



Newsletter 1/2016

TOPIC **WOMEN'S PEACE TABLES**

Dear Readers,

PWAG celebrated its 10th Jubilee in Bern, Switzerland, in October 2015. Board members and coordinators travelled from all over the world to join in the events. The first few days were dedicated to reflecting on our past performance and to developing plans for the future. Creating scope for exchange with the Swiss was also important to us, as they have been a continual support to our organization over the years.

At public events, we shared the experiences gathered during the Women's Peace Tables that were held in ten different countries. We also presented our WikiPeaceWomen project, for which, as you will read in this newsletter, we have begun collecting the biographies of a million PeaceWomen.

We have achieved much in the past years. We have drawn attention to peace and have strengthened our network. We have supported peacemakers and made their work visible. We are committed to continuing our work.

Being a part of PeaceWomen Across the Globe means a lot to me. When I'm working in my small organization in India, I feel like a drop of water – but in this global network, I feel like an ocean.

Solidarity, peace, and love,
KAMLA BHASIN, CO-PRESIDENT OF PWAG

There is a Great Demand for Peace Tables

Last fall, [PeaceWomen Across the Globe](#) organized ten Women's Peace Tables in ten countries. The aim of the tables is that women should be able to submit their demands on an equal footing with men in peace processes and conflict situations – as UN resolution 1325 has stipulated for the past 15 years.

Fifteen years ago, the UN Security Council signed resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. The document calls on UN member states to respect the needs of women and girls in conflicts, to protect them from violence, and to include women in peace negotiations. In 2015, to mark the 15th anniversary of the resolution, UN Women published a 400-page study on its implementation.

Some things have been achieved – but much has not
The study comes to the conclusion that there are still large gaps in the resolution's implementation. It notes positive developments in some areas, but finds that shockingly little has happened in others. One welcome change is that more peace declarations now refer explicitly to the situation of women. Between 1990 and 2000, only 11 percent of declarations did this. Since the signing of the resolution, that figure has risen to 27 percent. Of six agreements that emerged from peace negotiations or from UN-supported national dialogue processes in 2014, two thirds contained such references.

However, there has been no movement as regards women's participation in peace negotiations. In 31 large-scale peace processes held between 1992 and 2011, just nine percent of the negotiators were women. Women accounted for four percent of the signatories, for as few as 2.4 percent of the chief mediators, and for 3.7 percent of the process observers.

Women at negotiating tables

PeaceWomen Across the Globe works to ensure that peace negotiations do not remain a purely male domain. This is why, in 2015,

Top: More than one hundred women participated at the Peace Table in Bangladesh.



TOPIC **WOMEN'S PEACE TABLES**

CONTINUED >

PWAG organized ten Women's Peace Tables in Bangladesh, Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Sudan and Thailand. The idea behind the tables is that, if women are going to be shut out of official negotiations, they should at least have access to a halfway institutional platform which they can use to table their demands. These types of platforms obviously fulfil a need, and it is equally obvious that there are too few of them. This became clear in early 2015, when ten of the international coordinators who had been approached about the tables took almost no time at all to agree enthusiastically to getting involved in the project.

The Peace Tables were part of *Women, Seriously!*, an international campaign launched by PeaceWoman Irene Santiago (Philippines). The campaign increases the visibility of women's right to participate fairly in peace negotiations, and thereby puts pressure on governments and the international community.

Diverse formats

The Women's Peace Tables were run in October and November 2015 in partnership with local organizations. The female participants – who numbered between 30 and 100 at each event – were women's rights activists, women from rural areas, indigenous women, students, representatives of government and civil society, police officers and journalists. Men were also invited to participate.

The event format differed from country to country. For instance, in addition to traditional conferences, there were also group discussions and creative elements. The thematic focus also varied according to the context. Topics included the impact that religious conflicts have on women's rights, the issue of domestic violence, and economic empowerment as a prerequisite for political participation. One striking finding was that despite their

different origins, women all over the world face similar difficulties. Speaking in Bangladesh, PeaceWoman Fawzia Khondker fittingly noted that “women encounter many struggles in life. They have to rebel against their families, the state, and gender roles. Our society will never advance unless we recognize these struggles and remove them.”

Given that the first installment was such a success and received such positive feedback from within the network, PWAG will definitely be continuing the Women's Peace Tables project in 2016. After all, only when women have a platform that allows them to participate actively in peace processes will they one day be able to join men on an equal footing at official negotiating tables.

Sources

Sarah Diack (cfd), “Rechtlicher und institutioneller Kontext von UNSCR 1325. Grundlagenpapier,” 2015
www.cfd-ch.org/pdf_temp/2015_Grundlagenpapier_1325.pdf
 UN study, “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace,” 2015, wps.unwomen.org/en

More information

www.1000peacewomen.org > Activities > Projects





TOPIC JUBILEE

Participants listen to a talk about new PWAG projects during the jubilee celebration at Schloss Bümpliz.

Ten Years PWAG, and the Network Keeps Growing

On October 22 and 23, 2015, PeaceWomen Across the Globe celebrated its jubilee, marking ten years since 1,000 women were collectively nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. The celebrations in Bern were an opportunity to look back on past achievements, meet women from around the world, and make new contacts.

The opening event was entitled “10 years – 1 000 women – 1 million stories,” and was held in a large tent on Münsterplatz in Bern. The tent was open to visitors interested in chatting to PeaceWomen from all over the world. Seated at tables, the women, who hailed from Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Thailand, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Kenya, Egypt, Palestine, Mali and Afghanistan, talked about their work and the political situation in their home countries. Over 100 women and men, as well as many teenagers, listened to their explanations and asked interesting questions.

Peace is...

The program also featured a panel discussion with representatives of Swiss politics, culture, and academia. The lead question asked what we can all do to contribute to a peaceful society. The diverse panel featured author Dorothee Elmiger, professor of sociology Ueli Mäder, Kathrin Hayoz (Free Democratic Party, Bern), Margret Kiener Nellen (Social Democratic Party, Bern), Laavanja Sinnadurai (lawyer with Tamil roots) and Annemarie Sancar (Green Party, Bern).

It quickly became clear that each participant had a different idea about what peace actually is. For Hayoz, for instance, peace means being able to get up in the morning without having to fear for one's life. Elmiger, by contrast, has a traditional definition of peace: “Peace is the absence of war. This definition illustrates that

there are places in the world where wars are being waged, and places that are spared such conflicts.” However, everyone on the panel agreed that lasting peace is not possible without social justice.

Women in peace negotiations

The event entitled “Women's Participation in Peace Talks – Challenges and Solutions,” which was held in Schloss Bümpliz, provided a space for exchange between experts. PWAG coordinator Karen Tanada opened the event with a report on the Philippine peace negotiations in which she participated. She explained the contribution that women had made to the peace process and highlighted the difficulties with which they had to contend. For instance, one of the conflict parties initially refused to negotiate with women. Over time, however, the resistance lessened: “I was accepted by all sides. Everyone knew that I was working for a just peace,” said Tanada.

The panel discussion that followed brought together Sidonia Gabriel (Centre for Peacebuilding, KOFF), Carmela Bühler (Human Security Division, FDFA), Ursula Keller (SDC), Sima Samar (PWAG coordinator for Afghanistan) and Karen Tanada of the Philippines. They discussed how to implement UN resolution 1325 so that women actually get to participate in negotiations.

Eating, drinking and music

The jubilee ended with a gala fundraising event. Guests were treated to an international meal, and between-course entertainment came in the form of short speeches, a feminist dance performance by Bern's all-girl hip-hop act Urban Rebels, and singing by Mozambican musician Nilisa.



WikiPeaceWomen

Ten years have passed since 1,000 women were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Kin Chi Lau from Hong Kong – who has been a member of the PWAG International Board since the very start – has long been dreaming of going a step further. Now that is becoming a reality: PWAG is collecting the life stories of a new generation of peacemakers, and is also updating the biographies of the original 1,000 women.

The project, which was launched in October 2015 under the name WikiPeaceWomen, is about increasing the visibility of the peace work done by women all over the world. Visit the WikiPeaceWomen website to read the first updated biographies and new inspiring life stories. You can also get involved by nominating a woman yourself.

We would like to take this opportunity to share two WikiPeaceWomen entries with you: the updated biography of Rokeya Kabir (Bangladesh) and a new article about Vicky Johanna Cogua Nova (Colombia).

Catching up ten years down the line

Ten years after she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, **Rokeya Kabir** continues to campaign for women's and human rights in **Bangladesh**. She is head of Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), an organization that she helped to set up. Between 2002 and 2009, the government severely restricted Rokeya's work and that of her organization. Nevertheless, she continued campaigning – from a smaller office and with a smaller team – and drafted guidelines for a new education policy in Bangladesh. Rokeya has been able to work more freely since 2009, and as managing director of BNPS she advises the government (among others) on issues related to the UN convention on women's rights (CEDAW).

Rokeya sees many positive changes happening in Bangladesh. She explains, for instance, that the country now has various laws that protect the rights of women and children. However, she also points out that implementing the legal framework is difficult: if women are to be strengthened, then teachers, judges, members of parliament, and the media all have to be made aware of gender issues.



A new peacemaker

Vicky Johanna Cogua Nova (30) is a young woman from **Colombia** who advises Colombian Peace-Woman Ana Teresa Bernal (High Counselor for Victim's Rights, Peace and Reconstruction). As a student, Vicky was part of a group in which she voluntarily organized training on human rights, and offered legal advice to victims of human rights abuses.

As Ana Teresa Bernal's personal advisor, she is working to rebuild towns and cities that have suffered armed conflicts. She believes that exchanging experiences with other countries is important for her work: "In order to achieve peace, we have to communicate, particularly to ensure that new structures of organized crime do not develop."

The full biographies can be found at www.wikipeacewomen.org and the nomination form is available at www.1000peacewomen.org -> Network -> WikiPeaceWomen.

Forthcoming events – Save the Dates!

February 14, 2016

One Billion Rising, global campaign against violence towards women

April 25, 2016, Bern, Switzerland

PWAG General Assembly

May 23 – 27, 2016, Switzerland

Series of events with Rwandan women's rights expert Justine Mbabazi

August 22 – 24, 2016, Bern, Switzerland

Annual International Board Meeting and Event days: More information will be provided in the coming months.

Top left: Rokeya Kabir
Top right: Vicky Johanna Cogua Nova



Solidarity

Peace needs us – and we need you! Please support our work by making a donation or by buying a “peace share”.

Thank you!

**Berner Kantonbank
FriedensFrauen Weltweit**

Account number: 30-106-9

Swift code: KBBE CH 22

IBAN: CH79 0079 0016 2484 3428 5

Contact

PeaceWomen Across the Globe
International Secretariat
Maulbeerstrasse 14
3011 Bern, Switzerland

T +41 31 312 02 40
F +41 31 312 01 39

info@1000peacewomen.org
www.1000peacewomen.org

EDITING Caroline Honegger,
Andrea Grossenbacher
TRANSLATION Jen Metcalf
PHOTOGRAPHS PWAG
GRAPHIC DESIGN zala-grafik.ch

You will find further information on our events and activities on our website, where we also present our PeaceWoman of the Month: www.1000peacewomen.org



Our **Blog** provides information on the work of our global network:
www.1000peacewomen.com



Visit us on Facebook at:
PeaceWomen Across the Globe