From Chile to India, from Bern to Washington in 2019, millions of women raised their voices. Against gender-based violence: for the right to their political, economic and social participation. The protests were moving in every respect.

In Switzerland, more women than ever before ran for office following the magnificent women’s strike of 14 June. Following the autumn elections, the proportion of women in the National Council reached an historic 42%.

However, only in four countries do women make up 50% of parliamentarians. Hope rests on young, feminist politicians and heads of state, who not only change the face of politics, but also politics itself. They work for equality, justice and peace and so become role models for a new generation of activists. This gives us hope for a changing, more feminist world.

At the same time, civil society worldwide is moving in every respect. The protests were reawakening democratic rights and creating spaces in which civil society can network. Spaces like the Women’s Peace Tables, which we hold in several countries in 2019, including in Burundi. The country is marked by years of civil war and humanitarian crises. Ahead of the elections in May, our partner, the Centre Giritika, used the Peace Table to mobilise women to go out and vote and to be part of the peace process.

At a competition, held as part of the Peace Table, a song was awarded a prize. Since then it has spread throughout the country: “Woman, be heroine! You are the pillar for development. Vote for women for decision-making in our country.”

Peace process in Nepal
The Women’s Peace Tables fill an important gap in the Nepalese peace process. They harness the only opportunity for conflict-affected women to talk about their experiences during the civil war.

International Board
The Board met in May to discuss the strategic future of PeaceWomen Across the Globe. Alejandra Miller Basneyo (centre), member of the Truth Commission, spoke at two events about the peace process in Colombia. Our co-presidents Kamea Bhasin and Ruth Gaby Vermet-Mangold are pictured on the left and fourth from the left respectively.

Peace Table, Burundi
Jeanne Gacereke, PeaceWomen and director of our partner organisation Centre Giritika, at the Women’s Peace Table in Burundi that was used to mobilise women ahead of the elections in May.

“Woman, be heroine! You are the pillar for development. Vote for women for decision-making in our country.”

Women’s strike
At the women’s strike: Our Director Flurina Derungs (2nd from left), Co-President Ruth Gaby Vermet-Mangold (centre) and Vice-President Susanne Schweizer (2nd from right) with colleagues from the office and board.

PeaceWomen from Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Nepal and the Philippines benefited from the rich treasure of their collective experience in the peace processes in their countries. From left to right: Yasmin Busran-Lao, Salomé Gomez Corrales, Susan Rival, Carolina Cano Pajoy.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2020
In 2020 we celebrate our 15th anniversary – and we will continue to support, empower and connect women, who shape peace processes, stand up for their rights and create a more peaceful world. One key goal also remains: to make women’s peace work visible.

In March, we launched the podcast series “PeaceWomen Across the Globe.” In the eight episodes, PeaceWomen from Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Nepal and other countries talk about their work and the challenges they face doing peace work in their countries. In the first season, our founder, Ruth Gaby Vermet-Mangold, recounts how the “1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize” initiative came about and how the core idea lives on today in PeaceWomen Across the Globe. The podcast series is available on iTunes, Spotify and on our website (under “Publications”).

We will continue to intensify our collaboration with our partner organisations in Colombia, Nepal and the Philippines, including with a working meeting in Switzerland that will build upon last year’s meeting. Numerous Women’s Peace Tables are planned in these and other countries for 2020. In Pakistan, for example, our partner organisation Tehrik-e-Niswan is using culture to build peace: to-gether with participants from different parts of Pak-istan and Quetta, our partner is developing interac- tive dance theatre on the theme of peace.

The exchange of experiences and knowledge in the worldwide network of PeaceWomen continues to be the focus of our work, as does our political work with civil society actors.

Do not miss the opportunity to find out more about our work and our events: subscribe to our print and e-newsletters on 1000peacewomen.org and follow us on Facebook.
For a feminist peace

In Switzerland, the 2019 women’s strike was the defining feminist moment of the year. With over 500,000 participants, it was a resounding success. It not only won the right for the first women’s strike in Switzerland but also gave rise to a whole new wave of feminist activism. 

One focus of our work in 2019 was the conference on “Women, Peace and Security”, which we organised in cooperation with the Federal Commission for National Action Plan on UN Resolution 1325. The Civic Society Report, which we co-authored, was launched at the conference. More than 600 people discussed the link between the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda and that of the so-called “Prevention of Violent Extremism”. They considered the dangers involved in this linkage, such as the instrumentalisation of women’s rights, the dominance of security policy in the agenda and the restriction of civil society’s scope for action. 

In 2019, the network ran the PeaceWomen Across the Globe Peace Tables of 2019. It is precisely because gender inequality not only follows the first women’s strike in 1991, but was even part of it, that the PeaceTables are so important. The PeaceWomen portrayed are still missing in the kinds of discussions at the Women’s Peace Tables, they make this access possible. The participants are informed about the state of the peace process and learn about their right to participate in shaping the country’s peace.

Regional staff members of the Colombian Truth Commission are on site to record the women’s experiences. Twenty women decided to submit their “testimonios” to the Truth Commission. At the PeaceTables, they make a substantial contribution to the historical account of the civil war. Without that process, the experiences of the women whose voices would be missing. The process of coming to terms with the past plays a significant role in the accountability process after conflicts. 

“Peacebuilding does not end with the signing of a peace agreement. It is the beginning of the building of a peaceful and just society” said the head of our partner organisation, the Gestion 2.0 Orinoco Peace Institute, at a working meeting in Bern. At the meeting, our partners from Nepal, Colombia and the Philippines had the opportunity to draw from a rich pool of collective experience. These countries have gone through lengthy armed conflicts and it is at this moment in the transition towards a peaceful society, the political will to create a comprehensive overview of the conflict does not exist everywhere to the same extent.

In 2019, we hold a total of 18 Women’s Peace Tables in three countries, together with our partner organisations and with over 1,000 participants. For the Philippines, they came at a crucial moment as whereabouts decisions are being made in which women’s voices also must be a say. In Burma, Yasmin was impressed by the work of the Colombian Truth Commission’s Gender Commission. Gender Coordinator Salomé Gómez Cerrales and her colleagues ensure that women and LGBTI people are included in establishing the past. 

For the further development of the projects, the PeaceWomen Across the Globe Board has created two funds. This will ensure that we can continue to strengthen the network of peace activists, and make our work visible. The indispensable networking and mobilising the exchange and experience of women around the world makes their work visible.

For the Annual Report 2019, we would like to thank all of you who have been part of this process. We are grateful for your support and encourage you to stay involved.

We thank all of you for your great commitment!