



2018 YEAR END REPORT

Highlights

Women's Regional Network is expanding and growing more diverse, inspiring new networks of women human rights defenders, and advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in South Asia.

In 2018, Women's Regional Network (WRN) focused on launching our recent round of Community Conversations (CCs) documenting the voices of women internally displaced from the most remote and conflicted regions in S. Asia. WRN shares the stories of displaced women through these launch events, catalyzing action both locally and globally. WRN, together with our supporters, overcame various barriers and serious security concerns to host 2 launch events for each report this year. These events brought together local activists and international experts to provide an avenue for IDP women to influence policies and programming directly affecting their lives.



Honoring our Founder...

Patricia Cooper, WRN's founder and dedicated human rights activist, is honored with the 2018 Humanitarian Award from the Korb School of International Studies, alongside former U.S. Secretaries of State John Kerry and Madeleine Albright. This award is recognition for all that Patricia and the WRN team has worked for and accomplished in the past nine years.



REPORT LAUNCHES

Kabul

In September 2018, the WRN launched the Afghanistan Community Conversation report *The Cycle of Struggle: A Human Security Perspective on Afghanistan's IDP Women* at the Kabul Serena Hotel in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and its Country Director Mr. Christopher Nyamandi. The distinguished panel, along with the Minister of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR) and the office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), made many concrete commitments to Afghanistan's IDP women.

CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah recognized that the implementation of the National IDP Policy should be an urgent and immediate national priority. He suggested presenting the findings of this report to all of the DiREC Committee Members and will ensure the implementation of the recommendations of this report by relevant organizations.

The acting Deputy Minister for Policy and Planning of the MoRR spoke about the challenges of policy implementation, specifically

the frequent changes in government officials, but overall approved of the findings of the WRN research report. He asked for fund allocation from the Ministry of Finance, while stressing that all ministries should play their role on the implementation of the policy.

The delegates/participants included:

- **Dr. Abdullah Abdullah**, CEO of the Afghanistan H.E.
- **Mr. Mer Khuda Sabar**, The Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations
- **Ms. Shakila Nazari**, the Director of Information and Public Relations at the Ministry of Women's Affairs
- **Mrs. Shahla Farid**, Member of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan and a Women's Affairs Analyst



Afghanistan's CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah speaking at the CC Report Launch in Kabul

Additional participants include: directors of relevant Civil Society Organizations, (CSO), members of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan, members of the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC), and representation from Embassies, such as Japan and Norway.

UK

In October 2018, ahead of the 18th anniversary of UNSCR1325, the All-Party of Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women, Peace and Security launched WRN's latest report on Afghanistan's IDP women in London, UK. *The Cycle of Struggle: A Human Security Perspective on Afghanistan's IDP Women* presents and reflects on the perspectives of internally displaced women to promote the inclusion of this group in the ongoing discourse around IDPs. Barin Sultani Haymon, the author of the report and Independent Researcher, worked alongside Baroness Hodgson and the Gender Action for Peace and Security Network (GAPS). Speakers addressed a number of topics around the central theme of human security. Ms. Haymon presented the policy recommendations by emphasising the need for multilateral coordination and execution of aid programs across all stakeholder groups. Haymon pointed out that IDPs deserve as much international attention as international migrants and refugees garner because all displacement is traumatic.

Speakers at the London launch included:

- **Hanif Ahmadzai**, the Political Councillor to Afghanistan Embassy in the UK
- **Mandana Hendessi**, OBE, Senior Technical Adviser on Women, Peace and Security (ActionAid UK)
- **Miriam Lopez-Villegas**, Shelter Adviser (Norwegian Refugee Council)

Islamabad

"Absence of a national policy and legal framework to address issues of IDPs in line with the United Nation and Pinheiro Principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons is one of the main reasons for the invisibility and plight of the IDPs in Pakistan." –Ms. Rukhshanda Naz, Member WRN

The WRN Pakistan launched its report *Shattered Souls: Internally Displaced Women from Punjab, Pakistan* on August 30, 2018 in Islamabad. Sardar Kalyan Singh, a minority representative from the Sikh community, shared the problems of Hindus

and Sikh IDPs, as well as the host communities, and suggested that the minority communities' voices should reach the parliament through meaningful participation. Ms. Saima Jasam, the author and women's rights activist, emphasized displaced women's marginality and reiterated the importance of including women of different faiths, religious sects, and ethnicities in peace building projects and peace plans at all levels in order to develop a strong and durable peace.

The panel at this event included:

- **Sardar Kalyan Singh**, a minority representative
- **Dr. Jennifer Bennett**, Executive Director, Population, Environment & Development Centre
- **Ms. Rukhshanda Naz**, WRN Pakistan Board Member and ED of Legal Aid and Awareness Services.

Lahore

"It is about resistance becoming more mainstream." – *A Young Woman Activist*

WRN Pakistan organized its second launch in Lahore on October 12th, 2018. The report *Shattered Souls: Internally Displaced Women from Punjab, Pakistan* was presented by the author, Ms. Jasam, who was accompanied by a number of eminent civil society activists, representatives of the media, and members of Parliament. The discussion revolved around the plight of displaced persons with a focus on the specific needs of minority women IDPs and the role of civil society. The participants applauded the efforts of WRN in giving voice to those affected by conflict and religious extremism. The panelists stressed the responsibility of the state in protecting the rights and dignities of

those forcibly displaced due to conflict. The panel also recognized the barrier that problematic nomenclature such as "TDP" or "temporarily displaced person" can present in terms of state accountability. Key speakers included prominent civil society leaders Mr. I A Reman, Director HRCP and Peter Jacob, Executive Director, Centre for Social Justice.



Participants at the launch of *Shattered Souls Internally Displaced Women from Punjab, Pakistan* in Lahore, Pakistan, September 2018

Madhya Pradesh

"What we have lost through this struggle is not important anymore. We have become strong and learned about our power." –*Activist from Chutka, Madhya Pradesh*

The Madhya Pradesh Community Conversations launch was held as a press-conference on September 18, 2018 at the Press Club of India, where WRN garnered media attention on the issue of the dangers posed by nuclear power plants and the concerns the Indigenous People's Resistance Movement raises against the proposed plant in Chutka. The launch brought together voices from the ground as well as experts to discuss the ongoing struggle of continuous forcible displacement, and the



The Panelists and WRN India Team (with volunteers) at the launch of *Resistance Revisited, Community Conversations*, Madhya Pradesh, India



Advocacy meetings were conducted with many Afghan officials including the Second Vice President Dr. Sarwar Danish. This meeting was on the revision of the National Policy, and Strategy of Youths

lack of a response from the state in the name of 'development.' The panelists addressed the fact that rather than protecting its own displaced citizens, the state often poses another risk to IDPs through ad hoc policies, corruption and blatant impunity. These CCs brought to light the discrepancies between the mainstream narrative of a 'Shining India' and the human and environmental costs on the ground. This launch highlighted the participation of women, sustainability in the face of marginalization, and the role of the media as a pillar of a democratic state.

This panel included activists from the Chutka Anti-Nuclear Power Plant, WRN India Board Member and prime researcher, Abha Bhaiya, peace and anti-nuclear activists, academics, and environmentalists.



The audience and the panel at the launch of "Not Everyone Picks up Stones! Plural Forms of Agency and Women's Agency in Kashmir, (Community Conversations in Kashmir, India)

Kashmir

"I think what this recent movement has done is women holding up their agency. Their ability to exercise their agency is becoming visible."
—Young Women's Rights Activist from Kashmir.

The Kashmir Community Conversation report *Not Everyone Picks up Stones! Plural Forms of Agency and Women's Agency in Kashmir* was launched at the India International Centre on September 24, 2018. With a focus on the youth and women in the valley, this CC explored the plural forms of resistance and women's agency

in Kashmir. The WRN India team of researchers decided, given the complexity of the Kashmir conflict, the CC was best presented as a work-in-progress so as to ensure the remarks of panelists influence the final research. WRN invited a distinguished panel consisting of academics, peace-activists and practitioners, researchers, authors, psycho-therapists, human rights activists, and film-makers to deliberate upon *When Resistance Becomes Mainstream*, and facilitated a discussion to enrich WRN's report with different perspectives.

WRN Afghanistan Roundtable Discussions

WRN continues its partnership with ZAN T.V., the only all female broadcasting network in Afghanistan, to encourage people to think about women's roles in the political process. These discussions aim to encourage women to register as voters and draw attention to the potential of women candidates to facilitate a positive change within society.

Advocacy Meetings

WRN members and Fatema Kohistani, Afghanistan Country Coordinator, conducted advocacy meetings with various officials including the Minister of Interior Affairs, The First Lady, President H.E Ghani, The Second Vice President Dr. Sarwar Danish, members of Parliament, High Peace Council Secretariat, and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Participation in the Peace Process. In addition, WRN continues to have regular advocacy meetings with the CEO H.E Dr. Abdullah Abdullah every month. These meetings are intended to both follow up on previous commitments as well as promote and ensure women's participation.

Press Conference on the Kabul II Process

The WRN and the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF), conducted a



Press Conference on Joint Declaration Of Women and Children Legal Research Foundation and WRN regarding the Kabul II Process

Press Conference and Joint Declaration regarding this process. Together, they highlighted women's challenges and concerns and proposed specific recommendations to rectify the concerns to the National Unity Government, the international community, and other stakeholders. The declaration emphasized the meaningful participation of women at the Kabul II Process.

WRN Pakistan

WRN's team in Pakistan has expanded to include a new Country Coordinator, Rehana Wagha, a senior WPS writer and advocate. She has been instrumental in WRN's work in 2018. We look forward to continuing this work with our dedicated team in the New Year.

Advocacy Meetings

WRN continues to conduct advocacy and awareness meetings in Islamabad and across the country with various embassies and organizations such as The Global Fund for Women, Embassy of Canada, Embassy of the Netherlands, and UN agencies such as UN Women and UNDP. The work of WRN members has been highlighted in the Global Fund for Women documentary on Child Marriage.

WRN India

Awareness and Outreach Initiative

WRN's team in India has been working on its outreach training program that was launched last year. This program reaches out through talks and training sessions, primarily to youth, in the interest of expanding, sensitizing, and building the capacity of peace constituencies beyond activist circles. WRN is using this program to create awareness about the gendered experience of conflict and insecurity, as well as a gender-just peace.



WRN organised a roundtable discussion on Women, Peace and Security in Colombo, Sri Lanka on May 7, 2018.

Global Outreach

WRN at RightsCon

WRN attended its first digital human rights conference, RightsCon in Toronto, Canada in May. Represented by Chelsea Soderholm (COO) and Padmini Ghosh (India), WRN, along with over 2000 techies, coders, hackers-for-good, human rights defenders, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders from 115 countries discussed the intersection between the digital world and human rights activism. We learned more about how we can use technology to improve and enhance our work across hostile borders.

WRN Sri Lanka

WRN explored expansion to include Sri Lanka through a roundtable discussion on Women, Peace and Security in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The roundtable had two objectives: the first was to bring together women engaged in peace work in Sri Lanka with those from Afghanistan, Pakistan and India for a discussion on the critical issues facing women working for peace. The second was to introduce WRN to Sri Lanka and discuss the potential and interest of those present in joining our network and working together regionally.

WRN Participates in Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)

WRN's Global Secretariat met with the senior staff at Global Affairs Canada (GAC) in their Peace and Stabilization Bureau in early January 2018 to share our concerns about the erosion of women's rights and security in Afghanistan and the implementation of Afghanistan's National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325. WRN emphasized Canada's opportunity to play

a strengthened role in promoting women's full and equal participation in Afghan civil and political life through its Feminist Foreign Assistance Policy and its own renewed NAP, and on UN Resolution 1325.

WRN AS A MODEL: WRN in East Africa

Seven renowned women leaders from Uganda, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Kenya held their first consultative meeting to discuss and plan how to make WRN's model thrive in East Africa. The meeting focused on forming a Women's Regional Network for Peace & Security Leadership in East Africa. This meeting also offered an invaluable opportunity for women leaders to develop a shared ideological foundation for the proposed network. We look forward to their second consultation in Uganda in March 2019.



Activists from East Africa held their first consultative meeting in Nairobi, Kenya

Online WPS course

WRN successfully concluded in May its first online training/course on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for young professionals across Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. WRN engaged with young members of the civil society across S. Asia through this course. Over a period of

SNEAK PEEK OF 2019...

Regional Summit on Forcible Displacement and Gender in South Asia

WRN's team is hard at work planning our upcoming Regional Summit on Forcible Displacement and Gender in South Asia as a continuation of our commitment to ensuring the gendered dimensions of displacement are on the global agenda. This groundbreaking summit will take place in February 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The multi-stakeholder Regional Summit will build upon WRN's research regarding internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and focus on the situation of forcibly displaced women and girls. This summit will address the need for visibility of those forcibly displaced and the need to hold Governments accountable for prevention of displacement, as well as protection and a durable solution for those who have been displaced. The Summit will engage stakeholders from the security, humanitarian and political sectors and launch a South Asia Call for Action on Addressing Gender Issues in Displacement Across S. Asia. An expected outcome is that an International Working Group will emerge from the Summit to develop a South Asia Regional Protocol on Forcible Displacement.

six months, the course covered various pillars of WPS theories and practice and developed linkages among students and academicians, practitioners and policy makers thus helping to expand the discourse on Women's role in peace making and peace keeping.

16 Days of Activism

WRN participated in the 16 Days of Activism by conducting Mural Painting in public places, Analytical Reading of EVA Law at Tabish University and campaigning through social media. The aims were to change minds, eliminate violence and raise awareness.

