

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA

ABOUT WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK

Founded in 2011, the core purpose of WRN is to amplify the voices of unheard, marginalized women, and with them address the interlinked issues of peace, militarization, forced displacements, (in) security, justice and governance in South Asia and East Africa. To this end, WRN connects women peace advocates, committed to working collectively within and across national borders and cultures in traditionally conflicted countries. WRN's pursuit is reflected in its history where its unique Community Conversations have been used to deliver specific advocacy campaigns to ensure grassroots women's concerns and their voices shape political discourse, policy development and program implementation which affect them.

Through a combination of comparative analysis, advocacy and capacity building, WRN seeks to promote a unique and valuable regional dialogue by documenting the experiences of women in zones of conflict across South Asia. For this purpose, WRN will continue to work in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka – countries consistently featured among the worst to live in as a woman in terms of inclusion (economic, socio-political), justice (formal laws, informal discrimination) and security (at family, community and society levels).

Emphasizing human security and a people-centric, gender-lens approach, WRN recognizes non-traditional crises and threats also qualify as "conflict" for women, where women's lives, security and peace are jeopardized, all the more so for those who are displaced, caught in armed-conflict, or face the brunt of exclusionary, divisive and aggressive politics.

The WRN model and approach aims to tap into and coordinate local and regional expertise on key topics related to women's human rights, peace and security across multiple and diverse movements and networks.

WRN's Achievements

- WRN is first and foremost a network of solidarity, speaking for and supporting women's human rights defenders across South Asia and beyond.
- Choosing to work with women's peace organizations and networks, we have contributed to strengthening the impact and influence of transnational activism around gender inclusive peacebuilding.
- Listening closely to what women living in the shadow of conflict and insecurity tell us, we amplify their voices and concerns in order to raise public awareness and positively influence government policies and actions.
- WRN has steadily expanded its capacity-building platform through discussion, training and outreach on issues relating to women, peace and regional security.



CONTENTS

Letter From Our Founder	3
Regional and Global Activities	4
Seed Initiatives	7
WRN India	12
WRN Pakistan.....	13
Communications	14
Donors	15
Financials.....	15
Executive Board	16



WHEN SISTERS GATHER

Sisters gather,
sisters who are strangers,
in the hope of finding themselves
in each other.

Sisters gather,
and stories are exchanged,
mumbling, halting, then gushing
like a torrent unstoppable...
stories in spate.

Sisters gather,
sceptical about sorority,
defensive about their anxiety,
urgently in need of hope
and each other.
Will you be the one to heed my need?

Sisters gather,
having forgotten nothing
about the last dozen times they
squabbled, fought, argued—
the Cold Wars that thaw
with the first tickle of laughter
and the first trickle of tears.

Sisters gather,
to grieve over other sisters,
spent, lost, felled,
and to lament the silence over their fate.
When you are cut, I bleed,
they tell each other.

Sisters gather,
and promise each other
that they will not forget.
Not the ones who disappeared.
Not the ones who died.
Not the abandonment or violence.
Not each other.

Sisters gather
over the baby's crib,
gushing, cooing and remembering
why they are here.
This baby, and all the others, deserve better
than we have got.

Sisters gather
to partake of food, wine, love and empathy,
to celebrate each other,
generously, and in solidarity.
When sisters gather,
they change the world.

*By Swarna Rajagopalan after the launch
of the Latin America Women's Regional
Network in Antigua, Guatemala, 2017*

LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

WRN has dedicated its efforts to addressing and advocating for the rights, freedoms, and full participation of women and girls in South Asia the past 14 years and in East Africa for the past 5 years. Our work has taken on added urgency and depth as we focus on the dire human rights violations against Afghan women and girls. These violations have taken place both within Afghanistan and among those seeking refuge in neighboring countries due to the misogynistic policies of the de facto Taliban regime.

We initially planned to conclude our research and related activities by December 2023. However, due to the complexity and urgency of the issues facing Afghan women, we determined additional time was needed to ensure our findings and recommendations were impactful in bringing about the change we seek. We extended the sunset of WRN until August 31, 2024.

Our research uncovered significant human rights violations that demanded careful and comprehensive analysis. The extension allowed us to finalize our research and ensure our findings are robust and actionable. We presented these findings and recommendations at large UN events in New York City and Geneva in March and June of 2024. These platforms provided an invaluable opportunity to advocate for policy changes and garner international support to ensure basic rights for Afghan women and girls will one day be restored.

The extension of WRN's sunset has provided us with the necessary resources and capacity to make significant strides in our mission. We are proud to announce the launch of five new seed initiatives aimed at supporting women and girls in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and East Africa. These initiatives represent a strategic expansion of our efforts and are designed to address pressing needs and create sustainable impact for women and girls in these countries.

We are grateful for the continued support of our partners and stakeholders, which has been instrumental in driving our efforts forward. None of our work would have been possible without their continued generosity of time and funds allowing us to make the strides we thought important to advance women in South Asia and East Africa.

WRN will document its body of work and journey through a memoir process. We aspire to share our challenges, strategies and lessons learned as a cross border network for the next generation of women leaders. We hope to make that memoir available by November, 2024.

It has been my privilege to work alongside women who are deeply committed to improving the lives of all women. Their passion, integrity, and dedication to creating a better future have been truly inspiring. I will deeply miss collaborating with such remarkable women.



Patricia Cooper

REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTIVITIES



WRN launch at the House of Lords, United Kingdom, front row (L-R): Arzoo Rasooli, Maryam Rahmani, Womankind Worldwide, Nargis Nehan, Founder CFFA, Nazifa Haqpal, Andrew McCoubrey the UK Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Baroness Fiona Hodgson of Abinger, Vice chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women, Peace & Security, Patricia Cooper Founder, WRN.

Afghanistan with a Gender Lens: Strengthening Global Coordination. This was an official side event to the 68th UN Commission on the Status of Women, which WRN co-hosted and organized in partnership with the UN Permanent Missions of Afghanistan and Malta, Canada's Feminist Forum for Afghanistan, International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), and Peace Direct. The discussion focused on both the rich data compiled in the WRN Community Conversation reports and on key advocacy opportunities including the recent UN debates on the Draft Crimes Against Humanity Convention and the inclusion of "gender" in the definition of Apartheid. The event posed an urgent call for coordinated global action for the codification of gender apartheid as a Crime Against Humanity within international legal frameworks. Twenty-two Member States were represented at the event including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Eritrea, Faroe Islands, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guyana, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Pakistan, Slovenia, Somalia, South Sudan, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States. The event was attended by more than

WRN Advocacy Tour

House of Lords, United Kingdom

On December 7th 2023 fifty high level guests representing civil society, policy makers, Afghan women, researchers, academia, and media attended the launch of the WRN Community Conversation reports while dozens were connected online. At the launch, the reports were presented to Andrew McCoubrey the UK Special Representative for Afghanistan and Baroness Fiona Hodgson of Abinger, Vice Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women, Peace & Security. Following the launch, the WRN team had various bi-lateral meetings with nonprofits in London, as well as a briefing on the WRN research findings to Alex Cameron, Head of Afghanistan Programmes and Policy Department at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) for the UK, as well as representatives from the Pakistan and India desk in the

FCDO. The research highlights various issues within the Gender Apartheid Lens with a focus on internally displaced persons, refugees, minorities, and women human rights defenders.

Official Side Event at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women

On March 12th 2024 WRN along with several partners hosted the event *Crimes Against Humanity in*

Read the WRN research which was launched around the world!

Read all of the reports at www.womensregionalnetwork.org/wrncommunityconversations. The launch of the WRN Sri Lanka report is yet to come, stay tuned and follow us on social media.





The WRN delegation presenting the Community Conversations Report at Vital Voices, Washington, D.C. (L-R): Judge Najla Ayoubi, Afghanistan; Ananya Kundu, Founder White Dot Solidarity Network; Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, author of the WRN Pakistan report; Yalda Royan, author of the WRN Afghanistan report; Nargis Nehan, Founder Canada's Feminist Forum for Afghanistan.

500 in-person participants, while countless more attended online via a live broadcast on UN Web TV. The delegation also held bilateral meetings with Members States and UN agencies.

WRN Advocacy efforts are aimed at ensuring that "gender" is incorporated into the definition of Apartheid in the draft Crimes Against Humanity Treaty.

Vital Voices, Washington D.C.

On March 14 WRN launched its Community Conversations Reports at the Vital Voices Headquarters in Washington D.C. and an insightful discussion unfolded as the rich data from the WRN Community Conversation in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan was presented. Attendees, representing a diverse spectrum from civil society,

academia, and the women's rights sector, engaged in a moderated discussion. Following this, an interactive question-and-answer session delved into strategies for holding the Taliban accountable for their egregious violations of human rights. The discourse underscored the imperative of codifying and recognizing "gender apartheid" to prevent its spread beyond Afghanistan and mitigate its impact on neighboring regions. WRN also conducted an advocacy tour which included meeting with Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and staff of the US Women, Peace and Security Caucus. The WRN delegation engaged in a bipartisan discussion with Jenn Miller, Foreign Policy Legislative Assistant for the Office of Congresswoman Lois Frankel, representing the WPS Caucus of the House.

Side Event at the 56th Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland

Countering Gender Apartheid & Gender Persecution in Afghanistan: Call for Global Action for Accountability and Codification *On the Sidelines of the 56th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council* was held on June 19 at the Palais des Nations,



The WRN delegation at CSW (L-R): Ananya Kundu, Former WRN Country Coordinator, India; France Bourgon, Executive Director, ICAN; Judge Najla Ayoubi, Founder Member, WRN; Moderator: Fiona Hodgson, The Baroness Hodgson of Abinger; Ambassador of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Naseer Faig; Ambassador of Malta to the United Nations, Vanessa Frazier; Yalda Royan, WRN Afghanistan report Author; Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, WRN Pakistan report Author and Zarqa Yaftali, Director, Women and Children Legal Research Foundation



Delegation of WRN and Afghan women activists meeting with the Afghan Ambassador at the Embassy in Geneva, Switzerland

Geneva, Switzerland. The event was hosted by Afghanistan’s Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, Albania’s Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, Center for Dialogue and Progress – Geneva, Women’s Regional Network, Canada’s Feminist Forum for Afghanistan, Womankind Worldwide, Atlantic Council Strategic Litigation Project, and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

The panel included **Ambassador Nasir Ahmad Andisha**, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN in Geneva, **Ambassador Vasilika Hysi**, Permanent Representative of Albania to the UN, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan **Richard Bennett**, Afghan activist and End Gender Apartheid campaigner **Mitra Mehran** and Women’s Regional report author and regional specialist **Rita Manchanda**. The Special Rapporteur noted the importance of Afghanistan within the global rights discourse “*We are not only talking about Afghanistan in this room today, we are talking about a serious threat of rollback on gender issues everywhere and Afghanistan is a key place where misogynists everywhere are watching what happens in Afghanistan, and if there is impunity or consequences, so I*

believe we are working for humanity everywhere.” Rita Manchanda highlighted the regional lens and importance of the roll back on women’s rights in Afghanistan and its dangerous spillover effect on the entire region as well as regional security and humanitarian implications. The WRN also had bilateral meetings with UN agencies and civil society to raise awareness on the issue of Gender Apartheid and to share the report findings of the WRN’s research with Afghan women.

Apartheid on the basis of race is a violation of the UN Charter, and a convention exists that criminalizes it. As such, perpetrators of apartheid bear criminal responsibility and are subject to prosecution, UN member states have obligations to respond when other states practice apartheid and can call upon the UN to suppress and prevent this crime. The international legal definition of apartheid however does not extend to systemic violations on the basis of gender. Sex and gender-based discrimination and persecution are also violations of international law as stated under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to both of which Afghanistan is a signatory, and to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which considers persecution on the grounds of gender as a crime against humanity. There are thus a limited range of measures that corresponds to the gravity of the violations and can be taken to hold perpetrators responsible, as well as measures to compel other states to respond more effectively to women’s human rights crises such as that occurring in Afghanistan. Although international action should not be dependent on the official recognition of gender apartheid, recognition from UN member states and within the UN system could be a crucial step towards codification and accountability to counter the systemic oppression that women in Afghanistan continue to face.



WRN Side Event at the 56th Human Rights Council

SEED INITIATIVES

WRN sent out an internal call for proposals to distribute some of the remaining WRN funds before its sunset this year. Five initiatives were successful and have been operating and conducting activities. WRN hopes these spin off initiatives will benefit from this seed money and be able to gain momentum for their own fundraising, becoming sustainable into the future.

SRI LANKA

Women, Peace and Security Initiative

The project addresses the need to develop a robust response related to the Women, Peace and Security – National Action Plan adopted by the Cabinet and handed over to the President of Sri Lanka on 8th March 2023. The

project aimed at raising awareness to develop advocacy and networking among women’s groups, human rights activists and policy makers to make the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security become effective, known and updated to be useful to promote the core principles of the UN 1325. Our perspective is that in order to further 1325 activities and NAP development

and implementation the process must include the engagement of grassroots women and can be best accomplished by taking an intersectional approach where communities begin to define the meaning of UN 1325 to their lives and future rather than responding to donor driven or state driven interests. Based on the above assumption WRN Sri Lanka facilitated the following activities: social dialogues, stakeholder consultations, campaigns as well as a WPS course modelled after the WRN were conducted.

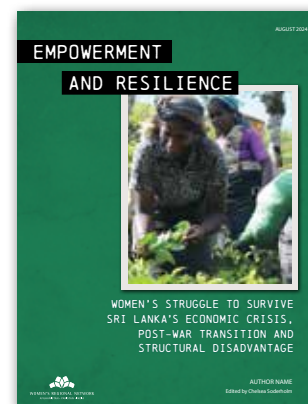
Beneficiaries of the project included:

Women from the North and East affected by the war (those resettling and those relocated), and women with disability including ex-combatants undergoing rehabilitation.

In general, addressing the issues of gender based violence and increasing women’s political participation will address continuing impunity related to GBV and lack of political will to address to expand the quota for women to Provincial Councils and the Parliament.



Sri Lankan seed initiative stakeholder consultations



Read the full Sri Lanka Community Conversation report [here](#).

INDIA

The White Dot Solidarity Network

The White Dot Solidarity Network (WSN) is a youth led initiative founded by Ananya Kundu and Dennis Lallienzuol. "White Dot" refers to safe, inclusive and accessible spaces for young leaders that the network aims to create. WSN provides needs based capacity building and resources to youth leaders and youth led collectives from marginalized communities and regions in Asia. WSN provides a safe space and platform for its members to network, collectivize and build cross border/ regional solidarities. WSN envisions a region where young people, regardless of gender, sexuality, caste, creed or any other social identity, actively contribute to feminist peacebuilding, transforming society and paving the way for a brighter and more inclusive future. White Dot Solidarity Network functions in India with the help of its fiscal partner, Rural Women's Upliftment Society in Manipur. WSN has been engaged in working with young people from vulnerable, marginalized communities and remote locations in the country.



Dennis Lallienzuol, Co-Founder of WSN, (Left) moderating the panel discussion on Inclusive Leadership in Mizoram

PROJECTS: "Building Your Feminist Collective" Workshop for Young Tribal Women's Network Members in New Delhi 27th April, 2024

White Dot Solidarity Network (WSN) organized its first workshop in Delhi for members of the Young Tribal Women's Network (YTWN) at the Hmar Christian Fellowship Centre in Munirka, Delhi on the 27th April 2024. The workshop was attended by 15 participants, with 13 women and 2 men. The attendees consisted of university students, scholars and activists who were all members of YTWN.

Symposium on Inclusive and Collaborative Leadership in Mizoram

White Dot Solidarity Network (WSN) in partnership with Full Life Access

Trust (FLAT) in Lehkha, and the Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences Research (local youth led Mizo organizations), organized a first of its kind Symposium on Inclusive and Collaborative Leadership in Aizawl, Mizoram. The first session was "Interactive Workshop on Feminist Participatory Action Research: Focusing on Community-Led Solutions to Social Issues" facilitated by Ananya Kundu. The Symposium was attended by 50 participants consisting of university professors, PhD scholars, Masters and undergraduate students, CSO representatives, social workers, writers, journalists, and government workers from across Aizawl. The event was widely reported and covered by the local media.

Upcoming events

July to September 2024

Youth Leadership Fellowship Program 2024 - India and Southeast Asia

The Youth Leadership Fellowship is an online program that aims at connecting young people between the age of 17-21 of India and Southeast Asia through a course designed for young people, providing them with the skills, knowledge, and networks necessary to promote feminist peacebuilding and social transformation within their communities. It is a participatory program through a peer to peer model



Participants who joined the workshop in-person in New Delhi with WSN Founder and Executive Director, Ananya Kundu.

where 20 young and exceptional youths who represent the marginalized, indigenous, and underrepresented communities or groups will be engaged in a 3-month long program delving from peacebuilding and gender to disarmament and conflict transformation and other issues that affect young people of the region.

Funding

WSN has been dependent on the seed-grant provided by WRN for its operations. The team at WSN has been actively trying to raise funds through grant applications to sustain its operations in 2024 and 2025. WSN is reaching out to funders to ask for support for its work. For more information about the initiative or how to support it please contact Ananya Kundu at ak.ananya.13@gmail.com and follow WSN's social media.

PAKISTAN

Young Women Leadership Development Program (YWLDP)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

This project addresses urgent gaps in knowledge, awareness, and capacity building for local women leaders in Pakistan, especially from conflict-ridden areas. It aims to empower women to participate in political life fully, assume leadership roles, engage in decision-making processes, and advocate for equal rights and entitlements. The project seeks to build civil society coalitions and promote a common agenda for women's empowerment and feminist peace and security. It aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the mandate of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Key activities include training 120 young women leaders from various provinces in Pakistan through the Young Women Feminist Leadership Course.



Participants of the Young Women Leadership Development Program (YWLDP), WRN Pakistan Seed Initiative

This training will help participants understand their rights, strengthen their agency, and form networks to influence their communities. We successfully **selected 16 young emerging women leaders from 11 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**, ensuring they represent diverse backgrounds and experience in working with local communities across various sectors such as health, education, skill training, agriculture, peacebuilding, and political empowerment. A comprehensive **toolkit for Women Human Rights Defenders** was developed by an expert scholar to further support these leaders.

A four-day residential leadership development course in Islamabad was held from June 24th to 27th, 2024. At the end of the Formation of four-day residential leadership development course in Islamabad, the young women leaders agreed to establish the **Young Women Leaders Network (YWLN)** at the provincial level. This network aims to explore the ways and resources to ensure continued work for the promotion of **Young Women Feminists Leaders** across Pakistan while connecting with other networks in other provinces. The **YWLDP** will bring together 50 grassroots young

women leaders among the target 16 young women leaders trained under this program, will be engaged in comparative analysis and explore critical commonalities for developing shared strategies and also to ratify the local, provincial and national strategies and upholding solidarities.

EAST AFRICA

This is a momentous time for WRN-EA. As we reflect through the period under review, are grateful for the strides we have made in contributing to making peace the norm for women and girls in our region. Our region has faced challenging times due to continued violence against women, bad governance, patriarchy, religious extremism, and discrimination and marginalisation of women and girls. We have responded by undertaking strategic responses reaching over 1000 women and girls spread throughout our region. We are grateful for the support from our partners including WRN, Sustainable Futures Africa Foundation, Amani Communities Africa, and Haella Foundation.

Programs:

- **Governance:** We have been able to complete our major policies and procedures, and legal compliance documentation. We now have functional boards at Regional and Country levels. We have formalised the fiscal hosting arrangement with Amani Communities Africa based in Ngong Hills, Kenya. We also made a strategic decision to make South Sudan our next country to expand and start a Country Chapter.
- **Movement building:** 45 network members were recruited and issued with certificates during the Members' Day on 12th April 2024.



Tree planting ceremony as part of the education on greening practices.

- **Capacity building for network leadership:** On 26th - 30th November 2023, twenty three WRN-EA leaders from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and the DRC, including representatives from Inter-Religious Councils and Community-Based Organizations, converged for a reflection, selfcare, and planning retreat. In addition to the leaders improving their leadership skills, they also shared inspiring stories of the impact of their work in the communities they serve. This testifies to the multiplier effect of WRN-EA from policy to community levels.
- **Institutional building:** We have held twelve board meetings at

country and regional levels in the period under review. The outcome has been bonding of the leaders and increased clarity of thematic areas: Sisterhood Care Program, Women in Prisons Program, Safe & Shelter Homes Program, Community and Climate Action, Peer Mediation in Schools Program, and Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainability. Additionally, we have developed a framework for resource mobilisation and partnerships for effective implementation.

- **Community Outreach Program:** We have held several community outreach programs including visits to: Huruma Children's Home, Oloolua

Primary School, Calvary School, Cara Girls Rescue Centre, Talent Day and Primary School, and Glory of Christ Nursery and Primary School.

- **Community Engagement:** We have carried out several community conversations including at: Ole Tepesi Community, Women of Bulembo Village, Women of Namutumba District where physical and sexual violence by intimate partners are rampant, education on greening practices through tree growing, and Community Empowerment Initiative to Namayingo South Hunyala Young Women Association (Hunyala)– sensitizing girls on life skills and rights, and encouraged girls to report any violations committed against them for redress through the respective institutions.
- **Documentation:** With support from WRN Global we have commenced a project in which we are interviewing women peacebuilders to document their stories, out of which a book titled: *Whose Peace? Tools, Qualities and Practices of Women Peacebuilders* will be published and disseminated. It will be launched during our annual retreat in November 2024.

AFGHANISTAN

CFFA

Since launching in September of 2023, Canada’s Feminist Forum for Afghanistan (CFFA) has been active both in global and Canada-focused advocacy efforts, as well as in building its capacity for sustainability beyond the existence of WRN. CFFA hosted a webinar in January 2024 *Recognizing Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan: the Role of Countries with Feminist Foreign Policy* which aimed to engage and inform decision makers and civil society on the rationale of the campaign to end gender apartheid. The event focused on the role of countries with feminist foreign policies in the advancement of the campaign, and was attended by numerous policy makers, politicians, CSOs, members of women’s rights groups and other key stakeholders.

In May, CFFA organized and delivered a special parliamentary event entitled *Combating Gender Apartheid: Another Step Towards an Equal World*. MPs and Senators from across the political spectrum joined together in Ottawa for a special parliamentary event to highlight the devastating human rights violations being perpetrated against women and girls in Afghanistan, and to

extend their support for efforts to have gender apartheid codified as a crime against humanity within international law.

CFFA has also led and facilitated a number of high level political dialogues, including a recent meeting between David Sproule, Canada’s Special Envoy on Afghanistan and Afghan women leaders and human rights defenders. The meeting allowed participants to share the needs and priorities of women on the ground, and focused particularly on the concerns of women ahead of the Doha III talks, as civil society and women’s voices were excluded from the proceedings.

CFFA has worked with a broad range of Afghan women and Afghan-led CSOs, both inside Afghanistan and internationally, compiling their input and endorsement for these letters and statements, and contributing to a unified, coordinated voice of advocacy. EPD/CFFA has held three XSpace sessions (formerly Twitter) in local languages to engage activists from inside Afghanistan on the issue of gender apartheid and to provide them with training and knowledge to support their women’s rights work.

Find out more about CFFA from Nargis Nehan at nargis.nehan@gmail.com.



CFFA Meeting, Toronto, Canada



From L-R: Ananya Kundu, Former Country Coordinator, India, WRN; Syeda Hameed, Former Planning Commission Member of India and Rita Manchanda Board Member, WRN holding the India Afghan Community Conversations Report.

Launch of WRN India Community Conversation, April, 2024

Women’s Regional Network, India in collaboration with the India International Centre, held the India Afghan Refugee Community Conversations Report Launch and Panel Discussion titled “Campaign Against Gender Apartheid: A Crime Against Humanity” on 12th April 2024 at the India International Centre, New Delhi. The conversation aimed to highlight key report findings of Afghan women’s experiences of gender persecution in Afghanistan and challenges they faced as refugees in India. The discussion then delved into the role of gender

persecution in regime maintenance in Afghanistan and the significance of the Gender Apartheid framework in global advocacy, its potential in bringing justice to Afghan women. The event was attended by 95 participants consisting of university students, civil society leaders, activists, lawyers and media representatives.

Upcoming Program

Asia Pacific Feminist Forum (APFF 2024), FPAR Reflections Meeting

Ananya Kundu has been invited to the Asia Pacific Feminist Forum 2024 organized by Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development

(APWLD) in Chiang Mai, Thailand in September 2024. Ananya will present key research findings and reflections from the Feminist Participatory Action Research on Human Rights of Migrant Women Workers that she had led at WRN from 2022 to 2023.

Support for Afghan Women HRDs, journalists, and activists

Since the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, WRN Pakistan has been committed to providing unwavering support to the courageous and resilient women of Afghanistan. We are proud to share that our efforts have yielded remarkable results in just a few short months with very limited resources with the help of our friends and networks.

- Assistance was provided to Afghan Women HRDs, journalists, and activists in seeking safe shelter in Islamabad and Peshawar.
- Food Packages Distribution to Afghan Women HRD, journalists, and activists residing in Quetta, Peshawar, and Islamabad.

Film Festivals in Quetta, Peshawar, and Islamabad:

After the influx of Afghan refugees in recent years in different cities of Pakistan, particularly Balochistan Province and KP, many social issues emerged. Many individuals, organizations, groups, networks, and



WRN Film Festival and discussion, Quetta

community members played a pivotal role in support in different forms as per their capacity. During December 2023, three separate Film Festival events were organized in Peshawar, Quetta, and Islamabad. In each event, a large number of Afghan women refugees, Pakistani women's rights activists, local CSOs, and UNHCR representatives participated. The event was titled "Unscripted Realities: Documentary Screening, Panel Discussion, Insights, and Q&A Session." In Peshawar and

Islamabad events showcased the documentaries based on Afghan women HRDs, journalists, and artists, made by a local journalist Ms. Jamaima Afridi. After the screening a panel comprised of renowned Pakistani activists, Afghan women HRDs, and UNHCR representatives was held.

Vital Voices Cases to support WHRDs at Risk

WRN was a vetted partner of Vital Voices which supports Afghan WHRDs at risk. WRN referred cases from our larger network of Afghan Members. WRN selected the most dire cases, working with a small WRN Committee for verification, budget review, translations, application support and secure transmission as well as follow-up. WRN also supported application writing for other funds as required and applicable. WRN has closed this mechanism, handing it over to Canada's Feminist Forum for Afghanistan, the WRN Afghanistan seed initiative, having supported over 25 cases of women under threat due to their activism.



WRN Film Festival Event, Peshawar. The UNHCR representatives highly appreciated organizing these events as this helped them listen to the Afghan women and their challenges, concerns and solutions.

COMMUNICATIONS



WRN communication during the period November 2023 to July 2024 focused on the promotion of WRN Community Conversations research findings in countering Gender Apartheid & Gender Persecution in Afghanistan since the Taliban's 2021 seizure of power. Our policy communication was in line with the global advocacy initiative for 2024 which posed an urgent call for coordinated global action on this women's rights crisis, to bring key stakeholders around a unified movement for the codification of Gender Apartheid as a crime against humanity within international legal frameworks. We engaged with various stakeholders in the preparations of the advocacy events in London, New York, New Delhi, Ottawa and Geneva. We also coordinated with the authors of the Community Conversations: Yalda Royan, Saba Gul Khattak and Taiba Pirzad, Rita Manchanda and Ananya Kundu for data analysis, and developing presentation of the key findings of the research.

The communication with graphic banners and live video streaming of the key events during the advocacy events were featured in the website, social media platform X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Themes:

- Advocacy on Women and Girls of Afghanistan under Taliban rule.
- Developing collations and alliance for the cause of Afghan women.
- Promotion of country level events: women's march in Islamabad-Pakistan.
- Solidarity with novelist, poet, and educator Heba Abu Nada's death in Gaza, Palestine.
- WRN Advocacy echoed by Massoda Kohistani at the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference 2023 in Netherlands, highlighted the reality & need to include women of Afghanistan in implementing feminist foreign policies.
- International Day of Tolerance.
- Racial & Gender based discrimination and its impact on the security & well-being of North East women in Delhi by curtailing their access to safe housing & employment.
- Promoting Nobel Peace Prize 2023 awardee activist Narges Mohammadi who is imprisoned in Iranian jail, for her fight against the oppression of Iranian women.
- Recalling the commitments made by our governments, communities and leaders to adhere and be accountable to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Promotion of WRN Research quantitative data and stories of the WRN Community Conversation Report: *Suffering Unveiled: Afghan Women's Struggle Under the Taliban*.
- Solidarity with Zholia Parsi, Neda Parwani, Manizha Siddiqi, and Parisa Azadah, the activists imprisoned by the Taliban for seeking their right to education and work.

DONORS

The members of the Women’s Regional Network thank all of our supporters for your commitment to our shared vision and your support of our research and advocacy anchored firmly in the real world of women’s experiences.

In-Kind Advisors

Jane Barry
 Marie Berry
 Sayeda Hameed
 Baroness Fiona Hodgson
 Senator Marilou McPhedran
 Jane Real
 Swarna Rajogopalan

\$100,000 & Above

Vital Voices

\$25,000 – \$50,000

Channel Foundation

\$10,000 – \$24,000

CarEth Foundation
 Cynda Collins Arsenault
 International Civil Action Network (ICAN)
 Lynda M. Goldstein Foundation
 Mary Sissel
 Womankind Worldwide
 Mary Zinn

FINANCIALS

Profit and Loss

January 2023 - December 2024

	JAN - DEC 2023	JAN - DEC 2024	TOTAL
▼ Income			
400 Contributions	13,685	35,338	\$49,022
500 Grants	80,093	159,611	\$239,704
Total Income	\$93,778	\$194,948	\$288,726
GROSS PROFIT	\$93,778	\$194,948	\$288,726
▼ Expenses			
700 Grants to Others	31,900	119,737	\$151,637
750 Outside Services	272,426	86,641	\$359,068
800 Program and General	25,908	11,613	\$37,520
830 Travel and Meetings	70,088	28,449	\$98,536
860 Other Business Expenses	4,431	2,864	\$7,295
Total Expenses	\$404,752	\$249,304	\$654,056
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$ (310,974)	\$ (54,355)	\$ (365,329)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Patricia Cooper, Canada/USA
Najla Ayoubi, Afghanistan
Saumya Uma, India
Rukhshanda Naz, Pakistan

Chelsea Soderholm, Senior Advisor
Manoj Mathew, Communications Consultant
Cheryl Fellows, WRN Accountant



WRN working group meeting Dubai, UAE, February 2023. L-R BACKROW: Ananya Kundu, India Country Coordinator; Patricia Cooper, Founder/ Convener; Swarna Rajagopalan, India Founding Member; Jane Barry, Facilitator; Ruth Ochieng, Founding member for East Africa WRN, Uganda; Kagwiria Mbogori, Director, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kenya; Joy Mbaabu, Founding Member, WRN East Africa, Kenya; Jane Real, Facilitator, Philippines; Shreen Saroor, Member, Sri Lanka Chapter; Rukhshanda Naz, Board Chair, Pakistan L-R FRONT ROW: Abha Bhaiya, Founding Member, India; Rita Manchanda, Founding Member, India; Nimalka Fernando, Board Member, Sri Lanka; Dr. Saumya Uma, Board Member, India; Shad Begum, Country Coordinator, Pakistan



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