

Annex 2: Highlights of the Evaluation

External Evaluation of Women Peacemakers Program 2011 – 2015

Highlights of Findings and Conclusions

Drafted by Analía Penchaszadeh & Gisela Dütting, 14 December 2015

Introduction

The Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) is a Netherlands-based organization that works worldwide for the nonviolent resolution of conflict, and the inclusion of women's voices and leadership in nonviolent conflict resolution processes. WPP's **vision** is of a world where women and men work together through gender-sensitive active nonviolence, to build communities where people co-exist peacefully. Its **mission** is to transform conflict through gender-sensitive active nonviolence.

Between September and December 2015, Analía Penchaszadeh and Gisela Dütting carried out an evaluation of WPP's strategies and program since 2011. The evaluation consisted of a review of reports and materials from WPP; interviews with community partners, allies, and others in the field of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS); and a workshop with board and staff members. Below, we present a selection of the findings and our reflections about WPP's role and contributions.

Overview of WPP

WPP was originally established in 1997 as a program of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), to support and empower women peace activists worldwide, and to advocate for a gender perspective in nonviolent peacebuilding. WPP has created a holistic model of grassroots trainings on Gender Sensitive Active Nonviolence (GSANV); issue and agenda development based on local experiences and joint analysis; and advocacy for national and international WPS policy that takes into account the root causes of conflict. WPP became an independent stand-alone organization in 2012, facilitated by a MFS II program partnership with Cordaid. A small staff has taken forward WPP's program commitments while maintaining a community of partners around the world and building new organizational infrastructure to sustain its activities and build on its vision and mission. Today, WPP is recognized for its respectful and reciprocal relationships with partners; engaging men as allies and placing masculinities in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda; and its articulation of the global trends that affect women peacemakers on the ground.

Achievements

Over the period 2011-2015, WPP conducted the following activities:

- Implementation of two **Training of Trainer (ToT) cycles** in Asia and the Middle East and North Africa that consistently yield high marks from all participants. The ToT cycles involve a series of face-to-face moments for training and exchange, and includes a follow-up system where participants report on how they are using the skills and insights gained in their work for peace.
- Convening regional and international **consultations** that bring together peacebuilders from

diverse countries and movements (peace movement and women's movement) to exchange experiences and develop joint analysis and proposals on specific themes, such as masculinities, gender and militarism, and obstacles to Resolution 1325 implementation.

- Conducting **participatory research** to document and capture learnings about themes affecting women peacemakers on the ground – including implementation of Resolution 1325 and the impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on civil society.
- Producing and disseminating high-quality **publications**, grounded in local partners' experiences and connected to international developments; giving partners increased visibility through collaboration with international organizations and networks in the women's and peace movements. This includes contributions to blogs, Twitter and Facebook, published articles (including the annual "May 24 Action Pack"), monthly *Cross the Lines* newsletter, Policy Briefs and many others. Outreach is also achieved by (co-)organizing public events in the Netherlands and internationally, and participating in face-to-face and online dialogues.
- Engaging in **advocacy** efforts at the UN and in the Netherlands (particularly around UN Security Council Resolution 1325), as well as creating opportunities for community partners (especially those trained by WPP) to advocate for their proposals at the national and international level – providing strategic support and accompaniment during lobbying efforts.
- **Transitioning into an independent organization** with highly motivated staff, a formalized "WPP Community" model, a committed Netherlands-based board and an International Advisory Council – all contributing to becoming a fast and smart player.

Through these activities, WPP has made the following contributions:

- **Capacity-building:** A tested training model with innovative content and participatory methodology that also holds participants accountable; continuing the steady work of training growing numbers of peacemakers who work at all levels (local, national, international); and an eye towards a multiplier effect to increase the impact of the trainings with participants sharing their knowledge and skills with others. Importantly, participants report that they feel personally strengthened and supported in their daily work.
- **Bridging:** Creating safe spaces where thinking is tested among like-minded peacebuilders from diverse regions and movements, where those involved exchange experiences, influence each other's agendas, and jointly develop new analysis.
- **Sense-making:** Pioneering new analysis and linking emerging trends to on-the-ground experiences of women peacemaking in order to formulate demands and policy proposals.
- **Agenda-setting:** Placing pioneering themes and concepts on the national and international WPS agenda by engaging strategically with international organizations and networks.
- **Influencing:** Successfully engaging with the Dutch government in the process of the National Action Plan 1325, in collaboration with national lobby networks and galvanizing support among migrant women from conflict countries in the Netherlands; working with partners to ensure viewpoints and experiences of women peacemakers on the ground were integrated into the UN Global Study assessing 15 years of Resolution 1325.

In particular, WPP played a key role in enhancing and influencing debates about:

- **Masculinities:** emphasizing that just adding women to the existing peace and security system is not enough. Through a critical masculinities perspective, the peace and security system can be

transformed towards more preventive and nonviolent interventions, enabling women and men to effectively participate in conflict resolution processes.

- **Men as allies:** highlighting the importance of supporting women peacemakers through awareness-raising and engagement of men as allies.
- **Counter-terrorism measures:** demonstrating the effects of counter-terrorism measures on the WPS agenda, particularly the shrinking spaces for women peace activists and for civil society as a whole.
- **Root causes of conflict:** WPP has maintained a critical analysis of gender and militarism, upheld by latest academic research.
- **Gender Sensitive Active Nonviolence (GSANV):** consistently, WPP has brought to the fore the more than 100 year- old practice of active nonviolence, which they have improved with a feminist gender analysis. This is an important voice in a world where headlines are focusing on military interventions, drone attacks, boots on the ground and bombings.

Attributes of WPP that enable achievements:

Throughout the interviews conducted, there were recurring themes that pointed to WPP's specific attributes or characteristics (often referred to as "Unique Selling Points") that accounts for the organization's success:

- **Pioneering and agenda-setting:** WPP has been able to keep moving ahead of other players by focusing on recent developments and emerging trends, framing them coherently within the experience of women peacemakers, and staying driven and highly motivated to bring new issues and new voices to the WPS table.
- **Way of working:** WPP community partners highlight the respectful and reciprocal way of working of the WPP staff. Relationships are non-transactional (not based on funding), and local partners do not feel like WPP staff are pushing their own agenda. The WPP community is built on shared values and joint action, which is reflected in partners stating that they feel safe, supported and inspired. It is this way of working that gives legitimacy to WPP's voice.
- **Ability to listen and synthesize information from different spaces:** WPP's publications present information and analysis that resonate at the local, national, and international levels, both to activists and to UN diplomats. This uncommon ability to analyze global trends through the lens of local experiences has won WPP respect in international settings as well as among their community members, who are then able to use the knowledge for their local efforts.

Limitations and vulnerabilities

While WPP's model and accomplishments show strategic thinking based on their principles, there are limitations that affect its impact and makes the organization vulnerable. Limitations that are assessed in the evaluation are:

- WPP maintains a critical stance that enables it to spot emerging issues and capture developments before others. Although a critical and innovative viewpoint is one of WPP's biggest strengths, to some extent, it also results in the organization being positioned outside of the mainstream of government policies and larger peace organizations, thereby limiting their impact. Additionally, tracking multiple issues while also keeping an eye out for new trends has

resulted in an **over-stretched organization that is not always able to take advantage of advocacy spaces created through their innovations.**

- The WPP partnership model is based on shared values and on equality between the WPP office in The Hague and the organizations in the WPP community around the world. WPP aspires to be effective but not domineering. While its model is to achieve scale through collaboration, there are several challenges to this approach and it is our view that **WPP's current size limits its capacity to bring their work to scale** – both in advocacy and in outreach in the field. The size of 3-5 staff is too small to achieve the scale WPP aspires to achieve at international level. Moreover, the current funding landscape (see below) is not conducive to the sustainability of organizations that operate at this size, making WPP quite vulnerable.
- While WPP's publications and communications materials are highly informative and accessible for many audiences, they have focused on making sure there is a clear feedback loop with the local activists whose insights are the base for new analysis. **Dissemination strategies therefore tend to be directed at their established audience of partners and collaborators** and consequently, opportunities are lost towards external audiences. The high quality content that WPP produces would merit broader dissemination and packaging to broader audiences that are less familiar with the organization.
- WPP's achievements and legitimacy are derived from the strong community it has built, with respectful partnerships that see mutual benefit in collaborating. Although there is a deliberate strategy to reach out to people who are linked to organizations, the emphasis tends to be on individual relationships so as to reinforce learning and follow-up from activities. **The reliance on highly motivated and committed individual activists**, however, does not always translate into institutional commitments.

Context in which WPP works

There are several trends that affect and inform WPP's work, which we believe are important to include in our assessment of WPP's strategies and outputs over the past 5 years:

- **"Crowded Field"**: Less than 10 years ago, the field that is commonly identified as WPS (Women, Peace and Security) had just a handful of players. After the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was approved in 2000, more organizations (including those in the development sector and otherwise not historically involved in the peace movement) entered this field and older peace organizations also took up issues like gender, peace and security. All in all, the field has become crowded with more and large players, each seeking a niche and looking for collaboration that will benefit them.
- **Popularity of "Masculinities"**: When WPP started its 2011-2015 program, masculinities was a relatively new topic, and they were recognized as a trail-blazer in bringing it into the WPS field. Now, work around masculinities has become trendy, and several male-led organizations operate with high visibility in the WPS field, placing women's leadership at risk.
- **Competition for funds**: No longer is it sufficient to do excellent and acknowledged work bearing fruit, the funding landscape has changed. Accelerated through austerity measures, government development aid budgets have been slashed and many large development NGOs in Europe, including in The Netherlands, have been hit badly. This has resulted in increased competition for fewer funds, and a situation where many organizations are looking to profile themselves and to be more visible as the main organization driving "the work". WPP's inclusive way of working, which does not seek credit for collaborative work, makes them vulnerable at the moment of

having to demonstrate “value added” or uniquely attributable policy impacts.

Reflections on WPP

As we process the information and finalize the Evaluation Report for the Women Peacemakers Program, we offer the following reflections:

- WPP has stayed true to its mission to *engender peace*, at home both in the women’s movement and in the peace movement, and embodying a bridge between movements.
- WPP has innovated a way of working that brings in men as allies addressing masculinities, gender and militarism, while keeping women at the forefront and in leadership.
- WPP has demonstrated a keen ability to synthesize and articulate new thinking in ways that is relevant both for local communities and at the UN level. This analysis links theory and practice whereby local partners see their experiences reflected and find it useful in their day-to-day work on the ground.
- WPP presents a necessary critical voice that needs to be bolstered in order to have more influence. In today’s world, there is a hardly a voice more relevant than the voice of resisting war and militarism, a voice that incorporates a gender analysis and women’s rights, and a voice that brings the centuries-old experience of Active Nonviolence to the table.