2019 Annual Report

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

The Road to Reconciliation in partnership with International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) with Canada Funding

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, recognizing that it was a time of immense importance for the country and to acknowledge how conflict affects people and communities in the most profound ways, AWAW designed a project which envisaged a 4-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.
3. Engaging in peace/security processes at national/international level and integrating a gender lens.
4. Promoting a culture of peace/conflict prevention/peacebuilding

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2</td>
<td>5th September 2018 - 1st November 2018</td>
<td>Three 1-day workshops for the three forces, Police higher officials, NGOs and government officials on Transitional Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity 3</td>
<td>3rd, 4th, 12th, 15th, 17th, 18th, August 2018 6th, 8th September 2018 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>
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Activity 4 - Advocacy Campaign “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through nonviolence”

The advocacy campaign “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through Non-Violence” was carried out to make the public aware of the importance of working towards a shared future where all of us can live in harmony together. We believed that it is important to inform people that it is only by coming together we can achieve development.

The plan of the advocacy campaign was as follows

**GOAL:** Comprehensive development through attitudinal change

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. To make the General public aware of “Unity”
2. Walk the journey to prosperity together with the youth.
3. Protecting the environment through the Slogan “Tree is Life”

- Train journey from Colombo to Jaffna with the exhibition
- 5 Public meetings in selected 5 towns in the Island (In Colombo, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Hambantota and Kandy)

- Exhibition:
  1. A Digital Exhibition of the 2 world wars
  2. Lesson to learn from Japan’s recovery
o iii) Quotes from Religious leaders
o iv) Quotes from renowned personalities
o v) A Digital exhibition of the importance of the “TREE”

- Street Drama with the theme of “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through Non-Violence”
- Distribution of plants
- Distribution of School Exercise books to school children with the cover printed with the slogan “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through Non-Violence”
- Distribution of Wall calendars printed with the slogan “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through Non-Violence”
- Distribution of Pocket calendars printed with the slogan “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through Non-Violence”
- Releasing gas balloons
- An official Facebook page for the campaign.

**Art Competition:** An island wide art competition under the title *My country in 2048* was held as a with the advocacy campaign. The age categories were 10-15 years, 16-18 years and above 18 years. The three best drawings were selected and the winners were gifted gifts in the final meeting which took place finally in Kandy. In addition to the drawings we received an essay written by a 12-year-old student. A special prize was also awarded to him.
Press Conference

On the 10th of January 2019, a press conference about the advocacy campaign was held in Galadari Hotel, Colombo.

Distribution of Books, Wall Calendars and Pocket Calendars

10,000 books, 5000 wall calendars and 5000 pocket calendars were printed with the logo of the campaign which were distributed to school children and the general public.
T-shirts and caps

T-Shirts and caps printed with the logo of the campaign were given to the key organizers and dignitaries who helped us to carry out the campaign successfully.

Exhibition

1. Quotes from Religious leaders.
2. Quotes from renowned personalities

- The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.
  - Chief Seattle

- If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.
  - Mother Teresa

- When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity.
  - Nelson Mandela

3. Digital exhibition

Videos on

1. Importance of “Trees”
2. A Digital Exhibition of the 2 world wars
3. Lesson to learn from Japan’s recovery
Train journey from Colombo to Jaffna with the exhibition

A 3-day train journey from Colombo to Jaffna successfully took part as a special highlight for the advocacy campaign.

Social Media reach:

Live streaming’s of the activities of the advocacy campaign were posted in the official Facebook page of the campaign.
Public meetings in selected 5 towns in the Island- Colombo, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Hambantota and Kandy.

5 public meetings took part in the 5 selected towns Colombo, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Hambantota and Kandy.

Representatives of the Head of Missions, The Mayor, the governor of the respective district, Government officials, Civil Society Leaders, men & women political leaders, members of TEAM 1325 & SMART 75 and the general public were present to witness the meetings. The media was also present.

At the beginning gas balloons which had the slogan “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through Non-violence” printed were released by the guests. A street drama was staged to convey the message of the advocacy campaign to the crowd at the premises. The digital exhibition of the 2 world wars, digital presentation of the lessons to learn from Japan’s recovery and also the digital exhibition of the importance of the “TREE” was displayed. The quotes from religious leaders and renowned personalities were put on show. In the meantime, wall calendars and pocket calendars which included the slogan and the logo of the campaign were distributed to the public. Exercise books were also given to the children present there.

At the end trees were planted to mark the campaigns commitment to protect the environment.
The overall project “The Road to Reconciliation” funded by International Civil Society Action Network has brought very positive outcomes. Through Activity 1, we were able to spread a powerful and effective key message on reconciliation. Activity 2 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 enabled to reach thousands of people, among universities, schools and general public and make them aware about the Sustainable Development Goals.

Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Activity - Strengthening Good Governance and Democracy: Women Taking Leadership a partnership with Global Communities with USAID funding

The Association of War Affected Women in partnership with Global Communities proposed the implementation of the project “Strengthening Good Governance and Democracy: Women Taking Leadership” in Sri Lanka in key aim of reinforcing cooperative relationships across divides and to increase the participation of women in peace and reconciliation processes.
The project will also be working towards the advancement of women of all ages and all strata of life including women with special needs as well as women who are indigenous and living in rural as well urban areas.

It will also train women on women peace and security (WPS) agenda enabling them to take UNSCR 1325 to the grassroots so that this will enable them to mitigate conflicts at the community level and earn respect from the local population. They can enhance their ability to be leaders at various levels AND will be able to address issues which are a hindrance for the full advancement and equal participation of women and through their agency achieve sustainable peace through the implementation of a comprehensive reconciliation process whereby social cohesion will be the norm of the day.

**Activity 1- Training on Advocacy and Social Cohesion**

In the main aim of mobilizing women for advocacy and bestowing them with knowledge on methods that can be used to initiate positive change for social issues, AWAW in partnership with Global Communities, held 8 one-day Advocacy trainings on Social Cohesion and Reconciliation in 8 selected districts in Sri Lanka. Workshops were held in

1. Jaffna
2. Monaragala
3. Vavuniya
4. Trincomalee
5. Batticaloa
6. Ampara
7. Mullaitivu
8. Kilinochchi

A total of 209 women coming from the above districts were trained on Advocacy and Social Cohesion. Through this activity we understood that almost all the participants had very little knowledge of the word: “Advocacy” but they knew the process somewhat and also has taken some steps of advocacy in their work in the communities. The highlight of these workshops was that all of them felt “while advocating for common issues, they have to keep the unity among the diverse communities” We believe these workshops had reinforced the importance of people coming together to advocate for common issues and identifying and focusing on the issue while always keeping in mind the importance of unity among diverse communities are able to come together, work together and will be also careful that it will not hurt or exclude any community.
Vavuniya – 3rd August 2019

Monaragala – 23rd July 2019

Trincomalee – 11th August 2019

Batticaloa – 4th September 2019

Ampara – 11th September 2019

Mullaitivu – 18th September 2019

Killinochchi – 26th September 2019
Activity 2 - Two Day Networking Workshop for SMART75 members.

In 2018 AWAW groomed 75 women to be leaders not only in the political and Peace arena but also to take leadership in any sphere they select this country. On 4th, 5th, and 6th October 2019 AWAW brought 66 selected women of the SMART 75 to a two-day networking workshop held in Nuwara Eliya. The specific objectives of the networking workshop were to bring together selected women from SMART75 to reflect and strategize the combination of synergies and way forward on social cohesion and reconciliation.
Activity 3 - Two Day In-depth Training on Gender Sensitive Transitional Justice

On 27th and 29th and 30th November 2019 and 6th and 7th of December 2019 AWAW conducted 2 2-day In-depth trainings on Gender Sensitive Transitional Justice to 56 members of the SMART75 group in Kandy.

The purpose of these trainings was to enhance knowledge and understanding on the topic of transitional justice and reconciliation processes as fundamental tools to achieve sustainable peace.

In the coming year AWAW will conduct 4 more in-depth trainings. AWAW will also organize 4 learning exchange visits to different parts of the country with SMART75 members and the women trained at the advocacy trainings. We will also be embarking on an advocacy campaign. Below are screenshots captured from Facebook.
AWAW- ICAN- Fact finding mission
From 24th-30th July 2019 AWAW together with International Civil Society Action Network carried out a fact-finding mission in selected districts in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of Easter Sunday Bombing. Batticaloa, Mannar, Kandy, and Colombo districts were visited through the mission.

National Peace Table – “Women do have a voice – The world should listen to it” in partnership with Peace Women across the Globe

Sponsored by Peace Women Across the Globe (PWAG), AWAW successfully held a National Peace Table titled “Women do have a voice – The world should listen to it” on Saturday 23rd of November 2019 at Ivy Room of Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo from 2.00 p.m. to 06.00 p.m.

The main aim of the event was to enrich the Sri Lankan Reconciliation process by Local and International experience for women to play a central role of the process. The Peace Table was titled after a quote extracted by the speech of Hon. Lord Tarik Ahamed at a reception hosted by HRH the Countess of Wessex to celebrate International Women’s Day at Buckingham Palace in March 2019.

Sixty-Five (65) people attended the National Peace table. Influential dignitaries such as H.E. the Canadian High Commissioner Mr. David McKinnon, Deputy Head of Mission from the Embassy of Maldives Ms. Khadheeja Najeeha, Chairperson of the Office for Missing persons (OMP) Mr. Saliya Peiris and Mr. Somasiri Liyanage Commissioner of the OMP, and Representative of Sri Lanka Air Force Squ. Ldr JPS Jayasunadara, Representative of the Embassy of Switzerland Ms. Carlotta Ehrenzeller, Eastern Province Provincial Council Member Hon. Ariyawathi Galappaththi, Central Province Provincial Council Member Hon. Saraswathi Sivaguru, distinguished members of the civil society from Eastern Province, the panelists Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamutu, Dr. Jehan Perera, Mrs. Shyamala Gomez and Dr. Dayani Panagoda were present to assist the event to a success.

Members of SMART75 - a team of 75 women AWAW groomed in 2017 by bringing women from all areas, ethnicities, religions and most importantly political parties and members of TEAM1325 a group of 25 women leaders from the 25 districts of Sri Lanka who were trained on UNSCR 13525 were present at the event.
UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub

AWAW is currently initiating a project funded by the London School of Economics. The scope of the project is to build social harmony through series of activities on women’s economic empowerment as well their awareness of new & emerging threats identified in accordance with the ground situation and political environment.

The main aim of this project is to bring rural women together across the divide to work together for a prosperous economy & build a shared future.

Other highlights.

On 11th of February 2019 20 Japanese student delegates from the faculty of Law of Hosei University, Japan who were visiting Sri Lanka to study the culture and social views in Sri Lanka had an interactive meeting with AWAW in Kandy.

On 11th July 2019 AWAW visited Doomabagastalaawe Maha Vidyalaya to distribute books printed with all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s).
Global Involvements


AWAW was the winner for Cross border initiatives and was awarded at the N-Peace Awards Ceremony in March 2019. Chairperson of AWAW Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa was the winner for Untold Stories – 5th March 2019.
Chairperson of AWAW Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa was invited to speak at the reception hosted by HRH The Countess of Wessex to celebrate International Women’s Day in Buckingham Palace on 8th March 2019.
Commission for Status of women 11th to 22nd March 2019

CSW63 Side-event: Centrality of Gender Equality to National Cohesion and Sustainable Peacebuilding hosted by Hon. Maryam Monsef, Canadian Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality – 12th March 2019

CSW63 Side-event: The Role of Parliaments as Partners in Women, Peace and Security - 14th March 2019

Reception to celebrate Women Mediators across the Commonwealth on the occasion of Commonwealth Day which was also attended by HRH The Countess of Wessex – 15th March 2019

Chair of AWAW was interviewed by UK Prime Minister’s Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad

Conference in preparation for HLPF 2019: “Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind – 27th – 29th May 2019 in Rome, Italy

World Federation of United Nations Associations - 2019 16+ Forum Annual Showcase 11-14 November. Chairperson of AWAW Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa was invited as a panelist to the conference - Dili, Timor Leste
With HRH Countess of Wessex attending all network meeting of Women Mediators Across the
Commonwealth - 25th November 2019

WE THANK ALL OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS FOR A SUCCESSFUL AND PRODUCTIVE YEAR

USA, Canada,
ICAN

Peace Women Across the Globe
Global Communities
AWAW Chair was invited to the opening ceremony of a fish market sponsored by SCORE in Monaragala. The project was initiated and implemented by women AWAW had trained under the SCORE Project in 2018.