continue to support Afghan WHRDs at risk in the country, the region, and the world.

Afghan/Canadian Symposium: Building a Better Future Together

The symposium, held September 26-27, 2022 in Ottawa, Canada, convened global experts to analyze and bring to light the reality on the



Participants of the Afghan/Canadian Women's Symposium, Ottawa, Canada

ground for women in Afghanistan. Panel topics included:

- *Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan: Measuring Canada's Response*
- *Pathways to Safety, Resettlement and Integration for Afghan Women: Barriers and Opportunities*
- *Mobilizing the International Community: The Future of Advocacy for Afghan Women*

Afghan women in Canada, and in consultation with women across the globe, developed *Calls to Action* (see

Appendix B) as a roadmap for the Government of Canada and its allies. It highlights the most pressing needs and priorities of Afghan women and identifies policy responses which Canada can pursue to ensure their Afghanistan response aligns with their Feminist Foreign Policy and Feminist International Assistance Policy.

More details on the symposium and its participants can be found at womensregionalnetwork.org/canada4afghanwomen

PAKISTAN



Farzana Ali, Peshawar

WRN Pakistan Core Group Members Engagements

Farzana Ali, Peshawar: After the fall of Kabul, Ms. Farzana Ali visited Kabul to meet with women and cover stories of IDPs from isolated districts of Afghanistan. After returning to Pakistan, she met newly arrived Afghan families and published their stories on the AJJ TV website (<https://www.aaj.tv/news/30287417>).

Huma Fouladi, Quetta: During the recent flash floods in Baluchistan, Huma worked in various districts, providing cooked food for 98 families (IDPs) in Bakhtiar Abad camp for two

weeks, as well as distributing water filter plants for home, hygiene kits for women, ration, warm clothes, tents, mosquito nets, pillows, and blankets.

WRN Pakistan Core Group Members meetings

WRN Pakistan Core Group Members meetings were conducted via zoom on a bi-monthly basis on various agenda issues relevant to the ongoing activities, progress review, planning, and review of potential grants and funds where WRN planned to apply.

Challenges for CSOs, working on WPS in Pakistan

The increased repression, surveillance, and financial limitations in Pakistan have made it difficult for CSOs to continue working on their

interventions, particularly those relating to human rights advocacy or/and women, peace, and security. Many CSOs and international organizations have ceased operations in Pakistan. The situation is worsening the plight of those who require assistance with a variety of concerns. Pakistan's government enacted the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act in 2022. According to this statute, every NGO shall apply for a project-based MOU with a 6-month term that can be renewed. Since the law was in the approval process, the government has refused to issue or/and renew the MOU of numerous NGOs who, according to the government, have utilized foreign donations to participate in anti-national activities, hurting public interest or/and



WRN welcomed Pakistan's new country coordinator

Ms. Shad Begum, is an award-winning women's rights activist and a pioneer member of the WRN Core Group in Pakistan.

national security. This reasoning was utilized by law enforcement agents to crack down on NGOs who criticize the state or its institutions. The recently enacted FCRA is restrictive. Many CSOs leaders believe suppression, surveillance, and funding limitations will be tightened, even more, following this law.

Recognition of efforts to end Gender Based Violence in the year 2020

The Swedish Embassy in Pakistan and UN Women Pakistan awarded the Ombudsperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rukhshanda Naz for her extraordinary efforts and actions to End Gender Based Violence 2020. She was awarded during the *16 Days of Activism* event in Islamabad. Rukhshanda Naz is also the Regional President of the Women's Regional Network.

Support and Assistance for Afghan HRDs/Refugees

Since the US and the International Coalition Forces withdrew from Afghanistan, a large number of H/WRDs and journalists have sought safety in Pakistan. Afghan women



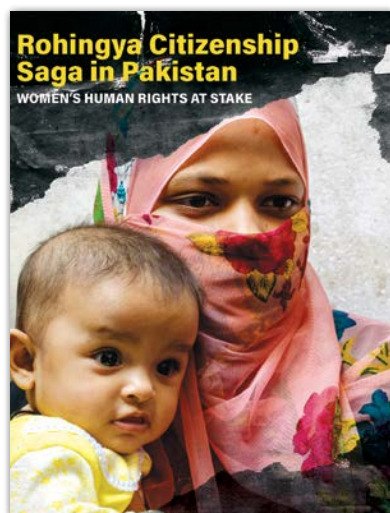
The Sweden Embassy in Pakistan and the UN Women Pakistan awarded the Ombudsperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rukhshanda Naz

HRDs approached WRN Pakistan for aid in finding secure accommodation, quick cash assistance, support and counseling in securing a visa, and so forth. Responding to these demands, the WRN Pakistan assisted many Afghan women HRDs and their families in securing safe lodging, visa counseling, other emergency support and in most cases, financial aid with the assistance of Vital Voices. CSOs in Pakistan are not officially engaged in assisting Afghan refugees as the Ministry of Interior does not authorize that activity, thus Afghan

asylum seekers can only expect limited assistance from the UNHCR and a few organizations willing to take the risk.

Printing and Dissemination of Rohingya Community Conversations Report and Policy Brief

The Rohingya Community Conversations Report and Policy Brief were printed and shared with civil society organizations, networks, and policymakers at the national level to disseminate the findings and the study's recommendations.



LOCAL WOMEN VOICES TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS: GAPS, CHALLENGES, AND WAY FORWARD

WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
AFGHANISTAN · PAKISTAN · INDIA

4 DECEMBER
8:00 PM TO 9:30 PM (PKT)
5:00 PM TO 4:30 PM (GMT)



MODERATOR
GULALAI - WOMEN RIGHTS ACTIVIST, MEMBER WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK



SHAHIDA SHAH
CEO, SHAH WOMEN RIGHTS ACTIVIST



FARAHNAZ ZAHIDI MOAZZAM
AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST



NOREEN FARHAN
HUMAN RIGHT ACTIVIST & HEALTH PRACTITIONER



AYSHA SHUJAAT
COUNTRY LEAD, GIRLS4GIRLS AND TRAINER



BUSHRA KHALIQ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WISE & HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Join the Conversation to End Violence Against Women

As someone interested in picking WPS agenda as a research topic for doctoral, the course provided by WRN gave me a very different perspective to look into the agenda. The topics of the course were picked up well and all the panel discussions triggered my mind to work for this agenda. I really look forward taking up the next WPS agenda course.

- Liza Gupta, India

WRN ONLINE COURSE Women's Peace & Security



16 Days of Activism

WRN Pakistan organized two very successful webinars as part of the *16 Days of Activism* campaign to highlight the issues and challenges facing women and young girls and how the local voices are contributing to End Violence Against Women.

The online webinar topic was *The Local Women's Voices to End Violence Against Women and Young Girls – Gaps, Challenges, and Way Forward*.

Ms Gulalai, a women rights activist and WRN Pakistan Core Group Member, moderated the first webinar, while the Pakistan Country Coordinator Shad Begum moderated the second webinar.

Renowned women rights activists, award-winning journalists, human rights activists, and health practitioners, participated in both webinars. Women's rights activists shared their experiences in working with women and girls, the challenges they are facing, and how they are addressing those challenges to ensure women's and girls' issues are not only highlighted but also resolved. This could encourage them to participate in the development process at all levels.

Participants took part in the conversation and expressed their interest by asking questions and sharing their comments. The third version of the WPS online course is scheduled to launch in April-May 2023.

South Asia Conference on Democratizing South Asia in the Digital Age

WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator Shad Begum participated in the South Asia Conference held on the 10th of October 2022, in Lahore.

Shad Begum joined the *Digital*

Education in the age of Taliban session as a panelist among other panelists from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) - Online course

The WRN Pakistan has initiated the country consultation process within WRN to prepare for the launch of WPS 3. WRN Pakistan will establish a committee in January 2023 to begin work on finalizing the sessions and course format, as well as identifying and selecting resource persons.



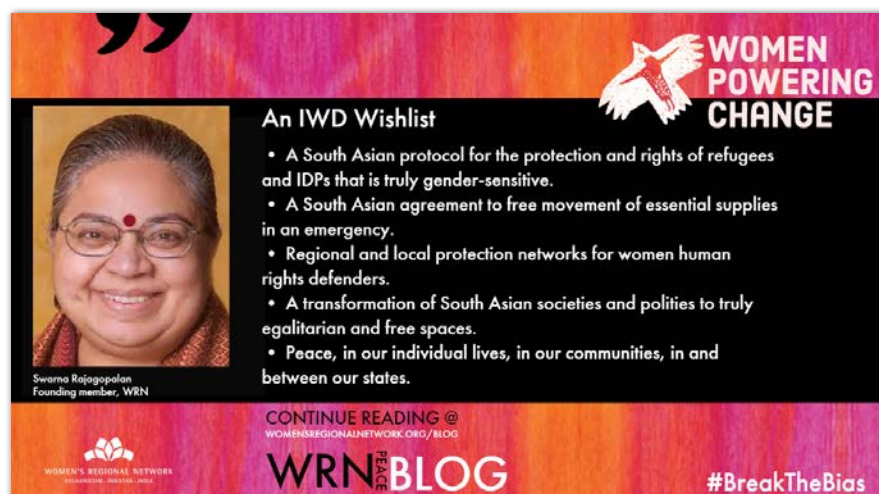
Participants at the South Asia Conference on "Democratizing South Asia in the Digital Age."

Celebration of International Women's Day, 8th of March 2022

- WRN Pakistan collected messages from its members for the *16 Days of Activism* campaign and posted them on WRN's social media platforms, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp groups.
- The U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security invited WRN to participate in their video series celebrating Women's History Month (WHM) and International Women's Day (IWD) in March 2022. WRN Pakistan collected 1-2 minute videos from member organizations, government officials, thought leaders, practitioners, and students in the WPS field to discuss the themes of WHM (Providing Healing, Promoting Hope, and IWD, and Break the Bias). The videos were also posted on WRN's social media platforms.

Pakistan's Country Coordinator 10 Days Visit to Germany and Switzerland

WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator Shad Begum was chosen by the Hanns Seidel Foundation Pakistan to attend the Practitioner Course on Local Governance in Munich, Germany, and Fribourg, Switzerland, in 2022. The relationship between the state and municipalities, their budgetary autonomy, the tasks they must fulfill, the challenges they encounter, and the role of the public in actively engaging in such processes, was the focus of the course. WRN's work in Pakistan focuses on strengthening and promoting inclusion in both society and relevant institutions on multiple levels. Thus, this is a space where the learnings from the training can be effectively applied.



WOMEN POWERING CHANGE

An IWD Wishlist

- A South Asian protocol for the protection and rights of refugees and IDPs that is truly gender-sensitive.
- A South Asian agreement to free movement of essential supplies in an emergency.
- Regional and local protection networks for women human rights defenders.
- A transformation of South Asian societies and politics to truly egalitarian and free spaces.
- Peace, in our individual lives, in our communities, in and between our states.

Swarna Rajagopalan
Founding member, WRN

CONTINUE READING @
WOMENSREGIONALNETWORK.ORG/BLOG

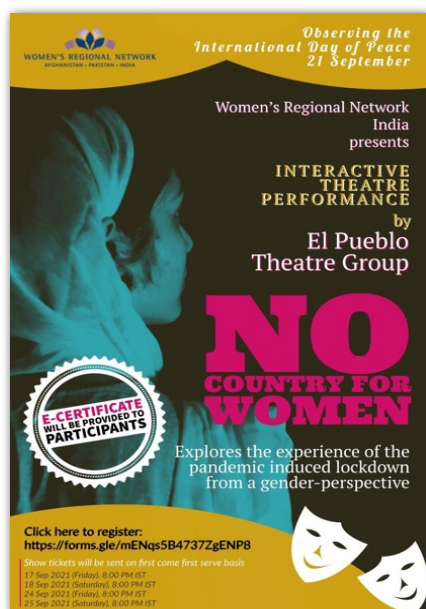
WRNBLOG

#BreakTheBias



Videos of Farzana Ali and Farhat Asif posted on social media platforms to promote International Women's Day and the #BreakTheBias campaign

INDIA



Theater performance, *No Country for Women*, by El Pueblo Theater Group, September 2021

WRN India commemorated International Day of Peace by presenting *No Country for Women*, an interactive theatre performance by the El Pueblo Theater Group, which explored the experience of pandemic-induced lockdown from a gender perspective.

Border and Broader Conversations

Border and Broader Conversations, organized by Sanjay Gathia (a civil rights activist who has been working on upholding the rights of Myanmarese refugees), is a bi-weekly series of closed-door roundtable discussions that bring together Myanmarese refugees and displaced people from both sides of the Indo-Myanmar border, creating a platform where they can share joint problems and connect to organizations and possible resource-persons from relevant groups to reach out to for help and build advocacy. India Core Group Member Priyanca Velath moderated multiple sessions in the series. WRN Board Member and India Core Group Member Rita Manchanda gave two presentations on gender-based violence on refugees, relevant laws in India, and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, focusing on the importance of documentation for advocacy.

WRN India Core Group Meeting 2022

WRN India Core Group members came together on the 18th of June 2022 for an offline meeting in New Delhi. Members discussed their plans and ideas for WRN India for the upcoming year, along with project proposals and possible opportunities for partnership with other organizations.



From left, India Core Group Members Priyanca Mathur, Abha Bhaiya, Rita Manchanda and India Country Coordinator Ananya Kundu at WRN India Core Group Meeting, Delhi.



WRN welcomed India's new Country Coordinator

Ananya Kundu is a youth peace advocate, feminist activist, researcher and writer.

Country Coordinator for India invited as a speaker at the Global Youth Peace Fest 2022, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

In recognition of her work as a youth peace advocate, Country Coordinator for India Ananya Kundu participated as a speaker and active youth leader at the 15th Global Youth Peace Fest (GYPF) 2022 which took place at the International Youth Center (IYC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 30th of September to 2nd of October. The theme for the conference was *Enhancing Youth Engagement & Sustainable Development in the Post-Covid World*. It was organized jointly by Yuvsatta (youth for peace) in India and IYC, under Ministry of Youth & Sports, Malaysia.

WRN members contributed as experts in the following:

- Rita Manchanda, WRN Board member and India Core Group member, was the IMADR Asia Consultant on developing *Strategy for A South Asia Action Plan* to foster communal harmony, social cohesion, the rule of law and human rights: IMADR EU Project 2021 – 2022.

• Publications:

- > Chapter 17: “Gender Conflict and Forced Migration in India: Human Rights Perspectives” in Saskia Sassen & Natalia Ribas-Mateos edited, *A Research Agenda for Gender and Global Migration*. Elgar Publishing, 2022.
- > Chapter: “Empowering or Entrapping in Indigenous Patriarchy? Political Motherhood in India’s Northeast Conflict Zones” in Hamoon Khelghat-Doost and Deniz Ülke Arıboğan

edited, *Constructing Motherhood Identity Against Political Violence: Beyond Crying Mothers*. Palgrave Springer, 2022.

- > Paper: “Social Contestations – Caste System and Gender”, *Leipzig* (hybrid), Sept 23, 2021.

- UN Forum on Minority Issues 14th session. Panel: *Conflict Prevention and the Protection of HR of Minorities*, 1-2 December, Geneva.
- India’s Regulatory Regime for Asylum Seekers & Refugees: Revisiting the ‘National Refugee Law’ Debate, organized by DAJI, SAFHR and IIC. 3 September 2022.
- Priyanka, WRN India Core Group member, launched her book *Discovering New India Multiculturalism Pluralism Harmony* on 18th of September 2022. JAIN University Press has published the book, where she is a professor. She was also the International Consultant with the Forum of Federations, Canada, for its Gender Equality and Federalism Programme in Myanmar.



WRN India Country Coordinator, Ananya Kundu, (third from right) at Youth Peace Fest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

APWLD Grant for Feminist Participatory Action Research (Migration FPAR) on Human Rights of Women Migrants 2022-2024

WRN India has been awarded the \$14,000 USD Feminist Participatory Action Research Grant on Human Rights of Women Migrants by Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD). Under this grant WRN India is undertaking a one and half year long project to collectivize and mobilize the North East women migrant community working in the beauty and hospitality sector in Indian metropolitan cities so they can advocate for their rights. The project also aims to build evidence on the experiences of migrant women working in these informal sectors and understand their migration in context of militarization and security concerns in the North East. WRN India's Country Coordinator



Ananya Kundu and Dr. Priyanca Mathur from WRN India, alongside members from 6 other South Asian organizations who have been awarded the MUAH FPAR Grant

Ananya Kundu, who is also the young researcher in the project, along with Core Group Member Priyanca Mathur, who is her mentor, attended the first project training in October at Chiang Mai, Thailand.

They were trained by APWLD on FPAR tools and methodology. The team has been conducting its first round of community consultations in Delhi and Bangalore to finalize the research design.



From left, Dr. Priyanca Mathur Velath, WRN India Core Group member, and Ananya Kundu, WRN India Country Coordinator presenting at the APWLD training in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

National Youth Peace Camp, Tripura

Ananya Kundu, WRN India Country Coordinator, was invited as one of the chief guests at the National Youth Peace Camp that took place in Tripura from 16th to 18th December 2022. The event was organized by a consortium of national and international youth peace organizations and the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, Government of India. Ananya delivered a talk on SD5- Gender Equality and the need to view Peace, Poverty, Climate Change issues through a feminist lens. The event saw participation from youth groups from all states of North-East India.

EAST AFRICA



Celebrating women champions of peace during the International Women's Day

Introduction

Women's Regional Network, East Africa (WRN-EA) was founded in 2019 following several consultations in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. It was inspired by the WRN South Asia Annual Board Meeting in May 2018, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, which two of the founding members of the WRN-EA attended.

WRN-EA is a network of leading women activists in peacebuilding, feminism and human rights defense in East Africa with a focus on organizing dialogues and conversations in which women feel safe to share their lived realities. Only then are they able to move outwards, advocating to the end gender-based violence.

Our Mission is to galvanize feminist personal and collective agency, spirituality and leadership to heal lives in the region.

Our Goal is to build a movement of women unleashing their personal and collective power to heal themselves and their communities.

Our Approach

We raise questions that challenge the patriarchal power dynamics that have hindered women's access to peace and wholeness. Storytelling (Conversations) for healing is a central approach to our work. Given the long history of "peacelessness" in the region, there is need to create safe spaces for healing so as to build motivation, power and resilience as a prerequisite to propagating ideas, opinions, perspectives, experiences and solutions for the African women.

Our Structure

WRN-EA has its regional offices in Kenya and country chapters in Uganda and Kenya.

In 2022, WRN-EA convened rural, vulnerable women from the two regions, creating safe spaces and opportunities for them to hold conversations that foster their healing and wellbeing.

During the reporting period, the network intentionally selected two regions in Uganda and Kenya to allow groups of vulnerable women to discuss the types of conflicts they face, identify those that had hurt them most, and get involved in developing solutions to address the situation. The conversations helped women peace builders in these communities understand that structural inequalities are one of the key drivers of the conflicts they experience. It is their responsibility to engage and reclaim their freedom



The Namayingo District Resident Commissioner (male on the front row), with the participants from Tumbula Community Empowerment Initiative, after closing the 2-day WRN-U training. On the left is the Local Council Secretary for Production.



An Artistic Impression of the Women Empowerment Centre to be set up in Eastern Uganda

Women's Empowerment Centres

WRN-Global supported the Uganda chapter to initiate the development of Women's Empowerment Centre to assist women in rural communities to reclaim their power, embrace skills, and access healing. The Centre will provide holistic wellness to collectively organize, deliberate and hold conversations on

a diversity of issues of their concern. Acquisition of the one acre piece of land in Namayingo District is an anchor to support the network to implement its vision beyond. WRN-Uganda looks forward to more support to accomplish this dream. The Kenya Chapter has followed suit and acquired a parcel of land in the heart of Maasailand to develop a Safe Haven for Prevention and Recovery from Gender Based Violence.

by prioritizing information gathering and sharing about their well-being.

In Uganda, the Community Conversations focused on Eastern Uganda, ranked as the poorest region in Uganda. In Kenya, the focus is on the Maasai Women of Kajiado District, an indigenous pastoralist community whose women suffered the multiple tragedies of female genital mutilation, polygamy, ignorance and illiteracy, patriarchy and poverty.

This was aimed at making women's inner peace flourish, through building their dignity and power to address the shame and anger within.

The community conversations carried out included mitigating post COVID-19 among women and girls living with disabilities; young mothers in small scale business in eastern Uganda, and documenting and holding healing sessions among young women attacked and harassed during political campaigns in central Uganda.

In Kenya, with the support of individuals and Sustainable Africa Futures Foundation, we were able to host four community conversations

and celebrate peace champions during the World's Womens Day and International Peace Day.

Another huge success for Kenya was the crowning of one WRN-EA member, Milkah Mukami as the Mrs Universe Kenya 2022. Her project is using the model of conversations to end gender based violence – turning the victims into victors through the spirit of sisterhood and creation of healing healers. We look forward to leveraging on the award to build a Safe Haven for the prevention and protection of women from gender based violence.



Member of WRN-EA is crowned Mrs. Universe Kenya due to her efforts to heal victims of gender based violence

The Future

WRN-EA has made substantial inroads in two countries in East Africa. We look forward to gaining more strength in these two countries, as well as gaining roots in all the other East African Countries including Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and DRC. WRN-EA is indebted to Global WRN, UAF-Africa, Haella Foundation and Sustainable Futures Africa Foundation for the continuous support that has enabled the network to thrive through this difficult season.



Members of WRN-EA

COMMUNICATIONS

WRN communication is vital in advancing the Women Peace and Security agenda and reach out to women who are facing discrimination, violence and those who need support. Through the communication platforms (Social Media, Podcast, Campaigns, Statements and Blog) WRN actively engages with policymakers, global leaders, women leaders in the region and like-minded organizations in advocating particularly for the rights of Afghan women and the agenda of Afghan women leaders based out of Afghanistan. At the same time, through different mediums, WRN networks based in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and East Africa voice out the rights and protection of Women and Girls.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

TWITTER (@WRNnews): WRN Twitter engagements have recorded a significant increase in the period reported. Twitter has currently 3,625 followers. The total reach out is 3,855,000. The Twitter platform has been the network's most effective communication and advocacy platform.

FACEBOOK (@WomensRegionalNetwork): WRN Facebook followers reached 9,225 for year 2022. The total reach has been 575,000. Additionally, there has been a drop in the engagement rate of Facebook followers compared to previous years. However, via Facebook, WRN continues to engage with women from the region, including Afghanistan.

INSTAGRAM (womensregionalnetwork): Instagram has been an effective medium to reach WRN's audience, mainly through Instagram videos in recent months. The number of followers steadily increased as engagement reached 31,374. Instagram connects WRN with an issue-specific focused young audience in the region.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Part of WRN's Social Media engagement was based on the below campaigns where local women leaders had the opportunity to connect with the network in voicing their struggles, opportunities and hope. Messages were shared through graphics, video clips, interviews and testimonies.

1. Women Peace and Security in Afghanistan: Stop Systematic Gender-based discrimination
2. Women Advancing Regional Peace
3. Women Powering Change
4. Right to Education for Afghan girls
5. Social Protection to End Child Labour: Special focus on Afghan Children
6. The People who are forgotten Twice: LGBT Refugees
7. Protection for Refugee Children
8. Status of Women in Afghanistan
9. Women's Voices from Afghanistan
10. Women's Agenda for Peace
11. Canada for Afghan Women
12. Let Girls Learn: Girl Child Day
13. Speak up for the survivors: Stop Violence against Women

WRN SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH 2022



31,374



575,000



3,855,000



PODCASTS

WRN's Women, Peace & Rights Podcast published six episodes in 2022. The podcast has given a platform for the women leaders to voice out the struggle to realize the Women, Peace and Security agenda and challenge the current realities. All the episodes can be accessed at www.womensregionalnetwork.org/podcast

The Tragedy of Afghanistan: Unveiling Taliban's Six Months in Power & the Situation of Women

EPISODE 5, FEB 25, 2022

Guest: Zarqa Yafatali

Host: Akanksha Khullar

Human Rights in Afghanistan Today: Impact on Women and Girls

EPISODE 6, MAR 07, 2022

Guest: Heather Barr, Associate Director, Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch in Pakistan.

Host: Judge Najla Ayoubi, Chief of Coalition & Global Programs at Every Woman Treaty.

Women in Politics: Achievements & Challenges in Pakistan

EPISODE 7, APR 17, 2022

Guest: Bushra Gohar, Former Member of Parliament, Pakistan

Host: Rukhshanda Naz, Ombudsperson, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Human Rights Violations Amidst Political Crisis in Sri Lanka

EPISODE 8, APR 27, 2022

Guest: Nimalka Fernando, Lawyer, President of International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination (IMADR), Former Commissioner of the Office of Missing Persons, Sri Lanka.

Host: Rita Manchanda, Women's Regional Network (WRN) Board Member.

Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Women in Pakistan Judiciary

EPISODE 9, MAY 29, 2022

Guest: Justice (Rtd) Nasira Iqbal, Former Justice of the Lahore High Court, Pakistan

Host: Rukhshanda Naz, Ombudsperson, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

The Movement to End Violence Against Women: Progress, Changes & Challenges

EPISODE 10, JUNE 8, 2022

Guest: Radhika Coomaraswamy, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General and the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict | Sri Lanka

Host: Amalini De Sayrah, a writer, journalist and editor, Sri Lanka

Access to Safety & Resources Continue to Fade for Afghan Refugees

JUNE 26, 2022, EPISODE 11

Guest: Dr. Habiba Sarabi, Member of Afghan Peace Negotiation Team, former Deputy Chair of High Peace Council and former Bamyan Governor

Host: Rita Manchanda, Women's Regional Network (WRN) Board Member.

STATEMENTS

Issues by WRN

December 2022: Condemns Taliban Ban of Female students from Universities in Afghanistan.

<https://twitter.com/WRNnews/status/1606190736340389888?s=20&t=F1EVOt3eMlvPt2nkZmfrsQ>

October 2022: Afghan & Canada Symposium 2022 Call to Action

<https://twitter.com/WRNnews/status/1580100757755662336?s=20&t=F1EVOt3eMlvPt2nkZmfrsQ>

August 2022: Condemn the Violation of Women's Rights in Afghanistan from 2021 to 2022

<https://twitter.com/WRNnews/status/15592488C43757465601?s=20&t=F1EVOt3eMlvPt2nkZmfrsQ>

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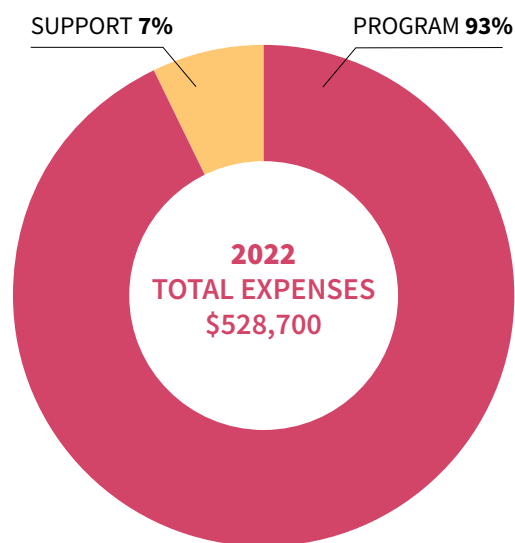
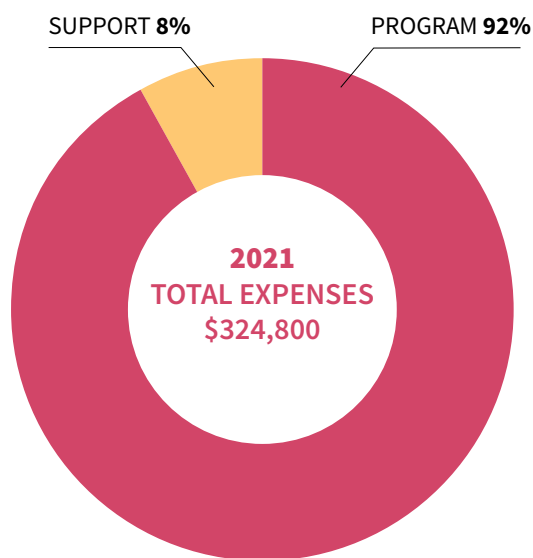
Open Letter to President Joe Biden from 4000+ women of #Afghanistan & the World. Taking funds from Afghans is the most inappropriate response for a country that is going through the worst humanitarian crisis in its history.

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:93cd3c5a-09cc-48c4-9154-c48bdd681490#pageNum=1>

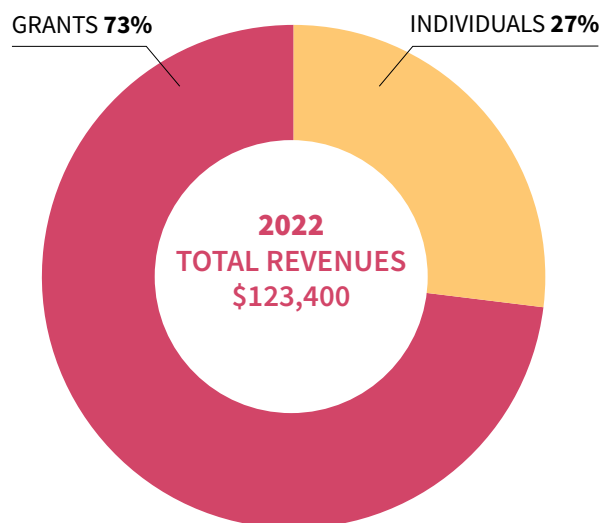
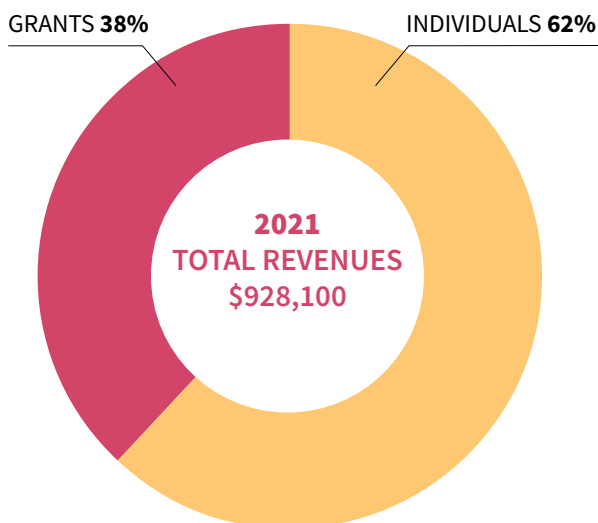


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These funds were used solely to establish Safe Houses and Apartments in Afghanistan for women human rights defenders and their families. Over 450 Afghan women and their families were given protection, security and living essentials resulting in over 3,000 Afghans served with these donations. Thank you!

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These days I scream silently into the earth and
beg to have my sanity returned.
Don't gift me a new breed of despair, I tell her.
Don't offer me a such a vast variety of heartache.

Don't offer me anything.

Of course, we want to believe that crushing skulls won't crush souls
but I'm not thinking of the dead here.
They have fought their battles; they have moved on.
They don't live here daily haunted by the face of humanity.

Oh! look, the sun sets again in colours of blood and plasma.
They say the sky is on fire. They say so was she.
Look how the clouds make faces of the recently deceased.
Look how the skies darken into obsidian, just like her hair.

For my Afghan and Iranian sisters

Shikha S. Lamba is a Jewellery Designer, Co-editor Coffee and
Conversations Magazine & Poet



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Box 6552, Denver, CO 80206

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