Association of War Affected Women

The Association of War Affected Women was established in 2000 to create a space for war affected women, specifically mothers and wives, of those who are missing to come together across the divide to work for peace. The Association of War Affected Women is committed to achieve sustainable peace in Sri Lanka and believes that peace has to be negotiated through an inclusive process.

Vision

Peaceful prosperous Sri Lanka where all its peoples are living with dignity enjoying equal right

Mission

Work towards strengthening democracy, women’s advancement and equal participation in order to achieve sustainable development and permanent peace in Sri Lanka.

Our main projects of the year

- Sri Lankan Women’s Agenda on Peace, Security and Development
- Women Defining Security, Realizing UNSCR 1325
- Strengthening democracy and good governance through Women’s Political Participation

“Bringing women together across the divide.”

VisakaDharmadasa
Chairperson of the Association of War Affected Women
Sri Lankan Women’s Agenda on Peace, Security and Development

When? The agenda was presented on the 16th and 17th of August, 2012

Who? It was prepared by the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) and presented to the government of Sri Lanka

Where? The presentation took place in the Hotel Ela Regency in Kandy, Sri Lanka

Why? This agenda emerged from the urgent need to discuss the situation of women, which constitute the 53% of Sri Lanka’s population, in the postwar context

The Survey

The Association of War Affected Women conducted a survey in all the war affected districts including both Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa to ascertain information in four broader themes, women in poverty alleviation, women in decision making, gender mainstreaming and women in post conflict rehabilitation. Information on the current situation, the issues, and suggestions for improvement were collected through Focused Group Discussions attended by the women leaders of community based organizations. Qualitative information was collected by using an open ended questionnaire. The information gathered provides an overview of the ground realities. The survey was conducted from February to July 2012 by a team headed by a Gender Expert.
The Agenda’s Recommendations for the Four Areas of Concern

**Women’s Security and Safety**
- Demobilize and disarm all paramilitary groups
- Speed transformation from militarization to normalcy
- Replace uniformed men by women wherever possible
- Implement the National Action Plan of the National Framework Proposal for Reintegration of Ex-combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka
- Expand services of the women’s desks in police stations (in local language)
- Ensure awareness of UNSCR 1325, 1820 at all levels
- Sensitive awareness-raising programs
- Ensure 50 percent of the members of Civil Security Councils are women
- Provide legal counseling for women
- Ensure effective reintegration of women ex-combatants

**Women and Development**
- Increase women’s access to credit, skills and extension services
- Ensure gender-sensitive wage policies for women working in the informal sector
- Encourage the private sector to set up industries in the affected areas
- Promote home-based industries
- Promote women’s role in agriculture and animal husbandry through provision of training, inputs and establishing community farms
- Introduce a service package for livelihood development
- Amend gender discriminatory laws that prevent women’s equal access to land and inheritance
- Raise women’s awareness of their rights
- Quantify the economic contributions of women
- Women owning and dealing with land should have the right to compensation for the damaged properties

**Women in Decision Making**
- Policies which ensure the appointing of not less than 33 % of women to all governing bodies
- Ensure that all political parties have not less than 33 % of women candidates in their nomination lists
- Introduce a quota for women at all levels of governance
- Build capacity skills of women to take up leadership positions in community based organizations and subsequently in political bodies
- Empower women to face challenges in accessing positions of governance
- Advocate for increased representation of women in political and institutional structures from the village level upwards
- Ensure representation of women in all decision making bodies
- Policy reforms at all levels that promote equal opportunities by appointing women to higher decision making levels both in public and private sectors and ensuring their implementation.

**Rebuilding, Recovering and Reconciliation**
- Bring women’s concerns and discriminations to the authorities
- Create a platform for women affected by war to discuss their issues
- Facilitate women’s involvement in post-war reconstruction efforts to ensure that their societies are founded on justice and inclusion
- Facilitate a social dialogue between women’s groups from the North and East and other districts
- Include women and consider their concerns at the decision making levels of reconstruction, resettlement and reintegration processes
- Ensure that housing infrastructure facilities, water, transportation and services such as education and health care are available for all resettled people
- Set up (by the local authorities) grievance committees to assess the needs and problems of those who were affected by war to expedite a speedy recovery
- Develop mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the Language Policy
- Implement social integration programs through cross cultural events such as sports, interfaith dialogues, and exchange visits
- Include peace education and nonviolent dispute resolution mechanisms in the school curriculum
- Ensure that special community level programs are in place to address the concerns and needs of female ex-combatants
Objective

The main goal of the UNSCR 1325 Project is to ensure that security-related officials at a community level are familiar with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Throughout the facilitation of the workshops, the implementation of dynamic participation activities and the collaboration between representative of different sectors of society (officials, civil society, religious representatives, etc.), the workshop seeks to generate sensitivity towards gender-based violence and related issues confronted by women in the post-conflict context in Sri Lanka.

“Participants seemed encourage to engage in the promotion and implementation of resolution 1325 by identifying the issues that women face and will take action on them”. - Observation made by the facilitators of the project.

Topics discussed during the workshops

- Introduction of the United Nations
- Main UN objectives
- Introduction to the United Nations Security Council
- Duties of the UN Security Council
- Administrative structure of Sri Lanka
- UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
  - Background
  - Who should take action?
  - The four pillars
Objectives

- To empower a greater number of women in Sri Lanka, mainly in the Northern and Eastern provinces, with the necessary skills to engage effectively in public life
- To strengthen dignity and confidence in women who are potentially seeking political office and community leadership through the facilitation of a stronger network of women (in NGOs and local government) that is dedicated to ensure women’s empowerment
- To operationalize Security Council Resolution 1325 in Sri Lanka by allowing women to be selected and elected at all decision-making levels
- To enhance awareness and knowledge of voters in order to strengthen democracy and democratic offices in Sri Lanka

Strengthening Democracy and Good Governance through Women’s Political Participation

Content of the Workshops

1st Workshop
- Introduction (parliament, good governance, provincial council, women’s affairs, etc.)
- Decision making at all levels
- Leadership and styles of leaders
- Types of force (advisory, dictatorship, legal, personality and special power)

2nd Workshop
- Media and Communication
- Advocacy

3rd Workshop
- 13th amendment
- 17th amendment
- Local administration procedures
Objective

The objective of this meeting was to observe progress of reconciliation and reconstruction in the post-war Sri Lanka through the eyes of local women who were affected by war.

Issues Raised by women during the meeting

- Women’s Safety and Security
- Women and Development
- Women in Decision making
- Rebuilding and Reconciliation

AWAW meeting with the high-level UN delegation in Kilinochchi

When? The meeting was held on the 08.12.2012

Who? Permanent Representatives of Japan, Sri Lanka, Romania, Bangladesh and Nigeria to the UN as well, High Commissioner of South Africa, Ambassadors of Italy and Brazil to Sri Lanka, Prof. David L. Phillips and Dr. Patrick Burgess of Columbia University were present. The delegation was led by Japanese Permanent Representative to UN, H.E. Mr. Tsuneo Nishida

Where? The meeting was conducted in Kilinochchi from 15.40 – 16.00

Why? The purpose of their visit to Sri Lanka was to observe progress of reconciliation and reconstruction in the post-war Sri Lanka. Therefore AWAW facilitated a meeting with local women of North and East in Kilinochchi to discuss about the current situation

Questions raised by the Delegation

- Count of Women in Police Force
- Count of Women in Governance
- Who curtail the freedom of movement of women
- Status of resettlement
- National Action Plan on 1325