



Association of War Affected Women

## Newsletter Vol. 5 December 2008

***Our special thanks to American Jewish World Service and Berghof foundation for Conflict Studies for their generous support to run our office as well all others who partnered with us this year to make life better for women world over and to make a genuine effort to bring peace to Sri Lanka***

### **Objectives of AWAW.**

To achieve sustainable peace in Sri Lanka through socio-economic development with the active participation of war affected women.  
To further women's advancement, empowerment and development.



Chair and Staff of AWAW

## Ongoing Projects

### “ Training Women to Run for Political Office Implementing UN Resolution 1325.”



AWAW has undertaken to train 25 women as trainers, to build capacities for women to run for political office. These 25 trainers in turn will train 50 chosen women in each of their districts, bringing the total to 1250 trained women who will run for local Government office in 2010 or they will be community leaders with proven ability. The first phase of this project, training 25 women leaders, has been conducted successfully with the collaboration of Women’s Campaign International (WCI).

In July and August we put together a resource pack, “A tool kit to enhance women’s political participation”. This will be in Sinhala, English and Tamil languages.

The second phase was conducted successfully with the partnership of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). This phase consisted of conducting 10 workshops in 10 districts. These were done to identify women with the motivation and capacity, who can be trained to run for political office.



We will be using 10 out of the 25 women who were trained, to conduct the training in their respective Districts.

The first disbursement of funds to the 25 trainers to conduct training was done at a meeting held in Kandy on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November.



The 25 women that we trained as trainers in all Districts of Sri Lanka wanted to build a coalition to enhance their capacities to work in partnership in the future, for the betterment of all Sri Lankan women. They named themselves “Team 1325”. AWAW is extremely happy and proud to host the “Team 1325”.

The International Civil Society Action Network and the Karuna Center for Peace building were the partnering organizations for a five day workshop conducted for the members of the team 1325, on Conflict resolution, Peace Building and UNSCR 1325 and 1820.



Work shop on Conflict Resolution & Peace building



Team 1325

AWAW was very fortunate to convene a high level meeting in the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, chaired by the Minister herself, to look into the possibility of drafting a national plan on resolution 1325. We were able to convene more than 40 very important individuals from the Ministries, UN, INGO’s and Women and Civil society organizations.

We convened three times at the Ministry and were able to include 1325 concerns in to the Sri Lankan National action plan on women. Right now this is with the Cabinet of Ministers, for their approval.

## **“An Exploration of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices – Women and Armed Conflict”**

This project explored the agency of grass root level women for peace building and was conducted as a research to build upon. AWAW selected six grass root level women’s organizations. Two each from Kaluthatara, Matara and Galle districts in July 2008. Initially a workshop was conducted for 20 women from each of these six organizations, out of which 10 women were selected from each organization, bringing the total number of women to 60.

They were exposed to workshops on facilitated dialog and listening and leadership building, perspectives and knowledge where a basic conflict resolution component was added, exploring power to change and networking bringing women of all districts together.

This project also facilitated six exchange visits. 2 each to Puttlam, Ampara and Trinco to meet 10 women in each visit from the respective districts and share and learn from each others experience of conflict and tsunami.

Ten of the women who participated in the exchange visits were brought in for a day of evaluation of the project and it was very moving as well as very satisfying to learn how the project has impacted the women.

AWAW undertook and completed this project very successfully with the generous support and partnership of Women Defining Peace (WDP) of WUSC- Canadian CIDA funded.

## **“Women Defining Politics” Organized together with International Republican Institute**

AWAW together with IRI successfully completed a series of workshops to train women to run for political office, specifically in the central province of Sri Lanka. Through this project we trained 90 women. The women of Central Province built a coalition called “Central Province Women’s Voice” to work together in the future.



IRI Workshop

AWAW conducted an advocacy campaign to United National Party head Quarters and Sri Lankan parliament on 09<sup>th</sup> of October 2008, taking 55 women to advocate for a 33% quota for women in nominations list of all political parties at all levels of offices. During this advocacy campaign they were able to meet the head of the Parliament select committee on electoral reforms and more than 30 elected officials and hand over letters to that effect.



AWAW conducted a press conference to inform the public regarding their advocacy visit to the parliament and the demand for 33% quota for women representation.

The project culminated with the last summit being held just before an upcoming election. This was very important and timely because the elections were for the Central Provincial Council and three of the trained women are hoping to contest that election. This project resulted in the building of capacity, knowledge and motivation of the women of the Central Province to achieve their goals, as a united group.

## Advocacy Campaign To Secure a 33% Quota To Increase Women's Political Representation

In July 2008 , the team 1325 visited the Sri Lankan parliament, had important discussions and meetings with the Speaker of the House, the Head of the Select committee on political reforms, ministers and members of parliament to secure a 33% quota for women in the nominations list of all political parties. These meetings were very successful as they were able to convince the ministers of the necessity of a quota system to increase the women's representation, drawing international examples.



AWAW engaged in a post card campaign to the president of Sri Lanka. demanding the 33% quota.

**Sri Lanka Power Sharing and Constitution Drafting Study Tour, Cape town. South Africa.**

During the study tour to South Africa the women politicians who participated decided to look in to the possibility of working for peace as a cross party women’s initiative. They decided that when they get back to Sri Lanka they will convene to discuss ways and means of contributing towards peace building in Sri Lanka.

**Related Activities**

In September 2008 AWAW Chair was invited by the Australian Diaspora youth as a Chief Guest at their musical and charity event celebrating peace, in Sydney. The very important aspect of this was the youth came up with a declaration for resolving the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka.



