



Newsletter 2/2020

FOCUS „FEMINISTS CONNECTING FOR PEACE”

A global network of women peace activists

The current coronavirus crisis shows that a globalised world needs a shared approach and common solutions – networks are crucial for this. Society is changing, and with it the challenges facing feminists. Now, especially, networks offer the opportunity to work together flexibly, to support one another and to increase political influence through joint campaigns in order to stand up for a peaceful and gender-just future.

The work of PeaceWomen Across the Globe (PWAG) is based on a global network that arose from the "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize" initiative. As "Feminists Connecting for Peace", the network has gained new momentum. Organisations and individuals who are active in current peace work are joining and enriching our collaborative work. The network unites women activists from a wide range of fields, for example those fighting against environmental destruction and women working for a fair gender justice system and for fair working conditions, including within the care sector. What unites them is their demand for a gender-just world, a world in which women and girls can live in peace and security.

The contexts in which they live and work may be different, but the exchange of experience and ideas with other feminists is important. It enriches the work, creates new ideas, enhances solidarity among women and strengthens their ability to persevere. Activism demands a lot of strength, and often the lives of these women are threatened. A network of like-minded women provides new energy, as well as support when the psycho-social burden becomes great. In this way, a network can also contribute to system change and structural transformation.

New forms of cooperation

Because trips abroad are for the most part not possible this year, we have been trying out new forms of cooperation within the network. Thanks to new technology we are able to meet people from all over the world. Exciting things can arise from this. One example was the 7th South-South Forum on Sustainability. The ten-day conference, organised by Lingnan University and the Global University for Sustainability in Hong Kong, was held online for the first time in July. Together with PWAG, women activists from our network organised six workshops in which feminist perspectives on current challenges were discussed. Outstanding speakers spoke about topics such as food security, racist police violence, militarisation and violence against women. Participants from Argentina to Palestine took part in the subsequent discussions. The event made it clear how enriching, instructive and personal such online exchanges can be.

The current coronavirus pandemic is once again highlighting the weaknesses of social systems and the unfair distribution of resources. Feminists are now increasingly organising themselves around the world, ensuring that these insights are not lost, and that they are followed by concrete political changes. With the "Feminists Connecting for Peace" network, PWAG offers a space for this.

“We symbolise the millions of women who show up every day for peace”

Peace encompasses much more than the absence of war. The work of our PeaceWomen illustrates this peacebuilding principle better than any academic text. They are committed to issues that are essential for a gender-just, sustainable peace: the rights of women and marginalised groups, civil society participation in the reconstruction of societies after wars, conflicts or dictatorships, the elimination of violence against women, access to education for children and women, and much more.

On the 15th anniversary, we asked seven of the 1000 PeaceWomen nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 what the nomination meant for their work and activism, what challenges they are facing today and what their hopes are for the next 15 years.

Learn more about these and other PeaceWomen on our website under "Network" – "1000 PeaceWomen" and enter a name or a country in the search field.

Listen to Mandy Carter and seven other peace activists in our "PeaceWomen Across the Globe" podcast series. You can find them all on iTunes, Spotify and also on our website under "Publications" – "Podcasts".



Maria del Pilar Callizo,
Paraguay

The nomination became an important pillar of my work for justice and respect for human rights. It motivated me to make commitments at various levels to help increase women's participation in society, reduce inequalities and consolidate democracy in Paraguay, which has experienced 30 years of dictatorship. As a lawyer and in the various roles I play, my aim is to reaffirm the principles of a representative, participatory and pluralist democracy. For the future, I would like to see a policy of equal political participation by women. They should be represented wherever decisions are taken.



Amélia de Almeida Teles,
Brazil

The nomination as one of the "1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize" was extremely important to me, it gave me greater visibility and provided me with more political security. We human rights activists are often seen as "belligerent" people. My nomination influenced public opinion about me and my work as a feminist activist and founder of the Women's Union of São Paulo. It heightened the understanding that human rights are a defence of peace. It strengthened me and I felt more accepted. Today in Brazil, we are living through the greatest tragedy in its history with the pandemic. We women live in a paradox: we are the most oppressed, the most exploited, but we are the most creative when it comes to survival. We invent survival strategies daily. We will survive and continue to defend our right to a healthy, self-determined life without violence.



Ling Zhao,
China

In 2005, I was a graduate student and the president of the Peasants' Children – China Rural Development and Promotion Association at Beijing Normal University.

I was volunteering as a teacher for children of migrant workers in rural communities, teaching them English, history and drawing. I was one of the youngest PeaceWomen and decided to devote my life to the cause of women and children. I teach English and am head of the middle school at Buze School in Chongqing. I still believe that women can do much for peace and happiness all over the world. I would like to invite other PeaceWomen to come to my school and community. I would encourage my students to learn from them and to work hard for their dreams.



Mandy Carter,
USA

This is my 53rd year as an out black lesbian doing social, racial, and LGBTQ justice organising. The nomination continues to give visibility to the organising I started doing at the age of 19. We PeaceWomen symbolise the millions of women who show up every day against violence and destruction and for peace. At age 71, I organise and act on the collective women's work to contribute to human society and peace in the world. My challenge – and opportunity – is mobilising the baby boomers and those aged 18-35 for peace and social justice in the United States. Happily, on issues of economic, social, spiritual, and political relationships there has been intergenerational progress. Here, women and people of colour will soon be the numerical majority. My hope is that women continue to build our collective peace organising, in all of our respective countries.



Zahira Kamal,
Palestine

The nomination showed appreciation for my political, social and professional work. It also increased my commitment to enhance the role of women in politics and society. The nomination encouraged me to emphasise women's achievements in my country and in the region, to research and document their experiences in political and social life and at work, and to develop policies that meet women's needs. As the former Secretary General of the Palestinian Democratic Union, I continue to fight

to improve the situation of women. I hope that in the future the 1000 PeaceWomen can work together and learn from each other. Unfortunately, the political situation in the region has deteriorated. I realised that peace between Palestinians and Israelis is incredibly hard to achieve. We have to work harder so that the international community remains committed to the Palestinian cause for ending Israeli Occupation.



Jolly Grace Okot,
Uganda

Being nominated gave me so much pride and energy. It encouraged me to found the organisation Health, Education, Arts, Literacy and Sports (HEALS) for orphans and internally displaced children. Only late had I realised that I was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder because of my abduction by the Lord's Resistance Army as a child. The nomination allowed me to present my passion to the world, for example in the documentary film War Dance and by launching the Ugandan chapter of the organisation Invisible Children. It made a huge impact on war-affected women and children, especially former child soldiers. But there are still inadequate resources for women and child victims of war. I have decided to run for parliament to ensure that issues affecting women and children are being addressed. The change we want to see will begin when women are empowered.



Sister Sesilia,
Indonesia

The nomination continues to boost our spirit to work for and serve the people, especially the vulnerable and marginalised, to fight for justice and peace for them. We still face many challenges in humanitarian work, but we don't give up easily. During the transition process when East Timor became independent, we ran repatriation and reconciliation programmes for returning refugees. We often had to travel day and night on dangerous roads when the situation was not yet stabilised. Today, society has more understanding for women and child survivors of violence and human trafficking. In future, I hope PeaceWomen can share experiences, learn from and support each other. I believe women should become agents for peace in their households and villages.



Feminists vote YES

Child labour on cocoa plantations, poisoned rivers during the extraction of raw materials: the Corporate Responsibility Initiative demands that internationally active companies based in Switzerland be held responsible for environmental damage and human rights violations abroad. Women and marginalised groups are particularly hard hit by environmental destruction and human rights violations. Please read our joint statement with cfd on our website under "News", which shows why, from a feminist perspective, a YES should be put in the ballot box on 29 November.

YES to the War Business Initiative

Our pension fund assets and the funds of the Swiss National Bank are currently being invested in armament corporations. With money from Switzerland, war materiel is produced and wars are fuelled, wars in which the civilian population, in particular women and children, suffer. This initiative puts a stop to these investments. As a feminist peace organisation, we call for a clear YES.

Get involved in peace work!

Become a member of PeaceWomen Across the Globe and get an insider's view of our projects and our future planning. We will invite you to events with our project partners and to joint activities with the team.

Your regular contribution will help us to plan our peace work in the long term, and to make it sustainable. We look forward to meeting you! You can find information on membership fees on our website under "Support" – "Donate" or by emailing franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org



Close up

New on PeaceWomen Across the Globe's International Board

"With increasing polarisation, creating safe spaces for difficult conversations with those with whom we do not agree has become an imperative for peace-makers."

As Senior Programme Officer in the Mediation Support Team at the Center for Security Studies at the ETH Zurich Anna Hess Sargsyan has spent the past 10 years working on mediation support and peace process design with a regional focus on the OSCE area. Her work has focused on dialogue facilitation, women's participation in peace processes, multitrack peace mediation and civil society-academic exchanges.

She has developed educational programmes in conflict settlement and peace mediation for professionals from the public sector and civil society. Her research interests evolve around challenges to peace mediation in protracted conflicts, particularly in contexts where geopolitics overshadow ongoing peace processes.

She holds Master's degrees in International Security Studies from Columbia University in NYC and in Political Science from the American University in Armenia.



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