

Minutes of WAF Working Committee Meeting – January 20th 2021

Participants

1. Bunny
2. Naila
3. Rani (Had to leave early))
4. Neelam
5. Ruby
6. Popti
7. Meena
8. Ume Laila
9. Ruby
10. Sahar Bandial
11. Ambreen
12. Erum
13. Tauseef

Agenda item # 1: Feedback on Child Rights

Rani had contacted Hina to get more information on the issue of child abuse and child sexual abuse.

In the Punjab there is a Child Protection Bureau and a Child protection Court. Children can be taken to this court and then the bureau looks after the child and handles all the legal work as well.

Ume Laila said the Bureau was functioning and had improved but did not have a presence in all the Districts of Punjab, but was there in 18 Divisions. They also had a Help Line for Child domestic labour. Many people don't know about this Bureau, and WAF could help spread awareness. Hina will join us next week for a more detailed briefing.

Agenda item # 2: National Coordinators Feedback

Bunny said that Karachi wanted to do a webinar every month. Lahore said that was fine, let Chapters do what they want.

Meanwhile Lahore going ahead with its plans for *Forty Years of WAF and 12th February 2021*.

- A Calendar designed by Bunny giving salient points of WAF, Pakistan's, history. Minutes of First WAF meeting, Positions taken on Secularism, Bangladesh, Baluchistan etc.
- WAF Karachi is making a film on WAF
- Lahore has a montage on 40 years of WAF

- WAF YouTube should be ready by next week.
- The Lahore WAF website will be ready this year and material, including videos will be uploaded.

Lahore planning its Webinars which will be open to all. The 12th February 2021 Webinar will have four stages of the Women's movements, beginning from 1947 to the present. Panelists will be from all the chapters, and will represent different age groups and discuss issues/challenges related to their own areas. Bunny will give the overview and Naila will be the moderator. Time will be slotted for Q& A's and overall, the Webinar would be two hours.

Other Webinars also planned.

28th January – Impact of Covid on Home Based Workers. Ume Laila is sharing invitation for this.

25th March: Bangladesh 1971

1st May: Workers.

28th May: Webinar on Democracy

Agenda item # 3: Harassment Law

Sahar said that one of the problems with the present law was that it was restricted to the workplace, and definition of workplace needs to be expanded. She also said that what constitutes harassment is so personal, what may be tolerable conduct for one may not be so for others. So it was difficult to pin it down in a definition.

Rani suggested we form a committee to look into this law in greater detail.

Neelam said the law should include justice for everyone, including men. She said there were a lot of complexities and complications in deciding what constituted harassment. Therefore, this needed a lot of reflection, debate, and examination of the law and its social implications. Plus the punishment must be commensurate with the crime.

Bunny said this was a difficult area and so much was based on perception. And once the person punished has completed his/her term, they must be allowed to work again, not be cancelled forever.

It was agreed that first a committee within WAF discuss this, and then we get lawyers on to suggest changes in the law.

Rani said she had a lot of material on this issue and suggested we do not rush this and should remember that any amendment proposed may mean watering down the law.

The following would like to be on this committee

Neelam

Meena

Ambreen

Popti

Ume Laila
Sahar
Rani

Agenda item # 4: Al- Jazeera Stories.

Bunny said the feed-back from Al-Jazeera had been very positive, the person who had written to WAF said the ideas were fantastic and she would select some and then ask Al-Jazeera to sponsor them. She particularly liked the following suggestions:

Forty Years of WAF

The Camel Library

Home-Based Workers and the Impact of Covid 19.

Agenda item # 5: Reflection on Webinars

Lahore Chapter will discuss the Child Marriage Law once Afiya has shared the material with them.

Naila suggested that Webinars should be recorded, and depending on their sensitivity, either put on You Tube or kept in the archives. Neelam agreed saying this would reflect on how much discussion and thought goes into each issue WAF takes up and it is not a knee jerk reaction.

Ruby suggested that apart from the harassment law, other laws which become weaponized, such as the laws on Blasphemy and Defamation should also be reviewed. Neelam said that the Blasphemy Law needs to be looked at from the Human Rights and Freedom of Speech point of view.

Ambreen agreed that these laws need to be reviewed, including VAW during Covid. Ume Laila agreed and added that we also need to look at CEDAW again. Ume Laila will send bullet points to make it easier for WAF to focus on the main issues.

Agenda item # 6: School Text Books

Neelam said that Ayra had got the Punjab Text board Books, and she and Ayra would go through them and then involve the committee.

Popi said the books for the new curriculum were not ready yet. That the Government itself was confused and it was lowering standards to meet Madrassa students' requirements. But the Provincial Minister had said schools could use other books provided they were approved by the Government.

Neelam said we still need to look at the books in circulation, and do our homework, so that we could then suggest what not to add in books the Government was planning to bring out.

Agenda item # 7: *Miscellaneous*

Erum has become a member of the WAF Working Committee as she has attended four WAF meetings. She will be working with the Media Committee.

Naila talked to Leena to let her know that she had WAF's support. Leena very happy with receiving this support and thanked everyone profusely.