



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK

AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA

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Amy Claire Wild, Global Marketing Strategist



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2012 ANNUAL REPORT

The **Women's Regional Network** is committed to a collaborative network to both **strengthen the security of women** and to **enhance women's leadership** to initiate and take action in preventing conflict, developing solutions to eradicate corruption and work collectively towards building peace across the region.



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2012 ANNUAL REPORT

In the past two decades, countries in South Asia have experienced profound changes, including violent conflict, repression, a rise in extremism and, for some countries, a violent transition from dictatorships to democracy that is still unfolding.

Women, particularly civil society activists, have been on the front lines of these developments as catalysts of non-violent protest, agents of positive change and, unfortunately, key targets of rising intolerance, extremism, and violence. Though their experiences are similar, they have almost no opportunity for regional interactions and exchanges to share strategies, successes and challenges as they face the huge task of creating a peaceful and prosperous future.

The Women's Regional Network is a collaborative network to assist communities of women leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India to learn from each other and construct common agendas across borders to develop solutions for stability, peace and growth. The Network is currently undertaking in-depth conversations with women in rural and urban communities to deepen their understanding of the inter-linkages between security and extremism and corruption and militarization, including the militarization of aid and development, as they impact women's lives. These "conversations" are focused on women who are voiceless, illiterate, and mostly uninformed of their rights and how to access them.

Across the world, the countries most dangerous for women also pose the greatest threat to international peace and security. The correlation is clear: where women are oppressed, governance is weak, leaving an environment where terrorists and extremism are most likely to take hold. Recent studies classify Afghanistan, Pakistan and India as three of the five worst countries to live as a woman.

From Our Community Conversations

"No one is monitored for what they are doing and whoever comes to monitor is also practicing the same culture of corruption and bribery. We do not question our leaders who loot all the state wealth and convert it into their personal assets."

"The physical violence in my country makes me think about death every second of my life... any second can be my last."

"Anything that hurts humanity's dignity is violence... The violence I have seen in my everyday life is not by the Taliban, but by their influence on people's minds and attitudes. I have seen my uncles deny their daughters an education or [prevent them from gaining] skills outside the home. This is harsh violence."

Our Members In The News

- **Rangina Hamidi:** <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rangina-hamidi>
- **Huma Safi:** <http://www.npr.org/2012/08/27/158522519/afghan-women-fear-backsliding-on-key-gains>
- **Selay Ghaffar:** <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/12/world/asia/afghan-law-offering-abused-women-redress-makes-slow-gains.html>
- **Binalakshmi Neptram** of India awarded the CNN/IBN Heroes Award: <http://ibnlive.in.com/shows/Real+Heroes/235841.html>
- Coverage of the **WRN Pakistan Public Meeting:** <http://tribune.com.pk/story/463474/peace-unattainable-without-inclusion-of-women/>

2012 Accomplishments

Women leaders in the region determined the focus of the Network's activities. The members developed the core values that guide their work and the outcomes they hope to achieve.

Women philanthropists from North America and Europe and human rights activists globally have supported their vision and were instrumental in the launch of the Network in the Fall of 2011.

- Funding from Mama Cash, a women's foundation in the Netherlands, supported the "Community Conversations" in all 3 countries to document the impact of extremism, corruption and militarization of aid and development on women and children's lives.
- A standardized questionnaire was developed by the members to allow for quantitative and qualitative data gathering in all three countries.
- A governing structure for the Network (determined at the Planning Meeting in Nepal in 2011) created a Steering Committee, a Global Secretariat and agreements with CSO's in each country to serve as WRN fiscal agents.
- A set of 11 core values were agreed upon to guide members of the Network as they collaborate and take action in the struggle towards peace, justice, and accountability.
- The Steering Committee held meetings in Dubai, Istanbul, and Islamabad in 2012 and formalized the structure and operational norms for the Network.
- Public meetings in Islamabad, Kabul and Delhi, for key stakeholders and leading human rights activists, launched the vision and mission of the Network in South Asia.
- An Annotated Bibliography on Gender, Security and Corruption, as well as the Militarization of Aid and Development on Women in South Asia was completed in November.



WRN Planning Meeting
Nepal, Fall 2011

Plans for 2013 and 2014

- Complete the "Community Conversations" in all three countries.
- Continue Regional Exchanges into each country's conflict zones.
- Finalize the report from the "Conversations" and the "Exchanges" that identify the inter-linkages among the three countries on the issues of corruption, lack of security and militarization of aid and development on women and children's lives.
- Hold a Regional Consultation for 50 leading activists in the Region, including global champions, to develop positive actions and solutions to address peace, justice and accountability issues.