The Association of War Affected Women presents its annual report on programs and activities implemented during the year 2016, “Working towards a peaceful World”

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About Us

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.

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.

**Reporting period:** 1st January 2016 – 31st December 2016

**Our Vision:** Peaceful prosperous Sri Lanka where all its peoples are living with dignity enjoying equal rights

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

AWAW carried out very important work towards reconciliation in Sri Lanka and also globally on peace building during the reporting period.

1. AWAW is very happy to announce the launch of its branch in New York city this year


3. Launch of the SRI LANKA POLICY FORUM Featuring NISHA DESAI BISWA Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs United States Department of State June 13, 2016, in partnership with The Program on Peace-building and Human Rights at Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights

4. AWAW in partnership with Transparency International and with the guidance of the Hon. Minister of Women handed over women’s submissions to the Constitution drafting committee
5. AWAW together with the Women’s Democracy Network of IRI held a communications workshop for women politicians.

6. “Promoting Women’s Political participation” Un women project with Royal Norwegian Funding

7. “Sri Lankan Mobilized to achieve reconciliation transmission” SFCG and RPR partnership with EU funding

8. “Women in Local Governance” SFCG partnership with US Embassy funding

9. Assessment of local government institutions – and Fostering Innovation in Municipal Governance in 4 Municipal councils in partnership with IRI

10. Women’s Peace Table with WDC Jaffna with the collaboration of thousand women peace builders.


1. “The Road to Reconciliation: Justice, Hope and Dignity in Sri Lanka”

On 17th March 2016 at the Sri Lankan Permanent mission to UN, New York.

2. SRI LANKA POLICY FORUM
AWAW together with the Program on Peacebuilding and Rights at Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights launched Sri Lanka Policy forum on the 13th June 2016 at University of Columbia New York.

On 8th January 2015 Sri Lanka’s political landscape entered into a new era bringing hopes to its twenty million people. Nine years of lawlessness and untold hardships to the population in general and civil society in particular was brought to an end democratically, which was a dream come true for the majority of the people. His Excellency President Maithreepala Sirisena in his Independence Day address specifically mentioned the dire necessity of reconciliation and the challenge before us to overcome it comprehensively. Six years down the road after the end of the war very little has been done on this very important aspect, After President Maithreepala taking office few key efforts has been taken place in this direction. Establishment of the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation headed by Former President HE Chandrika Kumaratunga and several mechanisms in facilitating the much needed reconciliation process, the Prime minister’s action group, and the Steering committee as well the Consultation Task force on reconciliation mechanisms which will carry out Island wide consultations to obtain people’s ideas on the proposed 4 mechanisms, namely:

- A Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence
- Judicial mechanism with a Special Counsel
- An Office of Missing Persons
- An Office for Reparations

The task before GOSL is very complex. Geneva resolution has placed it already at the international domain. Thus as much as domestic civil society and other process are absolutely vital, this special process also AWAW annual Report 2016
demands international involvement, mainly from friendly countries and civil society specially based here in New York in multiple ways.

3. Women’s Submissions to the Constitutional Reforms on 4\textsuperscript{th} march 2016

AWAW in partnership with Transparency International and with the guidance of the Hon. Minister of Women handed over women’s submissions to the Constitution drafting committee
WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO THE PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL MAKING BY WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS OF SRI LANKA

Facilitated by Association for War Affected Women (AWAW) and Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL)

4th March 2016
Acknowledgement

The Submission outlined below was developed as a partnership between Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) and the Association for War Affected Women (AWAW) in collaboration with women political leaders of Sri Lanka. The Submission captures the unique perspectives and experiences of women that have engaged in governance and democratic processes and offers their vision and recommendations for the new Constitution of Sri Lanka.

TISL and AWAW would like to acknowledge the support extended by all the women political leaders that contributed to the compilation of this submission. We especially acknowledge the leadership and guidance provided by Hon. Chandrani Bandara, Minister of Women and Child Affairs.

We, the Women Political Leaders of Sri Lanka committed to peace, development, security and prosperity of our Country:

We, the Women Political Leaders of Sri Lanka committed to peace, development, security and prosperity of our Country:

Collectively make this submission to ensure that our views, perspectives, experiences and priorities in the democracy and governance of this land are recognized and addressed and;

Recognizing that ensuring women’s inherent dignity and equal rights is the foundation for peace, security and development in Sri Lanka;

Noting that disregard of women’s rights in the post-war context has resulted in lack of women’s participation in the reconciliation, reintegration, and development processes and in political decision making bodies;

Considering that women in Sri Lanka reaffirmed their faith in Article 12 of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka guaranteeing the equal rights of both men and women;

Noting that it has been seven years since the conclusion of the war, but yet there exists serious security, equality and economic concerns for women in the areas of recovery, resettlement, reconstruction, and reintegration in Sri Lanka;

AWAW annual Report 2016
Reaffirming the equal rights and human dignity of both men and women enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Child Rights Convention;


Noting the importance of the submissions made by women to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and the importance of implementing the recommendations on women made by the LLRC;

Reaffirming the principles of equality and rights articulated in the Women’s Charter of 1993 and promises made in all the Development Policy Framework of Sri Lanka,

Considering the obligations of the government of Sri Lanka to implement the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, especially paragraphs 40-41 with regard to the impacts of conflict on women;

Noting that Sri Lanka committed to ensuring the equal rights of women in the areas of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights in the National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights;

Emphasizing that the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its subsequent Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 have put in place an international legal framework for women’s equal participation and full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peace building;

Bearing in mind that any forms of undue exclusion of women amount to violation of the principles of equality;

Taking into account that involving women in decision making, governance, and post conflict reconstruction, and ensuring women's needs and rights are keys to creating sustainable peace and development in Sri Lanka;

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Underlining the uniqueness of this land;

Appreciating its natural beauty and the abundance of resources, and the need to protect the environment and its fauna and flora for our future generations

Affirming that fulfilling the basic necessities of its people is an obligation of the state.

Reaffirming that safeguarding the rights of all its peoples is utmost important and an obligation of the state,

Reminding that it is a basic right of its people to be heard and be able to voice in their own languages,

Celebrating the rich diversity of its people and the value it brings to the country,

Respectfully present our submission to the Public Representative Committee on Constitutional Assembly in promulgating a new Constitution for the Democratic, Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

We make these recommendations keeping in line with the proposed headings of the Public Representative Committee.

Recommendation I: The basic structure of the Constitution
We recommend the inclusion of a Preamble;

That first and foremost recognizes the post conflict context of Sri Lanka. It must recognize that all Sri Lankans have suffered and have been affected by the protracted civil war.
Recognizing that women were affected in multiple ways. As such special arrangements should be in place to ensure that war affected women contributed to decision making processes.
It must also recognize that women have been marginalized due to various reasons in the past and that this Constitution will uphold the dignity and equality of women.

Recommendation II: Citizenship, religion/belief, fundamental rights and obligations, (civic and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights), language rights, group rights and directive principles of state policy

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We recommend that the new constitution;

1. **Guarantee** human dignity, equality and equal protection by the law for all persons irrespective of race, nationality, language, religion, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

2. **Enshrine and Guarantee** the protection of human rights for all persons irrespective of race, nationality, language, religion, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

3. **Language**
   - The right to speak/write and be understood by the national languages of the country and that Sinhala, Tamil and English be declared as national languages.

4. **Bill of Rights**
   - The Bill of Rights should include the ‘Right to Life’.
   - The inclusion of the right to practice a religion of one’s own choice even after marriage.
   - Freedom from torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
   - We propose the right to file, hear and argue cases in one’s mother tongue in the Supreme Court.
   - All citizens have an equal right to education and the right to attend an educational institution of one’s choice.
   - All citizens have the right to health care.
   - Citizens have the right to seek justice from the judicial system for all forms of human rights violations.

5. **Ensures the rights of women**
   - A temporary quota of a minimum of 33 percent for women to the national Parliament, Provincial councils and local government bodies for a period of 15 years.
   - The proposed 33 percent should be within the system not in addition to; in other words, 33 percent should be included within the existing cadre in all the elected bodies.
   - That the principle of equitable representation for women be enshrined in the Constitution and be promoted in all sectors and spheres including but not limited to elected bodies, government institutions, private sector, judiciary, law enforcement and independent commissions.
   - Equal employment opportunities should be equally guaranteed to both men and women.
   - There should not be any salary discrepancies between men and women in both the public and private sector.
   - The Constitution must stand against all forms of violence against women and children.

6. **Protections of watchdogs**
• The protection of watchdogs, change makers, activists and whistleblowers must be recognized as a priority for safeguarding democracy.

7. Upholding good governance
• Principles of good governance, accountability and transparency are upheld as inherent values of the Constitution with a firm and inalienable commitment to anti-corruption.

Recommendation III: The nature of the Legislature
1. The following suggestions are proposed to enhance the quality of the National List Members of Parliament:
   • One third of the National List candidates should comprise of women.
   • A strict set of criteria should be developed for the selection of National List candidates, including women.
2. All, important bills must be brought before the Parliament for vote after a process of wide consultations within and outside the legislature. The accepted democratic procedure for drafting and passing bills has to be adhered to, at all times.
3. In the event of Crossovers, there must be no crossover of MPs that is detrimental to the mandate of the people. In other words the interest and expectations of the voters, who have elected the parliament must be protected at all times.

Recommendation IV: Independence of judiciary and the Court Structure

Supremacy of the Judiciary
• The supremacy and independence of the Judiciary is paramount for a democracy, thus the appointment of the Chief Justice and the judges of the Supreme Court should be vested upon the constitutional council as per the 19th Amendment to the existing Constitution.
• Citizens have the right to legal redress and a fair trial through an efficient, timely and just judicial system.

Recommendation V: The appointment of a Constitutional Court
• We propose the establishment of a Constitutional Court to deal with violations of Constitutional provisions.

Recommendation VI: Power sharing, devolution and provincial government

AWAW annual Report 2016
We propose;

1. **The full implementation of the 13th Amendment** with revisions where required. All revisions must be made after in-depth consultations with the parties most affected by the concept and practice of devolution.

2. **On environment and natural resources**, key geopolitically and environmentally important areas such as the harbors, airports, and geological assets such as large scale mines, main rivers, and mountain rangers must come under the central administration.

3. **On the issue of Land**, we understand that this is a very contentious issue, and therefore, we believe that there should be an arrangement where the center and the province has to jointly take decisions in key areas where the location is strategically important for the country’s security.

**Recommendation VII: Constitutional Council and Independent Commissions**

The composition of the Constitutional Council

1. Due to the important role played by the Constitutional Council in making appointments to the Supreme Court as well as the independent commissions, it is vital that the composition of the Council is representative and inclusive.

2. We recommended that one third of the Constitutional Council are women.

3. We also recommended that two thirds of the Constitutional Council must include representatives from the civil society sector.

4. A strict set of criteria, which is made public, should be followed when appointing members to the Constitutional Council. These criteria should include educational qualifications, professional experience, acceptance of the public and engagement with the public.

**Recommendation VIII: Electoral Reforms**

- The Constitution must prescribe an elections calendar to which all must adhere too.

- An electoral system in the country must be conducive for women’s political participation and should not be restrictive.

**Recommendation IX: Powers of the president under a parliamentary form of government**
1. No individual or institution should be above the law of the land.
2. The Executive must be answerable to the law. If the President and/or the Executive continues to have immunity, it should not be all encompassing.
3. Immunity should be disallowed in the case of allegations of corruption, criminal offences and financial misappropriation.
4. The Executive should be answerable to the Parliament.
5. There should be a check and balance system where the supremacy of the Constitution should be enshrined while also requiring a check and balances between the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary.
6. There should be a clear limit of the number of terms of the Executive.
7. A strict set of criteria should be in place for the dissolving of Parliament in order to prevent the abuse of this clause.

Recommendation X: Other Matters

Environment Sustainability

- Environment and water conservation should be recognized as a priority concern.
- The sustainable use of natural resource must be incorporated in all sectors and steps must be taken to address issues pertaining to climate change and to ensure climate justice.
- The protection of reserves (environmental reserves), should strongly emphasise that all national protected conservation sites should not be exploited by any persons or institutions. If such lands and areas have been exploited then there should be swift and strong prosecution mechanisms in place for violators to be prosecuted immediately.
- We therefore, recommend enforceable laws and mechanisms in place to protect these reserves and national resources.
- An independent commission to be established for the protection of environment and natural resources.

Notwithstanding anything contained elsewhere in this article, we strongly recommend that women should account for at least one third of total members elected from each party in Parliament and Provincial councils and Local government bodies, In case one third percent women are not elected, the party that fails to ensure one third representation shall have to elect at least one third of total numbers as women in the parliament, provincial councils and local government bodies while appointing members from the lists.


4 Draft article 84(8), constitution of Nepal INSEC online available at www.inseconline.org

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Executive Summery

As the 2011 UN General Assembly Resolution on Women’s Political Participation noted, ”Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.” The percentage of women in national legislatures has become a standard measure of a country's achievements in women's political participation. Globally, the average has inched upward, but is still far from reflecting women's share in society. Disparities are also wide among local government bodies. The discrepancy directly infringes on women's political rights, and can restrict rights in other areas, given the central role that national legislatures and local bodies have in formulating, implementing, and monitoring laws and budgets that directly affect women and girls.

Sri Lanka ratified the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on October 5, 1981. CEDAW articles 7 (b) states that “State parties shall take over all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the public and political life of the country by ensuring the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy”. Sri Lankan women have been enjoying the right to exercise the universal franchise from 1931 and 51.6% of the population is female. Sri Lanka also produced the first woman Prime Minister in the World in 1960.

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Further, women are the major contributors to the country’s foreign exchange earnings and Sri Lankan women’s literacy rate is higher than other South Asian countries. Despite all this, women are not adequately represented in political and public decision making bodies in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has the worst record of women’s overall participation in national and local legislative bodies in the South-Asian region. Though the majority of women exercise their political rights as voters or campaigners during election periods, less than 5.8% of in the parliament was female in 2010. The municipality and local governments’ level participation was 2% in the period 2008-11. The percentage of women in parliament since the 1930s has never exceeded 6%.

There are various factors inherent in Sri Lankan politics that impede women’s political participation. The political party systems in Sri Lanka are highly male dominated. The gender intensive preferential vote electoral system has discouraged women’s participation in elections. Due to stereotyped attitudes prevailing in the society towards women, they are not encouraged to be involved in politics. Further, the lack of child care support system at the community level and women’s multiple reproductive roles have limited women’s ability to engage in social networking. Lack of financial resources is also a major impediment for women’s political participation. In Sri Lanka, politics is always considered a dirty game. This is quite evident during election periods with a high incidence of violence that takes place during elections. The prevailing climate of political violence discourages women from participating in politics. The paucity of female legislators’ means, that the interests of women are not adequately represented in national, provincial or local government. Unless women gain leadership in governance, it will be difficult to transform or shape social, political and economic processes to work in favor of women and gender equality.

The general practice of South Asia is to fill the allocated seats once the quota is obtained by women who are either relatives of close friends of the political establishment, this has proven to obstruct the anticipated changers and good results of women being in politics, thus this proposed project will train young women professionals who are able to deliver the best for the development of the country as well who will have the ability to maintain their principles and bring serious changers to the political culture of this country.

1. Census of population and housing of Sri Lanka, 2012 (Provisional data based on the 5% sample)

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Gender responsive policy design and implementation – A follow up meeting with Plantation Sector Participants

Ajantha Hotel Hatton on Sunday 10th January 2016.

The plantation leaders discussed the issues face by them and also possible solutions, where they can use advocacy and lobbying as tools to secure solutions to their problems.
Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
Each goal was taken up and was asked the participants to connect with their issues

Goal No: 1   This relates to an overall poverty reduction and is common for all
Goal No; 2  Here we can make the connection with nutrition for children, so the food in the crèche is connected to this goal
Goal No 3  Here again we can make the connection with Crèches cleanliness access to medication by the workers for their children and themselves, pregnant mothers situation etc.,
Goal No; 4  Education for children, this we can connect to the library and computer lab we need for them
Goal No: 5  This goal is directly connected to women’s empowerment so it is for the women who wishes to run for political office as well the trainings and widows
Goal No; 6  Water and sanitation; this is connected to the sanitation in Crèches and water which is very important, specially coming from the Central hills where all the water sources are, the estate sector should encourage youth to work on the environment and protect the water resources.
Goal No; 7  this is on energy and the estates had their own power generation, this can be look into in the light of alternative power generation which is eco friendly as well.
Goal No; 8  This goal is what we have been saying for a long time we need decent working conditions and also again it is also tied with equality where women are not treated equal in work and payment.
Goal No; 11  is also very relevant for us when are house are built this goal has to be in mind of the authorities.
Goal No 13 and 15 both are very important as we come from central hills we need to keep in mind the environment at all times we need to protect it.
Goal No; 16  Once again it is very relevant for our peaceful
The participants were extremely happy that Sustainable Development Goals, so many of them had direct connections to their issues and they will now use these for advocacy when they write to the authorities.

“Networking workshops in order to build Regional women politician’s caucuses”

Activity : 1.3
Workshop schedule:

April 2016 :  Northern caucus – Bastian Hotel, Jaffna
May 2016:  East and North Central – Habarana Rest House, Habnarana
May 2016:  Southern – Sarvodaya, Matara
June 2016:  Western – Janaki Hotel, Colombo.
August 2016:  Central – Kings Park Hotel, Nuwara Eliya.

The purpose of the workshops was to encourage women in politics to build a strong network through women’s caucuses where women’s concerns are properly protected and promoted. The training also aimed to provide opportunities for women’s, to empower them self and to develop the network

5 Regional caucuses were established connecting five adjoining districts
Objectives of the workshops
To identify the communication gap between the politicians and local member
To provide relevant background and practical examples about networking women within agreed time schedules.
To make strong women regional networks
To identify the needs of the women politicians
Develop a capacity building plan to empower women in politics
Planning Meeting: 3rd October 2016

A planning meeting for the Regional women’s caucuses Summit on Building a strong network of women politicians across and within the different levels of Governance was held in Jaffna on the 3rd October 2016.

Regional women’s caucuses Summit on Building a strong network of women politicians across and within the different levels of Governance

On 11th October 2016 @ Riverdale Hotel, Kandy
Women politicians gathered to the Riverdale Hotel in Kandy on the 11th of October to discuss the methodology in building a Strong Network across and within the different levels of governance among women politicians across political parties, ethnic, religious and demographical divides. It was evident that though many steps have been taken for a very long time by various women’s groups supported by many governmental and other donors including but not limited to training women to run for office, advocating to various politicians, the results have proven that all these efforts do not really bring expected results. The meager success is that the government in office has promised a 25% quota for women at the local government level and this will be an additional cadre of members of local government, again with a very big cost to the nation.

AWAW is in the opinion that the 5.8% at the parliament level or the 4% at the provincial level has little or no connection with the women at the local level and this fragile situation itself put elected women in greater risk since there is no mechanisms to carry out any project that the women in the parliament or provincial council envisages.
National Coordinating Committee: 05

Northern Province  Eastern & North Central  Southern Province  Western Province  Central Province

A Chairperson and Secretary for Each of the 5 Caucus

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District Representatives should nominate 25 women’s from different political parties from each of the electorates of their respective district.
80 women from all districts of the country deliberating the importance of building a strong network in order to work collectively for the common good of all women of Sri Lanka!