



2017
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.

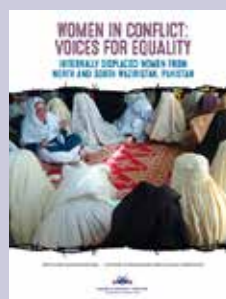
As the region faces attacks on civil society and democratic space by state and non-state actors alike, tensions are peaking due to the increasing politics of hostility, intolerance and confrontation. The women of South Asia diligently maintain open channels of communication, trust, and support by working together to advance peace efforts. We express our gratitude to the funders and supporters who believe in a South Asia without borders and in the power of women to lead the process towards sustainable peace that transcends fault lines and divisions.

The Network's membership is expanding with increased diversity. The Core Group members represent various castes, class, ethnic and religious minorities, age, and diverse geographical representation including conflict zones such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and North East India. Mentoring young women and men has become a central focus. WRN is engaging young leaders through the Women, Peace and Security online course. Students learn from WRN members and global security experts as well as interacting and building their own peace dialogues across borders.

WRN's staff is also growing. This year we established country offices and hired Country



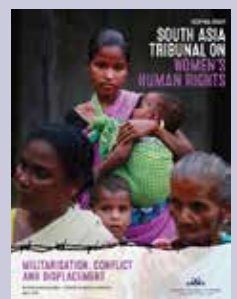
Afghanistan's Internally Displaced Women: Complex Realities



Women in Conflict: Voices for Equality Internally Displaced Women from North and South Waziristan



Homeless at Home: Internally Displaced Women in India's Northeast



Scoping Study South Asia Tribunal on Women's Rights: Militarization, Conflict, and Displacement

Coordinators in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Our fiscal sponsors are Prakriti in India, Rozan in Pakistan, and Equality for Peace and Democracy in Afghanistan. A communications consultant was hired to increase our visibility and outreach needs. The Regional Board met four times this year, in-person and virtually, to discuss strategic programing and resources needed going forward.

AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES

Community Conversations

WRN released the second round of Community Conversations reports across the region along with associated high level advocacy meetings. Symposiums were held in partnership with universities, national human rights institutions, and civil society organisations. At a time when migration issues are at the top of the global agenda, dialogue and advocacy for refugees commonly overshadows internally displaced

persons (IDPs), furthermore, the gender dimension remains but a footnote. The Network's Community Conversations continue to amplify the rarely heard voices of women IDPs living at the nexus of conflict and displacement.

Community Conversation Launch Venues and Partners

- University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan
- Balochi Academy, Quetta, Pakistan
- Guwahati University, Guwahati, India
- TATA Institute for Social Sciences, Guwahati, India
- National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan (NCHR)
- Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Lahore, Pakistan
- India International Centre, Delhi, India





Zohra Yousuf speaking at the Afghan Women Messengers of Peace Symposium. WRN Member Rita Manchanda (India), WRN Global Advisor Bushra Gohar (Pakistan) and author of the latest Afghan Report Palwasha Hassan join the panel on regional dimensions of peace, Kabul, Afghanistan, May 2017.

MAKING AN IMPACT

Afghan Women Messengers of Peace Symposium

May 15th-17th, 2017

The WRN delegation including Rita Manchanda (India), Anuradha Bhasin (India), and Bushra Gohar (Pakistan) participated on a panel of the 4th symposium on women and peace entitled *Afghan Women: Messengers of Peace* in Kabul. Also in attendance was Palwasha Hassan, who authored the latest WRN report *Afghanistan's Internally Displaced Women: Complex Realities*. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and the First Lady of Afghanistan. Key stakeholders from across the region came together to highlight the importance of women's roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as the importance of regional connections and collaborative efforts among women working on peace and security.

At the United Nations

- In May, Rukhshanda Naz, WRN Board Member from Pakistan, represented WRN at the UN General Assembly Preparatory Process for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. She officially addressed the committee with reference to the gendered recommendations from her field research on women IDPs from North and South Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan.
- In November, Ms. Naz attended official UPR proceedings. Ms. Naz authored a shadow report for Pakistan which included

consultations with over 60 CSOs in Pakistan. The report and its recommendations were based on findings from WRN's field research with IDPs from FATA in Pakistan and ensured that the concerns of women internally displaced persons (IDPs) and women human rights defenders were included.

- Ms. Naz attended the 68th Plenary session of CEDAW in Geneva, Switzerland. She made a critical intervention and official address to the plenary on behalf of WRN. This was a key session for CEDAW as it was the launch of general Recommendation 35.

Watch the live stream <http://webtv.un.org/watch/opening-of-session-1530th-meeting-68th-session-committee-on-elimination-of-discrimination-against-women-/5622067540001/>



Rukhshanda Naz addresses the audience at the UN Thematic group on Migration, New York, May 2017.



WRN International Day of Peace banners, Kabul, Afghanistan, September 2017.

WRN Banner's Fly in Kabul on International Day of Peace

On International Peace Day, WRN displayed banners in Dari across Kabul that read, "Let's find true, fair and comprehensive peace by ensuring women's engagement in the peace process." Country Coordinator Fatema Kohestani also attended the International Peace Day event and shared her insights on our Voices for Peace blog.

www.womensregionalnetwork.org/single-post/2017/08/26/WRN-Banners-Fly-on-International-Day-of-Peace-in-Kabul



Najla Ayoubi (right) speaking at the Carter Center, Atlanta, Georgia (USA), September 2017.

Judge Najla Ayoubi at the Carter Center September 19, 2017

WRN Board Member Judge Najla Ayoubi (Afghanistan) presented at the Human Rights Defenders Forum in May at The Carter Center in Atlanta. She spoke about the complexities of preventing and countering violent extremism and how current programming must be proactive, rather than reactive, for success.

www.cartercenter.org/news/features/p/human_rights/najla-ayoubi.html



Rita Manchanda advocates for the Rohingya community to Canadian Minister of Defense Harjit Singh Sajjan at the Halifax International Security Forum, Halifax, Canada, November 2017.

International Security Forum November 17-19, 2017

WRN Core Board Member Rita Manchanda attended the Halifax International Security Forum in Canada. Ms. Manchanda presented on the panel *Real Conflict Solutions: The World After Vancouver* on the role of civil society in peacekeeping and going beyond numbers to enable women to fully and equally participate in decision making processes.

Civil Society Work in Canada

WRN Member Hossai Wardak attended the *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Consultations on Canada's WPS National Action Plan* sponsored by Global Affairs Canada and facilitated by the Women, Peace and Security Network Canada where the Canadian government took key recommendations from civil society to renew their National Action Plan (NAP) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). Ms. Wardak was also invited to attend the official launch of the Canadian NAP which seeks to address the challenges women face in conflict, and promote their role in global peace and security.

Women, Peace and Security Online Course

WRN has launched its first WPS Online Course convening students from India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to deepen knowledge on

the complexities of gender, conflict, and peace studies. Students are learning from the expertise of WRN Members and renowned activists from across the globe including Uganda, Yemen and Bosnia. Lecturers engage with students on violent extremisms, conflict resolution, movement building, women in peace processes and politics, and more.

Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress March 2018

WRN is partnering with Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPD) for the 3rd Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress in March 2018. The congress aims to inspire and connect 30 Emerging Young Women Leaders with high level mentors such as women Ministers, members of parliament, civil society, and renowned journalists from across Pakistan.

Farhat Asif wins UNDP N-Peace Award

WRN nominee and member, Farhat Asif (Pakistan), was awarded the "Campaign for Action" UNDP N-Peace Award. The N-Peace Award supports the leadership and capacity of women and men to prevent and resolve conflicts, and serve as active agents for reconstruction and peacebuilding across conflict-affected countries in Asia. Ms. Asif is the founder of the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies where she promotes peace and women's rights through education.

WRN Research

WRN publications have been added to various libraries within the region and in North America

with recent additions to the US Library of Congress, Field Office, Islamabad, Pakistan. WRN publications have been used in courses at the University of Denver, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Massachusetts, Colorado State University, and the University of Colorado.

WRN MODEL REPLICATED IN THE AMERICAS!

October 31 - November 2, 2017

A WRN delegation met with women human rights defenders and civil society peacebuilders from Cuba, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, the United States, Puerto Rico and El Salvador to advise on the formation of a regional network to collaborate and find joint strategies for the most critical WPS issues we face today. The WRN delegation is honored to have participated in the Americas network founding meeting in Antigua, Guatemala. Participants included Nobel Laureate Jody Williams; Sofi Ospina Collazos, a leading Colombian feminist activist; and Amarilis Pagan Jimenez, a Puerto Rican attorney and feminist activist.

Women are leading movements to create autonomous forms of security from the bottom up, based on rebuilding community ties. The WRN is expanding its outreach to groups of women civil society leaders to share our organizing method. The WRN model is also being considered for replication by women in 6 countries across East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, DRC, Uganda, and Rwanda.



Women human rights defenders from South Asia and the Americas bonded over shared issues and experiences despite their vast geographic distance from each other, Antigua, Guatemala, November 2017.

Life (in 250 words)

Swarna Rajagopalan, WRN Board Member, (India)

*How it started does not matter.
Everything is different now.
A spark, a simmer, a stranger's
torch—everything burns anyway.*

*The first insult, the first stone—
remote realities, not mine.
To rage, to wage, to flee—
nothing decided by me.*

*The shells hurt us all,
but they wound the least.
Our heavy, aching hearts by
fear and uncertainty are besieged.*

*We wait in our homes,
fretting over a hundred things.
Will she return? Did they reach
safe? What is happening?*

*Did she run? Or was she taken?
Make no sound.
Did he die? Or was he disappeared?
Ask no questions.*

*Not knowing is the worst part.
Our imaginations outdo reality.
And who do we trust?
They were our best friends.*

*The lines cut between us, shifting
constantly, landmines of betrayal.
But we will survive. We adapt.
We innovate. We live.*

*Like weeds, we find invisible
routes to seek the sun.
We learn, we teach, we write,
we share, we connect.*

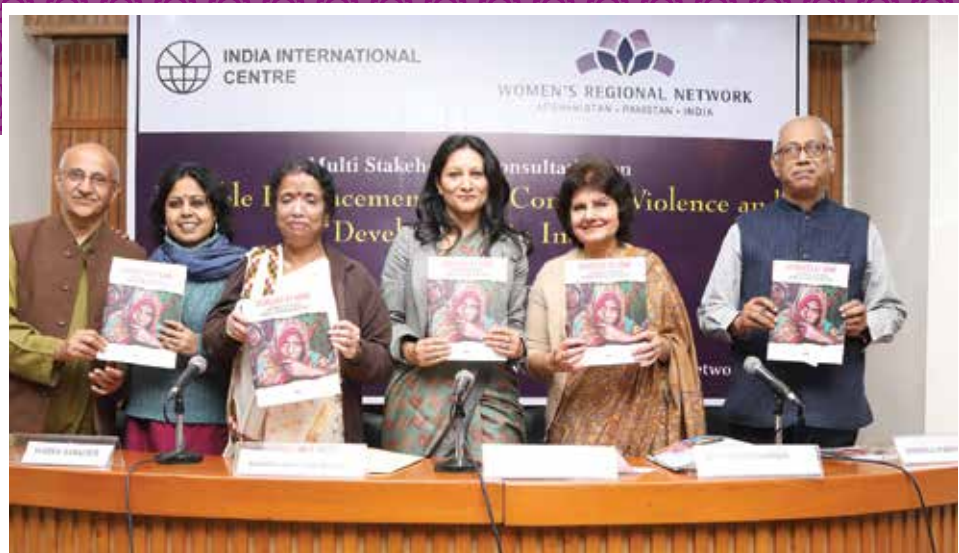
*Like water, we prevail.
No fire can resist our flood.
We build as you break—homes, lives,
spirits, relationships—tirelessly.*

*My sisters stay, tenaciously
holding on to homes and lands.
My sisters leave, protecting parents
and children, from terrible violence.*

*And then my sisters learn
to fight—guns, bombs, mines.
Their bodies are now the
battleground for someone else's war.*

*War is a strange land.
And so is this peace.
This strange pause where
we now wait—my new home.*

*Still marginal.
Still unsafe.
Still silent.
Still vigilant.
Still alive.*



Panelists at the 'Homeless at Home' report launch at the India International Centre, New Delhi, January 2017.

A LANDMARK ADDITION: SRI LANKA TO JOIN THE WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK IN 2018

WRN is excited to announce the accession of Sri Lanka into the Women's Regional Network! This marks the first new country to join the network since its inception in 2011. Sri Lanka is a leading country within the South Asia feminist and human rights movements, and has a rich and diverse experience to learn from in terms of transitional justice, truth and reconciliation, and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Nimalka Fernando, a leading Sri Lankan human rights defender, joined the WRN Board in the summer of 2017. Ms. Fernando offers a wealth of expertise on post-conflict peacebuilding, defending women's human rights, and leading regional movements. Consultations with potential members in Sri Lanka will begin in 2018.

CONSULTATIVE STATUS FOR UN PROCESSES

The WRN has gained consultative status for UN processes, including the Global Compact on Migration. We are seeking broader consultative status with ECOSOC and official UNHCR partnership to advance our work on IDPs and gain greater influence in policy formation at the global level.

VOICES FOR PEACE

Be sure to keep up to date in issues and events through our Voices for Peace blog. We conduct interviews with human rights defenders and local development practitioners, and provide insightful analysis through op-eds on the region's most pressing issues.

South Asian women's battle for rights and full citizenship begins at home and extends to the public policy sphere, limited everywhere by discrimination, exclusion, and violence. By supporting the Women's Regional Network, you are strengthening women's capacity to work across borders for a more secure, equitable, and just future. Your donation gives each woman the confidence to fight injustice and advocate for her rights. It is our supporters who make this work possible. Thank you!

Follow the GIVE NOW link to donate through PayPal.

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