

Report on

Book Launch

Where are our Women in Decision Making?

**Seminal Studies on United Nations Landmark Security Council Resolution 1325
Women, Peace and Security with focus on Northeast India with mentions of Bangladesh
and Myanmar**

Organised by

Control Arms Foundation of India

30th November 2016

India International Centre, New Delhi



Where are our Women in Decision Making?

The book launch event of Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI), held at India International Centre in New Delhi on 30th November 2016, saw an intense discussion revolving around the role of women in political decision making positions, especially in conflict-hit areas. The book titled “Where are our Women in Decision Making? Seminal Studies on United Nations Landmark Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security with focus on Northeast India with mentions of Bangladesh and Myanmar”. The book, edited by Binalakshmi Nepram, Secretary General of CAFI, also contains recommendations in the form of a National Action Plan on peace and security of women.

Ms Friederike Tschampa, Head of the Political Section of the European Union Delegation to India, who remarked that the book is record of the on-ground implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325. She also stated “concerned about the impact of armed conflict on women not only of a victims perspective but we also need to call for the participation of women and the full integration of gender equality in prevention, management and resolution of armed conflicts and would like to see women as actors and contributors in peace, security and development”.



Ms, Binalakshmi Nepram in her inaugural address stressed the impact of armed conflict on women as victims and the need for the participation of women and the full integration of gender equality in prevention, management and resolution of armed conflicts and would like to see women as actors and contributors in peace, security and development. She also emphasised that women of the Northeast are separated by ethnicity, community, region and religion but they are all suffering from the same problem of double discrimination by virtue of their ethnicity and gender. She also mentioned that there are 17 ongoing peace talks with Indian government over the region but no woman has been included. She stated that the book is primarily a question on why women are absent in decision making and moreover it also provides solutions and resolutions to ensure gender justice in our country and the world



The event concluded with remarks by Mr. Duccio Bandini, Programme Manager, EU India Delegation who talked about the significance of the work being done by CAFI and how the organisation is facilitating a dialogue between grassroots and regional level organisations. He accented the inputs CAFI provides for reflection on part of the government.

Dr Anuradha Chenoy, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, stated that women across these regions face discriminations on three identities – religion, ethnicity and gender and beyond that region, the face oppression of race, region and the patriarchal structure. Sharing



her experience and learning Dr. Cheney said, “We should salute the kind of courage these women have had because they have fought not only against the armed forces, the might of the state, the biases in life they face but also against their own community and partners”.

Ms Nivedita Varshneya, Country Director, Welthungerhilfe India, said that this book launch is a testament to CAFF’s ability to draw from a diverse pool of persons dedicated to peace building and are inherently invested in an inclusive and sustainable dialogue. This pressing need for a National action Plan with women playing an active role in peace building processes in the region will be analyzed and articulated by this gathering of strong women leaders and researchers.



The human rights perspective of a conflict was stressed upon by Dr. Jupaka Madhavi, Senior Consultant, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India who spoke about how geopolitics can impact the pattern of a conflict. She underscored the importance of focusing on formulating solutions in the conflict hit regions of the north east; and that these solutions should be shaped in terms of empowerment of local communities through increased access to justice. While she

acknowledged the importance of bureaucratic involvement, at the same time she emphasised the role of civil society in policy implementation.

The launch was followed by a panel discussion for sharing key learning of 3 years of consultations, community meetings and research across Northeast India. Researches visited all eight north-eastern states - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura - as well as Shan state in Myanmar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh to identify women leaders and make them understand UNSC Resolution 1325



Mizoram Contributor of the book, Ms. Lancy Zodinpuii Chawhte, Research Scholar, Mizoram University gave a detailed historical and political context in which the Mizoram conflict is set. She brought to the fore the fact that only four women have been a part of the state assembly in her state which is testament to the lack of participation of women in apex decision making bodies.



Ms. Nenem Misao, who added the Manipuri perspective to the book, elaborated upon the struggles of women against military laws since the very beginning of unrest in the state. She underscored these struggles with those of daily life and stressed upon the role of women in conflict situations. She asserted that conflict can be transformed and resolved only when women of the community are empowered, and this requires changes in the customary laws in addition to

economic independence. Representation not only at the government levels but in religious institutions is pertinent.

Research Fellow from Indian Council for Social Science Research, Ms. Aparajita Sharma has in her contribution to the book talked about the ethnic tensions in the state of Assam. She spoke about how the situation was exacerbated by four separatist movements running parallel and the apathy of disallowing women from assuming positions of power, be it at the grassroots level or apex level. There is a shocking lack of awareness stemming from low literacy rates, especially among females. She also talked about how the tensions in the state started with power tussles over natural resources and now has taken the shape of a communal conflict.



The statement by Mr. Ravindr Pal Singh, Peace and Security Analyst and Former Researcher at SIPRI, threw light on the concept of accountability and the techniques of monitoring the government's efforts in terms of women's security. He stressed upon the need of institutionalizing capacities and the areas where constitutional initiatives can be taken, for instance how the lack of political representation of women and access to justice is in actuality a gap in constitutional provisions. He elaborated the requirements of the process to increase women involvement in decision making, including how Legal and gender studies can be used to create understanding among women about rights and the shocking lack of composite measures on safety and security in conflict hit areas.



Mr. Cung Dawt, Coordinator, Chin Human Rights Organization highlighted the condition of refugees in Delhi. Cung, who resides in a Chin refugee camp situated in west Delhi, revealed that the refugees, especially women, are neglected and are often denied basic rights.

This book shares new insights, testimonies and "lessons learned" from the extensive research on status of women in decision making in South Asia especially in India's Northeast region with mentions of Bangladesh and Myanmar. The book contains 15 chapters and 10 Annexes. Broadly, there are three chapters in total which deal with a comprehensive analysis of the status of women in whole of South Asia for setting the context of the book.

- India is currently in the 108th position out of 145 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index and at 130th position in the Human Development Index (HDI).
- India has 24 million child brides, the highest number in the world. A bride in India comes with a price even if the law prohibits dowry, independent India continues to see the tragic prevalence of dowry.

- Every 22 minutes a woman, girl child and an infant is raped and there are over officially recorded 100,000 pending rape cases in the country.
- Two-thirds of illiterate in India are women and girls.
- Women work-force in Indian economy decreased from 35% to 25%.
- In Myanmar, there are only 28 women members out of 580 current members of the national assembly and only two women among the 36 members of President's cabinet.
- In Bangladesh, 74% of women were married before the age of 18.
- 4,563 dowry related cases in were reported in Bangladesh in the year 2012 and 60 per cent of married women reported that they have experienced violence at the hands of a spouse and/or in-laws.
- Acid attacks are prevalent in Bangladesh with 58 women and 20 girls being the main victims in the year 2012.

This book has been published within the framework of "Empowering Women for Peace and Development in South Asia" project implemented by Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI) and ANANDO with support from European Union (EU) and Welthungerhilfe (WHH). CAFI also acknowledges the contribution of Women's Political Action (WPA) in Myanmar. The aim of the work is to contribute towards promoting civil society and strengthening women led peace building initiatives for sustainable peace in South Asia. It is to promote active role of women in decision making processes in local governance and engagement with civil society for prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. It is to build capacities of civil society organisations for increased engagement in policy dialogue for the effective implementation of United Nation's landmark conventions; United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).



Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI) was founded on 10th September 2004 in New Delhi by a group of concerned citizens from all across the country to address humanitarian concerns due to rising armed violence in India. CAFI has been working in the Northeast Region of India for the past 10 years through its sister organization, the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network, which was set up to help women in Manipur. Also in the year 2009, CAFI set up North East India Women Initiative for Peace (NEIWIP) working for peace in Northeast region of India. CAFI's Humanitarian efforts have been recognised through several awards such as Sean McBride Peace Prize 2010, CNN IBN Real Heroes Award 2011. London Based Action on Armed Violence named us on list of 100 most influential people in the World in armed violence reduction in 2013, Femina Women Achievers Awards 2015 and "Women have Wings" Award 2016.

CAFI Delhi Office: B 5/ 146, First Floor, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi - 110029, India
Phone: 91-11-46018541, Fax: 91-11-26166234
Email: Caficom.muniquen@gnail.com, website: www.caficom-online.org
Northeast India Office: LangthabalMantrikhong, Thong Ahanbi, Old Palace Road, Near Manipur University, Imphal West-795003, Manipur, India, Website: www.womensurvivorsnetwork.org



Welthungerhilfe: Non-profit making, non-denominational and politically independent, Welthungerhilfe is run by a board of honorary members under the patronage of the Federal Republic of Germany. Welthungerhilfe has helped people in Africa, Asia and Latin America fight hunger and poverty, secure their own livelihoods and find new hope in their life. In South Asia, over the past 50 years Welthungerhilfe has supported more than 1000 rural development projects through local partner organizations who work with the most vulnerable and marginalized people. The guiding theme of our work is 'helping people help themselves

Welthungerhilfe India office: A-3, Soami Nagar, New Delhi, India - 110017
Tel: 011-40520140, Email: info.india@welthungerhilfe.de
Website: <http://welthungerhifesouthasia.org/>



The European Union, which consists of 28 countries, has the world's largest economy and its third largest population, after China and India. Though richly diverse, the countries that make up the EU (its 'Member States') are all committed to the same basic values: peace, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. They have set up common institutions so that decisions on matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level. By creating a frontier-free single market and a single currency (the euro) which has been adopted by 19 Member States, the EU has given a significant boost to trade and employment. It is also at the forefront of policies on sustainability.

Delegation of the European Union to India: 5/5 Shanti Niketan, New Delhi 110 021
Tel. +91-11-66781919, Fax +91-11-66781955, Website: <http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india>