



**Women in Governance – India (WinG-India)** is a unique network of women who are striving to be change agents in a world dominated by patriarchal traditions. The life of every woman is shaped by her distinctive context which in turn is influenced by both structural and systemic factors. Hence, WinG chose to bring in Dalit women (erstwhile untouchables) and women affected by conflict, in North east India and other parts of the country. The members of WinG-India represent marginalized communities across India, and work towards promoting leadership within local governance. Conceived in 2009, WinG-India is now emerging as a strong network within civil society in India by raising issues of women-security and governance at various National and International Forums. Key focus areas of the network include women security (with focus on implementation of UNSCR 1325), exploring customary laws and impact of women’s lives. WinG operates as a non-political, non-religious and non-violent independent network of women activists.

The decision of WinG is taken by a steering committee comprises of six members and WinG also has three working groups for its specific programmes.

Women in Governance strives towards building a world which is free from discrimination, violence and exclusion. Engagement of women leaders and transfer of power to them is aimed at creating avenues for access to justice and meaningful participation in local governance.

## KEY THEMATIC AREAS

### WOMEN SECURITY

WinG believes that the concept of Human Security needs to be reexamined from the perspective of women. The reason for this is that, women have always been kept out of the so called security domains but have remained the worst affected. It is now time that women come together, collectively engage and unravel the real meaning of personal security. This is possible only if women leaders build a critical consciousness and enter into the decision making bodies. This entails a process by which affected women and those who represent the affected have the capacity to influence policies and legislations that affect them.

WinG India has decided to further explore these areas and build a strategic plan on Human Security and Peace building. To take this further, WinG had commissioned a study which analyzed the current security issues of women in India within a human rights framework. The study confirmed what WinG has always believed that in all security related decision making processes and institutions women remain on margins despite the fact that they are major stakeholders in the whole scenario. Therefore, WinG has mandated itself to correct this situation by creating spaces for women in security related institutions and decision making processes and bringing women at negotiating table in peace talks.

## CUSTOMARY LAW

Many tribal communities in the North East India continue to regulate themselves according to their customary laws (CL) which are considered to be part and parcel of their culture and tradition. Though each tribe has its own unique set of customary laws, yet they share some commonalities, the most important being their patriarchal nature denying women their rights of inheritance, child custody, decision making etc. With the modernization of customary institutions an issue being discussed today is the codification of customary laws to suit the demand of gender equality. However, this discussion is fraught with many challenges.

For **women**, customary laws and institutions have advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, customary laws may be easily accessible and speedier for rural women and enjoy greater social legitimacy in local communities. On the other hand, customary institutions are often gender biased in composition, orientation and dispensation of justice. Very often, they are constituted by male elders alone and apply male-biased interpretation of laws. In India, the customary institutions have a tendency to exclude women from the decision making processes. The Indian constitution's while guarantees protection of women's rights, also recognizes the customary laws. Therefore, the working group on Customary Laws has been taking u this complex issue and building its own understanding and collective understanding before getting into real advocacy action on codification of customary laws.

## WOMEN LEADERSHIP

The main task is to generate cultural perspectives and practices to bring an attitudinal change in the victims of socio-cultural injustice, especially Tribals and Dalits. The cultural action will help to shake off the inferiority complex, psycho logical trauma they have developed over centuries of suppression and subjugation.