



Engaging Male Religious & Traditional Leaders to Advance the 1325 and 2250 Agendas

The mission of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers is to enhance the effectiveness of efforts towards peaceful and inclusive societies by increasing the active collaboration between religious and traditional actors and other key stakeholders in conflict transformation. While the Network acknowledges the positive role of religion and religious and traditional actors in fostering peace, it also recognizes the need to pay attention to power dynamics and hierarchies that might limit inclusive participation. In religious and traditional settings, formal leadership tends to be dominated by males who are often the elders in their societies. Many of the efforts to support religious and traditional actors tend to focus almost solely on these men. Such a narrow focus can be harmful.

UNSCR 1325 & 2250

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and in post-conflict reconstruction. The resolution calls upon all actors to increase the participation of women and to incorporate gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts. In order to achieve the full and effective participation and leadership of women and young women in peace processes, will mean that both men and women in all of their diversities, will need to work towards this common goal together. This is also the same for United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, in acknowledging and advancing the important role of youth within these same peace and security efforts.

The Network's Gender Transformative Programming

In order to address this issue, the Network utilizes gender-transformative programming to transform gender relations to promote equality through critical reflections and questioning of institutional policies and practices and social norms that create and reinforce gender inequalities and vulnerabilities for men and women.

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On the individual level, the Network engages male religious and traditional leaders to build their individual capacity and understanding on why it is important to be equal partners within these agendas and how it benefits them and their communities, as well as, how to be active supporters and allies within these efforts. Being an active supporter can include: voicing out their support within their communities and policy and advocacy fora; creating space within their communities and institutions for women and youth to actively participate and lead; and providing direct support to women and youth-led peace and security initiatives within their communities.

On the institutional level, the Network enables discussions between religious institutions and civil society partners to advance policy change and/or address harmful policies or practices that currently exist and hinder the participation and leadership of women within peace and security spaces. These discussions take place within our Advisory Group Meetings for our members and supporters, as well as, through partner programming and international forums and debate.

On the socio-cultural level, the Network facilitates inter and intra-faith dialogues through partnership with religious and traditional leaders and their communities in order to build community understanding and broader norm change. This includes addressing harmful gender roles, expectations and stereotypes. This in turn, encourages and fosters the uptake and acceptance of women and youth as active leaders and participants within these peace and security spaces. This type of work can also include active research and analysis in mapping out where religious leaders are presently active and working with diverse constituencies to facilitate a broader peace process.

Through the Network’s approach of actively engaging religious and traditional leaders through its three levels of change, results in more inclusive and peaceful societies.

An Interview with: Ven Napan Thawornbanjob

Network Member, Venerable Napan Thawornbanjob has become a longstanding advocate for advancing gender equality and increasing the number of men in the field.



"I think I have to thank my mom for my positive attitudes and characteristics of being open minded and sympathetic to others. Because of her compassion cultivated in my heart, I am who I am today. This has made me realized how important women are to peacebuilding process."

Ven. Napan was first introduced by the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers in 2014. Through the collaborative relationship, he began to learn about his privileges in Thailand as a male, and how girls suffer. This realization led him to begin working more in the space, including approaching influential monks to conduct more initiatives in this space and changing perspectives towards women's rights. "It made me feel like I need to do more. Please continue what you are doing in engaging male religious leaders to advance more in this field," noted Ven. Napan.

"Because of my changed perspective- I will do whatever I can do to change or inspire women. For an event, I nominated a woman to empower her to be on the panel because there were only males on the panel. She didn't want to speak up, but I told her if you don't speak up, then the female voice will not be heard. Don't worry about time, I will share my time. We need to amplify the voices of women peacebuilders. How can we call a peace process inclusive without women? We have to create real space [for their inclusion]."

About Venerable Napan

Venerable Napan is Assistant Abbot at the Golden Mount Temple in Bangkok and Chair of Institute of Buddhist Management for Happiness and Peace (IBHAP) Foundation. Being inspired by The Network, he founded the Foundation to create a bridging organization. The goals are to promote the application of Buddhism, as a teaching, an institute, and social and cultural capital, to developing happiness and peace in Thai society, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at both operational and policy levels, in order to be an international model; to create collaborative networks among all sectors; and to promote education, research and communication on Buddhist management for happiness and peace while respecting interreligious differences and promoting peaceful coexistence among people of all faiths and non-faith. Recently, he has been an edutainer on sustainable and inclusive peace and development, and coexistence, using mass and social media especially the Workpoint TV talk show, " Monks, help me!"