

## WAF Working Committee Meeting Minutes

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

**Present:** Naila, Fauzia Qureshi, Bunny, Meena, Nasrene, Ruby, Salima, Erum, Nida, Rifat, Aisha Amir Ahmad, Rani

**Agenda Item 1. Rules – procedures** etc. Decision taken to hold on WAF Rules/procedures based on document prepared by Neelam with additions by Bunny after 12<sup>th</sup> Feb on Rules/procedures etc for new and old members. Rani proposed that discussion should include a comment on the historical evolution of the Working Committee.

**Agenda Item 2. Ravi Urban Development Act (RUDA) and Ravi Riverfront Development Project by Fauzia Qureshi. Text vetted by Fauzia**

i. Impact of the Indus Water Treaty on the Ravi: Rights over the Ravi river water given to India. This left very little water for the stretch of the river that flows along the border of India/Pakistan for approx. 50 kilometers and enters Pakistan just north of Lahore above the Siphon and joins the Chenab at Sidnai headworks. There are a number of tributaries and nullahs or natural storm drainage channels which add to the water of the Ravi, a large number of which flow through Lahore and originally served as storm water drains for the city. These have been converted by WASA into drains for the city's urban wastewater (industrial and domestic), they have become open sewers that flow into the river at 5 outfall. With the diversion of the river water by India as per Treaty agreement, the Ravi has been transformed into a sewer particularly during the dry winter months.

ii. Lahore: Urban growth and natural resources: With the growth of the city, Lahore's aquifers that were its source of ground water are being depleted. The river that once replenished the aquifer no longer does so and ground water level has dropped from 70' to 700'.

Under the numerous 'master plans' for Lahore, the city's growth has been towards the South and East (Multan Road, Kasur etc). The city has turned its back towards the river and left it for use as agricultural land.

iii. Ravi development project: Idea of development of this land is old dating back over 70 years (1947) but it was picked up by Shahbaz Sharif and a consultant Meinhart selected for the Ravi River Urban development plan.

Meinhart's proposal: Storing the river Water in a lake with cleaned sewage water from the city including diversion of water from the Chenab and store water in a lake controlled by building 3 barrages which will take measures to deal with flooding during the monsoon by building a 46 km long 25 feet high concrete walls on its banks from Siphon in the North to Hudiara drain in the South. This would create a lake and store water and enable Dubai/Chicago style high rise river front development on both banks.

The proposal accepted by Shahbaz, and LDA selected as implementing body and a feasibility study undertaken. Fortunately the high cost of the project led to it being shelved in 2014.

Ravi development project picked up by PTI to generate money under the Ravi Urban Development Act (RUDA). LDA removed as implementing body. RUDA supersedes all other Acts -RUDA given all power to override other laws/Acts that might act as impediments. Under RUDA 120,000 acres of agricultural land on both sides of the river will be acquired and sold to developers. Funds generated through these sales will be used to construct the training works of the river by constructing 25 feet tall walls along the rivers banks and well as barrages to contain the lake waters.

Expected cost: Rs. 5 Trillion for training of the river (wall and barrages) & treatment plants

iv. Impact on Lahore

- Conversion of large tracts of agricultural land into urban land when we are already facing food shortages
- Massive displacement of 100,000 of the city's poor who live on its banks and will lose their homes and livelihoods
- Exploitation of agriculturists who are being offered 2 lacs as price for 1 acre which half the going market rate.
- The high rise construction/housing is planned for a population of 12million. This will double Lahore's population which it cannot support.
- Villages ghettoized by the high rise urban build will lose their livelihoods

v. Environmental Impact

Despite its depleted waters, the Ravi is not a dead river. It's a living river and its waters need to be treated. It supports agriculture, wildlife and livelihoods

Demand and viable alternative

LEAVE THE RIVER ALONE

- i. Declare area as protected national park/forest land – a 5 km wide floodplain comprising 20,000 acres.
- ii. This will leave 100.000 for development facing a green belt
- iii. Concrete walls and barrages for flood prevention not needed. The post Indus Treaty Ravi is not likely to see old style flooding

Request WAF to attend the EPA public meeting called by RUDA AT KACHA KHATAI ROAD ON 20TH FEB.

**(OLD EPA 2013 UPDATED)**

- Use material by Najma Sadeque/Rani for public awareness and human and environmental implications of RUDA.
- Fauzia and Rani to write a brief on the human and environmental cost of RUDA. Ruby and Neelam for input if needed. Ruby mentioned that Maryam Hussain did a lot of work on displacement for the Orange Train and has useful material.

**Agenda Item 3. Feb 12<sup>th</sup> Webinar. Bunny's report:**

110 minute long national level inter-generational/interlocational webinar including 20 minutes for questions/discussion on WAF and overview of the women's movement. Speakers: Bunny, Ruby, Eman, Arfana and Huma Fouladi.

Other chapters also planning similar activities/zooms for 12<sup>th</sup> Feb

Naila preparing invite. Should be ready and posted in a few days.

Ref: 8<sup>th</sup> March webinar on 1971. Reflective rather than celebratory or breast beating. Moderation: Bunny (?) Speakers: Khushi Kabir or Sonia Amin from Dhaka, Saba Gul Khattak and Ruby (?)

Bunny trying to contact Anum Zakaria for this purpose as she has done a lot of work in this area.

Ruby mentioned Huma Dar for the Kashmir issue but was reminded by Bunny that the focus is on 1971. We can think about her for when we address the Kashmir issue.

**Agenda Item 4.** CPEK. Issue flagged for WAF to take a position on as it represents a new form of imperialism and a Chinese style Riasat I Madina. So far haven't studied the issue and don't know much about it. Work needs to be done in this regard.

**Agenda Item 5.** Single National Curriculum. Neelam reported she had called a zoom meeting with Tauseef, Popti, Meena, Ruby, Nasrene and Salima for 5<sup>th</sup> Feb Friday. Erum Kashif, Nida and Aisha Amir Ahmad have asked to be included in this meeting. Links to be sent to them as soon as Neelam gets their email addresses.

Erum Kashif, who has direct access to a media channel, and Bunny suggested using different media channels such as Naya Daur etc to disseminate WAF's position/critique of SNC.

Neelam agreed but said we need to meet first and decide what points we want to pick up for this purpose. Channels can be approached after this.

**Agenda Item 6** Freedom of Expression: Removal and negative criticism of Iqbal's statue by Allama Iqbal Park maallees.

- Salima commented on the statue as popular art and critiqued the narrowly premised view of authorities that had removed it and members of the public who had denigrated it. In the discussion that took place around this issue, the removal of the statue was seen as violation of freedom of expression including the punitive action taken against park officials for allowing it.
- Neelam asked Salima to let her have the main points of the argument for a WAF statement on this issue.
- A webinar on the Iqbal statue as popular art and people's expression was proposed and agreed upon.

**Agenda Item 7.** WAF Website etc. Bunny gave information on:

- i. Current status of the website and WAF calendar.
  - Due to financial constraints and time delays, decision taken to merge calendar with website.
  - A professional firm (Bilal Humanyun) has been hired for the website and unlimited domain. Costs and budget have been negotiated and the firm has agreed to lower payment rates. Other than this, two people will need to be hired to upload material etc on the website.
  - Nida suggested we opt for an international server as local authorities will be less likely to block it. Bunny felt this was not an expected risk.
  - Naila is changing CAP captions and logo for this purpose.
  - Information to be included: WAF statements, positions taken, videos, photos.
  - Wants a smaller group of older WAF members to decide on other information for website viz. material that we may not want to place on the website.
  - We have had a good response to the WAF montage on YouTube
  - Naila requested that when any member views the montage on YouTube they should remember to push the subscribe button as this will add to our list of subscribers.

- Bunny once again requested members to share material in their archives including any published writing on WAF. Writers and sources will be acknowledged.
- Rani and Farida's book 'One Step Forward...'. Rani said she and Farida would be happy for the book to be placed on the website.
- ii. Work by other chapters: Karachi is making a film on its 40 years. Other chapters also planning similar activities (***I missed a lot of information on this. Bunny Please fill in, including any other***)

**Agenda Item 8. Museum and NCSW Chair.**

- i. Rani has spoken to the VC of Fatima Jinnah University about it and she is very keen to house it as they have the space and required technology for a portal to link up with WAF. Rani will be talking to the HEC Head in this regard for HEC provide an umbrella to Fatima Jinnah University for the Museum.
- ii. Rani has indirectly approached PMLN viz Ayaz Sadiq and? for action regarding the NCSW Chair. They have promised to do so after the Senate elections. In the light of current politics, this leaves the situation open ended

***Rani please check for errors/omissions.***