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NEWSLETTER

Invisible Members: Women and Conflict in the Region

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Introduction

Throughout the month of October, SEAN-CSO focused on the topic of “Invisible Members: Women and Conflict in the Region”. Conflict has always been associated with masculinity and male-dominated. However, it doesn’t mean women have no participation in conflict. Women have always been there, only behind the door.

Then, how do women show their participation in conflict? Why is their participation important? This month we invited some experts to examine this issue in our webinar and in an interview.



In Touch with Shadia Marhaban: The Shifting Discourse Between Women, Peace, and CSOs

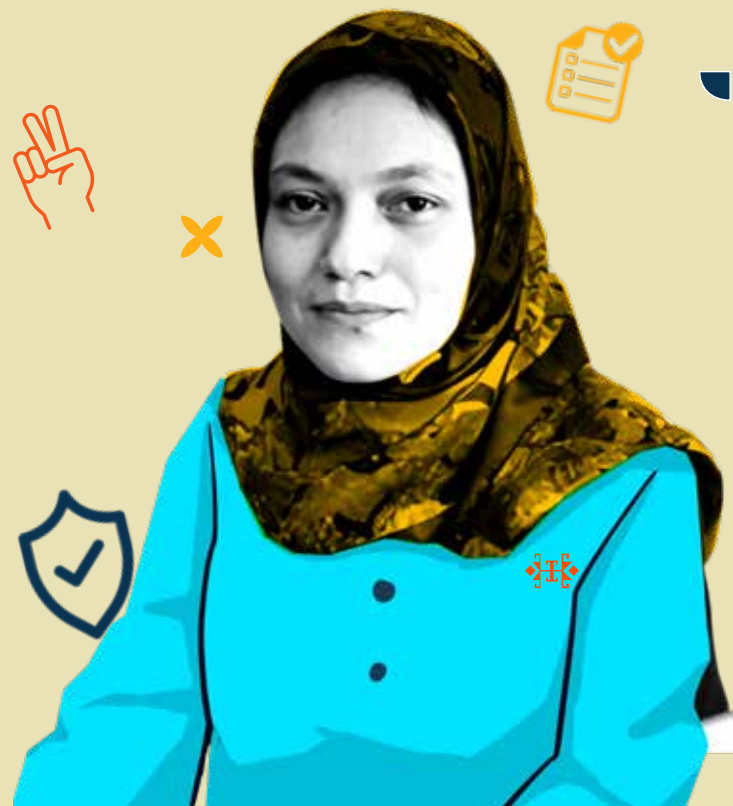
Shadia Marhaban is an international mediator and peace and conflict resolution activist from Aceh that has been working for the past 21 years. In our interview, we discuss the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda and its development within the CSOs context in Southeast Asia. She believes many things have been done in the WPS agenda from the top to bottom perspective. The UN Resolution 1325 regarding the WPS agenda has existed since the 2000s, but implementation needed more meaningful participation from the targeted audience. WPS agenda today is also affected by a global shift where critics undermine existing power for the classes within society, geopolitical issues where human rights and feminism are challenged by right-wing populism, and the rising economy of the rest.

Thus, Shadia believes in a bottom-up approach that encourages more women's local perspectives. Instead of socialisation and meetings, she observes that CSOs in the WPS agenda should have emphasised more local context, self-development, and voluntarism. Because in her view, CSOs in the WPS agenda would have more longevity if they were not relying too much on donor-driven objectives. Existing models in the peace process haven't lived up to the

expectations when compared to post-conflict realities, where women are still considered additional partners in peacebuilding discussions.

She then recalls her experience in Aceh Women's League (LINA) as a part of the founders. Many civil initiatives for women in peace and conflict resolution rely upon much of their activity from foreign donors. When the funds dried up in 2016, WPS activities were halted. LINA, however, managed to keep being active by doing much of its activity based on self-development and voluntarism. "I didn't compensate the participants with much material. Instead, I believe in equipping them with a skill set," stated Shadia.

She also had a chance to visit the communities of Pattani, Mindanao, and Myanmar, which were also facing similar challenges related to the peace process and post-conflict development. She presents





Source Photo: Detik.com

challenges faced by Acehnese during the conflict that became a lesson learned for others in their journey towards peace. “We can learn from each other, not only because of our common identity, it is the idea and lesson that can be used to positively develop the community,” she added.

She believes in three essential aspects for WPS's agenda in Southeast Asia to thrive. First is the importance of not creating classes among CSOs regarding accessibility to funds and networking. Second is creating

economic-based initiatives that led to a strong foundation for women's communities in rural areas. The third is the development of education that equips women and girls with knowledge and practical skill sets. She closes the segment by emphasising the importance of women in peace and conflict resolution. “Women shouldn’t be a ticking box in their involvement, they should have meaningful participation based on partnership in gender relations.”



Content Contributor

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed below are those of the authors.



Unraveling the Invisible: Women in the Vortex of Conflict

Author: Habibah Hasnah Hermanadi
(The Conversation, Indonesia)

Women often become invisible within the vortex of conflict, and there is no inclusion of them in the discussion surrounding violent extremism. The discourse that discusses this invisibility, marginality, or the dismissal of women, despite being a great bearer of conflicts, is a critical component in understanding conflict. Some of the “recommendations” related to the gendered framework include reclaiming agency vis-a-vis empowerment in Indonesia, but that also requires an extensive effort to put the framework into action plans. Therefore, in this article, we wish to explore more the extent of a gendered framework as an intervention and counter-mean for Indonesia. How can this framework be used to dissect the problem and how women are invisible and the violent modalities related to this?

To know the answer, read more of this content on our website www.sean-cso.org.

Dismissed and Overlooked: Women and Violent Extremism in Indonesia

Author: Sri Handayani Nasution
(AJAR, Indonesia)

Out of the population who access 670,000 extremist content across four Asian countries (Bangladesh, Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia), 80% come from Indonesia (Johnston et al, 2020). In recent years, Indonesia has faced repeated terrorist or violent extremist attacks. Among these, several attempted or accomplished suicide bombings were carried out by women; one attack even involved children (Curtis, 2020; Drajat & Pertiwi, 2020). In Indonesia, a country with the largest Moslem population in the world, women’s active involvement in violent extremist attacks is imminent. What does this phenomenon mean, and how does it affect the works of countering violent extremism (CVE) in Indonesia?

Read more of this article on our website www.sean-cso.org.



Women's Participation in Conflict: A Closer Look

Conflict has always been associated with men as a male-dominated field. Scholars would say that women are invisible members of conflicts. They are present, only behind closed doors. On October 5, 2022, SEAN-CSO held a webinar titled "Invisible Members: Women and Conflict in the Region." We invited our notable speakers Rozana Isa (Sisters in Islam, Malaysia) and Kalis Mardiasih (Writer/Social Activist, Indonesia) to take a closer look and discuss this topic. Here's a wrap-up of our previous discussion:

1. Why are Women Invisible?

Ironically, it's unsurprising that women keep getting violated and discriminated against. Kalis argued that society believed women have always been associated with

mother nature, such as nurturing and caring. Therefore, there's no way women can do terror because they are weak. Not only that, society always frightens women. If they do sins, they will eventually go to hell. "We are all women who are the victims of symbolic violence. We are gaslighted daily by male scholars who always talk about our sins and our potential to go to hell. And you know that the victims of violence could get traumatized and sometimes find it difficult to proceed," said Kalis.

2. What's Behind the Closed Door?

Some women believe that religiously, their role should be inside the house. However, being invisible doesn't mean they don't participate in conflicts. "Perhaps, they're invisible because all these events are happening within closed doors in someone's home. They're not out there giving their opinions because they're giving their support to those who are speaking up on these issues," said Rozana.

3. Women's Participation: Cases

Nowadays, women's participation in conflict has become even more visible. The positive one, women started to speak up their voices and can mobilize other women to speak up on their own too. Although on the other hand, there is also the opposing side. One of the cases is the Surabaya bombings in 2018 by a family of six, including the mother and two

daughters. Cases like this proved that women could also participate in a conflict, even more crime.

It can be concluded that although women are invisible, it doesn't mean women don't participate in this topic. However, women's participation also shouldn't be underestimated and discriminated against since, above all, conflict is not exclusively for men.



Member Highlights

Gagandilan Mindanao Women Inc.

The Philippines

One of our members, Gagadilan Mindanao Women Incorporated (GMWI), is known for its dedication to empowering women and girls for peace and development. This organization works in the field of P/CVE in the Sulu, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Currently, they are working on a project to reintegrate the Abu Sayyaf returnees and widows back into the community. Through this project, they tried to provide a sustainable live view with skills training, especially for the widows. They also tried to lobby the government to create an ideal community for the returnees and widows.

GMWI will focus on economic and financial empowerment for the returnees for their upcoming project. They are focusing on this

issue because GMWI believes that poverty is one of the push factors for violent extremism. In addition, they are targeting to support the coffee industry in Sulu to create more job opportunities, especially for the returnees.

To learn more about GMWI's activities, please check their Facebook Page: Gagandilan Mindanao Women Inc





Are you the one that SEAN-CSO are looking for?

If you are an academic, NGO officer, or Human rights activist that has knowledge and/or experience in the field of secondary and tertiary interventions, and would love to spread positive messages to prevent and oppose violent extremism in Southeast Asia through creative ideas, then, you are eligible to apply to our new program SEAN-CSO Content Contributors.

Not only can you spread positive messages, but there are additional benefits:

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Synergy in Harmony

Walk together for a better world



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If you have stories, research, or programs focused on Preventing or Countering Violent Extremism, contact us at:

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