

Minutes/decisions WAF Lahore meeting 17th May 2011

For Internal Circulation to WAF Lahore members

There were two main items the agenda:

1. Decision making/communication/membership/chapter and national communication and policy formulation.
2. WAF Lahore discussion on the implications of the devolution of the MOWD and future mechanisms that would ensure national and international commitments as well as some level of national coordination and universality of women's rights.

The discussion on item 1 of the agenda is for internal circulation among all WAF Lahore while item 2 is to be shared with other WAF chapters.

Under item 1 Members discussed basic rules of communication among and within WAF Lahore and nationally given that individual positions and discussions can get confused with WAF decisions and concerns. This can lead to misunderstanding. Questions were raised on decision making and concerns expressed that one of the co-conveners has not been available and has not been replaced by WAF. Additionally since WAF Lahore has not had a working committee since 2006 and all meetings have been open to all Members (and even to others who may periodically attend these meetings) it is not clear who is responsible for taking initiatives or communication, responding, following up or making inquiries including of other chapters as and when necessary.

There was considerable discussion on membership and policy making. It was agreed that some persons included in WAF decisions or on WAF lists should not have been included on the grounds that they are not members and further that women can only become members of the chapters in which they reside. WAF chapters must confine their communication with only those on the chapter lists and should not forward communication to others including to WAF chapters without a WAF agreement.

However the question of whether a WAF member who has a public position or a position of responsibility/identity or is constrained by other imperatives, or can bring these to influence the positions of WAF was not as clear and at times the discussion was even contentious. WAF is clear that it is non partisan but members have different interpretations of what partisanship means. WAF has also had other restrictions on the role/inclusion of WAF members when they are in positions of public authority and is clear that there should be no conflict of interests while determining WAF policies or positions. In the past while members in positions of power or with specific political authority (for instance when members are in positions of responsibilities in political parties; Party committees or are members of Govt. or Parliament etc) continue to be WAF members they are not eligible to become conveners or members of the Working Committee. There was debate however on whether the principle that they should not be in policy making positions during the time that they have other public responsibilities extends to the National Conventions in which WAF makes National policies/positions. Several members discussed this on the basis of some documentation and recall but agreed that this issue could not

- § be decided on the basis of personal memories. Younger, newer members generally agreed that women who are members of political parties should be allowed to become members of WAF but were not clear about potential conflict of interests. However they strongly expressed the need for Founder and older members to conduct orientations and discussions on WAF in terms of policies, positions, decision making and functioning.

Decisions regarding item 1:

1. WAF must have two conveners. Since one of the co conveners has been absent Mumtaz Mughal volunteered to become a co convener with Nighat Khan
1. WAF Lahore must have a working committee. It was agreed that regularity of attendance over the last year or so would be the basis for this committee.
2. **Since Humaira and Gulnar were the co conveners for the last year and a half and the new conveners only took on the responsibility in April 2011 they need to share/go through the attendance and provide a list for WAF to formally put a working committee in place**
3. Neelam suggested a sub-committee for important/urgent decisions although this was not formed. It is also not clear is this is to be an ad hoc group or founder members or those available to make a decision.
4. Information must be shared with all members and no subgroups should emerge unless this has been agreed by the working committee/general body
5. While it was decided that decisions were to be made through proper channels it was not clear what constituted decisions or proper channels.
6. The responsibilities/mandates of the conveners were not specifically decided nor was there clarity on how members would communicate among themselves or with other chapters since the practice has been that conveners and individual members are in touch with other WAF members and chapters on their own initiative.
7. It is also not clear what the conveners are meant to do in terms of decision making and/or taking initiatives/follow up etc until the working committee is constituted, that is in the interim especially since some issues are of some urgency. Conveners are often just a post box but this has often meant that WAF has a tendency to become dormant if members do not take initiatives
8. It is also not clear that after a working committee is constituted what will fall into the domain of the working committee and likewise in the general body. For instance when and on what issue will the working committee meet and when it will be necessary to call a general body meeting.

General Agreement:

- 1 WAF Lahore must go through its records including minutes and decisions of national conventions and WAF 'traditions' and review the functioning of WAF. Some areas may need to be reviewed and revisited. These discussions must also consider the issues of inequality among members in terms of resources or access to resources and opportunity for chapter or inter chapter connectivity. These inequalities of opportunity may strengthen hierarchies and is particularly significant since all members are not in the same financial positions to participate in inter- city meetings and national conventions.

2. This histories, decisions, processes and modalities must be systematically shared with newer, young members in structured discussions and sessions on WAF. WAF could then share these with the other chapters although it was also mentioned that in the light of the national devolution WAF chapters may also need to devolve. However WAF should have national positions on issues of national importance or significance as for instance on the mechanisms being suggested for national and international commitments and national connectivity.
3. It was also decided that the discussions on national mechanisms would be briefly written up and shared with WAF and WAF chapters. WAF Lahore would also request a meeting with members of Parliament to get concrete feedback on the alternatives being considered. Nighat was asked to call Bushra Gohar to initiate this. Bushra Gohar suggests that a small group of WAF Lahore members meet the Caucus committee in which all political parties are represented. A letter needs to be written to Nafisa Shah requesting such a meeting. Nighat shared this feedback with Farida Shaheed but no decision has been made on who is to write the letter and who will be participating in the meeting. The meeting is likely to be at the end of this month.
4. WAF Lahore agrees to be a part of the group requesting a review of the Mukhtar Mai judgment. Neelam is to share the text with the members and is to endorse once members have read it. Members are to be given 24 hours in which to respond.