



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA

Reflections in the Mirror
By Mangla Sharma, WRN Core Member, Pakistan

They say that a mirror never tells a lie. That stands true for the mirror as well that shows us the realities of women's empowerment, gender equality and violence against women in the South Asian region, particularly in Pakistan.

I am a Pakistani woman. I consider myself a part of a so-called liberal clan. I enjoy many liberties that many other women in Pakistan don't have access to. Nonetheless, neither my belonging to the liberal group nor my privileged position changes anything in the mirror. I also try to think that the first woman to head a democratic government in a Muslim majority nation was from my country. I look a bit further and find many women leaders in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka who had served their nations or are still doing so. However, the mirror still depicts the same gory pictures.

I move around and look into another mirror; the mirror that shows capacities of South Asian women. I get amazed. I only see in that mirror ambitious, talented, intelligent and hardworking girls and women all across the region. They are not less than any other women in the world. They are achieving many things on the basis of their talent and hard work. Their journey is not easy. They have to go against the tide. Nonetheless, they always manage to reach their destinations.

Since their birth till their death they always remain at a secondary position. In recent years a lot of pro-women legislation has been done in Pakistan and neighboring countries that apparently empower women. Nonetheless, there is a group that is creating hurdles in women's journey toward peace and development. Because, while on the one hand a lot of legislation is being done, on the other the incidents of injustice, discrimination and assault against women are increasing. While treatment towards women in the Taliban era still haunts us, in India we are witnessing ever increasing rape incidents. At the same time, in Pakistan, pro-women legislation has been violated at a great scale. The irony is that governments seem helpless in this regard.

Whether it is ever growing terrorism in the region, unnecessary usage of power or a desire to establish hegemony, women suffer and women in the region only want peace. Women always have to pay the price of the bloodshed.

The situation regarding peace and security is not encouraging throughout South Asia. States will have to take steps in this regard. Otherwise, it will take centuries to compensate for the damages done by this chaos.

Disclaimer: As with all WRN blogs written by staff, members and outside experts, views expressed are not necessarily those of all members of the networks. The views represented here are not intended to create any tension between the different communities present in India, or amongst the different countries in South Asia. It should rather be treated as an appeal to our humane and rationale nature, and a desire for sustainable peace across the region, within and outside our borders.