



Newsletter 2/2021



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 **UKRAINE**

# “Violence has become the norm in our society”

Women living in communities close to the contact line are affected by the war between Ukraine and the autonomous Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics in multiple ways. At the Women’s Peace Tables they can both network and freely share their experiences and visions of peace. We interview Board member Margret Kiener Nellen and our project coordinator Annemarie Sancar after their project visit in September.

Since May 2021, we have been conducting Women’s Peace Tables (WPTs) together with our Ukrainian partner organisation KRF Public Alternative and local groups in the war-affected region in the east of the country. There, women from different backgrounds and with different world views have been developing strategies together, looking at how they can make their everyday lives free of violence, improve their living conditions in the long term, and contribute to the longed-for end of the war.

### Why was this conflict region chosen?

The war in eastern Ukraine has been going on since 2014. The area is the third most mined in the world after Afghanistan and Syria. Over 13,000 deaths and over 9,000 civilian wounded have been recorded so far. Violence and the militarisation of public spaces are increasing, far beyond the actual war zone. As a feminist peace

organisation, we are compelled to contribute to the peace process here. The focus is on the indirect consequences and risks that the participants have identified: domestic violence, unemployment, inadequate social security, and disparate loyalties in the war. Thanks to relationships with local women’s networks, we have been able to establish contact to the local population, founded on trust. In addition, we can rely on long-standing relationships with international actors.

### At the centre of our work is UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security”. It recognises the essential role of women as actors in peacebuilding. How was this agenda addressed at the WPTs?

The “Women, Peace and Security” agenda was the guiding principle for the initial questions at the WPTs: What does security mean? Where, as a woman, do I feel insecure? It became clear that women’s participation in peacebuilding is only possible if they have time and space, economic and social resources, and access to public services and networks. At the end of one of the WPTs, one participant said, “Peace is not just about ending war. Peace is within us as a community, as individuals living together.”

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**What are the initial findings from the WPTs?**

The war, rampant poverty, gender-based violence as well as unemployment are at the centre of all narratives. Social insecurities, such as in the area of pensions and compensation for missing, wounded and killed people, as well as mistrust and scepticism towards the authorities contribute to actual and perceived marginalisation. Internally displaced persons, weapons and an often patriarchal police force are further building blocks in the architecture of fear. As one woman put it, “Violence has become the norm in our society.”

**In Kyiv and Eastern Ukraine you participated in WPTs and met authorities, international organisations and the organisers of their own initiatives. What were these meetings about?**

At the WPTs in Kharkiv, Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Sievierodonetsk we listened. It was very important for us to listen to women from the communities, activists and victims of the war, as well as to representatives of the police, administrative bodies and women’s organisations. We received valuable background information from representatives of UN Women, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**Women were encouraged to organise their own initiatives. What is the purpose of this part of the project?**

With these initiatives, designed by the women themselves, participants are motivated to work with local experts to carry out activities that quickly improve their situation in real terms. Initiatives include the communication of important legal principles, information activities, for example on violence against women, or art-based trauma healing.

**This pilot project is to continue; what is the next step?**

As a feminist peace organisation, we want to facilitate exchange and networking among women and women’s organisations so that a common understanding of peace can grow. We are now designing a longer-term programme with our local partners to improve everyday conditions so that peaceful coexistence becomes possible. Discussions relevant to war and peace will be held in the various networks, the findings will be condensed and projects derived from them. PeaceWomen Across the Globe’s network is an entry point for decisive political peace processes.

Learn more about our Ukraine programme on our website under Activities – Projects.

Cover picture (page 1): Group picture of the participants of the Women’s Peace Table in Sloviansk, Ukraine, with board member Margret Kiener Nellen (back, 3rd from left) and project coordinator Annemarie Sançar (front, 2nd from left).

**What strategies can civil society organisations use to strengthen women’s participation in peace processes? This was one of the key questions that we discussed together with our partners in Colombia, Nepal and the Philippines. The result of this collaboration is a new publication that draws on both their experiences in peacebuilding and those of women affected by conflict. It offers practical recommendations for the effective participation of women.**

Conflict is a continuum: There is a before, a during and an after. Women should be playing an essential role at each stage: in preventing conflict, in restoring and in building peace. The UN Security Council recognised the key role of women when it passed Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” 21 years ago. While women are generally well represented in grassroots and civil society organisations, they continue to be excluded from decision-making processes, formal peace and transitional justice processes. Consequently, the gender norms that discriminate against women are entrenched.

This is one of the findings in the publication “From transition to transformation. Strengthening women’s effective participation in peacebuilding and transitional justice processes: insights from Colombia, Nepal, and the Philippines”. It is founded on the experiences of and exchanges among conflict-affected women who participated in the Women’s Peace Tables (WPTs) we organised with our partners Comunitar in Colombia, Nagarik Aawaz in Nepal and the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute in the Philippines.

Working together on this publication, we found that peace processes offer windows of opportunity to address the inequalities and injustices that existed before and during armed conflicts. We discussed how these opportunities can be used to make transitional justice more inclusive and gender sensitive. The collective experiences of our partner organisations and of the participants at the WPTs show that including and amplifying the voices of women and marginalised groups in transitional justice processes can transform society.

The WPTs have given conflicted-affected women the opportunity to reflect and share their experiences, to broaden their knowledge about their rights, to receive psycho-social support and

# New paths for transformative peace processes



Participants at a Women’s Peace Table in Nepal. As in Colombia and the Philippines, the aim was to share experiences and build networks. © Nagarik Aawaz

**“Women have come together in solidarity to heal our body, mind and spirit.”**

to understand one another’s problems.” In Colombia a participant said: “What helps us most is participating in such encounters, where women come together in solidarity to help us heal our body, mind and spirit.”

The aims of the WPTs and of this publication are to build a comprehensive picture of how armed conflicts affect women, to develop a common vision of a peaceful future, and to understand how civil society can contribute to a gender-sensitive, inclusive and lasting peace. Women’s organisations and peace activists in countries that find themselves on the conflict continuum will find this publication a useful guide for their own activism and advocacy

to build networks to give their demands more political clout. A participant in Nepal said: “Such programmes centred on conflict-affected communities help bring all the victims together and

work. It shows, for example, how women who participated in WPTs in Nepal began to build local networks and to organise their own advocacy activities. It explains why civil society organisations acting collectively can more effectively hold decision-makers to account. And it demonstrates how approaching peacebuilding and transitional justice on multiple levels brings women’s demands from local and regional communities to the attention of national decision-makers.

The publication offers readers concrete examples of the opportunities and obstacles faced when turning UNSCR 1325 into a lived reality.

The publication is on our website under Activities – Projects.

**“Excluding women entrenches gender norms.”**



## On the death of Kamla Bhasin

# “We have lost a persuasive feminist”

Our co-president and founder Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold remembers Kamla Bhasin, the Indian feminist and co-president of PeaceWomen Across the Globe, who passed away on 25 September 2021 at the age of 75.

Kamla is dead. Kamla, the committed, powerful and staunch fighter for a humane world, for a world without wars and violence. Kamla, the feminist who tirelessly took on patriarchy and exposed its vicious effects on women, on society, on ways of life everywhere. Kamla helped to build PeaceWomen Across the Globe because she was deeply convinced that it is above all women who can end wars and build peace. When she founded our organisation, she spoke out about the wars of this world:

“We want to stop this huge wave of violence. This violence that is destroying our diversity, our human dignity, our

connectedness. This violence that poisons our rivers and lakes and lands. This violence that destroys people’s livelihoods, traditions, knowledge and beliefs. We want to end wars and violence that arise from insatiable greed, because they have turned honourable, rooted, caring people into beggars, refugees, migrants, terrorists, criminals and driven millions into hunger and insecurity.”

Kamla was smart and she loved people. She never tired of talking about the links between war, exploitation, destruction of the environment, poverty and violence. She especially stood up for those women who are ostracised by society.

PeaceWomen Across the Globe and all of us have lost a persuasive feminist and a wise voice of warning.

Farewell Kamla, beloved sister.

You can read the full obituary on the homepage of our website.

## Afghanistan at heart

Since the Taliban took power, we have been very concerned about all the women and girls in Afghanistan who have lost their hard-won freedoms. We are particularly concerned about the women students from Gawharshad University, our partner organisation in Kabul, many of whom have taken part in our peace policy courses. The headline in our June newsletter, “Afghanistan: an investment in the future” is now but a bitter echo from a bygone era.

After the fall of Kabul, we lost contact with our coordinator on the ground. Sima Samar, the human rights defender and founder of the university, was able to leave Afghanistan in time. As we go to press with this newsletter, she has reported that our coordinator is safe.

The proportion of women at Gawharshad University was high, at one third. Now it is unclear whether women can continue to teach or study there. Sima Samar has reported that it is also still unclear how the Taliban’s requirements for women to study can be implemented. We remain in regular contact with her and continue to keep the women of Afghanistan close to our hearts.

Read our first newsletter of 2021 about Afghanistan on our website, under Publications – Newsletter.

## Get involved in peace work!

By becoming a member of PeaceWomen Across the Globe, you will get an insider’s view of our projects and our future plans. We will invite you to events with our project partners, as well as to joint activities with the team.

Your regular contribution will help us plan and sustain our long-term peace work. We look forward to hearing from you!

Information about membership fees can be found on our website under Support – Donate. Or contact us by e-mail at [franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org](mailto:franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org).

## For peace and gender justice

Please support our women’s peace work with a donation.

Thank you!

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