



Gender and Kashmir

UNSCR 1325, 1820 and Kashmir

First Round Table Expert Meeting

1-3 January 2009

Muzaffarabad, AJK



منظر آبار سلنگی تنظیم سوپ کے زیر اہتمام خوانین کے حقوق کے حوالے سے منعقدہ کانفرنس سے عامرہ اے ٹی اور پروفیسر نقیہ گلانی خطاب کر رہی ہیں۔

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a growing awareness on women's social and political participation in Azad Kashmir. This is evident not only in the work of some local and international NGO's but also in that of the AJK government and SERRA, who have added a significant importance to the gender aspect in their projects. Gender Concerns International has been engaged in AJK since October 2005. During her Gender Mission Director of Gender Concerns International Sabra Bano visited the earthquake-affected areas, stretching from Muzaffarabad, Bagh to Jandala, and helped international organisations assess the needs of women earthquake victims. Since then, there has been a special bond between the women in AJK and the work of Gender Concerns International in The Hague.

During this period Gender Concerns International has visited AJK several times and met with people from various walks of life, prominently the-then President and Prime Minister. We also invited and hosted many able women from Kashmir to The Hague and Brussels and are working to draw international attention and resources to the betterment of women in Kashmir.

As our work progresses further in both Indian and Pakistan-administered Kashmir it is nevertheless important to seek advice and consultation from experts in Kashmir. Thus the meetings that have been held involving gender experts and a range of stakeholders has been very productive in identifying and bridging the gender gap in various institutions in Azad Kashmir.

This January 2009 meeting in particular has helped analyze and seek ways of improvement of the basic human rights situation of women in the region and to give Kashmir international attention regarding UNSCR 1325, particularly in Europe. Relating the work of Gender Concerns International in Pakistan to the efforts of UNIFEM Pakistan through Brussels liaison will certainly help women in Kashmir. The representation of women from Baluchistan and Kashmir in provincial and national consultation will also enhance the quality and effectiveness of the NAP 1325 Pakistan to an immense degree. Gender Concerns International and UNIFEM Pakistan will ensure the solid partnership of **Pakistan NAP 1325** on national consultation.

The cooperation with SERRA, HOPE and Gender Concerns International will help to strengthen the Women and Development Program in AJK. It is hoped that this cooperation would serve as a strong strategic alliance in order to achieve favorable results for women in Kashmir through the set MDGs targets by 2015. Below are listed some mentioned recommendations which we endeavour to be the main guidelines for an immediate follow up action plan:

- Lobby and advocate to gain 33% parliamentary seat allocation for women in Kashmir**
- Support to strengthen the women's organisational work**
- Cooperation on the scope and efficiency measures regarding Women Development Centre**
- Encourage the role of international organisations such as UNIFEM, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDP, World Bank and Gender Concerns International in Kashmir to participate in the project and work for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 with reference to MDGs by 2015.**
- Establishment of a Gender Studies Department at AJK University**

Introduction

As an international gender and development organization based in The Hague, The Netherlands, for past few years, Gender Concerns International has been engaged in highlighting the gender dimension of the Kashmir conflict. We have established contacts with women on both the Pakistani and Indian sides of Kashmir and have been able to invite our local partners to The Hague and to Brussels for lobby and advocacy purposes. While there is a growing international interest in addressing the specificities of the condition in conflict zones such as Congo, Burundi, Sudan, Chad, Liberia, Palestine and Afghanistan, we think it is important to connect the situation of women in Kashmir to that of women in other conflict zones. We have tried to create, maintain and establish this link in the Netherlands and Brussels (please do request for our previous reports) and consider it important to engage local expertise in order to strengthen our commitment to the women in Kashmir. For this reason, together with our local partner HOPE, AJK, we organized an Expert Meeting to discuss the immediate relevance of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 regarding the situation of women in Kashmir and the scope of MDGs 3 & 5 by 2015.

The aim of this meeting was two fold:

- 1-Analyse and improve women's basic human rights in the region and seek ways to give Kashmir international attention in relation to UNSCR 1325 particularly in Europe.
- 2 -Draft an action plan to strengthen women's organizations in AJK and strategize to encourage women's societal and political participation so as to achieve favorable results for women as outlined by the set MDGs targets by 2015.

Report of Gender Concerns International's visit to Azad Kashmir

DAY 1

The Director General of Gender Concerns International Sabra Bano visited Pakistan and Azad Kashmir from December 30 2008 to January 06 2009. During her visit she had substantial meaningful interaction with women from all walks of life. She was warmly received by the chairperson of HOPE, Prof. Taqdees Gillani, and the staff of HOPE in Muzaffarabad on January 1st 2009.



Taqdees Gillani and Sabra Bano

-Condolences

First of all, Ms. Bano paid her sincere condolences on the sad demise of Mrs. Taqdees Gillani's husband, Pir Syed Tanwir-Ul Hussan Gillani. He had been the mayor of Muzaffarabad. His sudden and untimely death is a great loss to AJK and especially to his wife Prof. Taqdees Gillani and their 7 year old daughter Sherzaad Tanwir Gillani. Ms. Bano greatly admired the courage and leadership of Ms. Gillani, who has stood firm in the aftermath of this personal tragedy. Her commitment to the women of Kashmir and international women's organisations in Europe has materialized the idea of this Expert Meeting even during her official mourning period. *"Many people are inspired by this non-conventional gesture and Ms. Gillani has indeed set a bold example of hope for the people and especially for the women in Azad Kashmir"*, Bano added.

Briefing on the Preparation of the Expert Meeting

An extensive session with Mr. Sajid Kazmi and Jasim Jamil from HOPE took place for several hours. Preparation for the experts meeting and field visits were discussed and prepared.

DAY 2

On January 02 2009, the day started with the arrival of guests of the expert meeting at the HOPE office. Thereafter the delegation went to visit the **Kashmir Cultural Academy** and Sabra Bano had a formal meeting with the Director of Kashmir Cultural Academy Allama Jawad Jafri. He gave a formal briefing about the activities and projects taking place at Kashmir Cultural Academy and spoke about the role of Kashmiri women within a cultural and historic perspective. He also highlighted the role of spiritual female poet "Lila Arifa"

who is still revered all over Kashmir. Later that day, Ms. Bano went to the proposed location for a local women's centre and met with the landlord. She was satisfied to see the location and will ensure that the already discussed women's centre is established as soon as possible in conducive condition in Muzaffarabad.



مظفر آباد۔ خواتین کے حقوق کے لیے سے کانفرنس میں خواتین شرکاء انہماک سے مقررین کا خطاب سن رہی ہیں۔ (فونو جتاج آصف رضا میر)

The next agenda item was to visit **refugee camps in the area and to meet with women of divided families**. Sabra was received by the women from the camps who had already been working with HOPE. They discussed the problems and issues faced by women and their subsequent needs. There is an urgency to work for female-headed households in the camps of earthquake-affected areas. Sabra Bano shared her observations with the concerned authorities and especially with the Secretary SERR, Dr. As if Salam.

Sabra also had several meetings with different women's groups ranging from grassroots level to professional women. This took place in order to widen the scope of interaction between the women in Kashmir and Gender Concerns International.

This busy day ended with several more meetings with Gender Experts in order to have a preliminary consultation on the expert meeting planned for the next morning.

DAY 3



On January 03 2009, the day started with the arrival of the guests. During the formal opening the participants were introduced. Prof Taqdees Gillani (pictured left) gave a briefing on the aim and objectives of HOPE and its partner organization Gender Concerns International. She

also outlined the areas of concentration and emphasised the need to work on gender-focused issues. **Ms. Gillani particularly expressed the need to campaign for the political, legal, and inheritance rights of women.** One of her greatest concerns is the right to representation for women, meaning 33% representation in Pakistan's assemblies, such as the one in Azad Jammu Kashmir. At the end of her speech Ms. Gillani pointed out the fact that many women and children in the region are malnourished, thereby calling for action to not neglect and forget impoverished female-headed households.

For the implementation of UN article 1325 in A.J.K, a lot remains to be done, despite the fact Pakistan has already signed and ratified the resolution. Kashmir especially is much behind the plan of achieving the set-out Millennium Development Goals by 2015. There is a need to chalk out a plan for achieving targets, so that women from A.J.K and Pakistan in general can be included in the planning and implementation processes. Mrs Taqdees Gillani thanked Gender Concerns International for enhancing the role of Kashmiri women and exposing the activities inflicted upon the women from the other side of Kashmir. Prof. Taqdees Gillani also paid tribute to Sabra Bano for working for the betterment and encouragement of women in conflict zones all over the world.

Sabra Bano addressed the gathering by informing them about the Gender Concerns' international role and its work with its partners in particular HOPE in A.J.K. Gender Concerns International is one of the signatories of the Schokland Treaty, which formalised the implementation of a Dutch National Action Plan (see picture).



In 2007 Gender Concerns had invited Zohra Rasekh from Afghanistan and Taqdees Gillani to The Netherlands to have an interactive discussion on the Dutch National Action



Prof. Gilliani at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007

Plan and its impact on women in conflict areas. Ms Gillani made it clear that it is precisely initiatives like the Dutch NAP which will facilitate the implementation of resolution 1325 in their countries.

Ms. Bano agreed with Taqdees Gillani and said that **the region needed a sharp strategy to draw more national and international resources for its people to reach MDG targets by 2015.**

After lunch there was a joint press briefing in which Sabra

Bano and Prof Taqdees Gillani addressed the press to inform them on the outcome of the expert meeting. They took questions from different TV channels and journalists from print and electronic media. In this successful press conference Sabra elaborated on various campaign issues for women and briefed the press about her activities in Azad Kashmir. **She assured her support to campaign with HOPE for 33% Parliamentary representation of women on both sides of Kashmir.**

The film **List 1325: List Me Now**, made by Gender Concerns Kashmir (Srinagar) about the general condition and sufferings of women was introduced to the participants of the meeting and the press. After the concluding session the Gender Expert meeting ended.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. There should be co-ordination between the working women and NGOs.
2. NGOs should be divided into different sectors such as Education, Health, Gender Justice, Skill Development, and Social Welfare.
3. Fixed number of NGOs should be allowed to work in different areas.
4. All the skill development programs should be given to universities. These skills will be more technical and professional and they will learn management as well.
5. Female university teachers are important for the implementation of projects because of their co-ordination with different communities through their students and their over all experience and exposure.
6. Need for Paramedical Training, enrolment of girls in remote areas and an institution for this should be established at Muzaffarabad.
7. There should be a gender development department at AJK University.
8. There should be mainstreaming, awareness campaigning, advocacy for women's rights, and women's empowerment plans.
9. Ensure the implementation of Islamic family laws, property rights, and other legal and political rights, such as 33% political representation, in all walks of life.
10. Eliminate social barriers and ensure female participation in decision-making processes.

11. Ensure proper representations of women and minorities in government services and political institutions.
12. Health facilities should be improved for women and newborn babies.
13. The department working for women should be strengthened.
14. Women can be empowered by changing their livelihood condition.
15. Need for an advocacy campaign on political rights of women in AJK.
16. Employment opportunities for the women of AJK through income generation activities and also government-level advocacy for women quota system.
17. Gender development should include social programs on political rights and awareness of basic rights.
18. There should be some institutes for technical training programmes for women and also a legal support group of lawyers comprised of women, working for women.
19. It is important that women should be involved and making decisions. This will enable them to execute policies that ensure the voice of women is heard.
20. UN Resolution 1325 which has already been ratified by Pakistan should be immediately implemented at Azad Kashmir, letter and spirit.
21. The major flux of money which has been donated by the international community for the earthquake areas should be justly divided include initiatives involving women empowerment and participation.
22. Projects which empower women should be taken as first priority and a gender-friendly atmosphere should be adopted.
23. Religious scholars should play a role in promoting balance and harmony at different segments of the society.
24. The State Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (SERRA) should ensure fair and equal allocation of resources and expertise for all local women's organisations.



Follow-up

NAP 1325 Pakistan and Cooperation between UNIFEM and Gender Concerns International

A meeting was held some time ago with Ms. Sabra Bano of Gender Concerns International specifically focusing on SCR 1325 and the Kashmir conflict. Following that, email exchanges took place between the UNIFEM CPD and, given the mission of Ms. Bano in Pakistan, a meeting was arranged at the residence of Alice H. Shackelford, Country Programme Director Pakistan on Sunday 4 January 2009.

UNIFEM Pakistan shared its work in Pakistan and the specific newly-initiated focus on SCR 1325 by supporting both the Government of Pakistan and Civil Society Organizations in this regard. Gender Concerns International shared the work done in Pakistan with specific focus on the Kashmir conflict and the latest meeting they had in AJK – Muzaffarabad. The situation of women in Baluchistan was also briefly touched upon.

Gender Concerns International and UNIFEM Pakistan will remain in close contact with each other in the coming months as Gender Concerns continues on to participate in the preparation process of a national consultation. This event is to be held following provincial consultations at the end of March 2009.

PRESS CONFERENCE ISLAMABAD, Pakistan

After a successful Expert Meeting and a fruitful visit to Azad Kashmir, Ms. Bano returned to Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. To draw the attention of the general public and the concerned Pakistani authorities to Kashmir on January 4, 2009, Sabra Bano invited the Pakistani journalists to a press conference at the Islamabad Press Club. At the press conference Ms. Bano presented the outcome of the Muzaffarabad expert meeting and announced the launch of



Gender Concerns International's new Gender and Democracy Campaign:

Say Yes to 33% Women Parliamentarians in Kashmir.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (available upon request)



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