

Minutes of WAF Working Committee Meeting – January 27th 2021

Participants

1. Ambreen
2. Ayra
3. Bunny
4. Erum
5. Hina
6. Maisoon
7. Meena
8. Naila
9. Nasrene
10. Nida
11. Nighat Dad
12. Popti
13. Rani
14. Ruby
15. Sarah Sheraz
16. Tauseef

Agenda item # 1: Webinars, Website and Calendar Updates.

Bunny said the Web Developer they had earlier was too busy and so they are planning on getting someone else. Nida agreed to help Bunny with the Website.

Nida said she was very keen to have a Digital History Museum of the Women's Movement. Would like a physical space for this, and she was already working on the history of Women Lawyers.

Rani said this idea had been initiated when she was with the NCSW, and HEC and UNESCO were supporting the idea. Then she left. But people interested in this should get together and pursue this.

Bunny suggested that we have a virtual portal at least, and Sheerin Mazari and her daughter could help, especially as her daughter, Eman was a member of WAF. Bunny would talk to Sheerin and Rani would follow up with NCSW.

Nida would talk to PML-N & PTI to persuade them to complete the process of appointing someone to head NCSW.

Since Bunny had not been well, she had not worked on the Calendar but is hoping to start on it next week. The calendar will be from Feb 2021 to Jan 2022.

12th February Webinar- Bunny said that Ruby would speak on the Women's Movement, as she had been working on this subject recently, and Bunny would be the moderator. Meanwhile a zoom meeting had been planned with the other chapters regarding speakers etc.

25th March Webinar on 1971- Bunny said Saba Khattak had agreed to speak, and Khushi has suggested Anum Zakariya, who has written on this subject. (Uzma from Karachi also suggested someone and bunny will see which of the two young Pakistani would be more appropriate) Two persons from Bangladesh would speak, Khushi Kabir and Amina Mohsin. Bunny has still to ask Anis Haroon We have to decide on who will moderate this session. Ruby would be the best person

Agenda item # 2: Child Protection

Hina joined us for this Agenda item.

Rani briefed her on WAF's concerns, that too many reports were coming out about child rape and that WAF had looked at some of the Agencies involved in Child protection, but wanted Hina to explain what exactly was available for Child Abuse Victims and what could WAF do.

Hina explained that there were Child Protection Courts in the Punjab, Sindh and KP and the Child protection Bureau could take custody of these children under the Destitute Child Act. The Bureau then pursues the case.

In Lahore there is a Child Protection Court and any citizen can report a case there. WAF can help register cases. And follow up with prosecutors. WAF could also do advocacy in partnership with Dastak. Either party could contact each other whenever needed. Hina said WAF could also take up issues such as early marriage and child domestic workers.

Ayra raised the issue of age, that the Bureau did not accept children over 15 years, and Hina explained that although that was not the Law, but a self imposed restriction the Bureau had decided on.

Nighat Dad said that Child Pornography should also be made part of our conversation as it gets neglected.

Hina said it was already a crime, but more awareness could be raised.

Dastak will include WAF in Training done by Dastak on the issues discussed.

Agenda item # 3: Single National Curriculum (SNC)

Ruby said she maintained her earlier views on the curriculum, basically that it had religious bias, and they had made education ideological rather than pedagogical.

Ayra had looked at the Punjab Text Book Board books for Primary school – English, Math & General Knowledge. Her observations were as follows:

- There was a lot of gender stereotyping – girls helping mother in kitchen, boys coming back after playing, etc.
- There was too much religion in General Knowledge, which should logically be in Islamiyat.
- Disability was treated as a curse instead of being disability friendly.
- Punjabi talked about as if it was someone else's language.
- Christian teacher shown in a dress as if they were different.
- Health and Hygiene lessons were good.

Discussing the SNC, Popti explained that the new books had not been printed yet. Any of the books used in any of the schools have to be approved.

The publishers have taken the Government to court over payment of money for books published by them.

Popti advised that we wait and see how all this pans out before making a statement.

In the ensuing discussion what was evident was that there was still a lot of confusion in the Government and things were not clear. Islamiyat had become too heavy a subject and needed Madrassa teachers to teach it.

Assessment policy was unclear

LGS has shared info about the SNC with parents, and are hoping that the Parents Body will speak up.

Some private schools were satisfied with the SNC.

Nida said that as a parent she was worried, but the majority of parents did not understand what was happening and what the hidden impacts of this policy would be. She felt that a Counter Narrative was missing.

Discussion on how to do an orientation for parents and spread more awareness of the negative fall out of the SNC.

On a positive note Ruby hoped that with their usual inefficiency, the Government may not be able to implement this education policy. But Meena emphatically said that even if it's a failure its impact will be harmful.

Bunny suggested that WAF could go to Court on Fundamental Rights or go for Public Interest Litigation.

Impact on children our main point.

Ruby suggested that this forcing of SNC could be a violation of the 18th Amendment.

WAF agreed on the following points:

1. Write Brief in bullet points – Nasrene, Popti and Meena requested to do this.
2. Consider Legal Options
3. WAF's narrative could be started with Karachi and Hyderabad.

Neelam to hold a meeting with SNC Group for a wider discourse on curriculum.

Agenda item # 4: RUDA

We ran out of time for this. Bunny suggested that we invite Fauzia Qureshi to our next meeting to give us a brief on the horrific consequences this is going to have – on climate, forests, villages etc. etc.