

Interim Narrative Report

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Organization name: Association of War Affected Women

Project title: Institutional Development – Year 4

Reporting period: July 2008 to December 2008

Total grant for period: \$ 15,000 / Rs. 1,573,500.00

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Introduction

The support of American Jewish World Services to run the office of the Association of War Affected Women has made it possible for the organization to implement many projects successfully and efficiently. This support has given us not only the financial strength but also the moral backing to continue the work that we have been engaged in up to now. We have been able, not only to organize our work more efficiently but also to increase the volume of work in a very short period of time.

The new image of AWAW with the support of AJWS, has paved the way for our organization to engage in many essential community development activities and for other INGO's and NGO's to recognize AWAW as an organization which has the capacity to work as an equal partner with other relevant organizations at a National level. This has led to three important INGO's to sign agreement contracts to partner with us and for our organization to be invited to many important current events.

The Association of War Affected Women was able to make significant progress during this period. We wish to thank AJWS for its farsightedness and generosity in funding our office, which has given us the strength, courage and capacity to work towards the vision of achieving our goals.

The work of AWAW has benefited more than 1000 women directly and many more indirectly, through workshops, trainings and projects to strengthen and support women.

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.

Activities and Results.

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

Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for increase participation of women in the political process and as peace – makers in post conflict contexts. The resolution, which was adopted on 31st October 2000, has resulted in a campaign to engage women in decision making, but has thus far borne few results in terms of increasing women in top level positions.

While Sri Lanka until recently had a female president and women generally have equal access to education and health care, they hold only 5.9% of political posts and rarely have senior positions in any level of government. As the country attempts to strengthen its political institutions and continues to develop the parameters of a future peace, women should be placed in key roles where they can bolster Sri Lanka's shaky democracy and change the patterns of behaviour that has allowed so much violence in recent years. But in order to be effective in these posts and become part of a much needed democracy strengthening effort, women require training and support. In Sri Lanka they also need help, finally introducing an effective system that would ensure that a greater number of women are represented through out the political system.

Within this context, 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 within this reporting period with the collaboration of Women's Campaign International (WCI).

We have successfully conducted all five three day training workshops for the 25 trainers. The subjects covered were

- advocacy and lobbying
- media and public speaking
- knowing your governing structures 13th & 17th amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution

- proposal writing and budget preparation / fund raising
- coalition building and networking

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. We will be sending you a hard copy of it and also posting it on our website. We believe that this will be a great resource for grass root level women through out the world who is seeking to build their capacities to run for political office.



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. Namely Monaragala, Colombo, Kandy, Badulla, Kurunagala, Matale, Galle, Matara, Pollannaruwa and Rathnapura. These were done to identify women with the motivation and capacity, who can be trained to run for political office.



AWAW was successful in securing funding from National Endowment Democracy to further train 500 women. We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to AJWS for helping us to secure the funds. 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 27th of November.



We have already submitted a proposal to the Swedish embassy to secure funds to further train the remaining 750 women in the remaining 15 districts.

We have also submitted a proposal to UNDEF for training 3000 women in 2010, extending the same project. And we will be using the same trainers in this project as well.

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 were seeking a suitable name to call themselves and came up with “Team 1325”, since they all work on this very important resolution. AWAW is extremely happy and proud to host the “Team 1325”

AWAW held a reception on the 30th of September 2008 at the Bay Leif restaurant in Colombo. The Chief Guest was the Canadian High Commissioner HE Angela Bogden and many High Commissioners and Ambassadors were present among the gathering. We also had Government Ministers, Ministry officials and prominent civil society leaders, women and men at the gathering. On this day we launched a website for the Team 1325. The address is www.team1325sl.org

The International Civil Society Action Network and the Karuna Center for Peace building were the partnering organizations for a five day workshop conducted from the 25th to 29th of September at the Hotel Hilltop Kandy for the members of the team 1325, on Conflict resolution, Peace Building and UNSCR 1325 and 1820. The resource persons were Sanam Andalini and Dr. Paula Green.



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”

Women organizing to address their local level concerns have remained strong in Sri Lanka with 1000s of women now functioning at the local level. These groups are dealing with various different issues such as micro credit, violence, livelihoods, women's empowerment, etc. However women's voices and grassroots mobilization for peace remains weak, with political parties defining and determining the peace agenda which is blindly followed by the masses. Lack of information about the causes and consequences of the conflict, possible solutions which ensure justice and human rights for all ethnic communities living in Sri Lanka, is one of the biggest obstacles to the emergence of a movement for peace. This project will be exploring the agency of grass root level women for peace building and was conducted as a research to build upon.

Within this context, 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 and 10 women were selected from each organization, bringing the total number of women to 60.

They were exposed to;

- Entry level one day workshop

- Facilitated dialog on listening and leadership building
- Two day workshop on perspectives and knowledge where a basic conflict resolution component was added
- Two day workshop on exploring power to change – here we included a tsunami component as all these districts have experienced tsunami. We wanted to document how women were able to react to such a devastating natural disaster. We drew in the humanity which was over arching all other difficulties.
- A day of 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. One woman was frank enough to admit that *“she does sewing for others as a living and though a Tamil school teacher wanted her to stitch a jacket, for money, she refused because of the very fact that she was from a different race. But after the project and the exchange visits where the Sinhalese women from the south were able to meet personally Muslim and Tamil women from the Eastern province. Many of the perceptions that she had regarding Tamil community was changed. Now she has related this story to her children to treat people equally and also she will be treating all races equally”*. It is more significant, because she is the wife of a Sri Lankan soldier.

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

As it is becoming increasingly evident, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has resulted in gross violations of human rights, decline in the democratic practices and enormous loss of human lives. It is also destroying the society, economic growth, and human development. As a direct impact thousands of women and children as well as men have been affected. In a situation where both parties have not withdrawn from the ceasefire but are engaging in open warfare, returning to the negotiating table in the near future has become a distant dream. In a rapidly growing hostile and uncertain political climate, norms of good governance and best practices are even more remote.

Even when the parties return to the table and a final solution is found the deterioration of the society in all aspects will pose a very big challenge in

implementing the agreement. Taking this ground reality into consideration and the necessity of women in decision making levels if we are to envisage a country where the democratic practices are upheld and good governance is in place,

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.



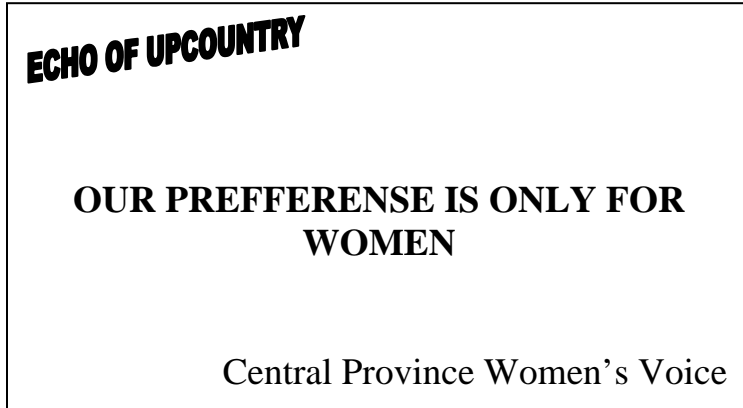
IRI Workshop

AWAW conducted an advocacy campaign to United National Party head Quarters and Sri Lankan parliament on 09th 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. This was conducted on the 28th of October 2008.

This project culminated with the last summit being held on the 8th and 9th of December, 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. They decided to put up banners through out the three districts of Central province. And the banners will read;



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

- On the July 10th 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.
- We also wrote letters to all NGO's and Civil Society organizations thanking them for the work they have done so far on this subject and also calling for their support at this very moment, since reforms are brought to the electoral system.
- We were also successful in inviting the minister of local Government and provincial council for one of our meetings and convincing him of the necessity of a quota system.
- Posters were put up through out the country by the 25 women on the 17th of October and November.

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.
- On 08th June 2008 they convened to one member's residence in Gampola to discus ways and means of moving forward. There, they decided to meet the leaders of all political parties to seek advice to move forward as a group.
- On the 30th of July the women politicians who went to South Africa met the leader of JVP Mr Somavans Amarasinghe at 9am for a four hour long meeting. The JVP had a road map consisting their vision for the future and wanted our suggestions for that. They also agreed to meet the Tamil National Alliance to further discuss the conflict and moving forward.

- Next they met Mr Mangala Smaraweera the leader of the SLFP (M). The meeting was very cordial and he agreed to extend his fullest corporation for our future activities. He wanted the women to deliberate and have their idea of a resolution to the ethnic problem in paper as document to be discussed.
- At 3pm the same day the women met Hon. Ranil Wikramsinghe the leader of UNP and the opposition leader, was very happy that women across political divides and also ethnic divides, were holding political offices; having come together to find a lasting solution for the country's problem. He said that the women are able to make great strides in this direction if they can unite and work together. They wanted us to have our solutions to make life better for the war affected women. He also admitted that the process of peace building was initiated in 2001 because of the initiative that AWAW took through their "Mobilizing Mother's for Peace" signature campaign.



- In the evening of that day at 6pm, we met Mr Sambanthan leader of TNA and had a lengthy discussion of a lasting solution. The discussion drew specific attention on power sharing and the most important the necessity of genuine political will.
- On the 5th of September, we met the Minister Mr Maithripala Sirisena, Secretary of Sri Lanka's ruling party and discussed our activities. He was happy that women could come together and advised us to come up with a proposal for our future plan.
- Moving beyond from this across party women's peace initiative have already secured funds to take 11 women politicians to Harvard University USA for a training of negotiations and mediation skills in January 2009.

With the generous funding from Hunt Alternatives and Norwegian Foreign Ministry and also to take the team to Nepal for a study tour in March with the funding of UNDP.

On July 17th to 23rd AWAW Chair was the trainer at an institution building workshop for North Korean women in Soul South Korea.



On the 07th to 12th of August AWAW Chair attended Salzburg Global seminar 455 on 1325.

September 20th AWAW Chair was invited by the Australian Diaspora youth as a Chief Guest at their musical evening and charity event celebrating peace, for a day, in Sydney. The very important aspect of this was the youth came up with a declaration for resolving the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka.



On the 22nd of September AWAW Chair met the Secretary Defense to discuss Gender sensitive training for peace keepers and future contingent of women peace keepers.

On the 04th of October, AWAW together with the Parents of Servicemen Missing in Action (PSMIA), held a religious ceremony to mark the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Killinochci attack. On this occasion, which was presided by the

Hon. Minister S.M. Chandrasena, a foundation stone was laid to build a pilgrims rest for the families of those who are missing in action.

On the 17th to 20th October AWAW Chair Was invited to be a trainer for a IPT Specialization course on “women in armed conflict”, ASPR Austria.

Context and Impact.

In Sri Lanka the peace process is at an all time low since the Cease Fire Agreement was signed in 2002, and the country faces not just a crisis of violence but also a crisis in democracy. As described in a recent article by the Asian Human Rights commission in reaction to the April 26, 2006 bombing in Colombo, the civil war in Sri Lanka is a direct result of a decay of its democratic institutions. More specifically, the article argued that violence in Sri Lanka is the result of the lack of democratic avenues of grievance expression and response, and that since the adoption of the 1978 constitution there is a shrinking space through out Sri Lankan society for the airing of alternative views. In this environment, all areas of work conducted by AWAW, is directed towards strengthening democratic values and creating space for finding a negotiated solution for the country’s ethnic problem.

Women make up the majority of Sri Lanka’s population. As the country attempts to strengthen its political institutions and continues to develop the parameters of a future peace, women must be placed in key roles where they can bolster Sri Lanka’s shaky democracy and change the current patterns of behavior and systems. In order to be effective in these positions and become part of a much needed democracy strengthening effort, women require training and support. AWAW’s, workshops, facilitations, trainings and all related work within the projects “Training Women to run for Political Office Implementing UN Resolution1325”, “ Women defining politics” the advocacy campaign to pass legislation to increase women’s representation in political officers , is directed towards achieving a sustainable peace in the country through the active participation of women, by furthering their advancement, empowerment and development.

The project “An Exploration of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice – Women and Armed conflict”, aims directly to explore the agency of grass root level women for peace building, promote reconciliation and understanding between women from Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim communities. Building their capacities and brining them together to share each other’s knowledge and experiences. By working with women’s organizations both in the south and the east within this project, AWAW has an actively positive impact on communities on both sides of the divide.

The programmes implemented by AWAW have served to strengthen, motivate and empower women to strive towards achieving their fullest potential.

A notable result of AWAW's activities within this reporting period is that

- It has been able to convene a drafting group comprising government officials, UN staff, NGO leaders and women leaders in drafting the section on 1325 to be incorporated in the national action plan on women
- Bring women politicians across political and ethnic divide to work jointly towards peace building
- Work on shuttle diplomacy between Sinhala extremists, JVP party and Tamil national Alliance to come to talks with each other on the national issue.
- Train 25 women leaders as trainers
- Train 90 women in Central province to run for political office
- Create space for two women's coalitions to build within the trainings of AWAW
- AWAW's collaboration with South Asia Small Arms Network to reduce the proliferation of illegal small arms in Sri Lanka; working on a proposal to train SL peace keepers and service personal on gender sensitive peace keeping and also to train women only contingent for peace keeping
- Notable changes in the capacity of partner organizations and collaboration among groups due to AWAW's work to strengthen grassroots women's organizations; Prjadiya padanama in puttlam. Navodya and govi kantha in Galle, Ruhunu sisila and Samagi Kantha in Matara , Pera pasal and Diriya kantha in kaluthara and women's groups in Amparai and Trinco.

Outcomes.

- 25 women leaders from all district trained as trainers to train women to run for political office
- Identified and trained 500 women from 10 districts who have the capacity and motivation to run for political office
- 60 women were introduced to basic conflict resolution skills.
- Exchange visits conducted under the same project enhance the awareness of the women from south as well the east and also most importantly the bonds which was established will last.
- Strengthened the capacity and motivated the women of the Central Province to take active participation in politics with a better understanding and awareness of democratic values and good governance.
- The chair of the parliament select committee on electoral reforms agrees to include a quota system to increase women's political participation
- Preparation of a Resource Pack " A Tool kit to enhance women's political participation" in Sinhala, Tamil and English languages.

Evaluation.

The benefits have been measured by the increase in numbers of women participating actively in politics, the increase in knowledge and capacity in the

participating women and the general increase in awareness of the content of UN resolution 1325, currently, compared to the time the work of AWAW began. Three women trained by AWAW will run for the Central provincial council elections in February 2009.

Unexpected Results.

- Being able to bring two political parties together who had very different ideas and also who have contributed much to the conflict
- Change of attitude of women in such a significant manner
- Three women to run for office this election to the Provincial Council, since it is the second tier of governance, since we targeted only local government.

Challenges.

- Lack of will on the part of the government officials to prepare a national action plan specifically for 1325 which prevented our effort in fully implementing the resolution
- Unable to secure funds for all the 25 trained women to begin conducting trainings at the same period.
- Was unable to bring 5000 women to Colombo on the 17th of December as planned to call for a 33% quota for women's political participation due to lack of funds.

Sustainability.

- We are training women and building their capacities so that they can secure funding for themselves to work.
- We are also calling for the women to establish a central fund to use for all those women who wish to run for office and need funding.
- We also are seeking funding for our projects from various donors to continue our work and have been able to do so by building our own capacities with your support.

Success Story.

Nalika Abeywikrama



I am a farmer who grows organic vegetable and fruit and market it by way of supplying them to the super markets. I am an active member of the united national Party. I was one of the candidates at the local government elections in 1998. In 2002 worked as Coordinating secretary - Tea Small Holding Development under Minister Lakshman Kiriella and currently I am the coordinating secretary to one of the parliament members. My ambition is to become a Member of the Parliament. Since I joint the trainings conducted by AWAW I was able to enhance my capacity and awareness regarding women's political participation, democracy and good governance. This December I was able to participate in a conference hosted by Women's Democracy Network in Soul Korea through the introduction of AWAW. I am proud to be a part of the TEAM 1325, I was able to meet sisters from all districts of the country and build lasting bonds with them. Currently I am training another 50 women from Kandy district to run for political office under AWAW- NED project. The skills that I have learned will be used to build capacities of thousands of women in my electorate to uplift their living standards.

AWAW Plans For the Future

- Will Facilitate Conference on “Moving Beyond Conflict: Spirituality as a resource for reconciliation and recommendation”
- Will be taking 11 women politicians to Harvard in January, through the project Cross Party Women politicians initiative for peace building.
- We will be taking the same women politicians to Nepal for a Study tour and visit to share and learn from the Nepali experience of post conflict.
- Further training for women to run for political office.
- Training peace keepers and service personnel on gender sensitiveness.
- At the moment we are talking with the Canadian High Commission to establish a 1325 forum to meet monthly, to full implement UN resolution 1325.

- We are also planning to hold an international conference on resolution 1325.
- We are hoping and have already had initial discussion with the eastern province chief ministers' office, to build capacities of the women and also to hold workshops on democracy and governance.
- We will be working with WDP, WUSC, with local Women's organizations towards conflict resolution and peace building.
- We also hope to bring 5000 women to Colombo on the International women's day to advocate for 33% quota.