



2020
WINTER/
SPRING

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.



Advocacy meeting with the Minister of Education, Dr. Mirwais Balkhi.

AFGHANISTAN

Advocacy Meetings with the Government Officials

From October 2019 to February 2020, WRN Afghanistan members, through the Women's Advocacy Committee, met with Minister of Education Dr. Mirwais Balkhi, to emphasize the challenges female students are facing and requested for the appointment of more female teachers. The Minister promised to attend to the issues.

WRN Afghanistan Core Member Meeting

On January 7 2020, WRN Afghanistan held its Core Member Meeting. The discussion focused on the design, structure and launch event of the

Women Political Participation research report, the upcoming WRN Quarter Plan and core member engagement in future activities. Two new members joined the network, Masouda Kohistani and Lia Jawad.

WRN participation in the Annual Review of Women Coalition for Peace strategy

On December 17-19 2019, the Women's Coalition for Peace, led by the Afghan Women's Network, with more than 200 members had their review meeting. WRN board members participated, moderated the panel discussion and reviewed the annual strategy of the Women Coalition for Peace conference 2019.

Zarqa Yaftali received the N-Peace Award 2019

WRN Afghanistan nominated and campaigned for Board Member Zarqa Yaftali for N-Peace Award 2019. She received the award for advancing Women, Peace and Security through advocacy and research. Her advocacy work has primarily centred on the inclusion of women in decision making roles. Her study highlights the day to day challenges facing women and girls in Afghanistan.



Zarqa Yaftali received the N-Peace Award 2019.



Review meeting of the Women Coalition for Peace.

Consultation Meetings with Diplomatic Missions and the World Bank

Ms. Fatema Kohestani (WRN Afghanistan Country Coordinator), Humaira Saqib, and Forozan Rasoli (Core Members), attended the consultation meetings on Women, Peace and Security and the implementation of *National Action Plan (NAP) 1325* at the UK Embassy, US Embassy, Canadian Embassy and World Bank.

WRN participation in ICAN 8th Annual Forum on Women, Peace and Security

In November 2019, WRN Board Member Zarqa Yaftali participated at the International Civil Society Action Network's (ICAN) 8th Annual Forum on Women, Peace and Security in Oslo, Norway. The ICAN Forum had gathered 100 women peacebuilders from 48 countries. The interactive discussion highlighted the stance of women peacemakers and the role of legislators as partners. The event provided opportunities to share experiences on how to build solidarity and develop action plans. Ms Yaftali met Hon. Mobina Jafer, Canadian Senator, and Ms Sophie Rhys-Jones, Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex. She briefed them on the presidential election, peace process in Afghanistan, and the women's participation in the peace process.

WRN collaborated with Afghan Women's News Agency to launch Peace Road-map

On November 15 2019, WRN supported the



On January 29 2020, WRN Afghanistan members met Mr John Roome, World Bank Regional Director for Sustainable Development, South Asia Program, to discuss the progress on SDGs.



Peace Road-map panel discussion on women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations.

Afghan Women's News Agency on the launch of a Peace Road-map, with a focus on "Why Peace is Unreachable". The event had significant participation of government officials, academia, women's rights activists, core members of WRN, students from universities, and youth. The panel discussion was with Ms Gulali Akbari, Head of Women Rights Commission at Upper House of Parliament; Ms Habiba Surabi, Deputy at High Peace Council; Ms Zarqa Yaftali, WRN Board Member; Mr Ghulam Yahya Hazam, General Director at Ministry of Peace Affairs at Government; and Ms Palwasha Hassan, Founder of the Afghan Women's Network.

Press conference of Women's Advocacy Committee on Afghan election

On February 23 2020, WRN Afghanistan and Women's Advocacy Committee held a press conference on the importance of a transparent election process so that all parties could accept the result of a democratic election. The recommendations to the IEC emphasized the

transparency of the US-Taliban agreement, especially regarding the status of women. It also demanded meaningful and active participation of women in the peace process, urging the international community to support women in monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement and prevent the erosion of their rights in the future.

Release of the former Election Commissioners of Afghanistan

In April 2020, WRN supported the Women's Advocacy Committee to campaign for releasing Prof. Maliha Hassan and Prof. Humaira, former women Election Commissioners of Afghanistan. An open letter was written to the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and the women were released. The Women's Advocacy Committee is a network of 37 civil society institutions in Afghanistan supported by the key members of WRN Afghanistan.

Upcoming:

1. Launch of Women's Political Participation research report.
2. Community conversations about women's role in the peace process.
3. Developing handouts for university students on social peace.
4. Advocacy on the research report findings.



Group photo from ICAN 8th Annual Forum on WPS.

PAKISTAN

Launch of the Community Conversations with Rohingya Refugees in Pakistan

In October 2019, WRN Pakistan launched its fourth round of Community Conversations (CCs) to document the issues and problems faced by Rohingya Refugees residing in Sindh Province, Pakistan. Initial findings suggest that Rohingyas in Pakistan are faced with immense economic and social problems because they are a stateless people, having no citizenship rights even though many of them have been living in Pakistan for two generations. It will help in amplifying the voices of marginalized Rohingyas, particularly Rohingya women, by bringing the findings and recommendations of the report to national and international forums for advocacy.

WRN Pakistan guest lecture at Fatema Jinnah Women's University

On November 15 2019, WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator Rehana Wagha, delivered a talk at Fatema Jinnah Women's University (FJWU) on *Women in War and Conflict*. This event proved to be an excellent opportunity for engaging with the students and faculty. The participants asked questions about *UNSCR 1325* and its subsequent resolutions, making it more interactive and meaningful.

Participation at KIGEPE (AGeNT 2019)

WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator represented WRN at the Asian Gender Trainers Network (AGeNT) Program organized by the International Cooperation Center at the Korean Institute of Gender Equality Promotion and Education, held from October 27 to November 9, 2019. This program proved to be an opportunity for networking with the Asian gender trainers from South Asia and East Asia as well as the Korean colleagues working for the promotion of gender equality. The participants updated themselves on the core concepts and themes around feminism and the feminist movement in Asia.

WRN Pakistan at the Women's Peace Festival

On November 6 2019, WRN Pakistan Core Member Shad Begun spoke at the Women Peace Festival panel titled *Peace Talks Post US/ NATO Exit and Role of Taliban in Power Affecting Women in the Region*, organized by Forum for Dignity Initiative Pakistan.



Shad Begum, WRN Pakistan Core Member, speaking at Women Peace Festival Islamabad.

WRN Pakistan joins FJWU for Future Collaboration

On December 10 2019, WRN Country Coordinator along with Core Member Shad Begum met with Dr Shaheena Ayoub Bahtti and her colleagues to discuss possibilities for collaboration between WRN and Women Research and Resource Center, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU). A *Letter of Intent* will be signed soon for future partnership between WRN and FJWU.

WRN Pakistan Round Table Discussion

On December 20 2019, WRN Pakistan organized a round table discussion on *UNSCR 1325-Twenty Years of Implementation and Way Forward*. The participants discussed the challenges of implementation and how WRN can play an active role in making the stakeholders recognize and implement the *UNSCR 1325*. They specifically stressed upon the recognition of women's roles in peacebuilding and the importance of their presence in all the processes, from peace negotiations to rehabilitation and resettlement.



Round Table Discussion organized by WRN Pakistan on the topic of *UNSCR 1325-Twenty Years of Implementation and Way Forward*.

WRN Pakistan Internal Review Meeting on the Draft National IDP Policy

On February 20 2020, WRN Pakistan held an Internal Review Meeting to discuss and review the recommendations for the *Draft National IDP Policy*. These recommendations will serve as the basis to launch an advocacy campaign involving parliamentarians, media, and other relevant stakeholders to push for the adoption of a national IDP policy in Pakistan.

WRN Pakistan celebration of International Women's Day

On March 8 2020, WRN Pakistan members participated in the International Women's Day (IWD) celebrations held in different cities of Pakistan and highlighted the agenda of women, peace and security. WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator published a write-up in connection with the Aurat March (Women's March) declaring it a turning point and a success for the women's movement in Pakistan. This blog post, *Aurat March: A Success Story of Bad Women*, is accessible at <https://tinyurl.com/y7yex8cj>



WRN Pakistan Core Members are celebrating International Women's Day 2019.

WRN Pakistan President's Advocacy on Ending Child Marriage Highlighted

A film on #ChildMarriages in Pakistan, focusing on the advocacy work of Rukhshanda Naz, prominent human rights lawyer and president of Women's Regional Network Pakistan, was released in March 2020. It focuses on ending child, early, and forced marriage in Pakistan. Every year, 12 million girls are married before they turn 18, nearly one every two seconds. Watch the film *Rights Not Roses* at <https://fundamental-film.com/rights-not-roses/>

Upcoming:

- 1) WRN Pakistan will continue to conduct Community Conversations with Rohingya women residing in Sindh Province of Pakistan. The report will be launched by August 2020.
- 2) A campaign will be facilitated to advocate for the adoption of *National IDP Policy* in Pakistan.
- 3) WRN Pakistan will continue to collaborate with universities through a Guest Lecture Series on the fundamental pillars of Women, Peace and Security (WPS).
- 4) Launch of Community Conversations, research activities in Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

WATCH THE FILM RIGHTS NOT ROSES

GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN'S RECENT FILM ON CHILD MARRIAGES IN PAKISTAN FOCUSING ON THE ADVOCACY WORK OF RUKHSHANDA NAZ, PROMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER AND PRESIDENT OF WRN.



WRN Pakistan President Rukhshanda Naz speaking at the release of the film *Rights Not Roses* highlighting her advocacy work to end child marriages.



Speakers and participants at the Roundtable Discussion on Women, Peace and Security.

INDIA

Poster-making competition commemorating International Day of Peace

WRN India collaborated with the School of Vocational Studies and the School of Human Studies in Ambedkar University Delhi to initiate conversations on sustainable peace. On September 18 2019, following an interactive session with Dr. Saumya Uma (WRN board member), a poster-making competition on the theme "My Right to Peace", was organized where more than 45 undergraduate students participated in making innovative and thoughtful posters depicting their vision of a peaceful and inclusive society.

Roundtable Discussion on Women, Peace and Security

On September 23, 2019 WRN India partnered with the School of Human Studies at AUD Kashmere Gate campus to hold a roundtable discussion on the theme Women and Peace. The roundtable had a total of 16 speakers including practitioners, academics, artists and



Panelists at the discussion on "Safe Places for Women in the City: Myth or Reality".

students. This group brought forth a diverse set of voices and practices ranging across justice and accountability in legal mechanisms, low-intensity conflicts and everyday peace, gendered aspects of climate change and peace, theatre as a peacebuilding approach, cross-border feminist solidarities, gendered poverty as violence, and practice of mourning as a movement, to name a few. In addition to the 16 speakers, other participants made their meaningful interventions.

Street-play on WPS agenda and the gendered impact of displacement

In September 2019, WRN India partnered with a student theatre group "El Pueblo" to produce and conceptualize a street play titled *Mai..Mai Kahan se hu? (ME..Where am I from?)*. The street-play, which focused on the WPS agenda and the gendered impact of displacement, attracted approximately 150 people across different institutes of higher education in Delhi.

Interactive Panel Discussion

On December 16 2019, WRN India organized a discursive conversation in the form of a panel discussion at JAIN University Bangalore. 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.



Scene from the street play, *Mai..Mai Kahan se hu? (ME..Where am I from?)*

Fact-finding and relief mapping work post violence in Delhi.

In March 2020, WRN India Coordinator Padmini Ghosh, volunteered with civil society organisations for fact-finding and relief-mapping work post violence in North-East Delhi. The volunteer work also included reiterating the need for peace and non-violence through community engagements and interactions.

Upcoming:

Research on the participation of women in the protests and sit-ins that were spread across Delhi.

REGIONAL UPDATE

2nd edition of the free online course on Women, Peace and Security

WRN received an overwhelming response from university students as well as young professionals. In 2019 the course was also extended to learners from Sri Lanka. The online sessions commenced on August 31 and were held fortnightly until December 21, 2019. Thirteen leading women peace advocates from the region and the USA contributed as invaluable resource persons for the course which included discussions on the four pillars of Women, Peace and Security agenda — Prevention, Protection, Participation, Relief and Recovery.

Upcoming:

1. 3rd edition of Women, Peace and Security Online Course for 2020
2. Periodic Regional webinars on issues related to WPS agenda.



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
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