



2019
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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.

GLOBAL OUTREACH

WRN Hosted Summit on Forced Displacement in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

WRN hosted a Summit on Forced Displacement and Gender in South Asia from February 27 – March 1, 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. WRN partnered with International Women's Rights Action Watch, Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP), to organise and host the summit. The Summit brought together 55 diverse stakeholders from 15 countries, mainly from South Asia but some from Europe and the US, to build upon WRN's core work of giving visibility to the forcibly displaced and argue 'Why Gender Matters.'

"It was such a privilege to be with all of you at the Summit. Looking forward to stay in touch"

— Priyanca Mathur, Prof. of Political Science, Jain University, Bangalore, India.

The Summit addressed the policy and practice gaps in meeting the needs and rights of women and girls whose voices are rarely heard and



Participants of the Summit on Forced Displacement and Gender in South Asia, February 27 – March 1, 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

realities seldom considered. At the conclusion of the Summit, a South Asia Call for Action on Gender in Forcible Displacement was adopted.

Video Overview of WRN Summit 2019 on Forcible Displacement and Gender in South Asia can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbKDbMkguFk.

Release of the Call for Action on World Refugee Day, 2019

The Call for Action, which was formulated during the summit held in Kuala Lumpur from February 29 – March 1, 2019, was released on the occasion of World Refugee Day, 2019,

expressing WRN's deep concern about the exponential increase in the population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Asia, a large majority of whom are women and girls.

REGIONAL CONVENINGS

Afghanistan and Pakistan Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress

Farhat Asif, WRN Board member, initiated a congress entitled "Afghanistan and Pakistan-Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress" at the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS) in Islamabad, with the support of N-Peace Network, in January 2019. The Congress focused on young women leaders to build synergies and work together to promote peace and tolerance by taking joint initiatives on peace building and social development in their respective countries.

The Congress was part of WRN's larger initiative to engage with young women with the intent of encouraging their participation and voicing their perspectives. Participants launched joint initiatives including; #YouArePowerful Campaign and Weave for Peace Project.



Afghanistan and Pakistan Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress

WRN Initiative to Promote and Protect Afghan Women's Rights in US Peace Talks with Taliban

In April, WRN led an effort to influence US government actions as a result of the US led Peace Talks with the Taliban. This effort was in collaboration with Afghan women leaders, including members of the WRN, the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and other civil society Afghan women's organizations. WRN initiated a two-prong campaign:

- To raise awareness among the US public of what was at stake for Afghan women with the US-led Peace Talks with the Taliban and,
- Ensure the US Congress take the action necessary to protect Afghan women in the rush towards an Agreement in order for US troops to leave Afghanistan.



Women leaders from four East African countries, Uganda (Ruth Ochieng, and Allan Asimwe), Tanzania (Demere Kitunga), Zimbabwe (Hope Chigudu) and Kenya (Joy Mbaabu, Kagwiria Mbogori and Njeri Kimanthi)

WRN modelled in East Africa

Seven renowned women leaders from four East African countries, Uganda (Ruth Ochieng, and Allan Asimwe), Tanzania (Demere Kitunga), Zimbabwe (Hope Chigudu) and Kenya (Joy Mbaabu, Kagwiria Mbogori and Njeri Kimanthi); gathered for the first time to consult on forming a Women's Regional Network for Peace & Security Leadership in East Africa. This initiative is based on the need for new ideas for genuine and sustainable peace in the region. The brainstorming over two days developed a Foundational Paper that included: context analysis, mandate, key shared values and principles, structure, scope, constituents and strategies for the proposed WRN for East Africa.

Civil Society Declaration for Revitalising South Asian Regional Cooperation

Swarna Rajagopalan, WRN Founder 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. The declaration that emerged from this meeting can be found at <http://www.southasianrights.org/?p=11955>.

WRN AFGHANISTAN

In recent years, WRN activities have added value to the body of knowledge on the meaningful participation of women in political and peace processes. The contributions of WRN have been noticed by various government officials, donors, NGOs and civil society. WRN has become a regional platform to connect women within the country and across the region.

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) partners with WRN

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), based in Washington, DC partnered with WRN to work with the members of the US Congress. This effort had extraordinary success in achieving its goals in Congress to promote the voices and perspectives of Afghan women in the peace negotiations with the Taliban. With the expertise of consultant Olivia Holt-Ivry and the expertise of ICRW's policy advocate, Teresa Casale, along with media consultants Finn Partners and Smash Strategies, based in DC, WRN was able to draw attention to the concerns of Afghan women and also table a Bill in the US House of Representatives promoting Afghan women's inclusion in any final Agreement with the Taliban.



Press Conference held by WRN and the Civil Society Working Group on the Peace Talks. The WRN women as left to right, Zarqa Yaftali, Humira Saqib and Fatema Kohestani.

Press Conference on Current Peace Talks

On February 9, 2019, Women's Regional Network, Women's Advocacy Committee, and the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CSJWG) conducted a Press Conference on the current Peace Negotiation with Taliban. The purpose was to reach out to National Unity Government officials and the peace talk delegates to emphasize the meaningful participation of women at the negotiation table and in decision-making around peace, reintegration and reconciliation processes.

Advocacy Meetings

WRN Afghanistan is a member of different advocacy committees such as Women's Political Participation, Anti-harassment, WPS-WG, and Human Rights Defenders. These committees meet regularly with high ranking authorities of National Unity Government (NUG). The committees, likewise, discuss WRN's activities on Women, Peace and Security with donor agencies.

Meeting with High Peace Council

To enhance women's participation in Peace Jerga, the Women Political Participation Committee met Mr. Dawoodzai — the head of Peace Jerga organizers and introduced seven women, three of them WRN Core Group Members, as facilitators in different committees at the Peace Jerga.



A gathering in a conservative province of Afghanistan to provide information on the Peace Talks with the Taliban.



WRN Board member Zarqa Yafatly, 2nd from the left and WRN Global Advisor Dr. Sima Samar, 3rd from left. This is the first meeting Ambassador Khalilzad held with women in Afghanistan.

Meeting with US Envoy to Afghanistan

WRN board member, Zarqa Yafatly, WRN Core Group Member, Lia Jawad, and WRN Global Advisor, Dr. Sima Samar, along with a number of Afghan women's rights activists met US Special Envoy, Ambassador Khalilzad, on the US Peace Talks with the Taliban. They discussed the meaningful participation of women in the Peace Talks to ensure women's basic rights are not negotiated away in any Agreement.

Consultation meetings

WRN Country Coordinator, Fatema Kohistani, and WRN Core Group Members attended the consultation meetings hosted by the UK, US and Canadian Embassies for the implementation of the Afghan National Action Plan on UN Res. 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Upcoming Activities

- WRN Afghanistan is currently conducting research on: Challenges Faced by Afghan Women in the 2018 Elections
- The fourth round of WRN's "Community Conversation" research will be conducted in second half of 2019, focusing on the challenges women face with the security forces in Afghanistan.

WRN PAKISTAN

Pakistan Country Coordinator, at the Asian Action Institute (AAI), Kathmandu, Nepal

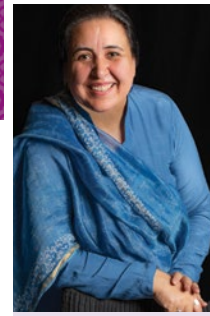
WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator, Rehana Wagha, was selected to attend South Asia Regional Institute on the Study and Practice of Strategic Nonviolent Action held in Dhulikhel, Nepal in March 2019. Ms Rehana Wagha, presented on the "Ideology of Non-Violence and its Manifestations in the Women's Movement in Pakistan".



WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator Rehana Wagha at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU)

Outreach and Engagement with Academic Institutions

WRN Pakistan Country Coordinator Rehana Wagha lectured on "Women, War and Conflict"



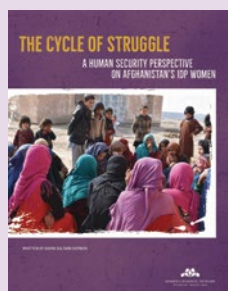
WRN celebrated Board Member Rukhshanda Naz's appointment as Ombudsperson Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Rukhshanda has been an activist in the Pakistani women's movement since the early 1990s. A lawyer by profession, she has worked with a number of NGOs on issues of violence against women and children and on women's empowerment programs.

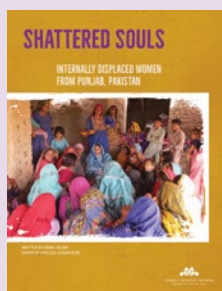
at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) workshop as a part of WRN's outreach program to engage young students in a dialogue on the issues of Women, Peace and Security. The lecture was attended online by students of AIU from 6 different cities of Pakistan.

Upcoming Activities

- **Community Conversations:** WRN Pakistan is holding Community Conversations with Rohingya women living in Sindh Province, to capture their difficulties and assess the impact of Pakistan's non ratification of Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. As a result of the findings of above mentioned research, an international dialogue followed by the advocacy meetings with the parliamentarians on the adoption of Convention relating to the Status of Refugees will be initiated.
- **Lobbying and Advocacy with the Parliamentarians and relevant Stakeholders:** Through an effective advocacy initiative, WRN Pakistan intends to make Parliamentarians and other relevant stake holders understand, appreciate and engage with the issues around women, peace and security through their mandate which can be helpful in devising a National IDP policy in the near future.
- **Outreach - Engagement with the Academic Institutions:** WRN Pakistan intends to launch a peace education initiative through a guest lecture series at the gender studies departments of various universities. WRN Pakistan's Guest Lecture Series will be particularly focused on the women in conflict in order to create unstructured spaces, providing interactive learning, while creating awareness and advocacy on the importance of women's inclusion in the peace processes.



The Cycle of Struggle: A Human Security Perspective on Afghanistan's IDP Women



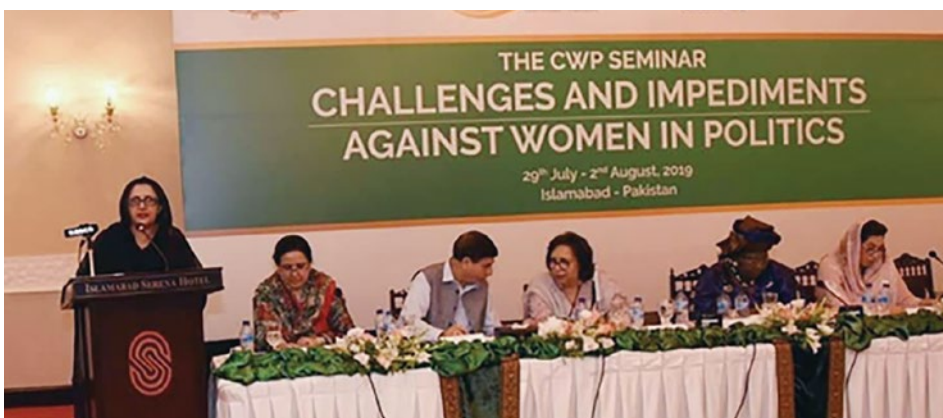
Shattered Souls: Internally Displaced Women from Punjab, Pakistan



Resistance Revisited: The Chutka Anti-Nuclear Power Plant Movement



"Not Everyone Picks Up Stones!": Plural Forms of Resistance and Women's Agency in Kashmir



First Women's Parliamentary Caucus held a Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) seminar on challenges and impediments against Women in Politics. WRN Pakistan Board Member, Ms. Rukhshanda Naz participated as a panelist and highlighted the challenges faced by Pakistani women in politics.



Left to right: Bushra Gohar (Pakistan), Abha Bhaiya (India), Shad Begum (Pakistan) and Rita Manchanda (India).

Appeal to Pakistan and India to withdraw from the war jingoism and hyper-nationalism

The participants of the Women's Regional Network Summit in Malaysia on Forced Displacement were deeply concerned at the crisis which loomed over Pakistan and India. Spiraling tensions threaten to engulf the region in an all-out war. The participants issued a statement urging the two nations to immediately withdraw from the war jingoism and hyper-nationalism which could have destroyed a region and have the potential for the destruction of the entire globe.

They appealed to India and Pakistan to immediately de-escalate, cease hostilities and return to the negotiating table to politically resolve all outstanding issues. They also called upon Nation States of the region to address these critical issues of peace, security and displacement

by involving women at each and every stage of decision making.

Video of the Official Statement on the Pakistan and India crisis from the WRN Summit 2019 can be found at <https://youtu.be/gygd3M8pCZ0WRN>

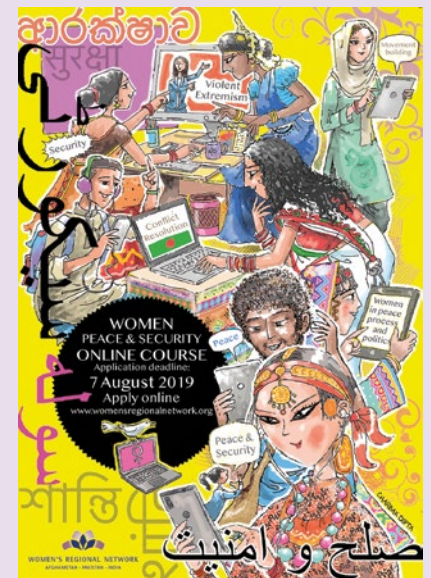
WRN INDIA

Awareness and Outreach Initiative

WRN's team in India has been working to further its outreach training program that was launched in 2018. The Members, in their individual capacities as peace and justice practitioners and as affiliated to WRN, have been engaged in taking the Outreach Program forward through talks and training sessions to youth beyond activist circles in different locations such as educational institutes and think-tanks.

Upcoming activities:

- WRN India is in the process of developing residential training programmes on Women, Peace and Security and Women's engagement in the peace process.
- Real-time courses with students across India, which will cover WPS concerns, in collaboration with some Indian universities.
- Outreach programme in the interest of expanding, sensitizing and building the capacity of peace constituencies beyond activist circles.



UPCOMING REGIONAL ACTIVITY (2019-2020)

WRN Launches 2nd Online Course on Women, Peace and Security(WPS)

WRN launched its 2nd edition of the free on-line course on Women, Peace and Security. The staff in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India received an overwhelming response from university students as well as young professionals. The challenge was to select only 36 candidates from many qualified applicants. The on-line sessions will take place fortnightly from 31st August until the end of December, 2019. WRN is honored leading women peace advocates regionally and globally are participating not only as lecturers but serving as an invaluable resource to the success of this course.

The WPS course will cover various pillars of Women, Peace and Security — Prevention, Protection, Participation, Relief and Recovery. In addition, sessions on the gendered dimensions of reconstruction and reconciliation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, countering gender stereotypes and violent extremisms, forced displacements and migrations, as well as how best to use cyber-space to foster social movements, and feminist movements in South Asia.



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
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