

Working Regionally for Peace, Security and Justice

WRN SUMMARY REPORT 2019



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA



Who we are:

A network of women within and beyond borders committed to strengthening the security of women and enhancing women's leadership to take action in preventing conflict, building peace, and protecting women's rights.

Values:

- Commit to working as part of a regional and global movement that builds our collective voice, power and influence.
- Promote and sustain leadership that is participatory and inclusive.
- Support appropriate strategies to ensure each participant's personal security is safeguarded.
- Ensure transparency, accountability and responsible use of our financial resources.
- Strive for excellence, while being creative, bold and courageous.



Introduction

The Core Purpose of WRN is to amplify the voices of unheard and marginalized women and together address the interlinked issues of peace and security, justice and governance and growing militarization in South Asia.

The Women's Regional Network, founded in 2011, is expanding, growing more diverse and advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in South Asia. Our work on insecurity and conflict from 2011-2016 brought us to the question of forced displacement. Across the region — across the world — people are moving in large numbers within and beyond borders, unwelcome wherever they go. The last two rounds of WRN's qualitative research documenting the voices of women in remote and often conflicted regions of the three countries in our Network shows that no matter what forces you to leave your home and source of livelihood — ethnic violence, conflict over land acquisition, environmental degradation — forced displacement results in impoverishment and degradation of basic rights. The Network members became increasingly alarmed that migration policies and practices by sovereign states and international humanitarian organizations failed to recognize the unique and desperate needs of women and their children.



WRN Team and Summit Participants in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 2019.

The South Asia Summit on Forced Displacement: Why Gender Matters

In 2019, the members took the questions and the priorities of the women whose lives we document in our Community Conversations to a broader and more impactful constituency. We devoted our limited financial and human resources to a convening in Kuala Lumpur,



WRN members from India and Pakistan (L-R) Bushra Gohar, Abha Bhaiya, Shad Begum, Rita Manchanda.

Malaysia in partnership with International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP), in late February, 2019 with 55 selected delegates from 17 countries representing a cross-section of UN Agencies, INGO's, grassroots organizations and academics engaged in responding to this humanitarian crisis. *The South Asia Summit on Forced Displacement: Why Gender Matters* was our effort to bring policy makers and practitioners together to focus on the need for a regional protocol on migration that embraced gender equality. The Network members led extensive consultations on a draft *Statement of Principles and Call for Action*

to be debated and adopted at the Summit. On World Refugee Day in 2019, WRN released the *Call for Action* which was adopted at the Summit. It expressed WRN's deep concern about the exponential increase in the population of internally displaced persons in South Asia, a large majority of whom are women and girls.

Expanding the Network

In 2019 we gained a stronger foothold in expanding our vision and mission not only across South Asia, but also to East Africa, where leading peace activists in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe have come together to give a concrete shape to WRN being modeled in the region. Women peace activists seek solidarity globally to not only strengthen our collective voice but to facilitate the creation of common policy frameworks. We collaborate to ensure our rights and demands are not invisible and to build a foundation, for those who follow us, of a stronger, more feminist vision of the world.

The East Africa Network will work with identified liberal religious leaders, both women and men, to help them better understand how their power over their congregations can be counterproductive to the institutions' doctrine of peace and abundant life. The network will also aim at strengthening the power of women, using the scriptures, to determine how they can live abundant lives, explore their potential and contribute without being exploited. Trainers will work with activists and organizers for change within religious institutions.

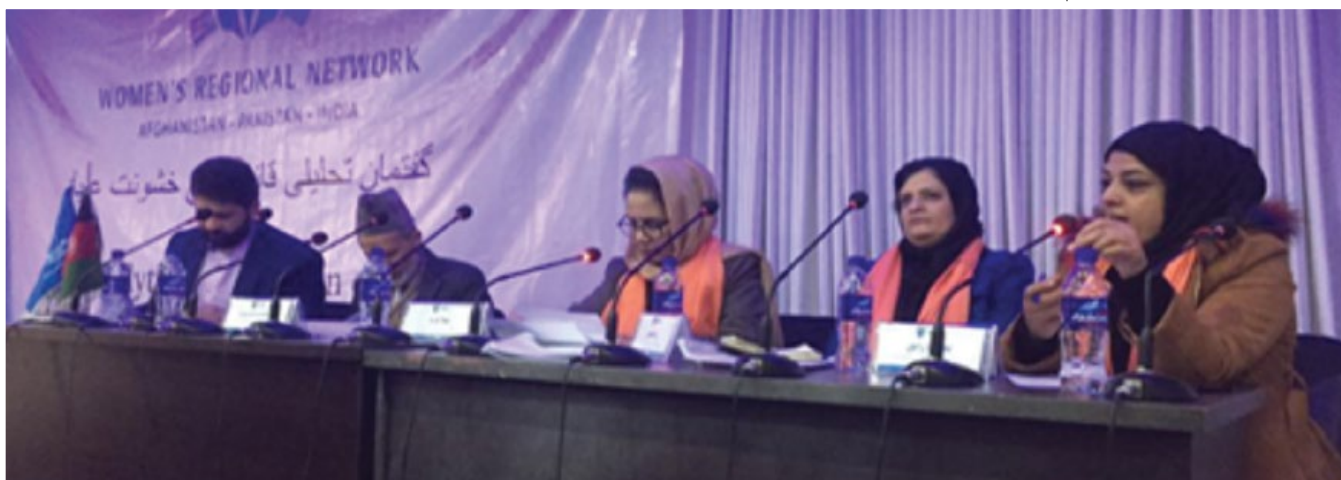


Outreach Activities

As a result of the realities of shrinking democratic spaces, increased aggressive political forces and assault on civil society activists, WRN across all three countries had to re-strategise its ways of working through which we could continue to deliver the same message but using different means. Sometimes working on some of our projects meant inviting an open threat to both WRN and its team, therefore it was deemed necessary that WRN's resources and energies be diverted in other strategic interventions in creating general awareness about the significance of issues pertaining to social justice and inclusive, sustainable peace.

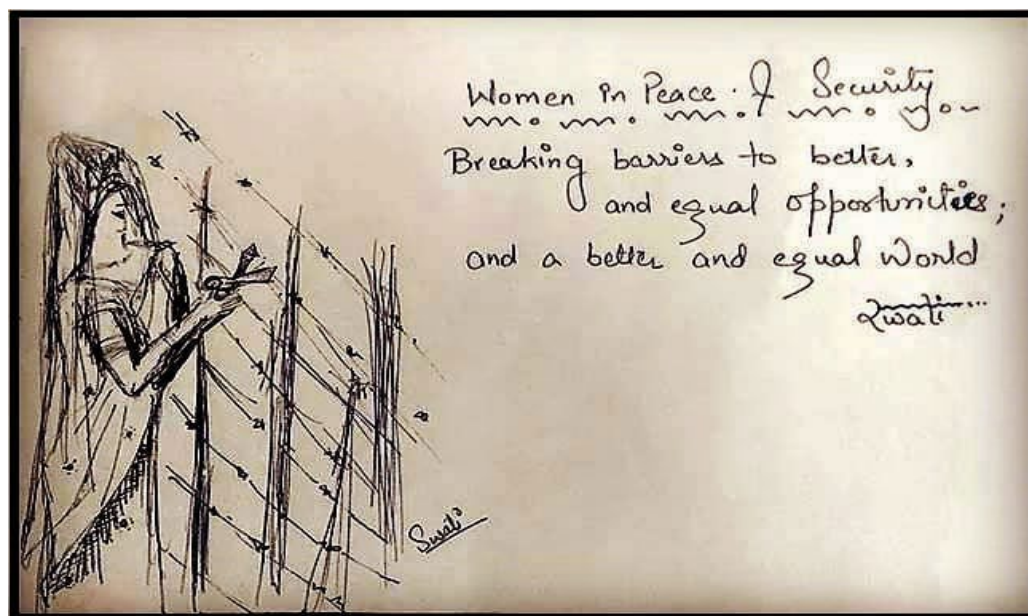
WRN has been busy throughout 2019 reiterating the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in varied ways through its Outreach programs and activities in different countries.

The activities in **Afghanistan** included roundtable discussions, analytical reading of laws, mural paintings, film screenings and press conferences. The roundtable discussions focused on the significance of Women's political participation, and was broadcast across Afghanistan through the well-known all female TV channel Zan TV. One of the most significant of such interventions in Afghanistan was on the International Day of Peace, 2019. WRN with its partners EPD (Equality for Peace and Democracy) and WCLRF (Women and Children Legal Research Foundation) held a press conference in the presence of civil society organisations and government officials to speak on the importance of the participation of women and youth in peace processes. This was also used as an opportunity to



Panel Discussion on ERAW Law, Afghanistan.

"A woman's longing for restoration of peace beyond borders". Drawing by Swati Dey, a participant of WRN's WPS online Course from India. Students of WPS2 was asked to draw their idea of Women in #War & #Conflict.



convey a message to the National Unity Government and the Peace Talk delegates of the significant potential role women and youth can play in building long-lasting substantial peace in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, WRN, through its outreach programs, engaged with more than 150 students. In addition, through TV broadcasts, and press-conferences, it could spread the message to thousands across the country.



WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator Rehana Wagha giving a lecture on Women, War and Conflict at Allama Iqbal Open University.

In Pakistan, WRN organized a lecture series at the university level. The first lecture was on "Women, War and Conflict" at Allama Iqbal Open University to engage young students in a dialogue on the issues of Women, Peace and Security. This lecture series was attended by more than 250 students at six AIOU campuses in different cities.

Continuing with the lecture series in institutes of higher education, WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator delivered a talk at Fatema Jinnah Women's University (FJWU) on the topic of Women in War and Conflict. This event proved to be a great opportunity for engaging with the students and faculty. Through the lecture series in different universities in Pakistan WRN could reach out to more than 300 students in different cities.



WRN Pakistan holds a Round Table discussion to mark 20 years of UNSCR 1325

WRN Pakistan also organized a Round Table Discussion on the topic of "UNSCR 1325-Twenty Years of Implementation and Way Forward". The participants included academics, journalists, social justice workers stressed upon the recognition of women's role in peacebuilding processes, the challenges of Implementation and how WRN can play an effective role in creating awareness and implementing UNSCR 1325 in Pakistan.



Street play produced by WRN India.

WRN India, focusing on the need to spread the word on inclusive sustainable peace, reached out to institutes of higher education to build stronger collaborations and engage with a wide section of the youth. This involved different activities like poster-making and essay-writing competitions, interactive roundtable discussions and panel discussions. Two of the significant events as a part of WRN's outreach program in India were on 21st September (International Day of Peace) and 16th December, 2019. On September 21st, WRN India organized events in the different campuses of Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) that engaged students through interactive activities. The discursive conversation in the form of a panel discussion at JAIN University Bangalore on 16th December 2019, came at a very meaningful time amidst a lot of political tensions in the country when the student community in general wanted a lot of questions to be answered. The discussion broadly explored the concept of WPS beyond zones of armed conflict to recognize the difference between negative peace and positive peace, how it is relevant to our everyday living and insecurities, and the latent conflicts in so-called peaceful societies.

WRN India also partnered with a student theatre group to produce and conceptualise a street-play titled *Mai..Mai Kahan se hu? (ME..Where am I from?)*. This short play draws a trajectory between public and private forms of violence and displacements that not only affect women but also connects them across boundaries.

In India, through its Outreach activities WRN reached out to approximately 250 students and young adults in different locations through colleges and universities in Delhi and Bangalore. The street-play, which focused on the WPS agenda and the gendered impact of displacement, attracted approximately 200 more people across different AUD campuses in Delhi.

Research and Community Conversations

In Afghanistan, WRN carried out a significant and timely research on the political participation of women both as voters and electoral candidates in the last parliamentary election. The research was carried out in three provinces — Kabul, Logar and Parwan — and a descriptive method of analysis of data has been used to prepare the report. The methodology includes data collection through questionnaires, personal interviews and focus group discussions. A total of 323 women responded to the questionnaire. Interviews were also conducted with 5 leading women who played an important role in the elections: Ms Shukria Paykan, who contested in the elections; Ms Maryam Arwan and Aziz Rafia, election observers in Kabul; Hasiba Efata from Parwan and Huma Ahmadi from Logar. The WRN team in Afghanistan is now preparing to launch the research report in the month of February 2020.

WRN Pakistan commenced its research for the fourth round of Community Conversations (CCs). These CCs have been conducted with Rohingya refugee women residing in Sindh Province of Pakistan. Pretesting as well as the interviews have been completed. First draft of the report is expected to be ready by the end of March 2020. The final research report will be completed in April followed by launches in major cities of Pakistan.

Advocacy

WRN Pakistan launched its advocacy campaign to lobby with the Parliamentarians for the drafting and adoption of National IDP Policy. For this purpose WRN Country Coordinator met with Senator Farhatullah Babar and Ms. Nafeesa Shah to present WRN research reports and recommendations for ameliorating the plight of women IDPs in Pakistan.

In Afghanistan, WRN met with President of Afghanistan, the Second Vice-President, Members of Parliament, and the High Peace Council Secretariat, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the First Lady, and the CEO to discuss the significant contributions women are willing to provide to build a sustainable peace in Afghanistan, security sector reforms to make them more gender sensitive and gender inclusive, as well as the need to establish a Gender and Peace Studies Institute, and a gender sensitive policy to respond to forced displacements. The WRN team in its meetings with the High Peace Council constantly

WRN members with US
Special Envoy
Ambassador Khalilzad



demanded for women's participation in Peace Jirga. The high point in 2019 was when they were successful in introducing 7 women in the Jirga, out of which 3 are WRN core members acting as facilitators in different committees in the Peace Jirga. The WRN team in Afghanistan, along with other women's rights activists had also met US Special Envoy Ambassador Khalilzad on the Afghan Peace Talks, emphasizing the meaningful inclusion of women in the peace talks.

Regional Engagements

Afghanistan and Pakistan Emerging Young Leaders Congress : WRN supported *The Afghanistan and Pakistan Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress* in January, 2019. The Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS) in Islamabad, Pakistan hosted this two-day congress, a cross border and regional initiative, with the support of N-Peace Network in Islamabad from January 14-15, 2019. This is an initiative by IPDS Founder/CEO and WRN Board member, Farhat Asif. Participants included WRN Afghanistan Country Coordinator, Fatema Kohestani and WRN Afghanistan Core Group member Fariha Easar and WRN Pakistan Core Group Member Shad Begum. The Congress focused on young women leaders from both countries to build synergies and work together to promote peace and tolerance in their communities by taking joint initiatives.

Promoting Afghan Women Through US Government Advocacy and Social Media Campaign: Between April to July 2019, WRN took the lead for a collaborative advocacy process demanding an inclusive Afghan Peace Process. WRN raised funds to collaborate with the Afghan Women's Network and contract with ICRW to advocate with the US Congress and the Trump Administration for an inclusive peace process in the then on-going talks between the US government and the Taliban. The advocacy campaign was successful in securing signatures of 77 bi-partisan members of Congress on a letter addressed to Secretary of State Pompeo urging Afghan women's inclusion in the peace process and protection of their rights. This two pronged initiative also included a media campaign to bolster wider citizen support for this issue, and to place pressure on and oversight of the Trump Administration. In early August 2019, the Women in Negotiations (WIN) Act was tabled in the US Congress in pursuit of this advocacy campaign.

WRN launched its 2nd edition of the free on-line course on Women, Peace and Security: WRN received an overwhelming response from university students as well as young professionals. This year the course was also extended to learners from Sri Lanka. The challenge was to select only 37 candidates from many qualified applicants. The on-line sessions commenced on 31st August and were held fortnightly until December 21st, 2019. Leading women peace advocates both from the region and from the USA contributed as invaluable resource persons — a total of 13 in number — for the course. The course included discussions on the four pillars of Women, Peace and Security agenda — Prevention, Protection, Participation, Relief and Recovery. There were also sessions on the gendered dimensions of reconstruction and reconciliation, countering gender stereotypes and violent extremism, women in violent political struggles, non-traditional and human security paradigms, as well as how best to use cyber-space to foster social and feminist movements in South Asia, and using film-making and story-telling as a means to foster the WPS agenda.

Civil Society Engagements and Participation in International Forums

Civil Society Declaration for Revitalizing South Asian Regional Cooperation: Swarna Rajagopalan, WRN Founding and Board member from India, represented WRN at this convening of civil society networks across South Asia in Colombo, Sri Lanka in late January. The delegates focused their deliberations on a South Asian regional agenda for collective advocacy on human rights, peace and democracy.

In Afghanistan, WRN Country Coordinator and several members played a significant role in the **Women Coalition for Peace**. This coalition is led by Afghan Women's Network, which has more than 200 members. In December 2019, there was a conference to review the annual strategy of where WRN played a key role in moderating the discussion.

WRN was represented by its Pakistan Coordinator, Rehana Wagha, at the South Asia Regional Institute on the Study and Practice of Strategic Nonviolent Action that was held in Dhulikhel, Nepal and in the Asian Action Institute training programs in early 2019. Here she also presented WRN's work in Pakistan and the importance of the non-violent strategy of the women's movement in Pakistan.

In October 2019, WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator was selected for the Asian Gender Trainers Network Program organized by the International Cooperation Center (ICC) at the Korean Institute of Gender Equality Promotion and Education (KIGEPE).

WRN's members honored for their work as peacebuilders and human rights defenders



WRN Afghanistan nominated and campaigned for **Zarqa Yaftali** for the N-Peace Award 2019. Zarqa is a WRN board member from Afghanistan and is one of the leading women in the Afghan society bringing forward through evidence-based research the everyday challenges faced by women and girls in Afghanistan. She is a recipient of the N-Peace award 2019 for her work in advancing women, peace and security issues through advocacy and research. The award ceremony will take place in Thailand in March 2020.



Rukhshanda Naz's appointment as Ombudsperson in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a rare opportunity to celebrate women's achievements in Pakistan while working to advance women's human rights and empowerment.

Members and Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Abha Bhaiya: India, Founder, Jagori Delhi and Jagori Rural

Swarna Rajagopalan: India, Founding Member, Prajnya Trust

Rita Manchanda: India, Director (research), South Asia Forum for Human Rights

Saumya Uma: India, Assistant Professor, School of Law, Governance and Citizenship, Ambedkar University Delhi.

Farhat Asif: Pakistan, Founding President of Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies

Rukhshanda Naz: Pakistan, Executive Director, Legal Aid and Awareness Services

Judge Najla Ayubi: Afghanistan, Former Deputy Country Representative, Asia Foundation

Zarqa Yaftali: Afghanistan, Executive Director, Women and Children Legal Research Foundation

Nimalka Fernando: Sri Lanka, President, International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)

Patricia Cooper: US and Canada, Founder/Convener, Women's Regional Network

STAFF

Fatema Kohestani: Afghanistan Country Coordinator

Padmini Ghosh: India Country Coordinator

Rehana Wagha: Pakistan Country Coordinator

GLOBAL ADVISORS

Cynda Collins Arsenault: President, Secure World Foundation

Jane Barry: Principal, Linksbridge

Stephanie Morgan: Western Union

Daisy Khan: ED, American Society for Muslim Advancement

Julie Shaw: Founder, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

Amy Claire Wild: Global Marketing Strategist

Bushra Gohar: Former Parliamentarian, Pakistan

Mary Jane Real: Co-Director, Urgent Action Fund-Asia Pacific, Philippines

Nafis Sadik, M.D.: Former Director, UN Population Fund (UNFPA), former Special Advisor to UN Secretary General

Dr. Sima Samar: Chairperson, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

Huma Safi: Former Deputy Director, Equality for Peace and Democracy, Afghanistan

Wazhma Abdulrahimzay: Former Human Rights Program Officer, Open Society Afghanistan

Nargis Nehan: Ex-Acting Minister of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Afghanistan

Dr. Syeda Saiyidain Hameed: Vice Chairperson South Asia Foundation, India

Hossai Wardak: Former Chief of Staff to First Lady Rula Ghani, Afghanistan

Abdul Wahed (Zia) Moballegh: Former Country Director for Heinrich Böll Foundation, Afghanistan

WRN Membership

India – Core Members

Zainab Akhter (Ladakh)
Suvarna Damle (Nagpur)
Sahba Hussain (Delhi)
Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal
(Jammu & Kashmir)
Rakhee Kalita (Assam)
Rita Manchanda (Delhi)
Richa Singh (Delhi)
Sarika Sinha (Bhopal)
Nusrat Sultanpuri (Jammu & Kashmir)
Saumya Uma (Mumbai, Delhi)
Sudha Vargese (Bihar)

India – Associate Members

Priyana Mathur Velath (Bangalore)
Rukmini Sen (Delhi)
Bader Syeed (Chennai)
Geeta Ramaseshan (Chennai)
Ufra Mir (Kashmir)
Lubna Qadri (Kashmir)
Nighat Shafi Pandit (Kashmir)
Diksha Poddar (Delhi)

Pakistan – Core Members

Farhat Asif (Islamabad, Azad Jammu
& Kashmir)
Romana Bashir (Punjab)
Shad Begum (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)
Sadia Chaudhary (Azad Jammu
& Kashmir)
Huma Fouladi (Balochistan)
Gulalai (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)
Nadia Ibrahim (Gilgit Baltistan)
Saima Jasam (Panjab Province)
Farhat Parveen (Sindh Province)
Rukhshanda Naz (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)
Zohra Nawaz (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)
Mangla Sharma (Sindh)
Zahida Munir (Balochistan)
Neelum Hussain (Lahore)
Farzana Ali (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)

Afghanistan – Core Members

Fariha Easar (Kabul)
Rangina Hamidi (Kandahar)
Frishta Karimi (Kabul)
Amina Mayar (Kabul)
Najla Raheel (Kabul)
Maryam Rahmani (Kabul)
Humira Saqib (Kabul)
Forozan Rasooli (Hemland)
Nabila Noori (Bamian)
Lema Anwary, (Kabul)
Lia Jawad (Kabul)
Adila Ahmadi (Bamyan)
Masouda Kohistani (Kapisa)

WRN's Milestones

2010

Patricia Cooper conducts a listening tour to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, with large and small groups of women from civil society organizations. Women unanimously agree a network would add value to their work; agree to focus on corruption and extremism as they impact women's security.

2011

Launch of Network in Nepal with four representatives from each country, plus international delegates. Network members add "militarization of aid and development" to their mission. Agree to document the experiences of women in remote and conflicted regions of each country.

2012

- Governing structure established with a Steering Committee from the region.
- Founding members determined that documenting the voices of women in the most conflicted and sometimes remote regions of their three countries would be the focus of the network. That qualitative research would be called Community Conversations. The recommendations from this research would form the basis of advocacy with policy makers nationally, regionally and globally.

2013

- Completed Community Conversations in all three countries.
- Convened a Regional Consultation meeting for 75 stakeholders at the International Center in Delhi, India.
- Released India Community Conversations Report.

2014

- Released Community Conversation Reports:
 - Pakistan Report in Quetta
 - Afghanistan Report in Kabul
- Regional Overview, U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington D.C.
- Conducted a 4-day Advocacy Tour in Washington D.C.
- Steering Committee agreed to study a South Asia Women's Human Rights Tribunal.
- Held 1st Tribunal Preparatory Meeting in Nepal. Agreed to focus on Women IDP's fleeing conflict.
- Established the S.A. Women's Emergency Fund for WHRDs.

2015

- Invited to attend, speak, present papers and/or workshops at:
 - U.S. Naval War College in Rhode Island, USA
 - WILPF's Women's Power to Stop War Conference, The Hague, The Netherlands
 - Defying Extremism Regional Dialogue in Sarajevo, Balkans
 - Asia Pacific Regional Consultation on UNSCR 1325, Nepal
- Registered WRN in the Hague and established a new governing structure.

2016

- Held 2nd Tribunal Preparatory Meeting in Sri Lanka.
- Released Tribunal Scoping Study Report, Community Conversations Reports and Regional Overview.
- Presented workshop at the AWID conference in Salvador, Brazil.
- Launched WRN Tribunal Scoping Study Report at USIP in September.

2017

- Community Conversations Launch tour in India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.
- Launched inaugural Women, Peace and Security Online Course.
- Women's Regional Network was modeled in Latin America among 7 countries: Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and Puerto Rico at meeting in Antigua, Guatemala with 27 activists and civil society leaders from those countries in attendance along with 4 representatives from the Womens Regional Network in S. Asia and Nobel Peace Laureate, Jody Williams.
- Invited to attend, speak, present, and/or consult at:
 - UN General Assembly Preparatory Process for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
 - The Carter Center, Atlanta, USA
 - Halifax International Security Forum
- Re-established Country Coordinators staff in offices across the region.

2018

- Completed 3rd round of Community Conversations and the launch tour in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.
- WRN's roundtable in Sri Lanka with women peace and justice activists from Sri Lanka and the region.
- Initial conversations about WRN being modelled in East Africa.
- WRN Founder-Director Patricia Cooper honoured with the 2018 Humanitarian Award from the Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver.
- WRN team started conceptualising the South Asia Regional Summit on Forced Displacements: Why Gender Matters, held in early 2019 in Kuala Lumpur.

2019

- WRN organizes and hosts *The South Asia Summit on Forced Displacements: Why Gender Matters* in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on February 27-28 and March 1, 2019.
- WRN leads an advocacy campaign in Washington D.C on the inclusion of Afghan women in the peace talks and secures the signature of 77 congressmen on a letter addresses to Secy. Pompeo.
- In August 2019, the Women in Negotiations Act was tabled in the US Congress in pursuit of this advocacy campaign.
- Firming of strategies and mission by WRN in East Africa for operations in the region.

Appendix A: WRN Statement of Principles

The Women's Regional Network Summit on Forced Displacement and Gender in South Asia (the Summit) brought together the voices and experiences of women and men from South Asia and across the globe to address human rights and humanitarian issues and the urgent need for durable solutions.

The majority of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are women and girls. They are displaced due to conflict, militarization, predatory development and natural disasters. Primarily, there must be concerted efforts to prevent forced displacement, maintain peace and justice, and effectively address the causes of forced displacement. Forced displacement must not be used as part of a strategy to drive conflict further.

There must be a shared humanitarian and political response to the forced displacement crisis, based on their fundamental human and legal rights. International treaties, legal frameworks and guidelines exist to address the rights of displaced persons and must be fully implemented. Governments, national and international, corporates and civil society are accountable to prevent and resolve forced displacement crisis. The right not to be displaced must be recognized.¹

Situations of forced displacement exacerbate the existing gender inequality vulnerabilities, including sexual and gender based violence across the entire displacement cycle.

Governments, global organizations, and civil society must do substantially more to ensure that women refugees and IDPs fully participate in decisions that impact their lives and rights. The lived experience of displaced women/ girls bringing an informed analysis to the challenges facing their families and communities. Their wisdom and knowledge must shape law and policy formulation and implementation.

At the close of the Kuala Lumpur Summit, we issue this statement of principles:

1. There must be a commitment to conflict prevention, peaceful conflict resolution and to not use forced displacement as a strategy to drive conflict.
2. Women's participation must be ensured in every stage of the displacement cycle; they must be visible and heard in every forum and participate equally in all decisions that affect their lives.
3. A gender analysis of existing legal frameworks, policies, program interventions, and investments is critical to ensure justice for women and girls, as well as the integration of a gender perspective into the formulation of policies and programs.
4. Strong legal frameworks, addressing the issues faced by women and girls, and gender-equal implementation of those frameworks, are foundational. Legal frameworks must be increasingly adaptable to meet the complex economic, social, and political dynamics that drive displacement.
5. Accountability and addressing impunity at every stage of the displacement process, in particular for the ongoing epidemic of rape and other forms of and sexual and GBV, must be a priority.

¹ These include, but are not limited to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the Geneva Convention (1949) and related protocols; the Conventions and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 and 1967); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1980); UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998); UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Appendix B: Call for Action

CALL FOR ACTION ON GENDER ISSUES IN DISPLACEMENT ACROSS SOUTH ASIA

**By the participants of the
Women's Regional Network Summit on Forced Displacement & Gender in South Asia
Kuala Lumpur, 27 February – 1 March 2019**

The participants,

Recalling the commitments made by the governments in South Asia to international human rights and humanitarian standards, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 1966, UN Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979 and its Optional Protocols, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 and its Optional Protocols, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006 and its Optional Protocol, The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) 1984 and its Optional Protocol, The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) 1965, The Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in time of War 1949 and its Additional Protocol 1977, Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons 1954, and The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1948,

Recalling further the commitments made by governments through instruments and standards including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, the Political Declaration and Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Platform for Action in 2000 and 2005, Declaration on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women 2010 and The Sustainable Development Goals 2016,

Recalling also the international declarations, principles, frameworks, rules and standards that provide guidance to all governments in comprehensively addressing various issues pertaining to the forcibly displaced in general and women among them in particular, such as the UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women (UNDEVAW) 1993, UN Declaration on Territorial Asylum 1967, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2000, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement 1998, The Global Compact on Refugees 2018 and The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration 2018,

Deeply concerned about the exponential increase in the population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Asia, with a large majority of them being women and girls,

Mindful of the fact that they are displaced due to conflict, political upheaval, militarization, predatory development supported by government policies and private projects, land grabs and natural disaster,

Bearing in mind that displacement leads to a violent uprooting, a loss of home, livelihoods and communities, existing standards of living, social support networks and comfort zones, and triggers discontinuities and disruptions,



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Acknowledging that displaced populations are vulnerable to death and all forms of violence including sexual and gender-based violence across developing countries and in developed countries that are now experiencing the ramifications of this global crisis,

Convinced that forced displacement is experienced disparately, disproportionately and especially adversely by vulnerable sections of society, such as women and girls, children, persons with disability and the aged,

Expressing concern at the resurgent patriarchy following displacement, witnessed globally, in which uprooted communities draw in upon themselves as a safeguard against alien environments and cultures, thereby providing a breeding ground for extremist ideologies with their repercussions on rights of women,

Deeply concerned that host communities, faced by alien populations and competing with them for scarce resources, feel threatened and turn antagonistic and violent towards displaced persons including refugees and asylum seekers, and that such violence and discrimination targeted at women are within the patriarchal paradigm,

Recognizing that violence is perpetrated within families, communities and through acts of commission and omission by state institutions such as security forces and law enforcement agencies, non-state actors and groups (organized and ad hoc) and by religious majority communities in cases of communal violence; and that the patriarchal control of female sexuality makes women and girls particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of gender-based violence such as rape, forced and under-aged marriages, trafficking, forced impregnation, sexual slavery and slavery-like conditions, and exploitative labour—manual, sexual and reproductive,

Observing with deep concern that not only have religion, race, caste, language, ethnicity and other such identities been deployed strategically in the production of multiple conflicts, but that these also contribute to the perpetration of overt and covert forms of violence against women among the displaced persons, who are treated and targeted as markers of communal identity and ‘honour’,

Reaffirming that justice and peace are not contradictory goals, but form vital components of human rights and constitutional ideals that all governments, global actors and civil society actors must strive towards and achieve,

Emphasizing that prevention and protection from forced displacement of persons, including women, in accordance with international and national legal standards are primarily the duty and responsibility of states and global actors, and that the role of civil society, including organized non-state actors, is to complement their efforts and to hold them accountable,

Emphasizing the urgent need for a shared humanitarian, security, and political response to the crisis and concerted efforts to deliver justice, maintain peace and comprehensively address the causes of forced displacement, in conformity with internationally recognized human rights and humanitarian standards, based on right to life, right to dignity, right to equality and non-discrimination and based on constitutional guarantees within each state,

Affirming that such response and efforts must address and redress the adverse consequences of internal displacement on women, based on their lived experiences, recognizing their agency and with their full participation in all decisions that are made with regard to their lives,

Noting the need for a gender-integrated, comprehensive and holistic policy and intervention towards addressing forced displacement and its repercussions on women’s rights in South Asia

1. Urge national, regional, international governmental and non-governmental actors that the following principles that inform this Call for Action, must form the basis of any gender-sensitive policy and action on forced displacement, namely to:

- a) commit to conflict prevention, peaceful conflict resolution and to abjure forced displacement as a strategy to drive conflict;
 - b) ensure women's qualitative participation in every stage of the displacement cycle, such that they are visible and heard in every forum and participate equally in making all decisions that affect their lives;
 - c) adopt a gender analysis of existing legal frameworks, policies, program interventions, and investments, which is critical to ensure justice for women and girls, as well as to integrate a gender perspective into the formulation of policies and programs;
 - d) formulate strong and adaptable legal frameworks, addressing the issues faced by women and girls, and implement the same in a gender-equal manner, in order to meet the complex economic, social, and political dynamics that drive displacement; and
 - e) address impunity and enforce accountability at every stage of the displacement process, in particular, for the ongoing epidemic of rape and other forms of and sexual and gender-based violence.
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2. Call upon all actors to ensure that legal and policy frameworks are formulated and implemented with a gender lens, including

- a) implementing the UN Global Compact on Refugees 2018, the UN Global Compact on Migration 2018 and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in a manner that articulates the rights of women and comprehensively addresses sexual and gender-based violence;
 - b) enacting legal frameworks (in countries where none exists) and implementing legal frameworks (in countries where frameworks exist) on forced displacement based on international and humanitarian standards to protect the rights of IDPs, with a special focus on women and children;
 - c) advocating for law and policy reforms, particularly by members of civil society;
 - d) formulating and implementing all laws and policies without discrimination on the basis of identities such as gender, religion, class, caste, language and nationality; and
 - e) allocating and disbursing funds which are the responsibilities of governments, and earmarking funds for not only protection, relief and resettlement but also for prevention of forced displacement.
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3. Request all actors to ensure that women are qualitatively engaged in every process of policy formulation and implementation, and speak for themselves including

- a) commit to engaging women in processes for justice, peace and conflict resolution through consultative processes that respect women's agency and autonomy as rights-holders and equal citizens, and foreground women's voices and perspectives in determining policy and programs across all phases of the displacement cycle: prevention, protection, relief and resettlement;
- b) design programs to address needs of women and implement all such programs in consultation with displaced women, women in host communities and local civil society, and ensure women's participation in all decision-making structures;
- c) collect disaggregated data during all stages of the displacement cycle, at least by sex, age, marital status and ability and use the same to better inform policy development and programme implementation, prioritizing women's rights and concerns; and
- d) raise public awareness, particularly by civil society actors, in a manner that documents and amplifies voices of women at the national, regional and international levels.

4. Call upon all actors and institutions providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons to meet the holistic needs of women and girls, founded upon a rights-based approach, including

- a) removing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles;
- b) preventing non-state groups from hampering, attacking or impeding humanitarian efforts that assist refugees and IDPs, including women;
- c) increasing access to need-based services in health, education, and economic opportunity including maternal and mental health services to address trauma and access to sanitary materials for all women IDPs;
- d) according special attention to displaced girls and their specific barriers to education, including the high risks of sexual abuse and exploitation at school and on the way to/from school;
- e) allocating adequate budget for humanitarian assistance to women; and
- f) providing new and improved pathways, such as humanitarian visa programmes, educational visas, and employment programmes, focusing on safe areas where they can realize their rights and live in dignity.

5. Recommend the prioritization of the security of internally displaced women, inter alia, by

- a) addressing the root causes of all forms of violence, including militarization, hate speech and extremism, systemic sexual and gender violence, and working towards demilitarizing the region and creating an alternative discourse to war and militarism;
- b) ensuring women's personal security at all stages of displacement, including violence and exploitation that rapidly increase in the aftermath of forced displacement;
- c) ensuring that women are adequately represented in response and security providers;
- d) increasing access to justice for women in a manner in which justice entails not only prosecution and punishment, but also include reparations and rehabilitation for the concerned women;
- e) increasing the role of regional organizations in peace-building; and
- f) including, in governmental efforts to promote national security, a commitment to protect and promote individual human security, particularly of women.

6. Call upon all actors to end legal discrimination and impunity for violations of human rights of women affected by forced displacement, including by

- a) ending impunity for human rights violations especially for gender-related human rights violations including sexual and gender-based violence, and strengthen mechanisms for justice delivery;
- b) assisting in the acquisition of legal documentation; and
- c) providing necessary funds for essential health, education, livelihood, legal, and other support services.

7. Encourage the governments in South Asia to establish, adopt and implement a regional system of response to forced displacement in order to find a durable solution, including protection against repatriation to countries that remain unsafe for the displaced, and issuance of a regional visa to facilitate and enhance cross-border exchanges and meetings.

March 1, 2019

WHEN SISTERS GATHER

By Swarna Rajagopalan after the launch of the Latin America
Women's Regional Network in Antigua, Guatemala, 2017.

*Sisters gather,
sisters who are strangers,
in the hope of finding themselves
in each other.*

*Sisters gather,
and stories are exchanged,
mumbling, halting, then gushing
like a torrent unstoppable...
stories in spate.*

*Sisters gather,
sceptical about sorority,
defensive about their anxiety,
urgently in need of hope
and each other.
Will you be the one to heed my need?*

*Sisters gather,
having forgotten nothing
about the last dozen times they
squabbled, fought, argued—
the Cold Wars that thaw
with the first tickle of laughter
and the first trickle of tears.*

*Sisters gather,
to grieve over other sisters,
spent, lost, felled,
and to lament the silence over their fate.
When you are cut, I bleed,
they tell each other.*

*Sisters gather,
and promise each other
that they will not forget.
Not the ones who disappeared.
Not the ones who died.
Not the abandonment or violence.
Not each other.*

*Sisters gather
over the baby's crib,
gushing, cooing and remembering
why they are here.
This baby, and all the others,
deserve better than we have got.*

*Sisters gather
to partake of food, wine, love and
empathy, to celebrate each other,
generously, and in solidarity.
When sisters gather,
they change the world.*



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK

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