**International roundtable**

**Building feminist leadership capacity**

**Proceedings of a Roundtable**

**Women’s Empowerment & Leadership Development for Democratisation (WELDD)**

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**Acronyms**

SG: Shirkat Gah

IWE: Institute for Women’s Empowerment

WLUML: Women Living Under Muslim Law

WELDD: Women’s Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation

CREA: Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action

GREFELS: Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au Sénégal

CWGL: Centre for Women Global Leadership

# Background to the Roundtable

The ***Building Feminist Leadership Roundtable*** (May 21-22, 2014, Kandy, Sri Lanka) was organised by the *Women’s Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation* (WELDD), a four-year project (2012-2015) jointly implemented by Shirkat Gah – Women’s Resource Centre (SG), the Institute for Women’s Empowerment (IWE) and the international solidarity network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML). In 2014, WELDD was working in partnership with some 50 local partners in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and engaging activists in 20 countries, almost double the originally envisaged 12. [[1]](#footnote-1)

The Roundtable had a dual purpose: (1) to share progress under WELDD[[2]](#footnote-2) and (2) to collectively reflect upon the experiences of building feminist leadership, especially in terms of the challenges faced in trying to ensure leadership is transformative *and* sustainable. This, it was hoped, would both help to guide the remaining 18 months of the WELDD project and, more broadly, strategise on how to nurture and sustain feminist leadership in today’s circumstances. The Roundtable brought together 34 multi-generational activists engaged in different issues from the grassroots to the international arenas, from across the world: Afghanistan, Algeria/France, Canada, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, Sri Lanka, UK and the USA. For WELDD teams engaged in different parts of the project (the majority), this was the first opportunity to share and collectively discuss their work around building feminist leadership. It was also a unique opportunity to learn from and engage with allies who have also been engaged in building feminist leadership (one third of the participants). (See Annex 1 for a list of participants)

The **WELDD Project** seeks to build feminist leadership as a means of empowering women and by end December 2015, hopes to have achieved the following results/Outcomes under specific themes:

* Public & political processes, democracy and pluralism, including secularism: At least 1,500 strengthened women leaders advocating gender equitable pluralistic societies and states, in at least 12 DAC[[3]](#footnote-3) countries in Asia, Africa and the ME with reinforced alliances and networks within and across national borders to reach at least 100,000 people.
* Peace and conflict: At least 175 women contribute to and influence peace and reconstruction efforts in at least five DAC countries.
* Combatting culturally justified violence against women: At least 100 women in seven WELDD countries assume leadership and, rejecting cultural justifications for violence against women, undertake at least 100 initiatives to combat these.
* Economic rights for informal, domestic and agriculture-based workers: At least 1,500 women, in at least 3 DAC countries strengthened to lead actions to achieve greater control over agricultural resources, including farmland and decent work.

WELDD believes that the seeds of women’s leadership are found in women’s resistance to disempowering forces and that collective actions - not merely individual leaders - are essential to change things in more sustainable ways. Leadership for WELDD is a part of an agency-empowerment-leadership continuum, in which *agency* is understood as women undertaking autonomous initiatives; *empowerment* as actions that challenge power structures; and leadership as the capacity to mobilise and work with others to initiate collective action.

All three WELDD implementing partners work to enhance capacity to engage in the public and political arenas, but each has adopted slightly different approaches. Two of the Partners, Shirkat Gah and IWE, are focused on building local ‘grassroots’ leadership respectively in Pakistan and Indonesia. In contrast, as an international network, WLUML’s work is focused on strengthening national activists engaged in or seeking to engage at the regional and international levels in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

There are other differences: SG works on all four outcomes, and ensures that all women receive the same capacity building regardless of their area of work; it has a focus on youth, and has systematically identified and strengthened men as supporters of women leaders from within the same communities, and sometimes families. Working in particular to build peace and women’s economic rights, IWE has a focus on women porters, domestic workers and others engaged in agriculture-related livelihoods; an innovative approach is integrating new perspectives and modules into pre-existing capacity-building institutional arrangements, and an increasing focus on self-care. WLUML has focused in particular on the issue of fundamentalism on the one hand under Outcome 1, and culturally justified violence on the other (Outcome 3), and highlights the interconnections of both. Finally, over and above Partners’ specific activities, WELDD has supported small projects building peace with the understanding that there is a continuum of violence targeting women and girls, from home-based inter-personal and structural violence to armed conflict situations. See www.weldd.org for more information on the WELDD project.

**SESSION 1: FEMINIST LEADERSHIP AND MOVEMENT-BUILDING**

Feminist leadership programmes was the focus of the Roundtable, but this was discussed within the broader context of feminist leaders and the women’s movement. As expressed by Geeta Misra, “There is a need to distinguish between feminist leaders and feminist leadership programmes because while we are trying to define feminist leadership, we are simultaneously trying to figure out what feminist leadership programmes look like.” A basic question then is whether, to what extent, and how best leadership programmes can contribute to strengthening leaders in the women’s movement, and the movement itself.

The Roundtable encouraged the tabling of difficult questions to enable an open and frank discussion. Participants discussed the complexities of sustaining feminist leadership beyond project life cycles, and how to build a cohesive feminist movement. Discussions were enriched by the abundant and diverse pool of feminist experiences spanning time and space on a variety of topics. Tactical and strategic elements required for both short term activism and longer term sustainability, such as funding, support systems and capacity building all came under review. Key issues included:

* The challenges of retaining feminist values and objectives in the face of changing external circumstances, in particular, the need to adapt interventions in the light of an analysis of the overall external socio-political and economic environment.
* Ensuring short-term and longer term financial sustainability,
* The need for greater clarity in terms of ‘feminist objectives’ according to the challenges posed and opportunities provided by the external environment. Challenges included increasing conservatism through the use of religion but also neo-liberal policies. Opportunities included the growing power of youth and technology,
* Adapting to and ensuring actions respond to the evolving nature of movements,
* Transferring power and leadership to the next generation

One key conclusion was the vitality of opportunities/spaces for feminists to hold face-to-face meetings, such as provided by the Roundtable, as platforms for collective analyses, support, solidarity and inspiration, and opportunities for different generations of feminists to examine their role in the current and future of feminist movements.

It was noted that while formalised feminist leadership programmes are relatively new, feminists, like people in every movement, have always worked to mobilise others to join their cause and to widen the pool of those helping the movement’s underlay of organising. Until fairly recently, women activists learnt ‘on the job’, as it were; there were few attempts, if any, to consciously impart new knowledge and build skills in sessions dedicated to enhancing capacity to assume leadership. Women emerged as leaders because of their abilities to organise, to speak in a convincing manner, to negotiate, etc.

Feminist movements build upon previous experiences and the work being done by different groups around the world. One concrete example forwarded from Pakistan was that the women’s collective, Shirkat Gah-Women’s Resource Centre started the Women Action Forum (WAF), which became the main platform opposing martial law in 1981; in turn WAF started a sub-committee, War Against Rape, which then became an independent organisation. As one generation of activists inspires another, one can never be sure of who will then become active and who will not, who will remain in the movement and who not. Yet, pioneers inspire others and women sometimes may not be aware at the time that they will become future leaders.

**Feminists as Turtles:**

The ‘turtle’ analogy for feminist leaders became a *liet motif*. The analogy was coined decades ago in the formative years of the WLUML network decades. First used to describe the handful of activists took on the responsibility to “make things happen” -- the term used by Charlotte Bunch (USA) to define leaders -- the turtle became the symbol of those building the movement through the WLUML network movement. Scattered across three different continents, the WLUML had little funding and networkers never knew when they would meet again. Farida Shaheed (Pakistan) once gave the few networkers who had taken on the responsibility of making things happen little onyx turtles, explaining that the collective labours of her activist friends were similar to that of the giant female turtles in Karachi, Pakistan. The giant turtle laboriously paddles her way up the sand beach; takes hours digging a nest, many more hours laying hundreds of eggs, still more hours covering them up with sand. Then, just as labouriously, she makes her way back to the sea, leaving the eggs to hatch. Many of the eggs never hatch; many of the tiny baby turtles that hatch perish before they reach the ocean, attacked by birds and dogs. However, those that do survive always remember where they came from and the females of next generation makes its way back to the same part of the ocean to lay their eggs. “We are like turtles,” she said, “working really hard to multiply [the number of] feminists. We do not try and control the lives of women we engage with. We have no idea how many will come back, but invariably, some will.” She also she told her friends that, like the giant turtles, feminist activists were an endangered species. “Look around,” she concluded, “All around [the Roundtable], you will find turtles, who may not even know they are turtles.” She noted that like a new turtle, a new activist must plot her own course, find her own way of working, which is what the turtle family is about.

The Roundtable participants adopted and expanded the turtle analogy. Many acknowledged being inspired by others and so considered themselves ‘eggs’. The many turtles and eggs around the table, it was noted, spanned the world and occupied different institutional spaces. Pramada Menon (India) added complexity by stating that not only did she consider herself both a turtle and an egg, she may even be other components, such as the eggshell. Lin Chew (Singapore) asked the roundtable to remember that the turtle only makes progress when she sticks her head out. Charlotte Bunch, founder-Director of the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL), stressed that while one never knows when those eggs are going to hatch, it’s good to remember that all the eggs may not hatch immediately. Hence, decades after the women’s leadership institutes she ran as the founder-Director of CWGL, the on-going impact was evident. Chulani Kodikara (Sri Lanka) rounded off the discussion by likening women’s feminist leadership institutes and institutions to turtle hatcheries because they take you in and give you space to grow.

**The politics of language:**

Stressing the importance of nurturing and building on knowledge production and gender equality using indigenous knowledge and local discourses, Doaa Abedlaal (Egypt) pointed out that the term ‘leader’ itself could be problematic. For example the term is perceived negatively in some areas where Arabic is the first language because the translation into Arabic is similar to the term ‘dictatorship.’ Given the negative connotations of the term ‘leader’ in countries with a history of dictatorship, such as Egypt Syria, Yemen and Iraq, some activists found the term ‘leader’ unacceptable, and a number of women engaged in the WELDD project did not want to become ‘leaders’. Reclaiming the term was time-consuming, and initial trainings had been obliged to focus on exploring what a leader meant to the participants. In contrast perceptions of ‘leaders’ was more positive in Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, the lesson was the need for clarity in selecting the terminology on leadership, bearing in mind how the term is viewed in different contexts

Charlotte Bunch noted that a fear of women’s leadership is evident in most countries and women have been afraid to call themselves leaders almost everywhere, including the USA in the 1960s. It is important to explore the reasons for this fear of women’s leadership, *and* why women fear – or hesitate -- to call themselves leaders. The issues confronting women in the Middle East helps to explain why some women in certain contexts may be reluctant to call themselves leaders, but it would be important to explore how this permeates women’s sense of self and the different impact this has across different contexts. **A crucial value of leadership training programmes is the space these provide for reflection, for feminist as well as cross-cultural dialogues**. One doesn’t have to necessarily agree with a feminist leader to consider her a leader. A rooted intersectional definition of feminism is essential. Feminists should think what it is like to operate in a world with different forces and should consider cross-issue dialogues.

Agreeing that this needed further examination, Chew suggested that other reasons women may not want to take on leadership could be due to having to take on added responsibilities, a deference for others, or shyness to take on power .

The Roundtable concluded that the close association of the term ‘leader’ as requiring ‘followers’ may be a problem as it implies an inherent hierarchy between leaders and followers and the higher status of a leader compared with others. We need to rethink how we talk about leaders and demystify our current perceptions of leadership. **It is vital to recognise that while leadership does entail doing something to make a process happen; leadership does not have to be hierarchical.** There is a need to promote concepts such as ‘shared leadership’ meaning a rethinking of the role of the leader as not being better or worse than everybody else, or expecting leaders to always be better than the norm.

**Agency & Leadership:** Lean Chan (Malaysia) stressed that every women is a leader but for women’s leadership to emerge requires the fostering of women’s agency. In terms of women’s agency, two key lessons around women’s empowerment processes and agency of particular relevance to feminist leadership programmes, as well as the movement in general, emerged from the previous collaboration of the WELDD implementing Partners (WLUML, IWE and SG) in an earlier jointly carried out project[[4]](#footnote-4). First, is the critical need for public discursive spaces in which women could share experiences, learn from each and strategise together emerged as vital keys for unlocking women’s agency, regardless of the arena of engagement and topic of activism. Second, women needed to be connected with sources of that convince women they have the right to be rights holders/claimants and legitimise their questioning and acting to change the status quo. Sources identified by the project included learning of:

* 1. Women’s diverse resistance in other places and contexts,
  2. Histories of social justice movements in general and those focused on women’s rights/gender justice,
  3. Acquiring new subjectivities that change how women think about themselves and their environment/lives. This can be described as a new sense of self associated with a broader collective identity, often linked to new ideologies, such as feminism,. The discussion about feminism, for instance, gives legitimacy for women to act.
  4. Religion was also seen as a source of legitimisation for action (including through finding new interpretations) to challenge injustices being faced.

The Roundtable noted that the feminist movement also requires spaces to connect, share, discuss and strategise. However, the environment has changed and the movement does not have access to the type of financial resources it did before.

**Other salient points participants made were as follows:**

Specific projects and initiatives can provide rich insights and help to consolidate feminist movements, provided these consciously connect with the movement. For leadership programmes to promote transformative feminist leadership that is sustainable, demands that they retain a focus on and connectivity with the movement(s) as manifested in diverse countries.

**Charlotte Bunch** stressedthat **a deep and abiding commitment to the notion that intersectionality (and the intersections of oppression), is absolutely central**. The challenge is how to deepen the work and be specific, without losing the broader picture. Inter-generational or multi-generational work is crucial to allow a sharing of perceptions of the existing problems, and an identification of areas that require combined efforts. It is also important to consider how the older generation could “let go but not disappear.”

Key points of the Concept Note for the Roundtable, ‘Building Feminist Leadership that is Sustainable’ were highlighted and Shaheed ended by briefing the Roundtable on SG’s scheme for building capacity of women leaders which falls into the following four categories:

* Informational needs: ensuring that women have full and timely information on which to base their activism, and ability to know how to keep updated
* The development of analytical capabilities within women leaders, including mapping of allies and opportunities; threats and opponents, and how to undertake a risk assessment of proposed actions
* Communication and negotiation skills
* Organisational, planning and management skills, including making strategic choices

Noting that most leadership training these days focuses exclusively on and privileges assertiveness, she said sometimes leaders may need to be aggressive, not merely assertive and polite. It is essential that women understand the likely consequences of being aggressive or assertive and make strategic choices when planning actions.

SG’s work resonates with many points made by Srilatha Batliwala in her book on leadership for CREA[[5]](#footnote-5),Batliwala asks a series of questions:

* What is leadership? What’s in it? Political performance. Where is it? Which sites? What does it look like? What are the key characteristics of the phenomenon in practice? The question WELDD has added is: “What does it take to build feminist leadership that is transformative and sustainable?” It is important to engage in on-going discourse.

Other questions arise. For example: Are all trail-blazers leaders or all leader trail-blazers? And, does it matter? Probably not. Firstly, all leaders do not necessarily break/defy norms in the way that ‘trailblazers’ are considered to. Secondly, leaders need people with them, not just people emulating their path.

Leadership needs to be understood as a part of the transformative process. All women don’t necessarily need to become leaders; some may not want the responsibility. Does it matter if not all women want to be leaders since we are part of a movement? What are the implications in terms of challenging norms and organising? This also raises practical questions for a project aiming to promote leadership.

What strategy should there be for people engaged through WELDD, or some other project or in the movement who may not want to be leaders? Does WELDD simply abandon them or continue with them? If the intention is to continue, on what terms should this be?

**The praxis of leadership:** Within the women’s movement there are some women whose praxis is that of matriarchs (sometimes even patriarchs). How do we avoid women leaders who use a praxis opposed to feminist ideology despite being very clear and articulate in terms of theory? How conscious and vigilant are we to avoid leadership practices that silence others? It is essential to maintain integrity but simultaneously recognise that not all people have the same talents, such as public speaking for example, and to ensure that such differences do not lead to hierarchies.

Finally, Batliwala proposes a typology of power:

1. Visible power which is formal, direct, and visible.
2. Hidden power: Sometimes also called “agenda setting power”, resulting from informal decision making.
3. Invisible or indirect power (e.g. media)

She also distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic power – the former being “the force of the personality traits, charisma, talents, capabilities, knowledge, and experience that the individual leader has”; the latter “the authority that comes to a feminist leader from outside herself” including e.g. assigned authority, positional authority & earned authority.

In trying to grapple with how to build leadership, SG felt that some desirable traits of leadership (e.g. charisma, honesty, integrity, commitment, perspective) were difficult to instil through a finite project with all its limitations. Although SG had not read the CREA booklet, this parallels Batliwala’s intrinsic power. There was also the question of needing to bear in mind the context in which leadership is/would be practised – which relates to intersectionality. Finally, the importance to grant the right to make mistakes to everyone was stressed.

**Conclusion**: Enriched by the abundant and diverse pool of feminist experiences spanning time and space on a variety of topics, the roundtable discussed the tactical and strategic elements required for both short term activism and longer term sustainability, such as funding, support systems and capacity-building. Key issues /challenges identified and discussed included:

1. Retaining feminist values and objectives in the face of external (changing) circumstances. This requires
   1. Interventions forged in the light of an analysis of the overall external socio-political and economic environment;
   2. Greater clarity in terms of ‘feminist objectives’ according to the challenges posed and opportunities provided by the external environment. This includes the increasing conservatism through the use of religion but also neo-liberal policies on the one hand; and the growing power of youth and technology, on the other.
2. Adapting to and ensuring actions respond to the evolving nature of movements,
3. Financial sustainability: ensuring short-term and longer term financial sustainability, financial needs of individual activists as well as sustainable funding for the movement; and
4. Transferring power and leadership to the next generation: The role of older, younger and in between feminists, and the need to create space to facilitate growth of younger feminists.
5. How to deal with ‘burnout’ of activists;

A key conclusion was the vitality of having opportunities/spaces for feminists to hold face-to-face meetings, such as provided by the Roundtable, as platforms for collective analyses, support, solidarity and inspiration, and opportunities for different generations of feminists to examine their role in the current and future of feminist movements.

# SESSION 2 KEY LESSONS AND CHALLENGES IN BUILDING TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

## Humaria Shaikh: SG’s experiences of WELDD (Please refer annexed power point.)

Following the 2010 floods in Pakistan, SG’s undertook humanitarian work focused on women, minorities and women headed households. In 2011, in the reconstruction phase, SG set up Women Friendly Spaces (WFS) in six locations where there was extreme poverty and growing Gender Based Violence (GBV) because of the disasters. In these spaces women learnt about GBV and received support through psychosocial rehabilitation. Local support groups were established around these WFS, and networking initiated with duty-bearers. The WFS became safe discursive spaces for women to share experiences, learn, draw support and strategise. They were a key focus for the WELDD interventions.

To strengthen women as rights holders, SG focused on building leadership across the different WELDD thematic outcomes,[[6]](#footnote-6) especially working with youth as key drivers for future change.

SG developed leadership modules to clarify gender and feminist perspectives through exercises such as the gender tree[[7]](#footnote-7); trained people to be trainers [to expand the number of people reached] and followed up on their activities, including by providing back-stopping. Communities were encouraged to identify their issues and create their own local solutions.

Interventions provided legal rights awareness, and helped the formation of women’s groups.

Assessing local understanding of ‘culturally justified violence against women’ (CVAW) through a specially prepared PRA tool, showed that women’s acceptance of VAW was justified through culture as well as religion. SG then built women’s capacity in communication and negotiation skills to strengthen the articulation as well as negotiation of rights. This lead to the formation of a women’s group in Swat and later a national group called Purple Women’s Movement.

By end of 2013, WELDD activities had connected more than 800 women and leaders and 400 youth, networking and collective sharing of issues at the provincial level and national level.

**Key Lessons:**

* Women realised that WELDD was a call for the realisation for their rights and not about social welfare. WELDD activities brought about a change of perspective: women have started thinking along the lines of political correctness, feminist narratives, patriarchal standpoints; they have started understanding the State-citizen relationship and civic rights. In all WELDD areas, women have come out in the streets to demand/claim their rights. For example, a woman called the police and media when the landlord attempted to evict them.
* Ownership and responsibility for change was given to women/community without the aid of gatekeepers.
* Creating a sense of community/solidarity & backstopping
  + Training events that create a sense of community, through dance for example, proved to be effective.
  + National conventions bringing together at least 100 people helped, creating a collective identity which was empowering because it created a sense of combined self. The Purple Women’s Movement and the Purple Voices youth movements were formed during national conventions.
  + Inter-regional and cross-provincial networking visits and trainings under WELDD enabled leaders to have a strong understanding of each other’s work and lives, creating a strong bond of empathy across diversity. Prejudices and biases also emerged, were addressed and resolved.
  + The Purple women and Purple voices have taken advantage of social media: they have made Facebook pages and have formed communicative connections. However, these movements are in their infancy, it will take some time to gather impetus. The leaders cannot yet be expected to work on important/major issues. Like growing religiosity and/or challenging authority.
  + The leaders’ strong networking bonds reinforce the potential for collective action. SG stays in touch with all the leaders as it is imperative to keep pushing for a feminist dialogue with the leaders through films etc.
  + Local level recognition and linkages were developed with the movements, together with the ownership formed, through sub offices formed by leaders.
* Listening & responding to women on peace & VAW
  + The problems and actions taken by women inform WELDD decision-making.
  + The Peace project integrated women’s identification of what peace means to them and the community. (Women feel their peace is disturbed if they are not treated equally at home or in public.)
  + Realising the importance of peace and security as a key factor to sustaining and furthering women empowerment, SG expanded its peace work to include needs assessments in conflict-ridden areas and building and bringing together multi-stakeholders networks comprised of human rights defenders, women, duty bearers and media.
  + Aware of their rights, the women in post-conflict Swat, for example, formed a group and for the first time in Swat women demonstrated on the streets, demanding their civil rights against load shedding and expressing solidarity with (often attacked) journalists.
  + Women Friendly Spaces, where most of this work is being done, are SG field offices; hence, we are in constant contact.

**Future issues**

* Women’s expectations of and desire for equal rights cannot be realized anytime soon.
* Countering the religious discourse: It is difficult to overcome the influence of religious groups because there is a lack of any affective counter narratives. There is no alternative heaven which may be introduced against the archetype.

**The way forward:**

* SG plans to undertake a research study on te continuum of growing religiosity to religious extremism in Pakistan (not under WELDD). This will help to explore indigenous counter narratives by working with youth groups.
* Study circles for are needed to build feminist leaders across Pakistan to reinforce the feminist discourse
* Connect all WELDD leaders and ensure international connectivity.

Responding to questions, Ms Shaikh explained that the SG-organised policy dialogues with duty-bearers following awareness sessions are a very powerful forum for women and youth to articulate their views and issues, learn about their rights and how to hold those in power accountable. The duty bearers are obliged to tell them how to cope and proceed for any kind of service that they need.

**Tools** In terms of consciousness-raising, SG has found that theatre and films work well, this includes a short film on child marriage produced by SG.

## Lin Chew: IWE experiences of WELDD

In contrast to SG, IWE is a very new organisation and therefore does not have long-term field partners and outreach, however it selected to work in Indonesia so as to work with known partners and build on existing work. A major focus is on developing sustainable leadership, as previous experiences have indicated that despite training women, leadership could not be sustained over time. Indeed, the unsustainability of leadership is almost a crisis. Therefore, part of IWE’s work has focused on understanding what constitutes sustainable leadership.

The work in Indonesia covered four areas:

1. Pluralism and peace;
2. Informal worker’s rights with three distinct groups: domestic workers, home-based workers (working on contract on their own at home) and women market-based porters;
3. Land rights and agricultural work hazards;
4. Sustainable leadership: IWE’s WELDD project is collating lessons of leadership building from the field and building on these experiences to develop a systematic process for sustainable leadership building for Indonesian activists. This is being done in collaboration with other activists by sharing experiences and capacity building training modules.

Some complexities stem from the fact that leadership is contextual requiring a number of issues to be taken into consideration to ensure leaders from specific contexts can fully participate. For example, some groups, such as domestic workers, find it difficult even to participate in the project, as they are unable to leave their domestic work, while many informal workers faced the double burden of working at home and also doing other work. Domestic workers have little mobility and find it hard to get permission to attend trainings or workshops.

**Key Lessons:**

IWE’s work with a large national organisation focused on agrarian reform revealed the lack of a gender perspective; this became the main focus of work with them. In deciding which groups to work with within organisations and movements, IWE considered how the organisation was doing its work and its capacity-building modules. IWE also added to the organisation’s knowledge base by providing feedback.

A sense of ownership for feminist leadership training programmes can be created by working with institutions’ existing capacity-building programmes. Existing programmes can be re-aligned towards feminist leadership building by including elements such as gender perspectives and by motivating participants to want to attend gender trainings. Catalysing a demand from within proved effective.

* The concept of pluralism was introduced in talks about reconciliation in conflict areas. In the Indonesian context of increasing religious fundamentalism and restrictions on women, dialogue son pluralism are crucial. IWE found that the concept is best instilled by avoiding confrontational language that criticises existing culture. Instead, pluralism can be introduced by discussing what a pluralist and inclusive society is, as well as its benefits. The discussion was animated by asking questions such as: how do you build a pluralistic society in which everybody is included in Indonesia? The organisations IWE selected to work with include groups that are marginalised and one working with religious teachers in Muslim schools.
* The complexity of conflicts must be factored into training. IWE found that conflict is not limited to different religious streams and ideologies, but also within, including conflict and competition among organisations and within organisations.
* Safe learning spaces for women have been greatly appreciated both located in public spheres as well as within women’s own domestic sphere as women expressed a felt-need to identify how best to promote a more pluralistic relationship within their families.
* IWE’s attention is now on understanding what type of systems can be built that are sustainable and also able to resist existing oppressive structures.

## WLUML experiences of WELDD

**WLUML worked on two issues: leadership for participation in public and political arenas, and CVAW. The project had to accommodate the different needs of screen/online activists and those engaged in collective work on the ground**. In the Middle East, people are comfortable using technological gadgets and they often think this is activism, although it is not enough. There is a need to transfer information to the ground and vice versa, especially since, in fact, only a small percentage of the population has access to the Internet. Discussions on bridging the divide between the on-line world and on-the-ground activism raises the issue of sustainability, and whether on-line activism can result in something productive and sustainable.

* Referring to **on-line activism**, Nihal Zaghloul (Egypt) commented that while she personally did not think online activism was enough, many people fear for their safety or have little mobility, resort to on-line activism instead of on ground activism. They need to be given information on how to remain secure and how to engage on ground.
* Pramada Menon commented that on-line activism should be considered activism because for some people, that is the most political they can get.

## Edna Aquino: CVAW & WLUML-WELDD

WLUML has the characteristics of both a movement and a network; it is also transnational. In terms of the turtle and eggs allegory, WLUML has produced a lot of eggs. However, the mother turtle does not necessarily follow up on whether the eggs have hatched and what kind of turtles come out. WLUML inspired many other movements. However, there are likely to be many that WLUML itself is unaware of.

The WLUML WELDD work on CVAW is a product of many previous years of WLUML work on religious fundamentalism; indeed, WLUML is one of those who pioneered the discourse on religious fundamentalism in relation to women’s rights.

WLUML-CVAW projects in Africa are located in Sudan, Senegal and Nigeria; in Asia the work is focused on Afghanistan and Indonesia. There is also a presence in Iran and Iraq. WLUML works with Associate Partners in communities where these Associates already have a presence. WLUML sets guidelines for Associates on how to develop strategy, ensuring that Associates are aware of the short-term duration of projects, to ensure maximum returns from limited resources. An example of WLUML activism is the project in Senegal, located in a community in the extreme hinterlands. In Nigeria, WLUML has selected communities in the North where child marriage and forced marriage is prevalent.

Additionally, WLUML creates spaces to link local issues with international audiences. For instance, a petition against death by stoning was put online and mobilised 11,000 signatures. The petition will be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council to demonstrate global opposition to this inhumane punishment and practice. WLUML, working with SG and Justice for Iran, around early age/forced marriages, contributed information to the UN OHCHR. A UN resolution on child marriage is expected early next year.

Mindful of the need to integrate its activities, the next stage includes workshops to consolidate and integrate the learning at different levels, and to develop leadership seminars for activists. WLUML also incorporates self-care as part of sustainable activism into its capacity building events. (See section XXX)

**Key Lessons:**

* Documentation of over 25 years of WLUML experiences would contribute towards sustaining and building women’s leadership through experiences and insights.
* Most WLUML-WELDD Associate Partners operate in high-risk situations. Therefore, developing personal security strategies for activists is essential for project sustainability.

The questions and responses of the discussion are summarised below.

Ms Anberiya Hanifa (Sri Lanka) noted that too much focus on **women’s leadership** can lead to the marginalisation of women’s macro-level decision-making as seen for example in Afghanistan. Women’s political participation helps the politicisation of women’s issues, but this is not enough and doesn’t work very well in places where women’s issues and female leaders are deeply marginalised, such as Afghanistan. The best way to deal with this issue is to ensure there are women leaders in development ministries such as the Ministry of Finance. Work should be broad based and women’s leadership, rather than being confined to women’s issues, should encompass all aspects of life.

* **Do WELDD activities target two different community groups of women from grassroots and civil society and what are the differences to project design?**

**WELDD in Indonesia**: Chan explained that the project design in Indonesia accommodates different training requirements of different groups. To maximise resources and time, cross-group learning is facilitated. Chew added that capacity building is designed differently at different levels, to address specific needs which can be addressed through cross-learning, facilitated by meetings of different levels of participants. Risma Umar (SP, Indonesia) explained that IWE works with activists at the grassroots and partners with local and national organisations that are not limited to women’s groups but encompass social groups such as informal workers, including men. Cross-group learning helps to establish linkages within the women’s movement and with social movements, and connects local and national interventions and groups. The methodology for the community has focused on legal awareness, on how to develop capacity to understand rights, and on the praxis: how is it feminist and transformative?

**WLUML: Africa & the ME:** Drawing attention to a different aspect of project design, Abdelaal said the selection of participants for training was context-driven in WLUML countries as many informal groups do not consider themselves to be organisations in the traditional sense. They prefer to be seen as collectives without hierarchy. For instance, one participant in The Gambia operates a community radio station on gender equality but does not belong to a formal group. Hence, there are variations within leadership that the WLUML programme seeks to address. Different capabilities had to be developed for different types of participants as they channelled demand from the grassroots to the national to international levels. Consequently, the selection criteria became very complicated. Codou Bop (Senegal) stressed the need to be careful in selecting potential leaders for training as some women associate and dissociate from the movement. This lack of commitment could result in the collapse of the entire movement and discussions on leadership should include talking about responsibilities.

* **How does the WELDD project address the concept of transnational leadership?**

SG, Shaheed explained, attempts to address linkages through forums that bring together different groups/communities. However, language does become a barrier as many rural women have difficulty in terms of communication, even in their own (regional) language. IWE, Chew said, has identified international movements to connect local women leaders with global initiatives. Bunch stressed the need to further explore the relationship between training local/grassroots activists and international activism. Abedlaal said WLUML is looking for activists ready to work on transnational issues in different contexts, such as sexuality, in different regions, to raise the profile of these issues, and one example was the on-going “Stop Stoning” campaign.

* **Are activities project- or programme-based?**

It was clarified that WELDD activities are project-based due to funding limitations, but the aspiration is to be long term. IWE is working with women’s organisations to develop an institute that goes beyond the project lifetime, which would address some aspects of sustainability and the requirement for space.

* **Fear of women’s leadership and cultural attitudes towards sexuality and women’s leadership**

Commenting on the fear of women’s leadership and the fear of sexuality Menon pointed out the reluctance amongst women to talk about the fear of sexuality and leadership. Women’s leadership can be discussed when it is centred on what are considered “natural” areas or soft issues such as health and education. Consequently, women’s leadership is only acceptable in some areas; discussing complicated issues like sexuality and LGBT issues is difficult. Similarly, in women’s leadership, there are many difficult areas. **We want our leaders to be loving, caring yet tough. We don’t want them to be telling us what to do, yet we require their directions. Both issues need to be addressed because they are intertwined. The possibility of a model other than biological determinism doesn’t exist, even though it can be aspirational.**

Ms Gulnar Tabassum (SG, Pakistan) said providing women a secure space allows them to discuss such issues and express themselves openly. However, in Pakistan such topics cannot be broached publicly which is creating safe spaces is so crucial. Shaheed added that sexuality does have a role to play and would like to discuss it further. Abedlaal agreed that although sexuality was not on the agenda, it is connected to various issues she works with such as the “Stop Stoning” campaign. Chan added that awareness regarding sexuality was also crucial.

**Closing comments:** In wrapping up,Shaheed mentioned that many women who joined the feminist leadership training had no previous background in feminism. While we want women to be part of the decision-makers in every sphere, integrating women into the mainstream is challenging because feminism also aims to change that very mainstream. Although we want women to be part of decision-making, feminists will always be critical and radical. Because the current system can be flexible and accommodate changes, feminists will have to continuously reassess their arguments and actions.

**Outcomes of session 2**

* Project design must accommodate different ground realities. It is important to understand the operating environment, including communities and groups to be engaged with, prior to designing the project. The level of education of different target communities and the society’s culture will influence project design.
* Involving different types of groups within the training can strengthen/develop connections and networks
* Whether, when and how to include men in feminist activism. In some cases it may increase the risk to women, if men are not included

# SESSION 3: EFFECTIVE MODALITIES FOR NURTURING FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

Discussion points:

* The benefits of mentoring vs. structured institutes; periodicity and connectivity.
* How to build conceptual knowledge e.g., the pros and cons of reading vs. experiential sessions.
* How to generate a ripple effect.

## Charlotte Bunch: Lessons of Building Feminist Leadership of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership

The most important thing is to be clear on why you are doing a women’s leadership programme. What is your goal? What is your purpose? Who are you trying to reach? And what do you hope they will be doing differently as a result of your programme? There will be various answers based on context and location.

The way I use the term ‘leader,’ is people who get things done and are able to mobilise people to get things done. This means collaborative action, coalition forming and gathering people to make something happen. It is not helpful to say every woman is leader. Every woman must be empowered, but leadership is a particular skill of “making something happen.”

There are many different types of leaders but the interest here is in ‘feminist leaders in a movement context. A trailblazer is a leader but not a movement leader, in the sense that we are looking for leaders who will advance a group of women. Some people are born with leadership abilities, some are made, but everybody does not have to be a leader. We should be working towards women’s empowerment and women taking control of their own agency. Furthermore, there are many different types of leaders. For example, a trailblazer may not be the leader of a movement, but can get others to think differently and she may have qualities of leadership. The privileged are given opportunities to exercise their leadership skills all the time. The less privileged don’t have these opportunities and are discouraged. Our job is to open up the opportunities and spaces for self-esteem and group support to exercise leadership skills. In the informal sphere, many women are already doing that. We need to recognise their efforts, support them and help move their work into a more powerful place. It is not just about leading at home and taking care of communities; it is also about getting the opportunity to change our public policies, whether in government or the NGO sector.

The first priority of leadership development programmes is to be clear on what the intended change is: What needs to change? Where? Is desired change in terms of actions or thinking? Because women’s leadership interventions can have very different goals, it is important to keep referencing the modalities and why those were used, because the desired result of one group or another may not be the same.

We started Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL) in Rutgers University with the goal of advancing the leadership of women from civil society in order to bring a more feminist perspective into global policy making, and we decided to focus on human rights. With this in mind, we targeted the UN and international human rights organisations as places where we could bring change. As a strategy we identified women around the world already talking about the issues. It was a very particular group of people we had in mind. We looked for women working in the national civil society and NGO sectors with interest and experience in the issues and therefore the potential for the type of programme we had in mind.

Over time, CWGL added media people to this group and occasionally a woman in politics if she was a feminist. But the key audience remained NGOs and national-level women leaders who understood the global human rights system, or had the potential to do so, within the very specific topic of women and human rights.

The core idea remained the same although at times the focus was more on violence against women, at others on reproductive sexual rights, social economic rights, racism etc. Topics shifted over time because the world began to change and we had to think about the next step.

The length of time and modalities of training programmes depend on who you are working with. CWGL estimated that for NGO advocates from around the world to actually learn something about the international system and build trust, required at least 2 weeks. Further, a longer period ( 3 weeks) would probably not be possible because people would not get such a long time off of work.

Modalities vary. The indigenous Women’s Leadership Network, for instance, conducts training online and gathers people at the Indigenous Forum at the UN once a year to hold their face to face meeting.

**The most important element is strategic thinking** (which is implicit in the SG matrix but may need to be made explicit)[[8]](#footnote-8). For CWGL, the most important thing was to teach people to think strategically about how to relate their local and national struggles to the global picture, and how to use international agencies to advance their struggle. Other elements were included, such as teaching people enough about the UN for them to engage and information leading to analysis and thinking analytically about the field they were working in and the strategies used for the analysis. Sessions used presentations, films, and small group work where people had to come up with strategies on the spot. We worked cross-culturally to get women to overcome regional divisions. These strategy sessions were at the root of the idea ‘16 Days Of Activism’ campaign. Strategy sessions encouraged women to apply what they were taught. They spent 2-3 days at the institute in strategy sessions to develop ideas, both globally and locally, to follow through.

The third big component is skills building. Most people think that’s leadership. I don’t. But, it’s an important component. CWGL conducted different sessions, such as self-esteem, self-defence, self-care, fund raising, organisational management, etc. Achebe Powell conducted cross-over analysis and strategy and built skills to address diversity. These were not separate sessions, but elements of the same session.

Connecting people Finally, participants were introduced to key players they could work with in the future. CWGL demystified the UN by bringing people working at the UN to talk to participants, to take them to do a programme about their work in the UN in New York. Having a separate forum for young women and giving them one-day to plan their agendas allowed them to engage more effectively.

**Mentorship is important**. Some of the most interesting leadership developments have been to attach 1-2 days of training to major meetings and accompanying women brought into the process throughout the session. In this way you learn *how* to work that session while you are participating in it. We did that with the Commissioner of Human Rights. It was very expensive but an effective methodology. We did not have a very systematic follow up, however.

**Towards the Future:**

We need to talk about the systematic backlash against feminist leadership, for example what happens when women take the role of a leader especially at the grassroots level? Of the co-optation of women’s leadership; of women’s leadership programmes that have nothing to do with feminism. It is also important to engage with the media because if we don’t, other people end up defining women’s leadership. The media focuses on non-feminist women leaders and feminists are almost invisible. The few that are highlighted are often from the global South but are not connected to the movements there.

## CREA’s Leadership Experiences

***Geeta Misra: The underpinning logic***

There is a need to contextualise: We need to analyse ourselves, to think about how we became feminists, and feminist leaders. How did we become committed to women’s human rights issues? We weren’t born feminists. How did we develop ideas of justice and injustice?

CREA’s objective is to change sexual and gender norms through leadership programmes. CREA’s strategy of context and theme-based workshops has been effective.

All women should have the capacity to control their lives; the innateness of a person must be addressed. Otherwise the idea that poor women have no capacity to be leaders takes hold. Outcomes of leadership programmes should be clear, monitored and assessed. For this CREA had come up with the following schema:

* Change in headspace: Is there some shift in the head space? Of thinking about something, judging something, a change in framing in how issues/concepts are framed? A feminist paradigm shift requires a change in the way issues are framed which reflects change in people’s thinking and perceptions.
* Shifts in actions: Is there some action that the person is doing/will do differently?
* The formation of networks by participants following a training programme, which enable further actions or strengthen existing ones.
* Impact on some policy or practice: This happens only sometimes, in terms of concrete changes achieved.

**Rupsa Mallik: Feminist institutes & projects**

CREAS’s Feminist Leadership Movement Building and Rights Institute is active in South Asia and East Africa. The design for this institutional space is based on the conceptual framework (already shared with Roundtable participants) by thinking through what this institute is about and who it is for.

Considerable thought went into how much theory and how much practice should be incorporated, and this varies depending on audiences. Despite the feedback that theory is difficult and heavy and despite difficulties posed by complex language, the institutes continued to include theory as a part of the training. The **need to balance theory and practice** is an area I would like to flag. A challenge in this respect is making the theory accessible without any dumbing down. Most training resources are in the academic sphere and in non-vernacular terminology; these require translations into local languages.

**Periodicity** is a concern: long-term institutional training is difficult to accommodate due to the difficulty of potential participants to attend lengthy trainings. CREA has, therefore, reduced its training from 2 weeks to 9 days and sometimes even 7 days.

Enhancing intersectionality is also important in designing the institute rather than only focusing on feminist leadership. A more intersectional understanding would facilitate consultative spaces and enhance diversity that will result in shifting the head space, and framing of the issues.

Misra raised **two questions**: (1) As a new mother, with a greater interest in gender and sexuality, she noted that gender norms are recreated in young people even in controlled environments, even when teachers are trained and the system is being challenged. So the first question is: “At what points to intervene and how to intervene?” (2) CREA Institute’s 10 year evaluation was called ‘Dancing on the Edge’ because of CREA’s willingness to work in new areas in which it does not yet have the expertise. This raises a second question: “how to stay on the edge but strengthen the edge and push the boundaries for transformative leadership?”

## Ayesha Imam: Research & Leadership Building

Imam (Nigeria) noted that the steps and sequences outlined in Batliwala’s presentation on movement development (See Section 5 below) were relevant to two research-related experiences in which capacity building contributed to the feminist social movement, demonstrating how leadership can be built outside formalised leadership programmes. The two projects are:

1. The capacity building and action research Women and Law project of WLUML in Africa and the Middle East (ME). This project required a lot of capacity building due to the paucity of research-based organisations in the Muslim majority countries included in project;
2. The West African Gender Inclusion Citizenship programme of KIT, the Royal Tropical institute of the Netherlands

Both projects resulted in women organising themselves and linking up with women’s movements at national and global level.

**The Lessons:**

* Crucially, the structure of each project created a sense of ownership among the communities involved. This was achieved by involving the women in all stages of the project, including design, implementation, analysis and outcomes. In this respect, the projects went beyond the training aspect.
* Neither project was framed as ‘leadership capacity building programmes’, yet both created leaders. Clearly then, leadership can be developed outside programmes aiming to develop leadership.
* An important element in both projects was the careful selection of allies, but it was equally important to note that allies may change sides. For instance, a male ally who supported one of the projects decided to oppose the project upon realising it was promoting women as holders of legal rights, not just calling upon men to be more generous towards women in land allocations. It is vital to be aware of such changes in alliances and not make assumptions in the selection of allies.

**Marieme Helie Lucas** (Algeria/France), founder of the WLUML network, stresses the **importance of fully understanding and clearly defining** values and concepts, such as ‘inclusion’, ‘peace’, ‘diversity’, democracy etc.. Sometimes we have to be partisan, not merely inclusive whereas ‘inclusion’ may include leaders with whom we have nothing in common. We need to question peace at whose and what cost? We need to re-examine ‘the right to defend oneself’ and vs. ‘promoting war.’ Diversity, she said, is something for which we are paying a very high price, having promoted it without thinking it through properly. All extreme right and segregationist movements have been built on the concept of diversity. The backlash to feminism is diverse. Similarly, democracy is now restricted to an electoral process, regardless of the political content. Hitler, it should be rememberd was elected and many extreme right anti-women forces have won elections. This makes it imperative to clarify these concepts.

**Mentoring and capacity building institutes were both considered relevant** **in building feminist leadership**, but younger activists suggested that not all feminists are suitable mentors.

Imam noted that the choice of mentoring and/or institutional approach is context dependent. Mentoring is easier for the long term, institutes are useful for network building and keeping in touch with people. They also provide a support system in case of backlash. Shaheed added that issues that may arise regardless of whether there is the framework of institutes or not; these need to be identified and a clear vision maintained to move forward. Abdelaal said the two should go hand in hand: Mentoring is a second step after institutes, but there is always an issue of power between the mentor and mentee which needs to be kept in mind. Mentor and mentee must learn from each other. Some feminist women are not ready to be mentors and both sides should be open to the idea. Striking a similar note, **Fatma Emam** (Egypt) expressed concerns regarding competition within the movement which damages each other’s work.

**Outcomes of Session 3**

* There is a need to clarify the term ‘feminist leadership’
* Both mentoring and capacity-building institutes can nurture leadership – as can other interventions like action-research
* Training should consider language limitations

# SESSION 4: DOES THE LOCATION OF LEADERSHIP NECESSITATE DIFFERENT MODALITIES AND FOCUS OF LEADERSHIP STRENGTHENING?

The discussion was preceded by presentations.

Faizun Zackariya from MWRAF, (who was chairing) and Menaha Kandasamy (Red Flag Movement, Sri Lanka) drew on their experiences from working with multi-ethnic communities in Sri Lanka through mentoring, mobilisation and training of mainly rural, grassroots community work.

**Key lessons:**

* It is crucial to move from Individual leadership to collective leadership
* The starting point must be anissue that is deeply felt by the affected community/women. Ownership facilitates internalization and provides motivation to change and be involved in the process to bring about the change.
* Process is important. To be able to mobilise, there must first be aproblem identification and its analysis that will propel people to act. Facilitation can be either internal or external people.
  + The process should begin to build a base which will lead to collective strength in which women’s voices are present and heard
  + It is important to draw upon the experiences of pioneers.
* **Why/what grassroots**
  + A political movement is driven by affected communities. But ‘the community” is never a homogenous block; it is differentiated by class, power interests etc.
  + To be successful, a movement should be organic, indigenous and led by local people to give it rootedness. This provides it the legitimacy and ownership to voice the issue as a public concern.

**Learning from the case:** This illustration of women’s activism and resistance highlights the importance of mentoring and skill trainingfor dealing with different institutions. It is vital to be adaptable according to changing contexts, able to come up with different strategies and different approaches as needed. Catalysing and nurturing a collective leadership combined with the mobilisation of other workers was effective and created a sense of solidarity. Training is important, however. The work of the RFM adapted for trade unions, focused on awareness about rights, how to lodge complaints, legal awareness etc.

**Edna Aquino** (Philippines): With respect tothe question, ‘Does the location of leadership require different modalities in leadership strengthening?’, it is vital to bear in mind the specificities of the context, otherwise we are susceptible to backlash. It is equally important to not get drawn into arguments around cultural relativism.

At a practical level, mentoring has to start by understanding the current level of knowledge of those being considered for a training programme. Strategic thinking also involves building a culture of learning which allows flexibility in designing the training. The Marxist tools of social investigation can be used for strategy making in designing programmes.

Menon: **‘Women’s leadership’ is like a large pot that we put different things into.** When creating feminist leadership training, it is essential to answer the question ‘who is the feminist leadership for?’ In terms of activism, there are expectations that feminist leaders will be active and political. However, some feminists may not want to identify as an activist or they may have preconceived notions about activism that they don’t subscribe to. Such people focus on everyday activism by transforming their own landscapes. Thus, feminist leadership needs a definition that is inclusive of this. It is also important to analyse how much unlearning is taking place.Furthermore, not everyone has the privilege of working at the grassroots so it is problematic to valorise the grassroots. And who defines what “community” is? The community’s people are not homogenous, yet the agenda expects less diversity. Furthermore, there is a need to work with people in the urban sphere, especially the youth as well.

**Ariane Brunet** (Canada):Being a **feminist means fighting all types of oppression**. Today, we live in a fascist world and this impacts our activism. There is no democracy other than electoral democracy and the people in power wish to further their own regressive agenda. Opposition to this situation is what has fed the Occupy movement. It’s important to look at the protests and riots across the world. Alain Bertho for example, tallied riots in across various countries since 2005 and counted 597 riots in 97 countries across the globe, including China, which is why he called this the ‘age of riots’ in which youth are being killed systematically.

The feminist movement must be cognisant of the spreading global youth unrest. The trend of youth uprisings indicates a break between the people and the government and it is extremely important to understand the history and the cause of these developments. Also, for the youth, there isn’t a clear divide between the North and the South.

**Within youth movements, women are less visible**. In Syria, for example, women in general as well as feminists were part of the youth movement, but the youth did not want to go to the MENA Agenda 1325 in Geneva (part of the WILPF International project to enable women to respond to political events in the Middle East North Africa region). Those who wanted to go were in their 50s or 60s. This was because that the youth movement in Syria did not identify with the women’s movement.

**Designing training:** Zaghloul stressed the importance of always asking intended participants ‘what do you need?’ because the context changes with each case. Kandasamy said different approaches are needed at different times, but everyone needs basic knowledge. Perhaps we need to create different scales/frameworks to design context specific programmes for different institutions/groups. The trainer must always be ready to learn and not just see herself as someone imparting knowledge. There are various tools, such as the Marxist tool of social investigation mentioned earlier, but also tools like needs-assessment have been effective. It is important to work on the ground to create an appropriate strategy. While there will be different modalities based on different contexts, these derive from an interaction of field work and one’s own basic knowledge.

**Outcomes of session 4**

* Training design is context-specific, dependent on cultures and other context definers, education and specific community requirements.

**Summary of Lessons for building transformative feminist leadership:**

1. It is essential to be clear on what is expected from the leadership programmes in terms of change (where, who, what) whether this is a change in thinking i.e. what CREA calls the headspace, or shifts in action. This has implications both in terms of the selection of participants and in terms of designing the contents and modalities of the training.
2. Strategic thinking must be promoted along with strategic planning
3. Skill building is essential; the skill sets required context-dependent. However, skill building by itself is insufficient to build feminist leadership.
4. Enabling direct interaction with external parties that women activists want/need to engage with for their activities (UN system, international, national or local decision-makers and others, depending on the desired outcome). (Sometimes the best link is obtaining personal mobile numbers.)
5. Building leadership should aim to amplify the voices demanding gender justice and enhance visibility through collective actions.
6. It is useful to review previous experiences in planning, designing and modalities of building feminist leadership to improve new interventions and to share with others.
7. Mentoring and other modalities include connecting and networking people, sending people to attend training and other events, including by being persistent even at the cost of sometimes pestering people; requesting others to re-orient programmes/training, to suit particular requirements, as WLUML did first with ISIS-Women’s International Cross Cultural Exchanges, and then Charlotte Bunch’s Leadership Institutes, in very effective partnerships.
8. It’s important to measure the impact of building feminist leadership and change achieved. For this CREA has presented a good starting point:
   1. Changes in head space, framing of issues;
   2. Shifts in action;
   3. Whether, the number and extent of connections and networks created; and
   4. Impacts on policy and practices.
9. Additionally, as Brunet stressed, we need to count what we have, not only what we need. Assessing gains in this process requires documenting gains/changes which are too often neglected, such as the networking and links formed through capacity building processes.
10. Regardless of methodology, it is important to ensure that whatever is implemented aligns with an overall feminist vision and goals. In this regard, it was noted that while it is clear what feminists do NOT want, so far there is no strong projection of what feminists want as a vision, there is no framework explaining for example, what a feminist economy or political system looks like.
11. Irrespective of the specific methods utilised, it is essential to create safe spaces for women to be themselves, to question the status quo, to undertake their own analyses and decide upon a course of future action.
12. Face-to-face meetings are crucial. Besides critical thinking and strategising on specific issues, these provide spaces to refresh the headspace, sharpen analytical focus and learn from each other. Creating a learning culture should be part of capacity building.
13. Identifying failures of individuals or organisations or movements.
14. Not to be afraid of addressing issues of power when designing programmes/activities. There are various types of power. The power of money was discussed yesterday, but there is also the power of people, seen, for example, in youth and other movements. Interaction is vital to learn from others, including considering how to learn from other movements, and to include this learning and methods, into feminist capacity building.
15. Allies can be men or people in government and even donors. We need to develop mechanisms to work allies into the capacity building.
16. While there is certainly a need to elicit and accommodate people’s needs, it is equally necessary to remember the feminist agenda in building feminist leadership. The felt-need may not always coincide with a feminist agenda. Consequently, it may be necessary to negotiate with those being engaged with, to ensure the feminist agenda is safeguarded, while meeting (at least some) of their self-identified needs.
17. Different forms of activism exist. It is important to learn from new forms of activism and enhance women’s creativity. However, diversity must be acknowledged and also that some women may not want to be in the movement. There are different ways of doing things.
18. The ability to analyse the changes and developments that are happening is vital. Therefore, the space must be created to meet and discuss these developments.

In the closing, Ayesha Imam tabled the following question to consider: **How do we recognise failure and what should we do about it? How can capacity building address the need to address failure?**

# SESSION 5: LINKING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING WITH MOVEMENT BUILDING

## Srilatha Batliwala (India)

The presentation defined a movement, characteristics of a movement, characteristics of feminist women’s rights movements and core steps of building a movement. (See annex 3) Some salient points:

* A movement is defined as an organized set of people vested in making a change in their position/condition (shared interests), building and pursuing a shared agenda for change (“political agenda”), through collective action, with some continuity over time.
* Key characteristics of movements are:
* An organized membership or constituency base: the individuals or communities most vested in the change from either formal or informal organizations (neighbourhood/village collectives or committees, unions, cooperatives, federations, networks) which form the structure/infrastructure of the movement
* A clear political agenda: viz., a shared analysis of the context / problem they seek to change, goals and targets, and often, a vision of the alternative they seek
* Leadership from the constituency at multiple levels: i.e., not entirely dependent on external leadership
* Collectively created strategies to advance their political agenda
* Collective and coordinated actions that articulate these strategies: these are manifestations of the movement’s political struggle
* Actions may comprise contestation / confrontation (protest marches, rallies, etc.), and / or critical engagement (advocacy, lobbying, joint projects).
* Some continuity over time: spontaneous uprisings or short-term campaigns are not movements, but may develop into movements, or be among the strategies that movements use
* Women and other marginalised genders are key constituents of feminist/women’s rights movements. A useful resource is the Bridge Pack for further reading regarding movement formation.[[9]](#footnote-9) Characteristics of feminist/women’s rights movements are:
* **Feminist values and ideology** (recognition of patriarchy as a fundamental power structure, demand for gender equality, the full body of human rights, inclusiveness, etc.)
* **A feminist political agenda**, built from a feminist analysis of the problem or situation they are seeking to change, and which addresses both the practical needs and strategic interests of women and other marginalized genders
* **Women and other marginalized genders as the key constituency** / critical mass of the movement’s membership
* **Women’s leadership from the constituency at all levels:** women are the key movement leaders, with real decision-making and strategic voice in shaping the movement
* Some movements have led to other sub-movements which were not feminist in nature, such as the indigenous women’s movement.
* **Core Steps in Movement Building**

1. Perception of injustice
2. Inspired, determined leadership
3. Creating spaces, mobilising others
4. Consciousness/awareness building
5. Building a political agenda
6. Mobilising and organising the larger constituency around the agenda
7. Identifying action priorities and strategies
8. Actions for change
   1. Visibility/backlash

b. Absorbing gains

c. Analysing the situation

d. Refining/advancing the political agenda

e. Designing new strategies

* **Feminist leadership capacity building for movement building requires**:
  + The creation of a feminist political consciousness.
  + Teaching women organising skills. However, leaders who allow democratic internal functioning are more sustainable as leaders than leaders who excel in technical skills. The skills of organising and inspiring can be explained through stories and examples; even stories of failure are relevant to this process.
  + Building political skills which includes feminist intersectional power analysis, context / “force field” analysis (forces acting for and against the agenda), SWOT analysis, dealing with backlash and “holding the line”, recognizing & resisting cooption, consolidating gains, framing new agendas, advocacy and critical engagement, alliance building, etc.
  + Building assessment skills i.e. the ability to look within the movement and understand what is required to go into the next stage of growth. There are four stages of movement growth that can be used to understand where a movement is currently located and decide how to move to the next stage.

Some points for discussion and further thought are as follows:

1. Movements can lend themselves to democratisation provided attention is paid to this from the outset. There are many innovations to help move away from patriarchal systems, but research shows that old leadership structures are very hard to change.
2. Movements go to scale: meaning they produce a range of individuals with different leadership skills. This allows the creation of more resilient leadership structures and addresses leadership sustainability more effectively than organisational structures
3. The evidence is overwhelming that movements are essential for creating lasting social transformation, but this also requires agile leaders. Movements that die are those that failed to change so as to address the changes in the environment. There is a belief that some fundamental structures of patriarchy have been damaged. If this is correct, the impact on feminism must be considered and the feminist response to patriarchy must incorporate these changes.
4. Worldwide experiences show that conscious support systems are needed for sustainable leadership.

**In a second** power point **presentation on the relationship between organisations and movements,** Batliwala emphasized that while organisations are not movements, movements are populated by organisations, both formal and informal. Organisations play many roles in movements: they provide services, strategic support and capacity building. She identified three types of organisations within movements as follows:

* Organisations that emerge due to the movement itself
* Organisations that are created to build or support movements
* Organisations that are allies of movements such as donors.

The latest conceptualisation of movements follow the Arturo Escobar model of ‘meshworks,’ where movements comprise a complex network of organisations, some of which enter and exit the movement, while movement-created organisations remain fixed. This model provides a versatile and dynamic depiction of movements that accommodate many possibilities.

**DISCUSSION**

Participants raised questions regarding security/fear of arrest, value of learning spaces, differentiating between feminist and non-feminist women movements and the possibility of placing feminists within the UN system as a sustainability strategy.

Abedlaal questioned how much to invest in critical engagement and stated that a strategy of pushing feminist colleagues into UN organisations had generated positive results. Imam noted that such a strategy can be beneficial, provided the connections to the movement continue. Otherwise the women will feel isolated and burn out. Additionally, capacity building should invest in the skills to make decisions on whether or not to invest in engagement, what type of engagements, and to analyse the consequences. Chan said that engagement should not be the only strategy, and the ‘disengagement strategy’ of the 70s should also be considered in strategic thinking.

Tabinda Sarosh (Pakistan) raised the question of differentiating between women’s rights organisations that have a feminist agenda and those that don’t. Imam said it is necessary to distinguish the difference before entering into a relationship to avoid conflict of interest. She added that organisations can also provide legal cover for movements. Aquino pointed out that parts of a movement sometimes evolve into a hybrid-NGO type model and queried how to manage such change.

Bunch said face-to-face involvement is important in leadership capacity building to build trust, which also translates into trust in movements. Imam elaborated that trust is about solidarity *and* trusting in judgements made. Shaheed concurred that trust building is very important and said capacity building should incorporate this aspect.

Chan said spaces for discussion such as the Roundtable create a “life force” to rejuvenate a common agenda and contribute towards sustainability. Shaheed agreed that spaces are really important for learning, but cautioned about the financial negotiations for this.

The session concluded with Imam drawing attention to the fact that as middle and upper class women, the activists gathered at this Roundtable cannot represent other classes, whereas diversity within movements is important. Batliwala said the discussion should extract the elements that are required to build capacity in feminists and noted that leadership does not have to be built only through formal leadership training. She validated experimentation, experience and engagement as an alternative route to leadership building.

**Outcomes of session 5**

* There are differences between movements and organisations, and there are different categories of organisations with differentiated links with the same movement.
* Security is an issue and capacity building should address the risk of arrest. It is important to recognise and factor in that differently situated women confront different levels of risks.
* There are different strategic options in supporting leadership development.

# SESSION 6: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO MOBILISE MALE SUPPORTERS?

1. Is it, and when is it, important/useful to engage men in feminist leadership programmes
   1. Which men?
   2. Why?
2. What are the pitfalls and dangers to that and the benefits?
3. When and how can this be best achieved?

Chairing the session, Brunet suggested that discussants also keep in mind that the youth movement, made up of both men and women, has had a big transformational impact on our societies. The focus in not whether we want to include men, it is considering the type of impact it may have on other movements. What is the valid connection between women’s leadership and introducing our work to men?

## Codou Bop

Addressing the questions based on her experiences in Senegal, Bop started by critiquing the manner in which the State and the UN mobilise men in women’s issues. For instance, the involvement of men in family planning has increased men’s control of women’s bodies and not women’s leadership. When it comes to reproductive rights like abortion, the first people contacted are the Imams (male religious leaders).

One concrete example where men have consciously preventing women’s leadership relates to work by the Association of Senegalese Women which is one of the strongest feminist organisations although they do not call themselves feminist. Economic reforms negatively impacted male incomes.. Women became income earners, which affected men’s sense of manhood/masculinity leading to a lot of conflict and domestic violence against women. While younger women preferred to divorce their husbands, older women decided to share their earnings. An older woman had explained this by saying men cannot believe we women have changed in 15 years because they have remained the same. Hence, when organisations don’t involve men, the men remain the same. This translates into conflict. We need to reflect on the use of violence by men when they lose power.

The second experience of GREFELs in implementing the National Child Education (NCE) programme under WELDD was entirely different. The aim was to build leadership in teenage girls so they can say no to child marriages. The project worked with three communities with the highest mortality rates and highest number of child marriage.

The training on gender and leadership was for teenage girls but several boys were included, partly as chaperons because the parents would not allow girls to attend otherwise, and partly because the school headmaster requested the project team to include boys for project sustainability.

During the sessions some teenage girls who were already married, spoke of their experience including the death of friends in giving birth. This led the boys to share their feelings and experiences. The boys started to talk of their own pain experienced due to the loss of their sisters. They became a part of the programme. One youth said his sister committed suicide by drinking pesticide because she didn’t want to get married. (There are no statistics, but many girls who are married early commit suicide by throwing themselves down wells.)

As the training progressed, the boys came to realise they too have influence. After the training the youth decided to change the neighbourhood. One boy put up banners saying ‘stop child marriage.’ Some girls are now reporting attempted child marriages to Head Masters of schools. They go with a boy and make the report. Some parents have agreed to postpone their daughter’s marriages.

She concluded by raising a series of questions:

1. Do we need to work with the men to build leadership, and if so, on what terms?
2. What is the space we should use? Should it be our space or another mutual space?
3. How do we stay safe from men taking over?
4. What is the role of civil society in our countries in this regard?
5. How do we engage with the state on this?
6. How can we engage men to protect our gains?

## Gulnar Tabassum

In Pakistan, SG decided to include men in the WELDD project after holding discussions with the involved women who welcomed the idea because they face resistance from male members in their home. They reasoned that outsiders working with their men would be more effective than presenting their arguments to their family members themselves. SG decided to work only with men from areas where women leaders were being selected and preferably men who are family members as the women would have community and familial support.

Men are also victims of the system of patriarchy and SG used its newly developed Construction of the Gender Tree exercise (see footnote 7) to emphasise this. For example, the men said that their role was the protectors of their family’s honour which means exercising patriarchal ways to control women such as restricting their movement. They believed this was important because any sexual transgression by a female family member, such as pregnancy outside wedlock, would lead to a loss of honour for their family.

One question we had to decide was an appropriate male to female ratio. SG decided to never include more than 25% men in WELDD events. SG organised a Peasant Women’s Convention with 500-600 women and a few men at the back. When the ministers started to speak they addressed themselves as usual to “dear brothers” then they were stopped by the women. The minister was reminded that half the population are women and half the voters as well but the ministers never bother to ask for their issues and engage with them.

Some of the successes so far:

* One woman asked what we had said to her brother at the training because previously he used to slap her if her head cover fell off even at home; he objected to her going to SG’s Women Friendly Spaces. Now he doesn’t say anything even when she goes out without her head covered and minus a chaperone, and he has even started to help around household chores.
* In Swat a region completely taken over by the Taliban between 2005-2007, women weren’t allowed to drive. But the younger sister of a WELDD male participant wanted to learn to drive, and he taught her although to avoid societal taboos, he taught her after nightfall.

Including men gives women confidence and young men the chance to rethink the way they behave. The programmes allow youth to explore masculinity and what manhood means. However, one must be conscious of the dangers and guard against them. In countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan where we see a rise of religious extremism, things cannot change overnight because of thousands of years of tradition. We too have internalised patriarchal norms and may be replicating them.

**Discussion**

Almost everyone at the Roundtable had worked with men in some capacity. Questions were raised.

Mallik asked: **At which point would it be ok to work with men when the main constituency is women? Is it better to consider an incremental strategy because it seems like sanctioning by men if men come in?**

**Misra**, questioned the strategic need to work with men, explaining that while men attend CREA institutes, it is not a CREA strategy to work with men. Furthermore, if we work with men, it should be for their sake, not to better the lot of women. A lot of the rhetoric around groups working with men takes a very instrumental approach of including men to reach women. But this means the interventions are not committed to this idea of feminist leadership. In India, for example, health workers could not convince women to take medication for anaemia and so instead, convinced the men to give women the medication. The result was men forcing women to take the medication and while the health of women improved, it was on the basis of perpetuating a power imbalance. Moreover, a lot of donor money is going into programmes that say we work with men and boys. This is not just a question of donor resources; it impacts the resources of NGOs as well. There is a risk of the movement becoming separated into NGOs working with men and those that don’t.

Bunch responded that it is important to have a strategy while not instrumentalising men. Since we do want men to be feminist, the question is at what point do we draw the line between men being feminist and men being feminist leaders?

Shaheed said that in countries like Pakistan there is no choice but to include men given the risk of backlash when women become articulate and start demanding rights. Initially the WELDD project had no intention of involving men but women wanted to involve men because of the backlash. The terms and conditions of involvement are important. In places like Pakistan where patriarchal control is severe is is very difficult to change things at the grassroots without mobilising male support.

Shaikh further explained that in working with men, SG makes them aware of the laws, precisely to prevent a violent backlash when women claim their legal rights. Men too require trauma healing but rarely let their emotions show. Therefore when the young men were being unresponsive during one training, they were deliberately encouraged to not only share experiences but cry, this enhanced their receptiveness to the programme.

Others spoke of establishing clear boundaries when involving men. Kandasamy for example, said what is essential is to make sure we do not allow men to make decisions on our behalf.

Other participants noted that male involvement has positive outcomes. Dini Anitasari from Indonesia, for example, shared that an organisation doing research on pro-women policies carried out gender training. They did not analyse power relations but pushed men to become good men, good husbands and this had had a positive impact. Umar added that some 45% of the people she works with in Indonesia are men and in her experience, the feminist perspective made it difficult to work with them. Nevertheless, it is important to create a strategy for men to stop violence against women. Therefore she had invited men to join her feminist human rights organisation. Men’s role should be to support women’s leadership. It is important that men understand why they should support women leaders otherwise there will be power conflict in organisation.

Imam said men and boys must learn to recognise their gender privileges as well as complicity, but equally how it deprives them in many ways. Whether men need to be in feminist leadership courses is a different question. She agreed that if men and women train together, men should be no more than 25% of the participants. The alternative is to have an all-male group to allow men to speak more openly and for different exercises to be added.

Brunet said she had worked with men with a vision to bring about social relational transformation in a village setting, using music. Music became the common denominator and during the music competition, the women who had previously not been allowed to sing in competitions were able to compete. Then men used the women’s songs in the field. The goal was not trying to get men to change but transforming gender relations within the village.

Bop explained that her project was not designed for boys, it’s a women’s project and the boys know this. Project activities occur in public spaces, but as boys are not in the same position as adult males, there is more space for the girls to negotiate with them. It is difficult to predict what will happen in the future. A lot of male organisations exist, but they do not work with women on social justice, nor do they ever organise gender training. This creates a gap that is filled by training boys.

There were differing views from Egypt: Emam felt the traditional role of men should be deconstructed. In terms of sexual harassment the men are intervening with the harassers to protect women. Recently a group trained women to take on the harassers. We have to look at how we are engaging others.

Zaghloul said it is not always possible to deconstruct men’s roles. Civilian patrols by men in Basma (Cairo neighbourhood) have been successful in preventing the sexual harassment of women. She had not engaged women because they are targets and putting women on the streets would have meant that the men would have had to protect the women activists as well as the women generally on the streets. Many women come forward, saying they can handle it, but in fact, there is no way anyone can be emotionally or psychologically ready for what is going to happen. The movement uses two modules to sensitise men on how women feel when they are sexually assaulted. They get a volunteer and have a group of men put their hands into the volunteer’s pockets. This confuses and scares the male volunteer, leading to a sharp realisation of what women go through. The second approach is having women explain to men what they experience and how they feel.

**Language** On the question of male feminists, Tabassum said that in Pakistan, feminism and secularism are both taboo words. Even women don’t want to call themselves feminists, including for example a brilliant female poet she knows. So it is unlikely that men would do so. Imam said that regardless of whether or not men can be called feminists, the **question is whether men can call themselves feminist leaders**. Even feminist men do not call themselves feminist leaders. The role of feminist men is to talk to other men. Not to lecture other women.

# SESSION 7: BUILDING FEMINIST LEADERSHIP THAT IS SUSTAINABLE

The chair, Ayesha Imam, informed participants that the session would be a discussion with guiding questions first answered by a few differently aged people.

The first question is:

1. How can capacity building/nurturing address issues of sustainability of:
2. Individual women leaders
3. Collective efforts

## Lean Chan stressed that while there is a view that sustainability should last forever, in terms of social sustainability, the focus must be on ensuring the positives that create a better environment and improve conditions last. Some key points are as follows:

* In the context of the feminist movement, sustainability refers to social sustainability and the cornerstones of social sustainability are gender equality and social justice. Any inequality or discrimination makes a society unsustainable.
* Therefore in building capacity we need to be constantly asking ourselves how our practices reduce gender and other forms of inequality and contribute to social justice in the light of the movement or programme’s vision.
* Leaders exist as a person and their leadership is their performance of leadership. The leader as a person embraces their historical past and childhood experiences.
* As activists, we need to learn how to do deal with our emotional needs, our wellbeing and wellness and not just burnout and stress. This should include analysing how we support each other in our everyday lives. Hands-on activities that support us physically and also intellectually and spiritually should be encouraged.
* In terms of leadership practice, organisational practices should be reviewed. Organisation culture can be tedious although it is not intended.

## Fatou Sow(Senegal) said that a tension exists in two spaces: professional lives vs. activism. The question is how and when to stop. For example, although she has tried to phase out for 10 years, in fact she’s still active. The salient points raised were:

* Sustainability also means changes and new, different ways of fighting for the cause and incorporating these differences in our movements.
* Letting go is a difficult process because it may lead to the feeling that one is not useful anymore.
* It is important to recognise that things may change when the torch has passed on to others. Many leaders have not thought about this when they become leaders and do not have the time to think about this during their work. However, it is essential to understand this process in a conscious way.
* The question of ‘how’ is complicated because there are different ways to pass the torch.

## Charlotte Bunch highlighted the following:

* Leadership capacity building is itself about sustainability and should consciously remain so.
* Ending the isolation is important because it is empowering to have people work together. It is very important to make this explicit not just implicit.
* Spaces must be created to discuss sustainability and other issues such as ‘burnout’ in the planning process.
* One way to address personal sustainability and group sustainability is by having counsellors from within the movement. Using a personal example of different sessions with women who work on violence, she suggested talking about mental health and added that spaces for relaxation can be effective.
* It is valuable to go to a place outside the worksite and to be given permission to discuss our own failures or mental health issues, but it should be outside the everyday context and space. This can then lead to an on-going discussion within the organisation.

## Menaha Kandasamy, a younger activist, spoke of sustainability in connection with her work in the Domestic Workers Union which she said was one form of sustainable leadership. In 2005 the Red Flag Women’s Movement Kandasamy is associated with, started organising domestic workers because they are seen as part of the ‘unorganised sector’ and therefore not supported by mainstream trade unions. Seven years later they registered a union.

Initially, domestic workers themselves neither saw themselves as workers nor did they like to tell others they were domestic workers. The Red Flag Women’s Movement supported their union. Their union is considered to be sustainable leadership because they are changing rules and practices that discriminate against them or exploit them through the union. The changes in practices and rules are sustained. For example, until they registered as the domestic workers union, they were referred to as servants by government officials and in state documents. Now they are referred to as domestic workers because they managed to have the documents changed.

Secondly the Red Flag Women’s Movement supported democratic principles in the union. They have a constitution, rotating leadership, and transparent elections. The retiring union President becomes a committee member in the following year in order to continue to support the union. Society has started to see domestic workers differently and they themselves see themselves differently. They have started mobilising for themselves. As a movement, this union is sustainable.

## Marieme Lucas agreed that it is very difficult to stop being an activist and suggested task specialisation as a solution for burnout. In her 18 years of experience, it has been very difficult to stop working and rest when there is pressing work. It was extremely difficult to know how to take care of herself and do the work that very often needed immediate attention. This type of work is not like a nine to five job.

She also noted that you can be overworked but also energised. In her case, she said, burnout resulted from performing tasks that she was bad at, such as finances and management. Consequently, the time consumed by such matters took longer. If people are assigned tasks they are good at, this will lower burnout.

What sustains the movement is the spirit and the fight, not necessarily organisations. Just like people, organisations live and die. New initiatives and new feminist leaders will emerge. Our task is to look out for these new people and not work with any specific organisation.

Chulani Kodikara (younger activist) said institutions are important to create and nurture feminist leaders because everyone has their own ingrained biases.Training institutes and institutions are key to building feminist leadership because of the exposure, including exposure to other women leaders. Other ways of meeting training needs should be explored, such as the use of social media.

Perhaps we need to think in terms of other ways of learning. For example, can Facebook substitute institutions as training grounds?

**Nihal Zaghloul,** one of the youngest activists at the roundtable,drew attention to conflict resolution as an aspect of sustainability. Sustainability is about diversity as well as continuity and there are different ways of becoming sustainable. Movements are made of individuals. Therefore the capacities of individuals need to be built so as to build the movement. For movement building, it is important to look at individual capacity in order to see if there is a shared vision and compatibility. If individuals and movements don’t work out, they can join other movements.

Her experience has been that it is useful and important to have a few people in an organisation for conflict resolution. Keeping communication channels open within the organisation also helps.

It is important to self-reflect as individuals in order to prevent conflicts that can dismantle organisations.

## Yasmin Ghrawi suggested taking the discussion to a mind and body level and suggested using exercises where individuals can connect with themselves both mentally and physically. She noted that burnout is a physical and emotional manifestation and therefore, experiential exercises of mind and body connectivity could give powerful results.

## Doaa Abedlaal, bridging the older and younger women, noted that one difference about women leaders is the show of emotion

When their programme had asked trainees whether women leaders do things differently, they said yes, women were not afraid to display emotion and console each other.

She stressed the need to make our values and principles very clear so that newcomers understand what we are working on and trying to achieve. Nevertheless, some leaders have a hidden agendas and it works. They target recruits and include them in the movement because of hidden agendas. She concluded by emphasising that we must encourage people think differently and how to do things differently.

**A lively discussion ensued.** Some of the key questions/points raised were:

**Tabinda Sarosh** asked what the role and responsibility of new recruits who want to join the movement are. How should they be nurtured and guided? This should be part of capacity building because young feminists need to find their place.

**Geeta Misra** asked How is sustainability and wellbeing threaded through our work? Programmes for maternal heath may save women’s life, but they don’t consider that the woman has to live in a patriarchal home where there is no wellbeing as such. We have to lay aside some assumptions about what we think constitutes sustainability within movements and organisations because different people need different things to sustain them. Some people like to sleep, some to relax, some to dance, some to do yoga etc. Organisations have to ask what sustains a diverse staff.

**Pramada Menon** questioned how sustainability is being defined and asked how in our own contexts we are sustaining ourselves and others? In the context of capacity building programmes, are we looking at the sustainability of capacity building programmes, or the people within the programme? If we make it integral that they have to find their own support systems, and actually create those systems, this contributes to sustainability. However, this may mean playing a mentor role. The critical thing for all leaders to work out is how to give up power. For that you also need to find other areas of work where you feel valued.

**Srilatha Batliwala** said the problem with sustainability of leadership is the lack of clarity on what it is that we are trying to sustain, and what we do not want to sustain, such as the stranglehold of older feminists. The first step for sustainability is to start a process of identifying core elements that are vital to sustain leadership. In this process, we need to work out how to create sustainability without losing resources, without confusing this with formal authority positions. This means stepping down but still sustaining a leadership role. One way of identifying core elements to sustain and change, is to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The extrinsic aspect is how to ensure depth and breadth of leadership, and resilience of leadership structures. This is not person-centred but based on systems that create resilience of leadership. This means multiple leaders. There are many intrinsic aspects that we can use such as opportunities for new learning, sharing, rotation of roles, sabbaticals, R&R Centres, yoga, sleep etc. We can only discuss mechanisms and practices once we know what we want to sustain.

**Lin Chew** stressed the importance of allowing ourselves to show vulnerability and express emotion. Women are expected to be strong and nurture others, but we also need the space to express ourselves. We have to develop mechanisms to integrate our knowledge with self-care. The two should not be separate because knowledge is not limited to mind space. The mental processing involves a physical action as well. There is a need to consider a leadership support institute because leaders do need the support.

**Najia Haneefi** (Afghanistan) spoke of the difficulty she was experiencing to sustain feminist leadership in the diaspora. Although she is involved in many activities in Afghanistan, it never satisfies her. She feels what she was more effective working in Afghanistan than her work from outside for Afghan women.

This session ended by asking whether building transformative feminine leadership is just an obsession of older women. If not then participants were asked to respond to the following:

1. What do younger activists need from older ones
2. What do older ones seek from young ones
3. How can this be better accomplished

Younger activists confirmed that this was not just an ‘oldies’ obsession. Participants answers are to what they need from each other are provided in the Table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What do younger activists need from older ones** | **What do older ones seek from young ones** |
| * Experiences, lessons, failures * Camaraderie * Emotional support at difficult times * Networking * Pooling resources * creating academic capacity building opportunities for transitional feminists * Provide space for younger feminists to grow * Trust * Constructive criticism/ feedback * Job shadowing * Don’t go on about the past * Not create conflict in leader transition * Guidance of how, what, when, where * Don’t politicise * Reflect on what the young have brought to the agenda on human rights * Space for sharing | * Recognise that age brings physical limitations but don’t drive us to retire * Don’t expect we have the answers for today but don’t think we have nothing to offer * Create mutually respectful mentoring relationships * Take the space; don’t ask * Young women should be allowed to criticise older ones * To claim us as their history * ‘Show me how I can still be useful’ * ‘Allow me to tell my stories’ * Recognise, respect and build on the past. * The younger should take over the world * Don’t just cohort with your own at meetings, * Think back about things that didn’t go so well * Share vulnerabilities |

**FUTURE DIRECTION**

The participants made a range of suggestions aimed at sustaining the feminist movement through multi-generational collaboration. These are:

* Don’t stereotype, don’t be ageist. Accept that conflict of generations is a part of life and learn to manage it
* Document oral histories. Younger ones can interview older feminists, asking questions they feel are pertinent
* The ways of working have changed. This should be discussed
* Create space for dialogue but don’t pack too many things into a forum
* Job shadowing
* Leave your home station and do something else.
* Keep the communications open (midnight/ emails
* Find ways to provide emotional support to each other
* Arrange for exchange programmes
* Build counter narratives
* Engage with the UN Convention on aging people

The roundtable concluded with the screening of a 2 minute film against child marriage developed by SG and shown on the most popular TV news channel, in Pakistan, reaching 1 million people. A second short film screened was on issues around integrated security by IWE.

In her capacity of Director WELDD, Farida Shaheed thanked MWRAF for all their support in arranging the meeting. To close everyone joined in the feminist movement song: “I am a Woman - Hear me roar”.

**END**

# Annex 1: List of participants

**WELDD roundtable May 2014 participants**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Roundtable Participants** | **Organisation** | **Country** |
| **Achebe Powell** | **Betty Powell Associates** | USA |
| **Ariane Brunet**: Currently freelance consultant focused on peace/conflict and women. Formerly ran the Institution for Human Rights & Democracy before it was closed by Canad’s incumbent prime minister. | Centre for Secular Space | Canada |
| **Marieme Helie Lucas:** hails from feminist lineage with her mother, grandmother and aunt being strong feminists. She is a sociologist by training but has been a full time activist for a long time. She started the international solidarity network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws 30 years agao, and a new organisation 10 years ago focused on secularism. | SIAWI | Algeria |
| **Ayesha Imam**: long-time women’s rights activist; initiated Women In Nigeria, the country’s first feminist organisation focusing on women’s oppression and class oppression. Active member, WLUML, coordinated its Women and Law Programme for Africa and the ME.  Involved with the African Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Association of Media Women, The African Democracy Forum, the Gender Institute (?). Believes that women’s oppression needs to be fought alongside other issues of oppression such as class. |  | Senegal |
| **Farida Shaheed:** Executive Director of Shirkat Gah- Women’s Resource Centre (SG), which started as a women’s collective in 1975 – Pakistan’s first feminist organisation. Founder Member: Women’s Action Forum, the main lobbying platform for Pakistani women which SG started; Active for many years in WLUML. Director, WELDD project. | SG, Executive Director | Pakistan |
| **Gulnar Tabassum**: born a feminist; currently working with SG-WELDD; SG Thematic Coordinator, Outcomes 1 & 4. | SG, Programme Director, Communications & Leadership | Pakistan |
| **Tabinda Sarosh** , Director, Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights at SG; an activist since childhood. | SG, Programme Director SRHR | Pakistan |
| **Humaira Shaikh:** activist at SG, SG Thematic Coordinator Outcomes 2 (peace ) & 3 culturally sanctioned violence against women; earlier WELDD TC Outcome 2) |  | Pakistan |
| **Purniya Awan:** Assistant Programme Officer WELDD-SG since four months. | SG, Assistant Programme Officer | Pakistan |
| **Lin Chew** | IWE | Hong Kong |
| **Lean Chan**: hails from a feminist lineage; her grandmother, mother and aunt being feminists, sensitised her to the suffering of women. She grew up in a house with 50 women, where her father was the only man. Her great grandmother left China when her husband took a concubine, and she set up a women’s centre in Penang in 1930, helping women seeking employment as domestic helps. Ms Chan comes from three generations of domestic workers; her generation broke out of this cycle thanks to her mother.  A feminist activist and popular advocator, she shifted focus from class to the feminist perspective which focuses on all forms of oppression. She has worked with various groups at various levels; in Penang for 10 years without external links or support, organised workers in free trade zones and set up a workers’ centre. Political surveillance led her to shift to regional capacity-building and women workers. Ms Chan is part of IWE and is working on how women leadership can be feminist and transformative and also sustainable. She has worked as an academic to support her activism. Ms Chan now retired institutionally, is trying to return to local grassroots activism. | IWE | Hong Kong |
| **Risma Umar**: Activist from rural Indonesia, but now working in Jakarta. She worked with Solidarity Perempuan (Women’s Solidarity) for women’s and human rights. Has worked in many areas e.g. migrant workers, women in rural areas living under Sharia law, ethnicity and culture, women farmers. Member of IWE working with WELDD to develop capacity for leadership for women informal workers. | IWE | Indonesia |
| **Dini Anitasari** is working on the WELDD project as part of the IWE team. Previously she worked with the Jakarta xxxx with domestic violence survivors. | IWE | Indonesia |
| **Marhaini Nasution** from Sumatra Island is an activist and feminist who joined IWE in 2012. She earlier worked for Solidaritas Perpempuan (SP) for 7 years. She felt like a true feminist at IWE as she could meet other feminists and exchange ideas. | IWE | Indonesia |
| **Phoebe So:** Amnesty International Capacity Building Officer for China, mostly working with Chinese activists, including women’s and human rights defenders in China. IWE: involved in WELDD-IWE project looking at how to sustain women’s activism. Board Member of a local Hong Kong foundation, *Her Fund*. | IWE - Board Member | Hong Kong |
| **Raihan Diani**: recently joined IWE, self-identifies as Acehnese rather than Indonesian because the central Indonesian government treats Aceh residents differently.  Joined the feminist movement through the students’ movement; part of Achenese civil society group Women’s Democratic Organisation, workingon the peace process and to organise people at the grassroots. Following the Tsunami, they formed an organisation, meaning ‘better life’ on women’s rights. When thepesce process started, they also formed a local political party as well. Her interests are women’s rights & political participation. | IWE  Acehnese Women’s Democratic Organisation | Indonesia |
| **Fatou Sow** has been an academic for 40 years and has authored a feminist critique of African sociology. She is currently a Director of WLUML. | WLUML/ GREFELS | Senegal |
| **Codou Bop** part of WLUML; coordinates GREFELS, a women’s groups established under the framework of the WLUML Women & Law programme. GREFELS actively researches women’s and human rights issues and runs trainings. Coordinates WLUML in Africa and the ME.  Member, African Feminist Forum, National Senegalese Women’s Forum; Board Member of a women’s organisation in Senegal. | WLUML/ GREFELS | Senegal |
| **Doaa Abedlaal**: Activist for 7 years in WLUML, specialises in women political participation and how to advocate.. Founding member, *Ikhtyar* (meaning ‘choice’), a feminist collective in Egypt as the core principles of feminism is about choices in life.  Work focuses on knowledge production and gender equality in Arabic using indigenous knowledge and local discourses.  Has worked with UNDP, Egypt, on women’s political participation for the past six years. | WLUML/ Ikhtyar | Egypt |
| Fatma Emam | WLUML | Egypt |
| **Yasmin Ghrawi:** WLUML’s Communication Officer since less than 2 years. | WLUML | UK |
| **Najia Haneefi,** a socialist feminist from Afghanistan; founder member, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, started work at the grassroots and with UN Habitat for community development.  Co-founded the Women’s Political Participation Committee in Afghanistan and a women’s radio station. Her first work experience began as a child, in a children’s radio programme at a local radio station in Afghanistan. She later established a women’s radio station. Now settled in Canada, and enrolled in International Development and Women’s Studies.  of WLUML. | WLUML  Board member | Canada/ Afghanistan |
| **Nihal Zaghloul**: WELDD-WLUML coordinator  Founder and co-founder of *Imprint,* an organisation in Cairo working on discrimination and gender based violence.  Selected as board member for UN Women. | WLUML | Egypt |
| **Edna Aquino**: field coordinator for the Culturally Justified Violence Against Women component under WLUML. She thought of retirement after almost two decades at Amnesty International but was hijacked by Lin Chew who had introduced her to Farida Shaheed and Vivienne Wee for the Women Empowerment in the Muslim Contextpoject, then the WLUML-led MDG 3 project, to the current WELDD project. | WLUML | Hong Kong |
| **Nabiha Meher Shaikh** feminist teacher and writer. |  |  |
| Geeta Misra | CREA | India |
| **Pramada Menon:** Self-identifies as a queer feminist activist, working on gender and sexuality for many years. She is currently not connected institutionally and works as a consultant. She is a co-founder of CREA. She has made a documentary film and hope to do more such films. She does a stand-up show called Fat, Feminist and Free. She said she will be performing at the Asia Pacific Feminist Forum on the 31 May, at the solidarity dinner. | - | India |
| **Charlotte Bunch:** Founder and for 20 years Director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL) and initiated other women’s leadership institutes. Very interested in inter-generational or multi-generational work of sharing perceptions of where things are and what are the different places we need to come together, by identifying areas that require combined efforts, and how the older generation could “let go but not disappear.” | Centre for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL) | USA |
| **Menaha Kandasamy:** an activist, Secretary of the Ceylon Workers Red Flag Union.  Involved with the Red Flag Women’s Movement, the Domestic Workers Union, the Committee for Asian Women and the Australia-Asia workers, which is a local and regional network. Her interests and main areas of work are in worker’s rights and women’s rights. | Red Flag Movement. | Sri Lanka |
| **Rupsa Mallik:** Ms Mallik has worked with CREA for over a year and a half. She feels her personal and work philosophy have been unified at CREA which puts strengthening transformational women leadership at the centre of its activities. |  |  |
| **Faizun Zackaria**: Co-founder of MWRAF in 1986 and active in WLUML.  Involved in activism on inter-ethnic solidarity and national issues related to peace and justice. Activism is not limited to Muslim issues, but includes many national issues. | MWRAF | Sri Lanka |
| **Laila Udayar:** currently involved with MWRAF, spent most of her life in Muslim schools as an active teacher, not an activist. Teaching showed her that Muslim girls were not allowed to go to university despite good grades and given in marriage instead due to ‘unlearned moulavis’ teaching that higher education was against religiousness. Now she works with men, mostly maulavis and community leaders, educating them to promote progressive interpretations of Islamic teachings with good results. | MWRAF | Sri Lanka |
| **Anberiya Hanifa** has been active in the MWRAF since 1986, advocating for Muslim personal law reforms for 28 years and is associated with almost all MWRAF’s work. Her current interest is the anti-Muslim movement in Sri Lanka of extremist and Buddhist groups. Muslims are being targeted and there is a lot of violence against women. She is a member of the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka. Associated with WLUML since 1986. | MWRAF | Sri Lanka |
| **Chulani Kodikara** Currently working at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Ms Kodikara joined MWRAF in 1993 and her most important work was a book on Muslim Family Law for the WLUML network. She has been an activist on women’s rights and this is her area of interest. | WLUML/ICES | Sri Lanka |

Bits to reintegrate

**Contemporary** **Ariane Brunet** (Canada) added that NGOisation is directly connected to neo-liberalism, but Ms Bunch felt that NGOistan isn’t the problem; rather the neo-liberal economy which aids this is the problem.

# Annex 2: Agenda of roundtable

**WELDD International Meetings (21-24 May 2014)**

**Kandy, Sri Lanka**

**Agenda**

**Leadership Roundtable Discussion (21-22 May 2014)**

The Roundtable hopes to draw experiences and efforts of feminist activists working on women’s leadership in order to inform & strategize for the WELDD programme and to contribute further to the work on feminist leadership beyond the WELDD programme

**Day 1: 21 May 2014**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Item** | **Facilitator / Comments** |
| **Session 1: Introductions** | | |
| 9.00-10.00 | 1. Welcome & self-introductions | 10 mins welcome Faizun & Farida; 45 mins for 36-37 participants |
| **Session 2: Key lessons and Challenges in building transformative feminist leadership** | | |
| 10.00-10.30 | 1. The WELDD project & key points/questions in background note | Farida Shaheed (overview)  10 Mins & 20 mins |
| 10.30-11.00 | *Tea Break* | 30 mins |
| 11.00-11.45 | 1. Key lessons of WELDD Partners: Shirkat Gah, IWE & WLUML | 15 mins each:  SG: Gulnar & Humaira  IWE: Lin & Vivienne ?  WLUML: Fatou / Doaa/ Edna |
| 11.45-12-30 | 4. Inputs from participants/discussion |  |
| 12.30-13.30 | *Lunch break* | 1 hour |
| **Session 3: Effective modalities for nurturing feminist leadership?** Mentoring vs structured institutes/sessions; periodicity & keeping in touch. Are leaders born or made? How to build conceptual knowledge: readings vs experiential sessions; how to have a ripple effect? | | |
| 13.30-15.00 | Discussion kicked off by presentations by: Charlotte Bunch, Geeta Misra/Rupsa Mallik (CREA), Marieme Helie Lucas | Chair: Faizun <?>  15 mins each for panelists & 1 hour discussion |
| 15.00-15.30 | *Tea Break* |  |
| **Session 4:** **Does the location of leadership necessitate different modalities and focus of leadership strengthening?** Does leadership strengthening need to be tailored to the specific issues, sites & levels at which leadership is exercised? e.g. dealing with different sets of actors and levels of officials? How do we define ‘grassroots’? | | |
| 15.30-17.00 | Discussion kicked off by presentations by: Edna Aquino, Ariane Brunet, Pramada Menon, Faizun Zackariya | 15 mins each for panelists followed by 30 mins general discussion |

**GROUP DINNER IN THE EVENING**

**Day 2: 22 May 2014**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Item** | **Facilitator / Comments** |
| **Session 5: Linking leadership capacity building with movement building:** Is it enough to build individual women as leaders for social transformation? What is the role of individual leaders, collective actions, trailblazers & models? Do all women want to be leaders and does this matter? If the eventual purpose is to catalyse or bolster a movement for social change (which requires both leaders and supporters), does it really matter whether women assume leadership roles? | | |
| 9.30-11.00 | Discussion kicked off by presentations by: Vivienne Wee & Ayesha Imam, Srilatha Baltiwala via Skype | 10-15 mins each panelist; 60 mins discussion |
| 11.00-11.30 | *Tea Break* | 30 mins |
| **Session 6**: **Building feminist leadership that is sustainable:** What is sustainability? Sustainability of individual leaders vs the movement? How to deal with burn out? How to pass on the baton/make space for younger women? | | |
| 11:30-13.00 | Discussion kicked off by presentations by: Lean /Lin (IWE); Menaha Kandasamy, Fatou Sow/Doaa Abdelaal; Chulani Kodikara | 10 mins each panelist |
| 13.00-14.00 | *Lunch break* |  |
| **Session 7: How important is it to mobilise male supporters?** | | |
| 14.00-15.00 | Discussion kicked off by presentations by: Gulnar Tabassum, Codou Bop, | Moderator: |
| **Session 8: Other issues** | | |
| 15.00-16.00 | General discussion of issues identified during previous sessions | Moderator: Farida Shaheed |
| 16.00-16.20 | *Tea break* | 20 mins |
| 16.20-17.00 | Wrap up & Closure by WELDD Director, Farida Shaheed |  |

1. The focus of each partner is somewhat different: SG is working on all four outcomes; WLUML is largely active on public processes and participation, and culturally justified violence against women; IWE is involved in public processes, peace and conflict and economic rights [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 7s reinsert y have menaha'er roar his was not just an oldies'WELDD is a four year project (2012 – 2015), funded by the Dutch Foreign Ministry’s Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women programme (FLOW). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. DAC refers to developing countries eligible for Dutch Foreign Ministry funding [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Contexts: gender, poverty and democratisation from the inside out* (WEMC) 2006-2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Srilatha Batliwala, 2011, *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation – Clearing the Conceptual Cloud,* CREA. Available at <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ucwc/docs/CREA.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. These are: (1) Leadership with focus on participating in public & political arenas; (2) peace-building; (3) culturally justified violence against women, (4) economic rights [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The gender tree exercise, created by Farida Shaheed, helps to analyse gender and bring this to life through a visualisation. The exercise starts with participants identifying on either green or brown/yellow ‘leaves’ their experience of of being female or male (positive and negative) as manifestations of the gender system they inhabit. The exercise then transitions to identifying root causes (roots); follows up by identifying institutions maintaining the current gender relations of power (the truck), and ends with the enabling factors connecting the institutions as branches. Once constructed, the gender tree is used to help analyse the initiatives being take and planned to see to what extent actions address the root causes and institutional arrangements as well as manifestations. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Shaheed later clarified that the matrix had been shared as it was 2 years ago, and would be updated after this roundtable. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Jessica Horn, 2013. Gender and Social Movements Overview Report, Institute of development Studies. Available at <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-social-movements> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)