AWAW Newsletter 2013

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

We are also deeply committed to safeguard democracy and rights of all, specifically women’s rights and advancement. As we believe that people’s rights have to be safeguarded and democracy has to be strengthen in order to create a conducive atmosphere for peace to prevail. We are working towards a peaceful Sri Lanka, where all its peoples will be able to live with dignity, enjoying equal rights.

Our main projects
Of the year 2013

- Women Defining Security, Realizing UNSCR 1325
- Strengthening democracy and good governance through Women’s Political Participation
- Drafting of an “Advocacy Roadmap for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325”

“Bringing women together across the divide.”

Visaka Dharmadasa
Chairperson of the Association of War Affected Women
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.

After the successful completion of District and Regional workshops in 2012 we continued to 2013 to conduct Round table discussions on Challenges faced when implementing UNSCR 1325 in Sri Lanka and the solutions.

Participants - Diploma holders of UNSCR 1325 conducted by the Center for Study of Human Rights, Colombo University and politicians in Colombo, Jaffna and Batticaloa with the maximum participation of 15 members for one workshop.
AWAW conducted a 2 day discussion in Mihintale, with a group of experts to prepare a training module on UNSCR 1325.

The focused areas were mainly the United Nations; UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security; women’s protection; the need for women in decision making platforms and women’s rights; and about the department for women and child rights and community police divisions.

**Lessons Learned**

We were able to identify and learn that the population in most districts still suffers from trauma which impedes them to feel comfortable in their communities, as they must still recover from the losses of war and fear. We also came to acknowledge the importance of creating such a space in which Tamil civilians, particularly women, can express their fears and feelings directly to police officers. Besides the sensibility of the issues we were seeking to discuss, a very rewarding environment of trust began to be constructed. In some workshops, police men expressed towards the women that they should always feel free to go and meet them again whenever they face any issue. Interestingly, in some of the sessions, police officers and civilians ended up exchanging numbers and compromising to work together for the benefit of the entire community. This situation taught us about the importance of working far beyond cultural prejudices. Even though the workshops seemed challenging from the beginning, the results in terms of trust-building, exchange of ideas and debate of female issues were rewarding.

**Steps to be taken**

- Engage effectively in the promotion and implementation of resolution 1325 by identifying the issues that women face and will take action on them.
- Implement a systematic approach to curb violence against women.
- Raise awareness of people in the field on these topics with programs and through institutions.
- To lend their help society as much as possible.
- Give more attention to women’s issues.
TRAINING OF TRAINERS:

PRACTICALLY IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 1325 IN SRI LANKA

On March 27th, 28th and 29th AWAW hosted three full-day workshops entitled Training of Trainers: Practically Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Sri Lanka at the Thal Sevana Holiday Resort, Jaffna. The workshops were part of the Dharanni pilot project hosted by the Association of War Affected Women, Sri Lanka.

The purpose of these workshops was to bring together a variety of individual trainers, and train them to raise the necessary awareness to glean maximum contribution of women in the process of Prevention, Participation, Protection, Relief and Recovery for the overall wellbeing of society as Sri Lanka has now arrived at a critical juncture. The 14 participants (Appendix 1) represented various fields, organizations, associations and non-profit organizations.

- The training is fundamentally aimed at taking steps to practically implement UNSCR 1325 and taking this to a larger audience in society.
- The key purpose is to create a set of competent trainers who would genuinely be dedicated towards practically implementing UNSCR 1325.
- A Trainers’ Manual for Implementing UNSCR 1325 has already been completed and through these workshops we strive to deliver something beyond the average diploma curriculum.
After the successful completion of District and Regional workshops in North and East, we continued to carry out similar workshops in the rest of the 15 districts of the South with the generous support of US GWPS project.

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<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Kegalle</td>
<td>25th Sep 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Rathnapura</td>
<td>22nd Sep 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Matale</td>
<td>23rd Sep 2013</td>
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<td>4th</td>
<td>Nuwaraeliya</td>
<td>25th Nov 2013</td>
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<td>5th</td>
<td>Kurunegala</td>
<td>30th Nov 2013</td>
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<td>6th</td>
<td>Puttlam</td>
<td>3rd Dec 2013</td>
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<td>7th</td>
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<td>8th</td>
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<td>9th</td>
<td>Kalutara</td>
<td>13th Dec 2013</td>
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<td>10th</td>
<td>Galle</td>
<td>14th Dec 2013</td>
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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.

Lessons Learned

- The women in the northern part of the country are much more eager to participate in politics than in other regions of Sri Lanka.
- Despite the enthusiasm to engage in politics, most women remain politically immature and further political training is needed.
- Women gain a significant amount of knowledge regarding political administration, due to their previous level of the awareness of Sri Lanka’s political apparatus, which was very low compared to other regions.
- The interaction among northern and southern women (particularly with Sinhala women) was a great opportunity which opened the ground to overcome the fear of speech and mutual dialogue. It became a safe space for them in which they could get to know other women.
Drafting of an Advocacy Roadmap for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325

Project on “Drafting of an Advocacy Roadmap for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325” with the objective of creating a pool of experts from diverse backgrounds to advocate on Women, Peace and Security agenda in Sri Lanka.

1st Round
19th – 20th of July – Girthale Hotel, Girthale.

2nd Round
19th August - MAS MIMT Thulhiriya

3rd Round –
4th and 5th October – Riverdale Hotel Kandy with members of TEAM 1325 attending in order to contribute with their input in making the advocacy road map a comprehensive one.

4th Round
2nd and 3rd of November – Riverdale Hotel Kandy

5th Round
19th – 20th December - Tamarind Tree, Katunayake

Finalizing of the Advocacy Roadmap for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325” –
Building two houses in Wakare

The Opening Ceremony for a house constructed by the Sri Lankan Army in a joint venture with the Association of War Affected Women, for a young couple from the outskirts of Kadiraveli, Wakarey was held ceremoniously on the 10th of April 2013.

The Association of War Affected Women’s generous contribution of the surplus funds from the “Sthree Mela” project was instrumental in the accomplishment of this endeavor.

30th August 2013 - Meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Human rights, Madam Navi Pillay, held at the BMICH Colombo by ‘Parents of Servicemen missing in Action’
AWAW board hosted Canadian High Commissioner Her Excellency Shelly Whiting for dinner at the Earls’ Regency hotel, Kandy

4th September – Alms giving to mark the birthday of Madam Sunila Abeysekara who was a Sri Lankan award-winning human rights campaigner. She worked on women’s rights and human rights issues in Sri Lanka and in the South Asia region for over 30 years as an activist and scholar unfortunately she passed away 5 days after the event on the 9th of September.

21st September 2013 - Election monitoring, AWAW was monitoring the provincial council elections in the Central Province

20th September – AWAW participated at the event where the Women Parliamentary Caucus introduced their action plan to the women members of provincial councils and local governance
27th September – Meeting the children of boy’s orphanage in Kilinochchi, This orphanage which has 270 acres of land for its maintenance but due to SL Military establishment holding the land find it difficult to feed the children, AWAW made a in kind donation to the children.

12th October – “Women taking leadership - For a shared future ... Felicitation for Dulcy de Silva” a book launch with a colloquium segment of three panels and two key note speeches were held where President Chandrika Kumaratunga was the Chief guest at the BMICH Colombo. The three panels were on women in Reconciliation, Women in Reconstruction and Recovery and Women in Governance.
Participated in the Resolution to Act Launch Event which was held in Washington, DC, on March 13, 2013. Amb. Swanee Hunt and the Institute for Inclusive Security introduced Resolution to Act, their strategy for translating the powerful vision of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 into meaningful results. This new initiative seeks to bridge the gap between what policies “say” and what they “do.”

27th – 31st May: Visit to Belfast Ireland, ‘Moving beyond Militarization and War to a Nonviolent World’

9th to 11th November - National Women’s Dialogue: On Peace, Security and Development in Myanmar, AWAW chair participated in the above event organized by Columbia University in collaboration with Women’s organizations of Myanmar

18th to 21st of November 2013 Bangkok Thailand Training of Mobilizes Curriculum Review meeting AWAW chair participated in the above meeting convened by N Peace of UNDP and Inclusive Security

26th – 28th October – ICAN’s 2nd Annual MENA/Asia Regional Women’s Rights, Peace and Security Forum “Building Movements, Promoting Plurality” Istanbul, Turkey