

Islam and Muslim Societies

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Organizations

Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Women Living Under Muslim Laws is an international solidarity that provides information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to have been derived from Islam.

For more than two decades WLUML has linked individual women and organization. It now extends to more than 70 countries ranging from South Africa to Uzbekistan, Senegal to Indonesia and Brazil to France, It links.

- Women living in countries or states where Islam is the state religion, secular states with Muslim majorities as well as those from Muslim Communities governed by minority religious laws.
- Women in secular states where political groups are demanding religious laws;
- Women in migrant Muslim communities in Europe, the Americas, and around the world;
- Non-Muslim women who may have Muslim laws law applied to them directly or through their children;
- Women born into Muslim communities/families who are automatically categorized as Muslim but may not define themselves as such, either because they are not believers or because they choose not to identify themselves in religious terms, preferring to priorities other aspects or their identity such as political ideology, profession, sexual orientation or others.

It challenge the myth of one, homogenous 'Muslim world'. This deliberately created myth fails to reflect that a) laws said to be Muslim vary from one context to another and b) the laws that determine our lives are from diverse sources; religious, customary, colonial and secular. We are governed simultaneously by many different laws; laws recognized by the state (codified and uncoded) and informal laws such as customary practices which vary according to the cultural, social and political context.

How Did WLUML Start?

WLUML was formed in 1984 in response to three cases in Muslim countries and communities in which women were being governed by rights by

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reference to laws said to be 'Muslim' requiring urgent action. Nine women from Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Pakistan came together and formed the Action Committee of women Living under Muslim Laws in support of local women's struggles. This evolved into the present network in 1986. The network is guided by Plans of Action which are reviewed periodically.

What are WLUML'S AIMS AND FOCUS?

The network aims to strengthen women's individual and collective struggles for equality and their rights, especially in Muslim contexts. It achieves this by;

- Breaking the isolation in which women wage their struggles by creating and reinforcing linkages between women within Muslim countries and communities, and with global feminist and progressive groups;
- Sharing information and analysis that helps demystify the diverse sources of control over women's lives, and the strategies and experiences of challenging all means of control.

WLUML's current focus is on the critical issues identified as our priorities for collective analysis and action;

- Peace-building and Resisting the Impact of Militarization
- Preserving Multiple Identities and exposing fundamentalisms
- Widening Debate about women's Bodily Autonomy
- Promoting and protecting Women's Equality under Laws.

As a theme, violence against women cuts across all of WLUML's projects and activities.

What are WLUML' Principles?

WLUML focuses on laws and customs and the concrete realities of women's lives. This includes the often diverse practices and laws classified as 'Muslim' (resulting in different interpretations of religious texts and/or the political use of religion and the effects these have on women, rather than on the religion of Islam itself.

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The network consciously builds bridges across identities- within our contexts and internationally. We are especially concerned about marginalized women. This includes non-Muslim in Muslim majority states, especially where space for religious minorities is rapidly dwindling; Muslim Minorities facing discrimination, oppression, or racism; women whose assertions of sexuality – including but not limited to sexual orientation – are either criminalized or are socially unacceptable.

WLUML recognizes that women's struggles are interconnected and complementary, and therefore has a commitment to international solidarity.

WLUML actively endorses plurality and autonomy, and consciously reflects, recognizes and values a diversity of opinions. Individuals and groups linked through the network define their own particular priorities and strategies according to their context.

What we do

Solidarity & Alerts

WLUML responds to, circulates and initiates international alerts for action and campaigns as requested by networking groups and allies. WLUML also provides concrete support for individual women in the form of information on their legal rights, assistance with asylum applications, and links with relevant support institutions, psychological support, etc.

Networking & Information Services

WLUML puts women in direct contact with each to facilitate a non-hierarchical exchange of information, expertise, strategies and experience. Networking also involves documenting trends, proactively circulating information among networkers and allies, generating new analysis, and supporting networkers, participation in exchanges and international events. While WLUML prioritises the needs of networks, it also selectively responds to requests for information from, for example. academic activists, the media, international agencies and government institutions.

Capacity Building

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WLUML consciously builds the capacity of networking groups through internships at the coordination offices, and exchanges, trainings and workshops.

Publication and Media

WLUML collects, analyses and circulates information regarding women's diverse experiences and strategies in Muslim contexts using a variety of media. It translates information into and from French, Arabic and English wherever possible. Networking groups also translate information into numerous other languages.

An active publications programme produces:

- A theme based Dossier, and occasional journal which provides information about the lives, struggles and strategies of women in various Muslim communities and countries;
- A quarterly Newsheet on women, laws and society by Shirkat Gah, WLUML Asia Regional coordination Office;
- A bi-annual Newsletter on Women, laws and society by WLUML international coordination Office(ICO);
- Occasional papers – specific studies and materials which, for reasons of length or style, cannot be included in the Dossier series and;
- Other publications on specific issues of concern such as family. laws, women's movements, initiatives and strategies, etc.

For more information and to download WLUML publications, please visit our Resources section.

Collective projects

Collective projects have included training sessions, workshops, research for advocacy, meetings and exchanges around specialized topics.

Previous projects include;

- Exchange programme (1988).
- Qur'anic interpretations meetings (1990-2004)
- Women and Law in the Muslim world programme (1991-2001)

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- Feminism in the Muslim world Leadership Institute (1998, 1999, 2007, 2009)
- Gender and displacement in Muslim context (1999-2002)
- Initiative for strengthening Afghan Family Laws- INSAF (2002 – present)
- The Feminist Dialogue (2006 – present)
- The Global Campaign to stop killing and stoning of women (2007 – present)
- The International Coalition on Women Human Rights Defenders (2005 – present)