ASSOCIATION OF WAR AFFECTED WOMEN

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Association of War Affected Women

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THE ASSOCIATION OF WAR AFFECTED WOMEN

The Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) was established in the year 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.

Today, AWAW operates at the national and international level while continuing to work towards sustainable peace, strengthening democracy and supporting the advancement and participation of women in the social and political aspects of Sri Lanka.

Objectives

The objectives of AWAW:

i. To achieve sustainable peace in Sri Lanka through socio-economic development with the active participation of war-affected women.

ii. Women’s advancement, empowerment, development and participation.

Vision

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

Mission

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

Regional Seminar on Increasing Women in UN Peacekeeping

The Regional Seminar on Increasing Women in Peacekeeping was held from 8th to 10th March 2018 at the Hilton Hotel Colombo, Sri Lanka, as a follow up to the side event held in New York at the UN Head Quarters on 31st October 2017 jointly organized by the Canadian and Sri Lankan Permanent missions together with AWAW and ICAN.

This event was sponsored by the Canadian High Commission, Colombo. The seminar was organized together with the Office of the Chief of Defense Staff Sri Lanka and was facilitated by Major General Udaya Perera.

36 participants were registered, which consisted of a combination of civilians and military personnel from the regional countries in South East Asia. Among them, 22 participants were from Sri Lanka and the remaining 14 participants represented Pakistan, Maldives, Bangladesh and Nepal.

The seminar’s main aim was to discuss about increasing women in UN peacekeeping missions. It addressed a variety of topics that were relevant or linked to the main theme which included the obstacles faced during the process of increasing and deploying women, the challenges faced by the female peacekeepers and the deploying country as well as the host country and the communities of the host country, the steps to be taken as individual countries of the region in whole to improve and lead the countries and the region to deploy the highest number of women peacekeepers. The seminar further focused on the draw backs, the restorations, rewritings and renewing that should be made in the set of rules and regulations as well as the current resolution that were passed by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping.

Seven objectives were set for the seminar:

1. Sharing Ideas and Thoughts Freely
2. Enhancing the Knowledge on the Subject of Women in Peace Keeping through Team Learning
3. Identifying Measures to Enhance Women Participation in Peace Keeping
4. Identifying Challenges and Opportunities for Women in Peace Keeping
5. Identifying Regional benefits in Increasing Women Participation in Peace Keeping
6. Identifying how Women Participation can Improve Efficiency of the Peace keeping Operations
7. Establish long lasting Friendships.

These objectives were efficiently met by the end of the seminar and discussed at length during the sessions, discussions, group activities and Q & A sessions.
Strengthening Good Governance and Democracy – Women

Taking Leadership

With the purpose to strengthen democracy and good governance in Sri Lanka by increasing women’s political participation, AWAW groomed 75 women (‘SMART 75’) coming from all areas, ethnicities, religions and most importantly political parties.

The three specific objectives of the project were to --

I. Increase representation in politics at parliamentary and provincial level of educated young women.

II. Create a strong network of 75 young educated women leaders across ethnic, religious and demographical divisions.

III. Enable men and women politicians to advocate through understanding and awareness for the increase of women in governance structures of Sri Lanka.

To achieve the above, the following specific activities were carried out:

Activity 1

Assessment to ascertain potential candidates to be trained as women leaders/politicians.

These workshops were successfully held on

- 17th February 2018 at Ceybank Rest, Nuwara Eliya
- 19th February 2018 at Girithale Hotel, Polonnaruwa
- 20th February 2018 at Hotel Nelly Star, Vavuniya
- 24th February 2018 at Hotel Janaki, Colombo
- 27th February 2018 at Sarvodaya, Matara
Activity 2
A three-day workshop with a fast track English course, IT training and team building activities was held on 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} of April 2018 at Girithale Hotel, Polonnaruwa.
Activity 3
A three-day residential workshop to prepare the course content and updating of the existing Manual was successfully held on 10th, 11th and 12th of May 2018 at Hotel Janaki, Colombo.

Activity 4
Four three-day residential workshops to enhance women on Political Participation & Leadership. These were held on
- 24th, 25th and 26th of May 2018 at Riverdale Hotel, Kandy.
- 31st of May, 1st and 2nd of June 2018 at Riverdale Hotel, Kandy.
- 21st, 22nd and 23rd of June 2018 at Sarvodaya, Matara
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd July 2018 at Sarvodaya, Trincomalee
Activity 5

Five one-day facilitated dialogues with parliament and provincial level members.

- 10th July 2018 at Hotel Hasara, Galle
- 13th July 2018 at Riverdale Hotel, Kandy
- 31st July 2018 at Green Grass Restaurant, Jaffna
- 9th August 2018 at Sri Lanka Foundation, Colombo
- 11 August 2018 at Cottage Rest, Anuradhapura
Activity 6

One day National Level conference to distribute certificates which was successfully held on 3rd September 2018 at Sri Lanka Foundation. Honourable Speaker of the Parliament Mr. Karu Jayasuriya graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. This ceremony was attended by influential dignitaries such as the present Election Commissioner Hon Mahinda Deshapriya, Deputy Minister of Transport & Civil Aviation Hon. Ashoka Abesignhe, Chairman of Sri Lanka Foundation Mr Sarath Kongahage, Acting Chief of Party - SDGAP Mr Stephen Terravecchia, Former Chief of Party - SDGAP Madam Thusitha Pilapitiya, Former Member of Parliament & a Board Member of AWAW Hon Sriyani Daniel, Eastern Province Provincial Council Member Ms Ariyawathi Galappaththi, Central Province Provincial Council Member Hon Saraswathi Sivaguru and Civil Society Leaders

In addition to the above, the SMART 75 members and few other women who had been working with Association of War Affected Women were present to grace the occasion.
The overall results achieved were:

1. The project was completed very successfully before the anticipated time period. AWAW was able to groom 75 women and educate them on various topics as proposed by the project.
2. The manuals which were updated and translated were shared with other SDGAP grantees and they were given the necessary information and knowhow of training women to run for political offices, as well as the knowledge was shared with resource personnel of other grantees.
3. AWAW invited the SMART 75 to the 18th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325 event to be held on the 31st of October 2018.

**The Road to Reconciliation**

AWAW has carried out several activities on the topic of *gendered transitional justice and reconciliation processes.* Transitional justice and reconciliation processes are vital steps in the direction of sustainable peace. This is relevant in Sri Lanka where the government has embarked on two parallel processes of reconciliation.

Thus, recognising that this is a time of immense importance for the country and acknowledging how conflict affects people and communities in the most profound ways, AWAW has designed a project which envisages a two-pronged approach in complimenting the task undertaken by the Government of Sri Lanka on the reconciliation process in the country. That is,

1. take the message of the importance of transitional justice mechanisms in order to move forward to the grass roots though women and civil society leaders.
2. use media, both mainstream and social, to take the message to a wider public.
The project was carried out over several months, through several activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1</th>
<th>19th June 2018 - Kandy</th>
<th>One 1-day brainstorming meeting to draft the key message on reconciliation which will be used for all advocacy purposes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2</td>
<td>5th September 2018 - 1st November 2018</td>
<td>Three 1-day workshops for the three forces an Police higher officials, NGOs and government officials on Transitional Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3</td>
<td>3rd, 4th, 12th, 15th, 17th, 18th, August 2018 6th, 8th, September 8th November 2018</td>
<td>Nine 1-day provincial level meetings for 50 provincial/local leaders (men and women) to disseminate the core components of a gendered Transitional Justice and Reconciliation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4</td>
<td>Scheduled to take place in the 1st quarter of 2019</td>
<td>Massive Advocacy campaign covering universities and student’s as well general public throughout the country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The methodology used was, the ICAN animation on transitional justice has been screened and lessons from the best international practices has been taught while those learned from the Sri Lankan experience have been shared. Additionally, the project has provided an opportunity to discuss the Better Peace Tool (BPT) of ICAN to help ensure gender sensitivity in the design, substance and inclusion of all groups, especially women, in the key components of the reconciliation process and to help determine the range of technical, political and financial resources needed for these processes.

Overall, the project has brought positive outcomes. Through Activity 1, a powerful and effective key message on reconciliation has been spread. Activity 2 has enhanced the awareness on gendered transitional justice processes for seventy-five armed forces, NGO workers and government officials of Sri Lanka. With Activity 3, hundred provincial level leaders now possess knowledge on the basic principles of transitional justice and the advantages of gendered transitional justice processes. Lastly, Activity 4 has enabled to reach and make aware mainly the 5 government entities who are working on reconciliation and thousands of people, among universities, higher grade students and general public on the importance of having women’s voices in reconciliation.
Social Cohesion and Reconciliation for Regional Women Political Leadership Workshop – Monaragala -

In September 2018, AWAW held, in partnership with Global Communities, a three-day Social Cohesion and Reconciliation for Regional Women Political Leadership workshop in Monaragala, Uva Province, Sri Lanka.

The purpose of the workshop was to advance knowledge on the topic of social cohesion and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, enhance women participation in political and leadership roles, and foster constructive relevant conversations. In particular, the following three areas were investigated: Politics and Women; Social Cohesion; and Reconciliation.

Twenty-eight Sri Lankan women from the surrounding area attended the workshop. The second workshop will be held in December in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The workshop was conducted in Sinhala with a mixture of theory, practical activities, and the screening of two movies.

Overall, the workshop has produced positive outcomes. Indeed, according to the feedback offered by the attendees, twenty-eight Sri Lankan women had the opportunity to access the knowledge of experts in the field and now effectively possess abilities and skills that will enhance and contribute to their social and political positions.
Social Cohesion and Reconciliation for Regional Women Political Leadership Workshop – Vavuniya-

The Association of War Affected Women (AWAW), in partnership with Global Communities, held in December 2018 a three-day Social Cohesion and Reconciliation for Regional Women Political Leadership workshop in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka.
The workshop was carried out over three consecutive days (13th, 14th & 15th of December 2018) from 9am to 5pm. It took place in the conference room of the Vavuniya, Northern province.

The purpose of the workshop was to advance knowledge on the topic of social cohesion and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, enhance women participation in political and leadership roles, and foster constructive relevant conversations.

**Three main areas were investigated:**

a. Politics and women, including basic political and governance concepts, why women’s leadership is important, leadership concepts which could be used regionally and responsibilities, and rights of political leaders.

b. Social Cohesion, including brief awareness on social conflicts, conflict transformation skills, the concept of social cohesion, what are the benefits to regional political leadership, and how it could be sustained.


Twenty-five (25) women from the surrounding area attended the workshop. They participated due to personal interest in the topic and/or in the hope to learn new skills and enhance their position within the local Government.

In addition to the attendees, the following persons were present: Ms Visaka Dharmadasa, AWAW Chairperson; Mr. Indika Perera and Mr. Kelum Jayaweera, facilitators; Dr. Dayani Panagoda, Senior Technical Specialist GC, Jinandari Parameshwaram, Ms K.Waliaamma, Interpreters.

The workshop was conducted in Tamil with the help of the interpreters. Overall, each session was structured in four steps. Firstly, the facilitators explained the theory. That is, new concepts with examples for clarity. Secondly, the attendees were divided in small groups and asked to re-elaborate what they just heard namely, through activities and creative exercises. Thirdly, each group presented their findings and thoughts before the audience. That is to foster dialogue, enhance the attendees’ communication skills, and consolidate the concepts. Fourthly, a brief session where the facilitators gave their overall assessments of the work and performance of the attendees.

Moreover, two movies relevant to the topic of the workshop were shown at the end of day 1
and day 2. Although not compulsory, the attendees were strongly encouraged to remain for the screenings.

ONE Day Celebration

Anniversary Celebrations of UNSCR 1325

On the 31st October 2018, the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW), sponsored by USAID Global Communities, held the 18th Anniversary Celebrations of UNSCR 1325 in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

The purpose of the event was to explore the opportunities and challenges in implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Sri Lanka. In particular, it is AAWA’s opinion that the women of Sri Lanka must have their voices heard and become an integral part of the processes for reconciliation carried out and implemented by the Government.

Ninety-five people, including Sinhalese and Tamil women and men, attended the celebration. Among them, SMART 75 and TEAM 1325.

The event was conducted in Sinhala with instant translation to Tamil. The agenda included the playing of the National Anthem of Sri Lanka, the
lightening of the traditional Oil Lamp, the screening of the short presentation “1325 Journey”, a panel discussion, the speeches of six renowned guests, and the event closure with group photos and lunch. Overall, the event was successful as it has reinforced the importance of the UNSCR 1325, brought together like-minded people, and provided nourishment for thoughts for the implementation of the Resolution in Sri Lanka.
National Peace Table

On the 10th of November 2018 AWAW, sponsored by Peace Women Across The Globe PWAG, held the **National Peace Table** at Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Her Excellency President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumarathunga who is now heading a Reconciliation unit of the government graced the occasion as the chief guest. The key purpose of the event was to highlight the importance of inclusion of women at a time where Sri Lanka seeks to enhance its engagement with the international community and heal the wounds of the past.

One hundred and thirty people from all the districts of the country who work for reconciliation attended the event. Co-founder & Executive Director of ICAN Madam Sanam Anderlini, influential dignitaries such as H.E. the Canadian High Commissioner Mr. David McKinnon, Representative of the US Embassy Mr. Sean Ruther, Representative of Sri Lanka Army Brig. Abenayake, Representative of Sri Lanka Air Force Wg. Udr. B.P. Karunanayake, the panelists Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamutu, Dr. Nimalka Fernando, Dr. Jehan Perera, Mr. Sudharshana Gunawardana contributed to the panel and Dr. Dayani Panagoda moderated the same. The Peace Brief which was authored by Ms. Salma Yusuf was presented to HE Madam Chandrika.
Civil Society Leaders from all districts of the country who have been working on reconciliation, Government Officials from the Government Reconciliation entities, Women peace builders from all parts of the country together with national and regional level women and men politicians, Reconciliation experts, Members of SMART 75 and TEAM1325 attended the event.
Out of the 130 participants, 52 were males & 78 were females.
Screening of the Gender Transitional Animation
Sri Lanka Women Peace Study Program in Nepal

AWAW conducted a study tour in Nepal from the 22nd to 27th of November to learn from Nepal’s experience on Reconciliation with the generous support of N-Peace of UNDP.

1. One day field visit to the provinces to discuss with the women on their activities on the truth and reconciliation commission.
2. One day Seminar in Kathmandu to learn more from a cross section of the people of Nepal, namely NGO’S, women’s groups and government officials, politicians and Civil Society leaders.
3. One day seminar in Sri Lanka to disseminate the key learnings from the visit.
4. Seminar in Kathmandu

The key goal of the study program was to Secure women’s inclusion in all Reconciliation Mechanisms of Sri Lanka by way of lessons learned from the region.
GLOBAL INVOLVEMENTS

The Role of Parliamentarians as Partners in Women, Peace and Security


http://www.icanpeacework.org/2018/03/26/csw-panel-parliamentarians-women-peace-security/

18th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325, New York

AWAW Chairperson attended the Women, Peace and Security Week held in New York on the week 22nd - 28th October 2018.
ICAN 7th Annual Forum, Colombo Sri Lanka
Locally Rooted, Globally Connected: Harnessing the Collective Power of Women’s Leadership in Preventing Violent Extremism and Promoting Sustainable Peace

AWAV Chair attended the 7th Annual Forum “Locally Rooted, Globally Connected: Harnessing the Collective Power of Women’s Leadership in Preventing Violent Extremism and Promoting Sustainable Peace” which was co-hosted by AWAV on the 12th of November 2018.

Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Understanding Masculinities, Washington D.C.

AWAV Chair attended a workshop: Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Understanding Masculinities hosted by the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace and Security on 6th-7th December 2018.
UN General Assembly (UNGA) President Miroslav Lajčák has cited Sri Lanka as a successful example of how civil society could collaborate with the government on peace building. He has made reference to Sri Lanka’s peace building efforts during both the opening and closing remarks of the high level meeting on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace which was held at the UN Headquarters from April 24-26.

**President Lajčák cited the work of Mrs. Vishaka Dharmadasa, as an example of how an individual can contribute to a country’s peace building initiatives.**

He also cited an example of how Sri Lanka’s civil society made a contribution to the GoSL efforts on drafting a reconciliation and peace building programme for the country.

Speaking at the High Level Meeting, Sri Lanka’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York Ambassador Rohan Perera highlighted the initiatives undertaken by the Sri Lankan Government on reconciliation and peace building.

Ambassador Perera emphasized the importance of prevention of conflicts, as reflected in the Secretary General’s Report on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace, as a factor that would save countless lives and resources that could otherwise be utilized for a country’s development.

He also stressed the importance of ensuring predictable and sustained funding for peace building initiatives through the Peace Building Fund, which were crucial for reconciliation and peace building efforts of countries such as Sri Lanka.

Dr. Perera highlighted the collaboration between Sri Lanka and the Peace Building Support Office, as an example of a fruitful partnership on peace building between a Member State and the United Nations. Sri Lanka’s efforts of engaging the Diaspora in peace building initiatives was also highlighted.
Report prepared by:

Nuzla Rizkiya, Azra Nazar and Giulia Ferraro

Association of War Affected Women