

## **Annual Report for 2010 - 2011**

**Organization name:** Association of War Affected Women

**Reporting period:** From 7/1/2010 to 6/30/2011

### **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 the 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 contribute to the attainment of a sustainable peace in Sri Lanka  
To achieve a more equitable representation of women serving in political office

### **Activities and Results**

#### **"Training Women to Run for Political Office Implementing UN Resolution 1325" Funded by NED**

Security Council Resolution 1325 for increase participation of women in the political process and as peace – makers in post conflict contexts. The resolution, which was adopted on 31<sup>st</sup> 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 seats in the parliament, 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 behavior 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 throughout the political system.

Within this context, AWAW trained 25 women as trainers, to build capacities for women to run for political office. These 25 trainers in turn have been training 50 chosen women in each of their districts, bringing the total to 1250 trained women who have run for local Government office in 2011 or they will be community leaders with proven ability.

AWAW was able to get these 25 well trained women leaders to build a coalition called "TEAM 1325" and work as a net work in fulfilling ours and their goals.

The first phase of this project, training 25 women leaders, has been conducted successfully within this reporting period with the partnership 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 13<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> 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 throughout the world who is seeking to build their capacities to run for political office.

The second phase of this project 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, Kurunegala, Matale, Galle, Matara, Pollannaruwa and Ratnapura. 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. The ten selected women leaders have successfully conducted 4 out of the 5 workshops in their respective districts training 500 other women and two out of the ten have completed all 5 workshops within this period of reporting. They did invite influential politicians of their districts to participate at the final and the 5<sup>th</sup> workshop and made them promise to have those trained women's names in the nomination lists for the 2011 local government elections.

AWAW held a reception on the 30<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> 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. Currently this action plan is with the Cabinet of Ministers, for their approval.

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

- On the July 10<sup>th</sup> 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 throughout the country by the 25 women on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October and November 2008.

### **Strengthening Skills and Preparing for Participation in Peace Talks: Sri-Lankan Women's Cross-Party Coalition Realizing UNSC 1325**

AWAW/ICAN Partnership with Program on Negotiation at Harvard law School Negotiation Skills and Knowledge Building Workshop For Senior Sri Lankan Women politicians Jan 26-30<sup>th</sup> 2009.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of the project which AWAW hopes to engage the cross party senior women politicians was concluded successfully in January 2009. 12 cross party senior women politicians participated in this very interesting workshop on Negotiations skills and knowledge building conducted by the Program of Negotiations at Harvard law school. This program was funded by the Royal Norwegian government, Hunt alternatives fund and Harvard law school.

#### Coordinators and Resource personnel at Harvard

1. Sanam Anderlini – ICAN – coordinator and resource person on 1325 women peace and security
2. Ambassador Swanee Hunt –Harvard Kennedy School of government, women and public policy program- resource person – strategizing and moving beyond.
3. Dr. Susan Heckley,-resource person - Managing Director, Program on Negotiation
4. Ms. Gabriella Blum – resource person – Professor of International relations, Harvard law school
5. Dr. Donna Hicks – resource person- Associate, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University
6. Dr, Mari Fitzduff – resource person – Director of International Master of Arts Program in Coexistence and Conflict at Brandeis University.
7. Lisa Witzler – Assistant – Program of Negotiation

#### Sri Lankan delegation

1. Hon. Minister Ferial Ashraff
2. Hon. Thalata Athukorale member of parliament
3. Hon. Chandrani Bandara member of parliament
4. Hon. Thangeshwari Kadiraman member of parliament
5. Hon. Kumari Balasooriya, Governor, Southern Province
6. Hon. Upulangani Malagamuwa, member of provincial council
7. Hon. Kokila Gunewardena, member of Pradeshiyasabha
8. Hon. Priyanthi Gunethilake , member of municipal council
9. Ms. Shymala Gomas, lawyer and gender adviser UNDP Colombo
10. Ms. Rosy Senanayake , member of UNP central committee
11. Ms. Prema Thyagaraja, member from the Jaffna Tamil Diaspora
12. Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa , coordinator , chair AWAW

#### **Back ground**

The lack of political will to ensure women's full participation in the peace talks was evident across all political parties in Sri Lanka. To raise women's voices and build their capacities, with support from the Norwegian Embassy in Sri Lanka, AWAW launched a project on cross-party women's coalition building in 2008. AWAW led a group of elected women politicians to visit South Africa in April 2008 for a week long study tour conducted by the Law, Race and Gender Research Centre of the University of Cape Town. The women were introduced to constitution drafting and conflict resolution processes. During the trip they met a cross section of leaders ranging from Ministers, former ministers from all political parties and parliament members and those who were in peace building in South Africa. Not only were the participants inspired by the South African experience, but they also had the opportunity to build personal relations among themselves. This tour was the first time that most of the women had come together as individuals across the political lines. They quickly realized and became committed

working together *as women* to bring peace to Sri Lanka. On their return they have met all political party leaders to make their case and seek support for their future efforts.

The GoSL is likely to enter into the next phase of negotiations in coming months. AWAW is determined to maximize chances of the cross-party coalition of women politicians of gaining seats in the formal process. With this in mind, AWAW initiated this training of negotiation skills and knowledge building.

The training was held at the program of Negotiations at Harvard law school on the day 1 the women were introduced to Negotiation theory and framework for analysis , managing three tensions (Mnookin) creating and claiming value: empathy and assertiveness:

### **Project of Capacity Building for Women Community Leaders**

The project has been done in 2 phases in 25 different districts. The objective of this project is to work with selected 375 women 15 each from 25 Districts who will run for elections and further build their skills and capacities on campaigning and public speaking and groom them to run for the 2011 local government elections and work with them to get them elected and perform their duties successfully. The Workshops of first phase were held from 01<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, and the workshops of second phase were held from 18<sup>th</sup> June 2011 to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

Women political activists from various political parties who are intending to contest the forthcoming local government elections, women from different political parties who have contested before and lost and political party activists from several political parties participated and contributed in the objective of increasing the participation of women in political activities.

### **Sthree Mela Activities**

From the beginning Sri Lankan women have been contributing to the socio-economical development of the country. Still their continuation and strength is essential for the further development.

Internationally, there are many talks going on regarding the women peace and safety. Thus, an exhibition disclosing victories and obstacles of women and related conference series are planned to be held all around Sri Lanka including Kandy, Anuradhapura, Ampara, Kalutara, Matale, Batticaloa, Ratnapura, Hambantota, Kurunegala, Galle, Jaffna and etc.

In addition, the importance of contribution of Women in the development of this country is revealed through the exhibition and conference series. The following topics have been discussed in the conference

- UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- Media
- Mother and girl child
- Legal Aid
- Agriculture and home gardening

## **Context and Impact.**

In Sri Lanka after the military victory of the GOSL in may 2009 and left with three hundred thousand new IDPs in camps, where fulfilling the basic needs of IDPs is a huge challenge the human rights situation is getting worse day by day and the country faces not just a crisis of violence but also a crisis in democracy. As described in an 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 throughout 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 Resolution 1325", " 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 Exhibitions:**

#### **Ehaliyagoda, Rathnapura in Sabaragamuwa Province 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2011**

Our first of the series was held in Ehaliyagoda which was attended by a women minister as well few women members of parliament and few other politicians as well members of civil society and school children. The exhibits comprised of women's political participation, UNSCR 1325 and women and peace building. Women's handicrafts and women in gem cutting were also displayed together with Rathnapura heritage. We held workshops on UNSCR 1325 for 300 women during the two days. Certificates and gifts were distributed among school children of the two districts who came first second and third in essay competition on UNSCR 1325

The second was very successful since we were able to hold two planning meetings, around 4000 women , men and school children visited the exhibition. The exhibits comprised of women's political participation , UNSCR 1325 and women and peace building. We were able to hold workshops on UNSCR 1325 and women's political participation for more than 1000 women from both communities, as well for 500 school children. Women from estate sector were also able to attend the workshops as well display and sell their products, stories of women who had made themselves and community proud were also displayed. Hon. Ministers and all provincial council members were present together with parliament members of opposition. There were many stalls depicting the Uva province by estate sector women as well from village women of Badulla and Monaragala

The Galle one was special as being the capital of Southern province we were able to get all women involved from various social strata of the three districts. Women spent hours and came from Hambantota and Matara districts. Handicrafts and sweet meats made by women were displayed. The exhibits comprised of women's political participation, UNSCR 1325 and women

and peace building as well women in various fields were also displayed. We were able to hold workshops on UNSCR 1325 and women's political participation for more than 500 women. The honourable Governor of Southern province who is with us on women peace and security agenda was the chief guest. School children came to perform for us and was able to attend the workshops together with university students.

### **Drafting the Strategic plan of AWAW for the next three years, (the strategic plan is attached here with )**

The programs 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
- Train 500 women in 10 districts to run for political office
- Create space for two women's coalitions to build within the trainings of AWAW
- Being able to convene a high level cross party senior politicians forum called "Colomba Conversation to meet regularly to discuss current issues pertinent to democracy and governance as well peace in Sri Lanka
- AWAW's collaboration with UNFPA and ministry of defense 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; Prjadiriya 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 as well in Dutuwewa in Anuradhapura district.

### **Outcomes.**

- 25 women leaders from all district trained as trainers to train women to run for political office
- Identified and trained 1250 women from 25 districts who have the capacity and motivation to run for political office
- 120 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.
- Publication from the project Exploring knowledge, Attitude and practice – Women and Armed Conflict.
- Bringing together 17 senior women politicians and giving them training in two important subjects as well building a coalition among them which has created new openings and space for women of cross party to interact and work together in a culture where there were no cross party initiatives before.
- Was able to draft a document on Women's voices in Development and incorporate it to both the main political parties election manifestoes.
- Was able to hold 6 Sthree Mela exhibitions in six provinces of the country.

## **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. Four women trained by AWAW ran for office in the Provincial council elections and won.

## **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
- Four women running for provincial council elections and all 4 winning the elections.

## **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 17<sup>th</sup> of December as planned to call for a 33% quota for women's political participation due to lack of funds.
- Current situation and the attitude of the government towards NGOs
- Uncertainty of continues funding due to global economic crises

## **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.
- Significantly the rural women's organizations are creative enough to secure funding within their areas by way of selling their products/handicrafts etc in a open space for one day. Some even have raffles to increase the amount they could collect.

We are very happy to inform you that we have got confirmation that the following candidates were elected to office, we are still waiting for confirmation from our district coordinators. No sooner we hear from them we will add them to this list.

- |                                     |                   |                           |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Ms. W.A. Nishanthi Pradeepika    | Vauniya North     | ( Vauniya District )      |
| 2. Ms. Lalitha Kulanayake           | Lahugala          | ( Ampara District )       |
| 3. Ms. Soma Edirisinghe             | Uva Paranagama    | ( Badulla District )      |
| 4. Ms. Punya Wijekoon               | Uva Paranagama    | ( Badulla District )      |
| 5. Ms. Kanchana Ruwanmali           | Uva Paranagama    | ( Badulla District )      |
| 6. Ms. S.A.R. Gnanawathi            | Welimada          | ( Badulla District )      |
| 7. Ms. K.D. Chintha Damayanthi      | Soranathota       | ( Badulla District )      |
| 8. Ms. Ruchira Madushani Subasinghe | Kahatagasdigiliya | ( Anuradhapura District ) |
| 9. Ms. Kumudini Basnayake           | Nuwaragam Palatha | ( Anuradhapura District ) |