



Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts
gender, poverty and democratisation from the inside out



pathways
of women's
empowerment

Negotiating alliances, overcoming opposition: Women's movements and other social movements

**A roundtable jointly organized by the Research Programme Consortia on
'Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts' & 'Pathways to Empowerment'**

Time: 2.00 – 5.30 pm ❖ Protea 1&2, The Cullinan Hotel

14:00 – 14:20 Introducing the two Research Programme Consortia

Why this topic? What encounters have women's rights advocates had with other movements in civil society -- e.g. religious, multi-culturalist, human rights, anti-globalist, labour, environmentalist, etc.?

Andrea Cornwall (Pathways) and Vivienne Wee (WEMC)

14:20 – 15:30 (six 10-min inputs)

**Encounters of women's movements with other movements in civil society:
common ground, tensions, trajectories, contentions, alliances**

A. Encounters with religious movements or religiously-identified women

1. Women encountering religious movements in Palestine (*Islah Jad, Pathways*)
2. Secular feminists and religiously identified women in Iran (*Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh, WEMC*) [including a five-minute video clip]

B. Encounters with movements for social and economic rights

3. Women relating to the sex workers' rights movement in Bangladesh (*Maheen Sultan, Pathways*)
4. Women and land rights (*Ana Alice Alcantara Costa, Pathways*)

C. Encounters with movements for basic rights in a democratizing process

5. Women and the democratization movement in Indonesia (*Sri Wiyanti Eddyono, WEMC*)
6. Women's health rights as part of the democratization movement in Pakistan (*Kausar Khan, WEMC*)

15:30 – 16:00 □ Questions, comments

16:00 – 16:15 □ Roundtable buzz

Identifying key issues of strategic relevance for building alliances, overcoming oppositions

16:15 – 17:00 □ Plenary discussion

Strategies for engagement across movements: challenges and opportunities

17:00 – 17:10 □ Closing remarks: an invitation for continuing discussions (*Farida Shaheed, WEMC*)

17:10 – 17:30 □ Tea, snacks, mingling

Speakers Profiles

Andrea Cornwall/Pathways is a Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, where she directs the DFID-funded Research Programme Consortium Pathways of Women's Empowerment. She has worked on issues of gender in development for many years. Recent publications include *Feminisms and Development: Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges* (with Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead, Zed Books, 2007) and *The Politics of Rights: Dilemmas for Feminist Praxis* (with Maxine Molyneux, Routledge, 2008).

Vivienne Wee/WEMC is the Director of the Research Programme Consortium on Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts (WEMC). She is also an Associate Professor at the Department of Asian and International Studies and concurrently the Associate Director of the Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC) at the City University of Hong Kong. In addition, she is the Lead Researcher of WEMC's research conducted by SEARC. She has long been engaged in socially relevant research focusing on demands for social equality, based on gender, class, and ethnicity, in relation to the structures and processes of state, culture, and development. She has extensive experience in women's rights activism in South East Asia and in field research, particularly in Indonesia. Her recent work seeks to contribute to the development of new and productive synergies between institutions working at different levels, ranging from the United Nations, governments, universities and research institutions, civil society organisations (including religious organisations), to local village communities. She and Farida Shaheed are the lead authors of WEMC's research framework, *Women Empowering Themselves*.

Islah Jad/ Pathways is the Director of the Women's Studies Institute and Assistant Professor of Gender and Development at Bir Zeit University. She is one of the founders of the Women's Studies Institute at Bir Zeit University and of the WATC (Women's Affairs Technical Committee), a national coalition for women. She has published many works on Palestinian and Arab women political participation. She is the co-author for the Arab Human Development Report of 2005. **Islah Jad/ Pathways** is the Director of the Women's Studies Institute and Assistant Professor of Gender and Development at Bir Zeit University. She is one of the founders of the Women's Studies Institute at Bir Zeit University and of the WATC (Women's Affairs Technical Committee), a national coalition for women. She has published many works on Palestinian and Arab women political participation. She is the co-author for the Arab Human Development Report of 2005.

Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh/WEMC is a founding member of several initiatives to promote women's rights in Iran including Meydaan Zanan (Women's Field), a network of women's movement and also initiated the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign. She has been involved in a number of ground-breaking projects aimed at empowering the women in Iran and has also published a number of important works on the status of women in the country. She was editor in chief of Farzaneh Journal, a journal of women's studies and research. She has worked on the Beijing Platform for Action since 1995 as a director of NGOs coordination centre and was the editor and chief researcher of the Alternative National Report on Women's Status in Iran which was presented at Beijing+10, New York, 2005. She has been arrested twice for her activities to defend women's rights. She has started making video documentaries on key issues facing the Iranian women recently and co-founded the setting up of a progressive film collective.

Maheen Sultan/Pathways is the Coordinator of the Research Programme on Pathways of Women's Empowerment, South Asia Hub which is part of the Development Studies Programme of BRAC University. She has been doing free lance consultancies on social development and gender issues for several years and earlier has worked in various multilateral/bilateral development agencies. She is a member of Naripokkho, a Bangladeshi women's activist organisation. She has worked closely with the Government in the post-Beijing conference period on gender mainstreaming and CEDAW reporting. Her research interests include women's mobilisation and organisation.

Ana Alice Alcantara Costa/Pathways is a Professor of Political Science at the Federal University of Bahia. She has a Masters and Doctorate from the Universidad Nacional Autonoma of Mexico, and is a researcher at the Center of Interdisciplinary Studies on Women. She currently coordinates the Masters and PhD programs in Interdisciplinary Studies on Women, Gender and Feminism. She is the author of several works on political participation of women, feminism and social movements in Brazil, public policies and gender. She has advised various state agencies in drawing up policies and programs aimed at gender equity and in training of technical staff in expertise for the implementation of public policies.

Sri Wiyanti Eddyono/WEMC is a human rights lawyer. She has special expertise in legal reform and the structure, content and culture of law in Indonesia. She has worked on violence against women and the interactions between Islamic law, customary law and state law. She is particularly interested to do policy research on the content of local regulations that have tendencies to marginalize women based on religious/cultural interpretations, as well as study the attitudes of local governments (at the lowest level of administration) in utilising religious interpretations related to women's rights. She was recently elected a Commissioner in the National Commission on Violence Against Women in Indonesia, an independent national body for human rights.

Kausar Khan/WEMC She is a founding member of the Pakistan Reproductive Health Network and Advisor to Shirkat Gah (Women's Resource Centre, Karachi and Lahore) for Gender and Reproductive Health since January 2000. She has nearly 20 years experience of working with urban and rural communities on issues related to community development, and community participation in Primary Health Care, and other development activities. Her special focus has been on women and the very poor. She is also a Lecturer at the Department of Community Health Sciences, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan.

Farida Shaheed/WEMC is the Deputy Director of the WEMC Research Programme Consortium, and the Asian Regional Coordinator of Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML). She is a sociologist with many years of research experience on women's issues (including rural development, women and labour), especially in Pakistan and South Asia.. During her term as the Coordinator of Shirkat Gah Resource Centre , she developed and ran its (largest) legal consciousness programme that seeks to change laws and policies while building grassroots capacity through training thousands of women and male allies, and by providing legal counselling/assistance and networking. She co-authored the publication by WLUML and Shirkat Gah of " Great Ancestors: Women Asserting Rights in Muslim Contexts" which contains essential information and training kit on women's rights activists from the 8th to the 20th century exploring the myth that struggles for women's rights are alien to societies that embraced Islam.