

Women's Police Stations:

All chapters agreed that the setting up of women's police stations was a positive step but equally expressed their reservations about the police using these to deny women access to normal police stations. It was deemed a temporary measure, not a solution to the growing trend of violence against women.

Concerns voiced:

- * women's police station should be considered an option not the sole resort.
- * induct more women in higher echelons of police
- * women police officers be given the requisite powers
- * the police service be opened for women civil servants
- * police surgeons should be available at the time of lodging FIR's
- * monitoring cells also be set up
- * counseling services, medical and legal help should be available at the stations
- * at the opening of the first women's police station, the PM did not highlight the issue of violence against women
- * maximise efforts to sensitise existing male and female police officers to the gender issue
- * corrupt police structure should be discussed
- * WAF should continue to monitor and help handle modalities of setting up such stations
- * so long as the regressive laws remain, these actions are only stop-gap measures

WAF NATIONAL POSITION: Samina Rehman, Hilda Saeed and Rabia Khan to prepare a joint WAF position paper on this issue.

Special Courts:

WAF unanimously decided to oppose all special courts for women or otherwise. It was agreed that female judges are a positive step but they must not be restricted to the trying of women's cases only. All judges should be sensitised to women's issues. Waiting rooms for women in all courts are a must. WAF should press for the separation of the judiciary from the executive.

Separate universities for women:

A heated discussion on this issue terminated in Islamabad chapter being asked to get back to their GB pending which the original WAF position of being opposed to such segregation promoting action be adhered to. It was also emphasised that the proposed university in Lahore must be opposed vigorously.

Lahore chaired the post-lunch session

Reserved Seats:

All chapters agreed on the urgent need to restore the seats reserved for women in the legislatures on an immediate basis. All chapters have dropped the demand for a double vote.

Possible solutions included:

- * increase seats to 20%
- * seats be given to women representing all walks of life
- * the political Parties Act be amended so that no party be allowed to contest the elections if they do not field a minimum of 33 % women candidates
- * The above condition to stay in force until 33 % women enter the Assemblies as members

- * for the next two elections at least, reserved seats be filled by women candidates who have not won the elections but have polled the highest number of votes amongst all women candidates.

Decision: Islamabad to discuss the last mentioned possibility with its GB and the other chapters to discuss the issue of raising the percentage of seats from 10 % to 20 % with their GB's. Lastly, the chapters to formulate a joint position as soon as possible.

Mode of elections:

Islamabad raised the issues of:

- * the prohibitive cost of contesting elections deterring poor candidates especially women,
- * the trend towards personality based vs. issue based camp
- * the question of proportional representation

Chapters were asked to discuss these issues with their respective GB's.

Persecution of minorities:

WAF is totally opposed to any discrimination against any group on the basis of religion. Islamabad suggested that WAF take up this issue on a national basis.

Follow-up on previous issues:

Personal law and civil courts:

Lahore distributed copies of the Charter of Demands regarding the Family Code. AGHS sponsored Uniform Civil Code has been endorsed by Lahore with some reservations. Other chapters were asked to follow up on this.

Lahore's critique: definition of "family"

- * WAF's position on the notion of the family is far wider (ref. women's rights, human rights, WAF's position for Vienna 1993)
- * AGHS looking at Muslim Family Law only
- * the December meeting (attended by Lahore) with all minorities representatives, women's organizations reps, has agreed to a preliminary minimal code.

WAF's position on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

WAF worked on this issue pre-Vienna 1993 but since then has seemingly shelved the issue. It is important to continue to pressurise the Government and mobilise other NGO's to help lobby. Islamabad reported having sent the published WAF position to the government but received no reply.

The Vienna conference was discussed by those who had attended it

- * it was noted that the Pakistani official delegation made no effort to raise women's issues
- * no human rights activists were included in the official delegation
- * WAF propagates universal human rights but the Government spoke of Islamic human rights

It was decided that the concept of "Islamic" human rights be opposed and the strategy be to insist on universal human rights.

CEDAW:

- * pre-Vienna, several Muslim countries including Bangladesh and Morocco have ratified CEDAW.
- * WAF should establish contact with women's groups in these countries in order to determine what

strategies they used to combat governmental reservations. Islamabad will obtain a copy of these governmental reservations.

New Issues since 1992 Convention:

Process towards Beijing 1995:

Lahore provided the background to this:

Preparatory committee meetings were held in different countries. The Manila moot was attended by many NGO's including Pakistani NGO's. The forum at Manila incorporated all the recommendations by WAF, (copy with Lahore -- to be given to other chapters as soon as possible.)

Out of this the following broad groups were identified as targets for preparation for Beijing.

Health, -- Labour, -- Agriculture, -- Education & Culture, -- Economic Empowerment, -- Political Empowerment, -- Environment, -- Violence against Women, Indigenous women, -- Human Rights, -- Family, -- Science and Technology.

These were later divided by each chapter into groups they chose to work on:

Karachi: Health -- Violence Against Women -- Science & Technology

Lahore: Culture & Education -- Political Empowerment -- Economic Empowerment Family Labour

Islamabad: Human Rights -- Violence Against Women -- Environment

Positions and recommendations on all these were worked out at Manila, available ones will be forwarded to other chapters by WAF Lahore in a couple of weeks.

Action: discuss / change / raise / endorse / come up with position papers to help reflect the true reality of Pakistani women. WAF must also lobby with the Government and other NGO's to mobilise support for this reality. Lahore also voiced its concern that there has been no dialogue between the government and NGO's in preparation for the 1994 Djakarta and 1995 Beijing meetings.

The whole country -- academicians, parliamentarians, doctors etc. should be involved in the finalising of a joint National Report the deadline for which is March 1994. And WAF should act as a platform for co-ordinating all NGO efforts.

WAF should also take up the issue of making Beijing accessible for all interested groups, both in terms of permission from their home countries and easily available visas on the part of China.

Next GB's should be on feedback from Manila and those WAFers who attended in their personal or other capacities be invited to give each chapter a detailed report to help formulate strategy for the next few months.

International Conference of Population & Development:

Cairo September 1994

WAF needs to prepare a position on this -- main issues are:

- * right of choice (contraception, spacing of children, abortion etc.)
- * control over bodies & sexuality
- * reproductive technology -- contraceptives only for women
- * 3rd world countries increasingly used as guinea pigs

- * pressure to reproduce on women
- * pressure to reproduce as a form of old age security / workers
- * general argument in favour of population control is fertility of 3rd world as opposed to low growth rate of 1st world -- yet they are the ones to consume the far greater proportion of the world's resources.
- * governments need to be reminded not to abdicate responsibility for women's well-being and this should be made a part of general women's health care.

Islamabad reported the fact that the government had already prepared its own report for the moot. However, other NGO's are preparing their own recommendations. A 4 day Moot scheduled for New York, having disassociated themselves from the Government.

WAF should continue its platform of consciousness raising and preferably prepare its own position paper based on a thorough scrutiny of the Government report.

1994 the UN Year of the Family:

This concept is disturbing to WAF inasmuch as the UN concept of family is patriarchal based and WAF's is a far more broad based approach.

WAF will have to take a position on this -- we certainly cannot condone

SAP (Structural Adjustment Policy) New Economic Policies:

The structural adjustment policy as envisaged by the new world order has been accepted by Pakistan in toto. This has grave implications for Pakistan given that privatisation of a vast number of sectors previously taken for granted as governmental sectors is a foregone conclusion. This is bound to militate against women in particular: e.g., health; education; female literacy etc.

All chapters should discuss these issues locally with reference to Pakistani women. WAF needs to formulate a policy / position on this. At the end of the day, WAF needs to begin to react, and anticipate new situations and formulate adequate responses.

1 day one
28.1.94 Karachi chairing

Reflections on WAF and the women's movement:

WAF as a forum/organisation, - relationship to other organisations, -- conflict of interest in representing WAF &/or other organisations, commitment

(in the course of the morning discussion, WAF Peshawar arrived and was welcomed warmly. Lahore raised the issue -- common to all chapters at one time or another -- of WAF activists starting similar yet fundamentally different NGO's and then using / abusing the WAF name to seek recognition and funding.

A discussion was held on WAF's uniqueness as a women's movement organisation

- * WAF non-funded, non-hierarchical, democratic, non-registered organisation *is in Lahore*
- * WAF politically active but non-partisan
- * members meet weekly on purely voluntary basis

- part of a people's movement
- has consistently raised its voice against all forms of oppression
- we haven't created too many activists - but our converts are committed

Questions raised:

- is WAF as politically active as before is it as radical?
- is WAF successful at consciousness raising anymore?
- is WAF in a time warp?
- will funded NGO's, often run by senior WAFers-- and funding is now available for all hues of political thought, even street activism -- usurp WAF's role?
- will WAF be able to continue creating its own activism with its own members being co-opted by other NGO's?
- could WAF function more efficiently if funded?
- can organised means not achieve our ends?

Comments:

- * funded activism is not truly apolitical -- it creates its own imperatives and being based on funds rather than active belief, its momentum is both short lived, and ultimately subsumed by its donors; moreover, not indefinite!
- * funding often deliberately creating myths to suit its own ends (i.e. 1st world ends)
- * funding ultimately destroys movement -- activists slowly become part of the establishment and their drive is diffused
- * feminism is essentially confrontationalist
- * a movement is a conscious people raising its voice from below
- * WAF has mobilised successfully even with its own limited funds

WAF's role cannot be totally usurped by other NGO's as we are unique in our non-acceptance of funding. The problem is how members should avoid a conflict of interests vis-a-vis paid vs. voluntary activism.

WAF should continue to network with other NGO's -- we should continue to be a platform for others -- we should continue to play a pioneering role in the women's movement. While we do not claim to have a copyright on issues, WAF should only endorse those positions which in no way conflict with our stand and where we have been involved in decision making.

WAF will not accept funding from any governmental, foreign or multi-national donor. Individual donors of large amounts will have to acknowledge in writing that there no strings attached to the gift. Insofar as individual funding is concerned, WAF can accept it if there is no clash with our stated position and if WAF's image is not compromised.

WAF members responsibility:

It was felt that the level of commitment of a WAF member needed to be redefined in the light of the series of incidents where WAF's position was being misused or where WAF was not getting due recognition for its efforts.

Lahore wished the following facts in this regard to be mirrored:

WAF's position on women's rights as human rights was presented at Bangkok as WLUML / Shirkatgah' position by WAFers. When informed of this, the GB Lahore passed a resolution stating that such

members were liable to expulsion. A letter was faxed to WLUML France, UN Geneva and UN Bangkok clarifying WAF's stance. A sub committee took up the issue with Shirkatgah. The latter clarified that the presenting of WAF's position without acknowledging WAF was an unpremeditated omission. They would however, clarify the situation to the UN. When informed that the Lahore GB had done so already, SG took exception to this as well as to the wording of the GB resolution mentioning expulsion. SG singled out a member of the WC as having instigated the furore and sent out a letter to the Lahore GB stating its case. WAF Lahore takes strong exception to (a) this hijacking of WAF's position (b) personalisation of the issue (c) all WAF is hurt by such controversy

At this point Hilda Saeed wished it to be recorded that as a member of Shirkatgah, she formally protested at that organisation's misrepresentation of WAF's position on women's rights. Unfortunately, this has now been accepted as a WLUML / Shirkatgah position rather than as a WAF position by the UN.

Another case in point is the Consortium organised by Shirkatgah and AGHS where a large number of NGO's was invited to discuss a joint action plan to repeal the discriminatory laws and WAF which was set up to fight this legislation was not even invited. Later, WAF was contacted and asked to endorse the SG/AGHS stand. WAF Lahore put forward its objections to the endorsement: these being the inclusion of a foreign donor on the list of endorsees, and the aim of the resolution being the amendment of the Law of Evidence. After much discussion it was decided that WAF would be prepared to endorse the stance if (a) the donor endorsee's name is removed & (b) if the word "amend" is changed to "repeal". Islamabad reported that AURAT had invited the WC to a joint NGO discussion of this issue. WAF National decided to ask Islamabad to clarify the above two points with AURAT before WAF would be prepared to endorse the stand.

Shahnaz Rashid wished to document that her struggle for women's rights was not begun with WAF alone and she resented the proposition that she had been using WAF to further her own ends.

A discussion was held on the responsibility of the Working Committee;

there must be some sense of responsibility to WAF

members should be regular and committed

commitment of members should be challengeable -- personal is political

responsibility of the members of the General Body, and the right of the individual to represent WAF;

should the GB merely wait to be invited to meetings?

they too should shoulder some responsibility and develop commonalty of understanding and a perception of WAF's position on issues

a WAFer should be primarily identified as WAF

if involved in some other activity related to the movement, a WAFer should inform the GB of the results of this

It was felt that efforts to resolve this thorny issue be made chapter wise, hold preparatory meetings, and finally hold a mini-convention in Lahore, March 26, when members of WAF who represent other organisations also would be invited to state their case and modalities be worked out to deal with such issues. The topic "Working Relationship of WAF Members". The National co-ordinators were asked to keep in touch: Nageen & Nasreen from Islamabad; Nuzhat & Anees from Karachi; Alia & Rubina from Lahore. Also, Nuzhat and Nasreen would draft the letter to the NGO's. WC's were asked to discuss the issue in-depth, taking GB's into confidence so unpleasant encounters can be avoided in the future.

Strategies:

As time was running short only a few issues could be discussed and it was decided to resolve other issues at the mini-convention.

Review of statement of demands: Islamabad has amended the introductory paragraph in the light of WAF's revised position on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. WAF's revised position on reserved seats to be incorporated once all chapters have finalised their recommendations.

CEDAW Establish contact with other Muslim countries as suggested earlier.

PPP/PML-N Manifestoes Continue lobbying against revisionism of parties earlier stands on women's rights

Violence against women implement last year's strategies comprehensively

WAF procedures suggest all WC members acquaint themselves with established positions / procedures / methodology

Women's Rights Follow up on women's rights as human rights document.

Objectionable pamphlets GB members brought up the issue of an objectionable pamphlet being distributed at a joint Women's Division and A& B & P Women's Association meeting. It was decided to write letters of protest to the co-hosts of the function. However, members were reminded that they could have taken up the issue with their WC and even drafted the letter.

A brief summing up of the issues discussed at the convention was given for the benefit of arriving members and the Press by Pixie Zafar. Tahira Abdullah recited a poem by Habib Jalib which he had specially written for WAF. Anees Haroon tabled a resolution mourning the poet's death.

OPEN SESSION:

This was an interesting discussion on feminist thought initiated by Lahore. As decided in the 1992 convention, all Chapters should initiate discussions on this topic.