



Newsletter 1/2020



PeaceWomen Across the Globe
 FRIEDENSFRAUEN WELTWEIT
 نساء من أجل السلام عبر العالم
 Femmes de Paix Autour du Monde
 Женщины мира за мир на земле
 MUJERES DE PAZ EN EL MUNDO
 Mulheres pela Paz ao redor do Mundo
 DONNE DI PACE NEL MONDO
 ビースウーマン—国境を越え平和をつくる女たち
 全球和平妇女

FOCUS PHILIPPINES

Peace in Bangsamoro: women participate in decision-making

Peace in the south of the Philippines is at a crucial stage. The Women's Peace Tables are playing a strategically important role in this process: they ensure that women play a significant role in ascertaining the truth, in coming to terms with the armed conflict and in building the "Bangsamoro Autonomous Region".

One and a half years have passed since a clear majority voted for the creation of the "Bangsamoro Autonomous Region" in the south of the Philippines. With this vote the peace agreement signed in 2014 between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) took a significant step towards a new future. It also marked the official end of the armed conflict that lasted almost 50 years and took the lives of 160,000 people.

Bangsamoro comprises five provinces and several islands in the once predominantly Muslim region of Mindanao. For decades, the government actively promoted the settlement there by Christians, while at the same time investing little in the region. These were among the main causes of the armed conflict. Today, Mindanao is one of the poorest regions of the country with 60% of the population living below the poverty line.

From 2022 Bangsamoro will be governed by an elected parliament that will replace the current transitional government. This will also mark the end of the transition phase from the peace agreement to the creation of the autonomous region. Currently, decisions are being taken, a new course is being set and key legislation is being passed. The Women's Peace Tables are therefore taking place at exactly the right time.

Between August and October 2019, three Women's Peace Tables were held in different parts of Bangsamoro by our partner organisation the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, followed by a supra-regional Peace Table to which participants from all parts of the autonomous region were invited. Yasmin Busran-Lao is convinced that the Peace Tables "came at the strategically right time". She is a project consultant at the Institute and is one of three women who took part in the peace negotiations with the MILF. Philippine PeaceWoman Miriam Coronel Ferrer was the world's first chief negotiator and signatory of a peace agreement.

Increased role of women

The Peace Tables enabled women affected by the conflict – Muslims, Christians and indigenous peoples – to be part of the process of coming to terms with the history of the armed conflict. The women developed historical timelines to establish a record of what happened at the local level, with the overall aim of creating a comprehensive picture of the conflict. The women formulated strategies with regard to truth finding and reconciliation and discussed how future conflicts can be prevented. An important focus at all Peace Tables has been the increased role of women, both during the transition period and beyond. Out of 80 members of the transitional government, which consists mainly of the MILF, only 13 are women.

> SEE NEXT PAGE

"Look – and see women's tireless and unspectacular peace work"

15 years ago, Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold together with an international team nominated 1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize. In an unprecedented initiative, they searched the world for women working for peace and justice. On the occasion of its anniversary we interviewed Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold, initiator and co-president of PeaceWomen Across the Globe, about the decisive moments of the project.

How did the idea for the "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize" initiative come about?

In my work I have repeatedly met women who rebelled against injustice and fought for their rights. But their protests largely went unnoticed. As a National Councillor and member of the Council of Europe, I was spokesperson for the refugee situation in the South Caucasus. In the refugee camps I met many women who coped with the difficult day-to-day tasks with little money and a great deal of personal effort. During a trip to Chechnya, I met a young woman, Lara, who was teaching children in a bombed-out cellar. Her wish was for "beautiful" books to show the children a peaceful world. The next time I visited, I brought along some books, but Lara was dead, shot by snipers. This and other terrible experiences moved me. And then the idea of nominating 1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize was born.

The nomination was a huge undertaking. How did you manage it?

A team worked around the clock in our tiny office. We looked for coordinators in the different regions of the world, founded an international association and developed strict criteria for the selection of PeaceWomen. It was a crazy time! In the end we had to choose from more than 2000 women to find the "1000 PeaceWomen".



Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold in one of the many interviews she gave in 2005.



The exhibit «1000 PeaceWomen Across the Globe» was shown more than a thousand times around the world. (Zurich 2005)



Scene from the film "1000 Women and a Dream": The board and team learn that the PeaceWomen have not won the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize.

What was the main message of the project?

Look – and see the tireless and unspectacular reconstruction, care and peace work of women in conflict countries, but also in so-called peaceful countries. Learn from these women. Give them and their experiences and demands an important place in peace negotiations and governments! That was about how we felt.

"It is imperative that women exert their political influence."

What exactly did you want to achieve?

We wanted to make these PeaceWomen, these committed feminists, visible. With the "1000 PeaceWomen Across the Globe" book, the "1000 Women and a Dream" film and many media reports we gave them more visibility. Our "1000

Faces of Peace" exhibition was shown thousands of times worldwide – in schools, at universities, in churches and villages.

The 1000 women did not win the prize at that time. What happened after that?

We were disappointed and wanted to give up. But there were immediate protests: we should continue to support women's peace work, because "peace without women" is simply not possible – it is imperative that women participate in peace processes and exert their political influence. That convinced us. Creating a new organisation out of this wonderfully lively, wild sisterhood and making projects possible was not an easy step. But we succeeded.

What relevance did the project have for the feminist peace movement?

The idea sparked something – 1000 women, all taking on the task of creating a place of peace out of a divided and wounded world and

to care for the traumatised victims of war! But a good idea is not enough to change the world forever. It needs the focused peace work of feminist women's organisations. It needs women's tireless and powerful work.

How has the situation of peace activists changed in the last 15 years?

Pressure from women's peace organisations has convinced international organisations that without women, lasting peace is impossible. Resolutions such as UN Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace, and Security" call for the participation of women. However, progress is slow. Between 1992 and 2018, for example, only 3% of mediators in peace processes were women. Organisations like ours must continuously exert pressure and raise the issue of "women and peace", with good projects and through international cooperation.

Read more about Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold on our website under "About us" – "Board" and listen to the podcast with her (see p. 4)

"Peace without women is simply not possible."

CONTINUED > "Today our focus is on new legislation," says Yasmin, "At the Peace Tables we were able to formulate demands to ensure that the government keeps its promises to women" that are also contained in the Bangsamoro Basic Law, which was created after the peace agreement was finalised. The participants at the Peace Tables contributed significantly to a women's agenda in the transition process. In January they lobbied for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Women's Commission, which is responsible for gender equality measures. The participants also discussed the Philippine National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security", which was adopted by the Security Council 20 years ago. Among other things, the resolution demands the substantial participation of women in peace processes.

Pressure from women

In 2010, the Philippines was the first country in Asia to adopt a NAP – thanks to pressure from women. That is also why the peace agreement with the MILF contains several provisions on women's rights and their political, economic and social participation. Women have realised that at certain moments, men have to be brought on board, Yasmin says. To this end, men from the transitional government and civil society, as well as traditional leaders were invited to public forums, held in conjunction with the Peace Tables, to learn about the women's agenda. Yasmin is certain that it is thanks to the broad involvement of women and men that the awareness "that what is now being decided in Bangsamoro is of national importance" grew at the Peace Tables.



Yasmin Busran-Lao was one of three women who were part of the peace negotiations.

News

New podcast series launched

In time for International Women's Day we launched our new "PeaceWomen Across the Globe" podcast series! In two seasons of four episodes each, PeaceWomen talk about their lives and work, about the challenges for peace in their countries and how they became peace activists. In season 1, hear from Sima Samar (Afghanistan), Alejandra Miller Restrepo (Colombia), Yasmin Busran-Lao (Philippines) and from our founder and Co-President Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold. In season 2, which has just started, Sevim Arbana (Albania), Jeanne Gacoreke (Burundi), Susan Risal (Nepal) and Mandy Carter (USA) talk about their life and work. The podcasts are available on iTunes and Spotify and on our website (under "Publications").

Corona: it's time to act

The Indian author and activist Arundhati Roy described the corona pandemic as "a portal between one world and the next". Humans can now choose a new world for which we would be prepared to fight. PeaceWomen Across the Globe also wishes that the pandemic can lead to a change in thinking, paving the way to the more peaceful and just world that we have been working towards for 15 years. However, without increased global solidarity and cooperation with and between civil society actors, no new world can emerge beyond the portal. Read in our statement (on our website under "News") how we and our partner organisations support women who are particularly affected by the Corona crisis.

Initiative goes into consultation

An alliance of parties and civil society organisations, including PeaceWomen Across the Globe, has launched the initiative "Against Arms Exports to Countries at Civil War", which aims to anchor in the constitution the licensing criteria for the export of war materiel. Exports to countries at civil war and to countries that "systematically and seriously" violate human rights would be banned without exception. The Federal Council has submitted two variants of a counter-proposal for consultation. We are also participating in the consultation process and will focus on the impact of arms exports on women. The consultation period will last until 29 June.



Close up

New on PeaceWomen Across the Globe's International Board

"The women's movement, equality and the fight against discrimination are closely linked to the question of social justice."

Marina Carobbio has been the Social Democratic Party's (SP) representative for the Canton of Ticino on the Council of States since 2019. In November 2018 she was elected President of the National Council and the Federal Assembly for the year 2018–2019. The main issues during the presidential year were the promotion of women in politics and society, national cohesion and the protection of linguistic and cultural minorities. She had been a member of the National Council since 2007. Since 2008 she has been Vice-President of the SP Switzerland.

For many years she worked as a family physician in a group practice in Roveredo, Canton of Graubünden, and now fills in during colleagues' absences. Both in her profession and in her political work, she promotes family medicine and, as a politician and physician, combines science with civic engagement. For years Marina Carobbio has been committed to a social and just Switzerland and to international solidarity. In her political work her main focus is on the health system, gender equality and development cooperation. She is actively involved in various organisations working in international cooperation.



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**PeaceWomen Across the
Globe**

Imprint

PeaceWomen Across the Globe
Bollwerk 39
3011 Bern, Switzerland

T +41 31 312 02 40

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

EDITORS Flurina Derungs, Christina Stucky, Carla Weymann
TRANSLATION Caroline Morrissey, Christina Stucky
IMAGES PeaceWomen Across the Globe, Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute
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