

Women Peace Mediators Network

Empowering Women for Conflict Transformation and Mediation

Rationale

The process of attaining sustainable peace requires the inclusion of the entire society, and this cannot be achieved if women are not actively present in peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes. Women being half of the world's population and bearing the brunt of every conflict need to have their voices heard in the peace processes that directly affect their well-being and that of their societies. Greater inclusivity of women in peace processes would help minimize the security threats women face before, during and after conflict.

Despite a wide international consensus to promote increased participation of women in peace processes and to become more gender sensitive in negotiation and mediation, this recognition generally stays at the level of normative policies. Continuous discussions about the Women, Peace and Security agenda at global level and corresponding national policies have not been able to identify practical channels for making peace mediation gender sensitive and more inclusive.

The question of women's participation in peace building and mediation is in fact rooted in the premise that women's inclusion – their presence and participation in the process, their perspective and contributions to the substance of talks - improves the chances of attaining viable and sustainable peace. This proves true; since women know what impact an armed conflict or war can have on their lives.

Women's inclusion in peace building and mediation holds certain challenges however. Some of them are posed by the masculine narrative and arrangement and the others are about the lack of skills. Even though we have examples of women's presence as peace builders in Track 3 diplomacy, as we move into Track 2, Track 1.5 and Track 1 Diplomacy, their presence starts getting further narrowed. These issues served as the background of Women Peace Mediators Network.

About the Network

WPMN comprises of women peace activists from 13 countries, including Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Vanuatu, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Sudan, Switzerland, China, Nepal and Philippines. The overall goal of the network is to promote inclusivity in peace processes through, a) continued capacity building of women peacemaker's mediation capacities, b) raising awareness of the need for inclusivity on all levels and tracks of peace building c) promoting linkages between different tracks of peace building.

The network believes that on the one hand women as actors need to be empowered to negotiate and mediate at all levels of society. More women negotiators and mediators are needed on all tracks, and those already working, need to create space for linking up works on different tracks. And on the other hand - the issues, needs and views of women have to be brought into the political space, be there directly by the women themselves, or through other actors.

Taking it forward in Pakistan

In Pakistan, Kishwar Sultana, director Insan Foundation Trust, Naila Naz, deputy director, from ASR Resource Center, Rabeea Arif, creative director, PeaceNiche Karachi, and Naureen Naseer, Professor Peshawar University, represent the network.

WPMN facilitated the first national event of Islamabad Youth Declaration, at the occasion of Insan's Youth Forum, "Diversity is Beautiful: Respect Differences & Celebrate Commonalities", to further its agenda and solicit support from the youths of the educational institutions across Pakistan. The next step would be to organize youth groups in the provinces with the help of a working group that would be formed during this event after the endorsement of Islamabad Youth Declaration.

The Network originated in Nepal where women peacemakers got together in an international training on Multi Track Gender Sensitive Mediation, organized by South Asian Feminist Network (Sangat) and Peace Women Across the Globe, Switzerland.

