

**WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN INTERNATIONAL
ASSESSMENT REPORT:
TRANSFORMING PROTRACTED CONFLICTS
THROUGH WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:
SRI LANKA**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
LIST OF ACRONYMS	3
SUMMARY	4
BACKGROUND	4
METHODOLOGY	4
FINDINGS.....	5
PROGRAM POSSIBILITIES	14
CONCLUSION	26
APPENDIX A: LIST OF ASSESSMENT MEETINGS	27
APPENDIX B: POTENTIAL PARTNERS SPREADSHEET.....	30

List of Acronyms

<i>AED</i>	<i>Academy for Educational Development</i>
AWAW	Association of War-Affected Women
BPA	Business for Peace Alliance
CBO	community-based organization
CCC	Ceylon Chambers of Commerce
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CENWOR	Centre for Women's Research
CHA	Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies
CPA	Centre for Policy Alternatives
CSO	civil society organization
IDP	internally displaced person
IMADR	International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination
IRI	International Republican Institute
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MWRAF	Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPC	National Peace Council
SLPI	Sri Lanka Press Institute
SSA	Social Scientists' Association
WCI	Women's Campaign International
WDC	Women's Development Centre
WERC	Women's Education and Research Centre
WMC	Women and Media Collective
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
YATV	Young Asia Television

Summary

Women's Campaign International (WCI) has chosen Sri Lanka as a potential site to implement its US government-funded (grant awarded through authorization in H.R. 5631; House Report 109-676 – Making Appropriations for The Department of Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2007) “Transforming Protracted Conflicts through Women’s Empowerment” program. WCI made this determination by conducting desk research and two assessments, one in Washington, DC, and the other in Sri Lanka. Based on these assessments, WCI has determined that Sri Lanka is suitable for this project and has developed several program possibilities which are described in this document.

Background

In August 2007, WCI was awarded a grant by US Congressional allocation through the Department of Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2007 to build the capacity of women in two or three countries plagued by protracted conflicts to become effective community and political leaders and to participate meaningfully in conflict prevention, transformation, management and resolution at the local and national level. WCI chose Colombia, Jammu and Kashmir in India and Sri Lanka as potential sites for program implementation.

WCI’s selection criteria for program sites are as follows:

1. Identification as a state or territory plagued by protracted conflict;
2. Demonstrated local interest in enhancing women’s involvement in conflict transformation processes;
3. Local network of existing, effective state and non-state actors whose goals complement those of WCI;
4. WCI possesses the organizational capacity to effectively address relevant needs;
5. Articulated interest in collaborating with WCI by local stakeholders;
6. Logistical and financial feasibility.

WCI recently completed an in-country needs assessment in Colombia and is currently considering program possibilities in that country. After conducting desk research and an assessment in Washington, DC, WCI concluded that Jammu and Kashmir would be a poor choice for program implementation as it does not fulfill criterion 3¹ and criterion 6². WCI is currently in the process of conducting initial research on the feasibility of Liberia as an alternative site for program implementation.

Methodology

WCI began its assessment of a potential program in Sri Lanka by conducting desk research in May 2007. WCI then conducted a two-day assessment in Washington, DC, on July 16-17, 2007.

¹ A relatively weak network of relevant organizations exists in Kashmir, resulting in a scarcity of potential partners.

² The volatile relationship between Pakistan and India would make it difficult for WCI to position itself as a neutral entity rendering a program logistically unfeasible.

Finally, WCI conducted an in-country assessment from September 27th- October 5th, 2007. The purpose of these activities was to:

1. Determine current program coverage and gaps in enhancing women's participation in conflict transformation processes;
2. Obtain an overview of the issues and themes of importance to women and women's groups, especially as they relate to the conflict;
3. Gain a greater understanding of the current political atmosphere, security situation and conflict dynamics, especially as they relate to women;
4. Identify potential in-country partners, resource persons, consultants and/or hires;
5. Obtain logistical and security advice.

While in Sri Lanka, the assessment team traveled to Colombo, Kandy and Matara and met with 44 local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), media entities, government officials and scholars. A detailed list of these individuals and organizations can be found in Appendix A of this document.

Findings

Country Selection Findings

1. Identification as a state or territory plagued by protracted conflict

Sri Lanka's civil war began in 1983 making it one of the oldest ongoing conflicts in the world. Although a cease-fire negotiated in 2002 is technically still in effect, full-scale violence resumed between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a separatist rebel group, in 2006. The vast majority of the fighting is concentrated in the North and East of the island, areas predominantly occupied by minority Tamils and Muslims. In recent months, with the help of a breakaway rebel faction, the government wrested back control of large tracts of rebel-held territory in the East and remains on the offensive today. The government has re-imposed emergency regulations and tightened security across the country. The rebels have restricted access to the areas under their control and closed sections of the country's main north-south highway. As a result, prior government and military approval must be obtained before traveling to these areas. Human rights violations committed by both sides have dramatically increased. The government is responsible for murders, abductions, torture and enforced disappearances, especially of young Tamil men.³ Abuses by the rebels most frequently include forced recruitment of children and assassinations.

Internal displacement is one of the most dire consequences of the conflict. According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), more than 190,000 people were displaced between April and October of this year alone.⁴ The government's efforts to resettle internally displaced persons (IDPs) have had mixed results. Some IDPs have been allowed to

³ Human Rights Watch (2007). Launch of Human Rights Report: *Return to War: Human Rights Under Siege*. Retrieved October 21, 2007 from <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/09/11/slanka16838.htm>

⁴ UNHCR Summary of Displacement (2007). Retrieved October 17, 2007, from <http://www.unhcr.lk/statistics/index.html>

return to their homes while others have been resettled in other areas. Exact resettlement figures are not available and few NGOs or international organizations have been able to gain access to the resettlement activities. NGOs are becoming concerned about the increasing incidents of human rights abuses committed by the military, which is also managing the resettlement process as well as other civilian-related activities. In the past, a combination of government representatives and relief organizations carried out resettlement activities.

The heightening of the conflict has led to a general decline in social services and a narrowing of the political space. Discussions of a fair and equitable political solution based on devolution of power into a federal system are being drowned out by the government's rising drumbeat about a military solution that would ensure a secure unitary state. The current situation is not unprecedented in the context of Sri Lanka's cyclical regressive conflict; the government has repeatedly tried to achieve a military victory only to restart peace negotiations when it once again becomes apparent that such tactics are futile. Thus, while the escalation of the conflict is of serious concern, most NGOs and analysts believe that a return to more peaceful conflict resolution efforts is inevitable.

2. Demonstrated local interest in enhancing women's involvement in conflict transformation processes

Hundreds of women's organizations and other NGOs on all levels—community, district, regional, national and international—have been working for years to increase women's influence on public policy in general as well as on conflict-resolution initiatives specifically. Yet women's effectiveness continues to be dampened by structural factors. The general exclusion of women from political parties (and the institutionalized power of political parties), a lack of financial resources, nepotism and fear of violence have prevented women from gaining sustained political power despite the fact that Sri Lanka has twice elected women national leaders.

Only 11 of the 225 seats in Sri Lanka's Parliament are currently held by women. One political party is led by a woman, but she only attained that role after her husband died in an air crash. Because political parties show little interest in fielding women candidates without family connections, women are usually only able to enter politics as proxies for their dead fathers or husbands. Additionally, the parties' monopolization of political power makes it very difficult for independent candidates to get elected in general.

Despite the lack of women in political office, women's participation in public affairs is unusually strong and women enjoy a high level of gender equality as compared with women in other South Asian countries. Most women vote and are the single biggest foreign currency earners for the country through their work overseas, primarily as domestic assistants in Middle-Eastern countries.

However, deep dichotomies between the roles of military and rebel women are apparent. Women in the state's military are assigned non-combatant roles while the rebel women are active combatants. The latter have carried out numerous suicide bombings and engage in conventional and guerrilla attacks. Women's lives are affected by the conflict in several other ways as well. Women are the victims of high levels of domestic violence and the targets of an increased

incidence of rape during times of heightened conflict. Many are forced to simultaneously fill the roles of breadwinner and head of household when their husbands must fight and/or are killed in the conflict. Because women play such a large role in the conflict, their participation in conflict transformation is essential for peace in Sri Lanka.

In a remarkable move during the last peace process, women fighters were drawn into the formal negotiations via a subcommittee on gender. This body allowed women on both sides of the conflict to discuss with each other how to best include women in an eventual return to peace. Since the talks were suspended when the violence restarted in 2005, the participants did not have the opportunity to formally meet with each other. However, women's continual reconciliation work at the community level will be crucial to ensuring that a renewed peace process will result in a sustained solution.

3. Local network of existing, effective state and non-state actors whose goals match those of WCI

WCI met with several local and international NGOs who also aim to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes, including conflict transformation. Many of these organizations have a remarkably successful track record of program implementation and are currently working to build the capacity of the extensive network of local women's organizations in their communities. Some are already working to prepare women to contest in Sri Lanka's 2010 general elections through political and legislative training.

Some of the most notable examples of Sri Lanka-based women's organizations include:

- The Association of War Affected Women (AWAW), one of the most prominent women's organizations in Sri Lanka, works to "achieve peace through socio-economic development enlisting the active participation of war affected women." AWAW engages in such varied activities as capacity building for local women's organizations, campaign training for potential women candidates, and leadership skills-building for elected women.
- The Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) conducts "action oriented" research in order to most effectively advocate for women's issues. They publish and distribute materials that raise awareness on such topics as violence against women, conditions for migrant female workers, women's political participation, women's health, and the experiences of IDPs. CENWOR also conducts awareness programs for the public, government officials and the private sector.
- The Women's Development Centre (WDC) is working on an ongoing initiative to create a comprehensive network of all of the women's organizations in the country. They currently work to build the capacity of over 300 women's organizations throughout the country in such areas as peace-building, violence prevention, micro-credit programs, networking and human rights awareness.

- The Women and Media Collective (WMC) is an organization that works to represent women’s perspectives and promote feminist principles as a means to reducing violence and militarization. They release media statements, press advertisements, petitions, and memorandums on behalf of women and women’s groups. The organization is currently working to pressure political parties to support women candidates who want to contest in local elections.
- The Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum (MWRAF) has been working to economically, socially and politically empower Muslim women since 1976. Much of their work is concentrated in the East, where there is a large concentration of Muslims. MWRAF focuses on increasing political participation by Muslim women and run mediation councils to promote understanding between the communities.
- The Women’s Education and Research Center (WERC) promotes gender equality through research, training and policy advocacy. The organization uses a wide array of research findings to create social awareness and influence policy changes.

International organizations such as the Asia Foundation, the International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination (IMADR) and the Academy of Educational Development (AED) are working in various capacities to strengthen women’s participation in the public arena as well.

WCI also met with the Secretary of the Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Empowerment, which, in addition to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Parliamentary Women’s Caucus, and the Women’s Bureau of Sri Lanka, is a government entity tasked with increasing women’s welfare and political power.

Other organizations and groupings such as the Business for Peace Alliance (BPA) and the Ceylon Chambers of Commerce (CCC) bring together entrepreneurs from all regions and communities to promote regional empowerment and work toward peace-building.

4. WCI possesses the organizational capacity to effectively address relevant needs

Sri Lanka is particularly well-suited for WCI programming. Many local organizations have the expertise to conduct the types of programs that WCI is best suited to support. Details follow in the Program Possibilities section of this report.

5. Articulated interest in collaborating with WCI by local stakeholders

Several organizations in Sri Lanka expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of partnering or collaborating with WCI on specific projects. WCI has already received program proposals and/or budgets from several organizations including Young Asia TV (YATV), the Women’s Education and Research Centre (WERC), IMADR, AWAW, and the BPA and expects to receive several more shortly. Specific proposals are discussed in the “Program Possibilities” section of this document.

6. Logistical and financial feasibility

The numerous dynamic local organizations provide a very strong network through which WCI can target assistance. Only the areas currently suffering from active conflict would be logistically difficult for WCI to implement program activities. However, with local partners, WCI should be able to work almost anywhere in Sri Lanka. WCI therefore determined that it has the financial and logistical capabilities to effectively build the capacities of local women's organizations and support relevant activities.

Assessment Findings

1. Determine current program coverage and gaps in enhancing women's participation in conflict transformation processes

WCI worked to obtain as much detail as possible about each organization's relevant programs and needs. WCI also inquired about other relevant programs that each organization was aware of during each meeting. The following key themes emerged:

Increasing women's political representation

With women's representation at the national level a mere 5%, and 2% at the local level, increasing the number of elected women in Sri Lanka is clearly one of the most important objectives in regards to enhancing women's influence on conflict transformation processes.

While the National Democratic Institute (NDI) is working to address this need in parts of the south, and the International Republican Institute (IRI) is doing the same in the central province, the need to prepare women to run for political office remains largely unaddressed throughout the rest of the country. The need is particularly pressing in conflict-affected areas such as the North and East and among marginalized populations in the rural South and in plantation areas.

The government, which recently regained control of rebel-held parts of the East, has announced plans to hold local elections in this region. Specific needs for potential women candidates include skills-building in such areas as campaign fundraising, leadership skills, utilizing the media, access to campaign funds and legislative and constitutional awareness.

Improving policymakers' awareness of women's issues and effectiveness as advocates

There remains a great need for training women leaders in all sectors on such topics as conflict transformation skills, legal frameworks, international human rights (especially women's rights), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325)⁵, establishing productive relationships with male leaders and conducting political campaigns.

⁵ UNSCR 1325 was passed in 2000 to mandate states to pay special attention to women's rights in conflict situations and to ensure their participation in conflict resolution efforts.

Many women's organizations and researchers are grappling with ways to encourage women already in political leadership positions to support issues related to women's political participation and conflict transformation. Many of these organizations conduct research that could help positively influence policy decisions on issues that disproportionately affect women. They are currently seeking support to develop effective outreach strategies that will allow them to create and distribute more "palatable" or user-friendly materials to policymakers.

Creating a network of women throughout the country, particularly among marginalized women in the East and in the IDP population

There is a significant need to raise both the public and policymakers' awareness about the experiences of IDPs, women in the East and other marginalized groups. These women are often unaware of their rights and the practical implications attached to them. Many of the problems they face are unique to their regions, which have been affected by the tsunami, ethnic cleansing and other effects of the war. The Muslim population is critical of transformation efforts as it fears both continued conflict and that a resolution to the conflict will undermine Muslim welfare. In the past, the LTTE has ethnically cleansed Muslims from the North. The Muslims worry that a solution involving a dominant LTTE - if it renounces arms and enters the political process - may result in the Muslims losing their homes in the East as well. They also fear that a political solution that gives the Tamil majority in the East greater control of resources and policies may result in the Muslims' needs being ignored. These concerns are not unfounded. During the initial stages of the formal peace process that started in 2002, the LTTE and the government did not include the Muslims in the discussion until the Muslim political parties insisted that they be allowed to participate in the process. These tensions have the potential to spark confrontation and increased militancy in the East.

Facilitating trips to the East for women leaders and policymakers to give them the opportunity to witness the consequences of the war first-hand has proven to be an effective way to promote advocacy for those residing region. In addition, disseminating information gathered on such trips throughout the country is vital to promoting accurate perceptions of the living conditions in the area.

Skills building for local women's organizations

While there have been a number of trainings on UNSCR 1325, gender sensitization, and CEDAW there have not been trainings on the practical skills needed to translate these concepts and tools into action (especially among rural women). Skills-training on advocacy is especially needed to strengthen civil society's participation in the conflict transformation process.

Increasing women's representation in the media

Even women in leadership positions are often "media shy". Thus, both potential and current women leaders would greatly benefit from training on effectively utilizing the media. Representing more women in the media in a political context will not only promote the image of women as effective leaders, it will also increase women's knowledge and interest in politics within the context of civil society.

Gender awareness for public officials

The promotion of accountability among politicians, the police and the military is crucial to preventing human rights abuses. Police and military abuses of women are on the rise, and politicians are not adequately addressing human rights violations. Women are also being affected by draconian laws such as a recent piece of legislation (presented, ironically, by the Minister of Child Welfare and Women's Empowerment) that banned women with children under five years of age from migrating for work.

2. Obtain an overview of issues/themes of importance to women and women's groups, especially as they relate to the conflict

Many of the issues important to women's groups in Sri Lanka reflect WCI's priorities.

- Human rights:
 - Raising the public's awareness of their rights, especially among marginalized populations
 - Addressing violations, especially against IDPs
 - Promoting the idea of women's rights as human rights
 - Enhancing resources for victims of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women
 - Preventing the rape of women by the military in conflict areas
 - Increasing the availability of legal and trauma counseling for victims of the conflict and/or tsunami
 - Raising awareness on and preventing HIV/AIDS
- Politics and Public Policy:
 - Training for women political leaders
 - Gender sensitization for public officials
 - Investigating the possibility of establishing a quota for women in Parliament and other government bodies
 - Establishing a women's peace secretariat
 - Raising women leaders' public profiles
 - Creating a media presence
 - Raising awareness of issues that disproportionately affect women
- Conflict Transformation / Peace-Building:
 - Promoting awareness on the conditions and events associated with the conflict
 - Promoting public discussions and forums
 - Community problem solving
 - Intra-communal and intra-religious projects
 - The role of gender in conflict transformation

Some issues of concern are specific to particular segments of the population. For example, Muslim widows struggle to retain their land after their husbands die and many Tamil women have been doubly displaced by the tsunami and the conflict.

3. Gain a greater understanding of the current political atmosphere, security situation and conflict dynamics, especially as they relate to women

Approaches to conflict resolution: grassroots level vs. top-level leadership

It is not a good time for peacemakers in Sri Lanka. The high prevalence of propaganda in combination with the intense passions of war is impeding conflict resolution efforts. Women's organizations are finding it difficult to obtain any serious government or rebel support for peace initiatives. Therefore, long-term conflict transformation efforts are most likely better suited to the current environment. Strengthening organizations working in conflict areas and intra-communal settings has proven to be a very effective way to build the foundation of a peaceful society. A top-down approach to conflict resolution is currently unfeasible given higher-ups resistance to peace-building. Thus, building momentum at the grassroots level is the most strategic tactic under the preset circumstances. Initiatives that help society maintain a civil discourse during heated conflict are crucial to maintaining order at the community level. Conversely, approaching the war head-on in an attempt to find a "quick fix" has proven to be dangerous and even counterproductive.

The role of women's organizations

The renewal of violence has stifled the work of women's organizations, many of whom were making a great deal of progress in enhancing women's political participation and promoting women's rights during the ceasefire. They have also been forced to scale back some of their humanitarian work in locations directly affected by the recent fighting. Such circumstances make conflict transformation efforts such as those planned by WCI crucial to helping slow the regression of peace efforts. Many women's organizations have been successful in their efforts to create empathy between communities. WCI can be an effective agent of change by building upon the accomplishments of those who advocate for equitable solutions to the conflict, promote women in leadership and work across communal lines.

Effects of the conflict: human rights abuses and IDPs

The recent spate of fighting has created a large number of IDPs and a rise in human rights violations. Women are disproportionately affected by the fighting, displacement, and human rights abuses, in addition to the dislocation, deaths and abduction of their family members. Access to information, relief and assistance is not adequately targeted towards women. Women are treated as part of the IDP population, but not as a segment that requires special consideration. In refugee camps, women often lack adequate privacy or security. Other issues such as the inability to speak Sinhalese, the language used by the administration, especially with the increased militarization of resettlement, are a huge handicap especially because few military personnel speak Tamil. Excluding civil support service personnel, humanitarian aid providers and NGOs from the process of resettlement exacerbates problems that are unique to women.

4. Identify potential in-country partners, resource persons and consultants

WCI identified several promising potential in-country partners as well as several potential resource persons who would be able to provide WCI with strategic advice, recommendations and contacts during the process of program design and implementation. Appendix B contains a detailed chart of the potential partnerships identified during the assessment.

5. Obtain logistical and security advice

The vast majority of violence is restricted to the North and East, which are under tight security with checkpoints and curfews. The northwestern area, where the military is launching operations, remains inaccessible to those who have not obtained prior permission. In Colombo, numerous police and army checkpoints frequently stop vehicles and pedestrians for searches and identification checks.

House searches in the night have resumed and, under the revived emergency regulations, people suspected of being rebels or rebel supporters can be detained for up to 60 days without a warrant. However, local and international NGOs continue to be effective in the majority of the country as the security situation is permissive enough to allow them to run programs unimpeded.

PROGRAM POSSIBILITIES

These program ideas and initiatives are consistent with the overall goals of WCI's Concept Plan, "Transforming Protracted Conflict through Women's Empowerment". The ideas and suggestions described in this section aim to:

- Increase the number of qualified women who are interested and poised to serve as elected and appointed officials at the local, regional and national levels;
- Increase women's abilities to participate effectively in political decision-making at all levels;
- Build women's capacity to advocate for conflict transformation-related reforms;
- Enhance women's capacity to develop, lead and participate in conflict prevention, conflict transformation, negotiation and peace-building projects
- Improve women's teaching, communication and outreach skills so that they may build the capacity of other women to engage in conflict resolution activities as a means to ensuring that their impact is sustainable
- Build the capacity of local organizations to develop stronger financial and organizational management to effectively manage WCI's sub-grants and future grants from other donors in an effort to improve financial sustainability

The ideas follow the technical efforts as described in the Concept Plan. Specifically, they:

- Build upon past and current conflict transformation efforts by women, NGOs and the government;
- Involve action groups and individuals that will benefit from a WCI training program, such as women with a strong, demonstrated interest in and personal commitment to increasing women's participation in political decision-making and conflict transformation;
- Target women who have connections to both higher level leadership and grassroots level organizations;
- Encourage women's participation in official conflict negotiations. This component will require efforts to spread the message that women can be effective negotiators who can offer a unique contribution to conflict resolution/transformation efforts;
- Partner with local organizations to effectively tailor and integrate conflict transformation efforts to cultural and political needs;
- Provide sub-grants to finance action plans and/or advocacy campaigns and ensure that new

skills are grasped and employed.

The suggestions narrated in this section aim to create and enhance programming and sustainability of results through the creation of strong partnerships and linkages between similar efforts, while leveraging WCI's impact to increase programming efficiency and effectiveness.

As a result of this assessment, the assessment team developed 10 programming ideas. The first five ideas are narrated as combined comprehensive efforts involving more than one organization and multiple, complementary activities. The program ideas described in this section can be carried out as separate initiatives or through collaborative efforts. The assessment team recommends WCI uses the combined approach — which will include a combination of sub-grants, technical expertise and skills training — wherever possible. The remaining program ideas are those that WCI could support through the provision of small grants.

Comprehensive efforts (sub grants, technical assistance, and training)

1) Multimedia Campaign

Overview

As the most popular forms of media in Sri Lanka, radio and television have the capacity to reach the widest population and ensure the strongest impact. Several organizations with whom the assessment team met suggested that television (and possibly radio) discussions featuring mid-level and potential women leaders and activists could be one of the most effective ways to meet the program's goals. An internet-based component such as a blog or a website was also suggested as a way to increase the program's reach and impact.

The proposed project will act as a comprehensive, umbrella project that would provide a common link for several other subprograms, thus allowing WCI to achieve multiple objectives through a variety of approaches. As previously mentioned, a broad range of women leaders – from local activists to national-level leaders – would greatly benefit from media trainings. In order to address this need, WCI will partner with several women's organizations working on relevant issues to design the topics for each episode and conduct media training for the participants. Many of these trainings will include other capacity-building components. Details on these trainings can be found in the description of the second program possibility.

The topics of the discussions will center on themes that are relevant to enhancing women's leadership roles, especially in peace-building efforts and in reforming existing institutions and laws. By featuring women leaders who are addressing challenging issues, the series will emphasize opportunities for women in politics, the value of their participation and stimulate debate on important issues. In addition, it will increase women viewers' knowledge and interest in politics, peace-building and issues that disproportionately affect women. Possible topics/themes suggested during the visit include:

- 1) The implications of the conflict on different segments of the population
- 2) The need for legal rules of engagement and human security
- 3) The experiences of IDPs
- 4) The advantages and disadvantages of quotas for women in Parliament
- 5) The role and significance of local government structures

Partnering Organizations

YATV, a leading television production company that has been producing programs on such topics as human rights, peace-building and coexistence and youth and gender issues for several years, would produce the discussion series. YATV has already submitted a proposed budget to WCI.

WMC would collaborate on this effort by providing skills- training for program participants.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) would create opportunities for spin-off discussions through a women's weblog.

The Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) and Internews, a media organization which hosts "media houses" (training, production and resource centers for journalists) in three districts, may be able to facilitate radio broadcasts.

AED currently supports locally hosted public forums throughout the country that promote peace-building and conflict transformation through coexistence and discussion-based community problem solving. Some episodes of the program could feature topics and individuals involved in these forums.

Program Impacts

A media campaign of this nature will help WCI leverage its impact at several levels:

1. The programs will reach the largest and most diverse possible audience throughout the country. WCI will ensure that it is accessible to both Tamil and Sinhalese-speaking audiences through the use of subtitles and possibly through programs televised in both languages.
2. WCI will achieve its primary goal of increasing women's leadership and public profiles, especially of women who lack viable means to enter politics or obtain influential positions despite their skills and accomplishments.
3. By highlighting the efforts of women from all communities, the campaign would undermine existing gender and ethnic stereotypes, give legitimacy to women who are already grappling with the relevant issues and provide them with the opportunity to create public profiles so that they may eventually enter politics.
4. The program will build the capacity of its participants to effectively use the media, thereby providing them with the tools to run for office, be more effective leaders, publicly promote women's perspectives, and raise awareness on issues that disproportionately affect women.
5. The program will create a space for participating organizations to network with each other. WCI can use the media effort to lay the foundation for sustained future cooperation among organizations that work toward the same goals, i.e., increasing women's involvement in the public arena.

WCI's Role

WCI's will be involved in this project on several levels. First, it will fund the television series and act as a liaison between the participating organizations and YATV to ensure clarity and to enhance complementary efforts. WCI will provide technical assistance, such as facilitating or organizing trainings for women on public relations and utilizing the media for advocacy. Lastly, WCI will help facilitate the development of sustainable networks among the participating organizations.

2) Training Current and Potential Women Leaders

Overview

Several organizations indicated that they are currently in need of additional support to conduct trainings and workshops for women working in the non-government sector, women activists and women interested in contesting in elections. WCI could conduct and/or sponsor trainings and workshops that focus on legislative, constitutional and security-sector reform, peace-building, gender relations, human rights, power sharing and advocacy. Additional trainings geared at women who plan to actively engage in politics will focus on such topics as conducting advocacy campaigns, effective use of the media, fundraising and public speaking. Many of these participants will have the opportunity to put their newly-learned skills into practice by participating in the aforementioned talk show series. WCI's all-inclusive approach will ensure that women activists and leaders from all communities are given the opportunity to learn how to leverage their influence at the local government and national. It will also provide participants with opportunities to build networks with other participants.

Partnering Organizations

WMC has launched a systematic program to foster women's leadership at the local-government level with the ultimate goal of helping these women obtain national-level leadership positions. Participants are trained in local-government laws, human rights, public speaking, budgeting, and campaign strategy. The trainings have been structured after several rounds of trial-and-error and now represent several years of successful incremental efforts. Some of these women have been able to negotiate observer-status at local government meetings, which gives them access to the daily workings of government. The organization has already procured funding for the first year of their initiative, but is still seeking funds to sustain the program for a minimum of five years. The women undergoing training for local and national leadership will also be a significant resource for future peace-building efforts. Having emerged from and interacted with the various communities in their (often rural) neighborhoods, they will be well-positioned to act as moderators between communities.

AWAW has provided a number of women activists with training on CEDAW and UNSC 1325. However, the organization is currently seeking financial and technical support to conduct additional trainings for former program participants on the skills they need to make practical use of these tools.

IMADR is working to involve women from different minority communities in politics and provide them with the opportunity to obtain national and regional leadership positions. They would be particularly interested in selecting approximately 15 women from plantation and rural areas and training them to contest in the 2010 elections.

The Social Scientists' Association (SSA) has conducted trainings for women activists for several years. It is interested in conducting skills trainings for women activists from marginalized

populations from all over Sri Lanka. Possible topics of the trainings could include networking, advocacy skills, pedagogical skills and campaign management.

BPA could provide vocational training for women in Jaffna. This would allow WCI to expand the program's reach to an area that is not easily accessible.

Program Impacts

1. The trainings will ensure that a wide array of women from all segments of the population will be given the necessary skills to engage in politics and peace-building.
2. The trainings will also provide participants with the skills to act as trainers and role-models for other women in their communities in order to ensure their efforts are sustainable.
3. The trainings will provide a space for participants to develop intra-communal relationships so that they may coordinate future efforts.

WCI's Role

WCI would primarily be providing funding assistance and direct or facilitated training for these projects. Because WCI will be familiar with all of the participating organizations, it will be in the unique position of being able to identify organizations that are working on similar efforts and link them with each other. Where necessary, WCI can provide additional technical assistance. WCI will be able to provide an additional "bridging opportunity" for participating organizations and women through their participation in the talk show series.

3) Gender Awareness Training

Overview

WERC has been conducting workshops on gender awareness for police officers, college students, media personnel, lawyers, NGOs and the private sector since 2000. WERC requested financial assistance from WCI to resume these trainings in 2008. The trainings use the ideas contained in the Beijing Platform for Action as their foundation and focus on cultural constraints that undermine gender equity, women's political decision-making, good governance, and women's representation in peace processes. The workshops also deal with such issues as violence against women, constraints to women's involvement in non-traditional labor sectors and women's leadership in management, decision-making and capacity building.

The Asia Foundation has conducted similar programs in the past, and would be interested in resuming this work in the future given the necessary funding.

Partnering Organizations

The trainings will be conducted by WERC, which has access to a wide array of experts including lawyers, sociologists and political scientists.

The Asia Foundation may be able to provide expertise or collaborate on this project.

Program Impacts

The trainings will target those working on the conflict at the communal level such as police officers and lawyers. These individuals are rarely provided with such training opportunities, despite their significant impact on the daily lives of civilians, especially in the conflict-affected areas.

WCI's Role

WCI would primarily be providing funding assistance and direct or facilitated training for these projects.

4) Build the Capacities of Local Organizations

Overview

These programs will focus on improving the institutional and programmatic capacities of organizations that work on issues such as gender awareness, violence against women, CEDAW, human rights, women's leadership, conflict-transformation and the development of local networks. Specific needs include new or improved office facilities, staff training in concept development, public relations, fundraising and IT assistance. Additionally, while these organizations work with populations and communities across the country, they remain partially or completely disconnected from one another due to logistical and resource-based challenges. Fulfilling these needs is particularly important as it would provide the participating organizations with the ability to share ideas, information, resources and strategic advice with one another. Targeted and contextually structured sub-grants, combined with programmatic skills-building and technical support, would allow these groups to build and maintain these links and provide them with the foundation to leverage their work.

Partnering Organizations

WCI would work through IMADR, AWAW and WDC, larger organizations that have already begun to build a foundation for such projects. IMADR has formed Mothers and Daughters of Lanka, a grouping of 26 local women's NGOs while WDC is working to build the capacities 300 small CBOs.

The Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum (MWRAF) and the Women's Environment Foundation require additional assistance to support their communications abilities and maintain databases. Targeted and contextually structured sub grants could provide these groups with the ability to build and maintain these links and the foundation to leverage their work. Such an intervention can be combined with programmatic skills-building and technical support.

Program Impacts

Capacity building programs for organizations are particularly important to ensuring that WCI's efforts have the maximum possible impact and are sustainable. The trainings will give the participating organizations the necessary tools to procure funding, maintain networks and continue developing their organizational capacity. Additionally, because these organizations require very small amounts of funding, WCI will be able to make efficient use of its financial resources.

WCI's Role

By providing technical assistance, training and sub-grants for the participating organizations, WCI would help them assess their capacities and build programs to improve their functions, networks and reach. WCI would also be responsible for monitoring each initiative.

5) Uniting Women Entrepreneurs and Local Leaders Throughout Sri Lanka

Overview

This program aims to unite women working in chambers of commerce and independent women entrepreneurs for a December 2007 livelihoods and leadership development convention in Galle. The purpose of the project is two-fold. First, it will raise awareness among the minority communities, who are suffering from the direct impacts of fighting, that the majority of the country's population (which is largely concentrated in the south of the country) is sympathetic to their plight and wants to collaborate with them on conflict transformation efforts. In addition to creating goodwill, the initiative will build connections between women entrepreneurs from various parts of the country. This project is especially important because it will involve women from Mannar, Vavuniya, Ampara and Batticaloa, cities in the North and East which are most deeply affected by the ongoing conflict and are usually excluded from similar activities.

Partnering Organizations

The BPA, a grouping of businesspeople and activists working to foster peace, national unity and regional empowerment with a special focus on bringing diverse ethnic and religious groups to together, would facilitate this program.

The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce will co-host the livelihoods convention.

Program Impacts

By bringing the women from the North and East to meet their southern counterparts, the project will build bridges based on mutual interest and provide them with training in leadership and peace-building through economic linkages.

WCI's Role

WCI's primary involvement will be through the provision of funds. However, it would also link the women entrepreneurs with women leaders and activists from NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs) and CBOs by promoting and facilitating the latter groups' participation in the activities. WCI could also potentially implement a combination of trainings (as required) for this initiative.

Sub-grants

1) Raising awareness about the conflict

Overview

The lack of knowledge about the plight of war-affected populations in the rest of the country is staggering. To those in conflict-affected areas, it appears that residents throughout the rest of the country are apathetic to the increased incidence of human rights abuses, including rape and murder.

In order to combat this trend, several NGOs work to raise awareness among the general public about the experiences of conflict-affected populations, especially the plight of the women most strongly affected by the war. Representatives from these NGOs travel to remote, often virtually inaccessible conflict-affected areas and bring back the (predominately Tamil) populations' stories to share with the (predominately Sinhalese) population in the rest of the country. The information gathered is also used to advocate for policy changes as legislative activity in Colombo directly impacts these populations.

Similarly, there is a need for human rights education throughout the country. Especially in rural areas, women are unaware of the international and domestic legal frameworks that are designed to protect them from violence and abuse. CENWOR works to raise awareness about human rights by producing materials that address such topics as violence against women, CEDAW, children's rights, labor rights and services for sex workers.

Partnering Organizations

IMADR requested that WCI support the trips they facilitate to the conflict-affected areas. The information gathered during these visits will be published and disseminated through a series of pamphlets, printed in both Sinhalese and Tamil, not only to ensure the widest possible reach, but also so that victims from disenfranchised groups know that the public cares about their plight.

CENWOR currently needs support to facilitate the development and distribution of CDs and publications to telecenters and CBOs throughout the country.

Program Impacts

These efforts, which have been successful in the past, require little funding and are important steps in advocating for conflict transformation measures and sustainable peace-building. In the short-term, they enhance the possibilities for early conflict warning. For example, efforts at raising awareness about rapes, disappearances and murders committed by soldiers have resulted in public outcries and legal action.

Women who understand their rights are better able to protect themselves and their children from abuse, and therefore enjoy a better standard of living. Consequently, discontent and unrest, factors that contribute to the perpetual conflict, are reduced.

2) Support for CBOs

Several small CBOs requested financial assistance to continue their work on various social issues. Most of these organizations work to create awareness on issues such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol use, sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices and/or HIV/AIDS. Many of these CBOs are managed and run by women volunteers who also work full-time jobs.

Providing small grants to some of these organizations will enhance community-wide impacts among populations that are often neglected by humanitarian organizations. However, some of the programs, such as those aimed at combating HIV/AIDS, may be difficult to justify under WCI's current programmatic mandate unless they aim to work across the communal lines of the conflict on issues of mutual concern.

3) Media campaign on rights

A campaign aimed at building awareness about citizens' legal rights and human security during conflict was proposed by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), a non-profit membership organization which advocates for peace, human rights and development, including post-conflict rehabilitation and relief to victims of the conflict and the tsunami. The current escalation of the conflict has led to the imposition of increased security measures that have resulted in some cases of human rights abuse. In particular, according to CHA, the police collect large amounts of information from households across the country and have used this information to blackmail people for money.

CHA plans to conduct a media campaign to create public awareness about the legal parameters for gathering information, especially during periods of conflict. Specifically, while civilians are required to provide basic information (such as name, address and age) to the police, they do not have to provide more personal information, such as details about their finances or health. The campaign would include the publication of advertisements in local newspapers and potentially in other forms of media. It may also include awareness-building meetings and/or workshops.

Initiatives such as these are particularly important because establishing responsible institutions that will support – instead of undermine – peace-building and state and security-sector reform is a prerequisite for the successful resolution of the conflict.

WCI's Role

WCI's primary involvement will be through the provision of funds. It could also facilitate collaboration with other media organizations such as Internews to promote a wider reach.

4) Public Forums and Screenings

The National Peace Council (NPC), an NGO working to promote a politically-viable and equitable solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic war, recently produced a series of short films aimed at

generating public awareness on a range of issues that concern populations affected by the conflict including the impacts of conflict on women and children and the insidious use of propaganda. The NPC intends to screen the short films in 10-12 districts in the country, including conflict-affected districts, and those with a large IDP population. Following the screening, the NPC will facilitate discussions about the films in an effort to promote dialogue about issues related to the conflict.

The NPC requested WCI's support for this program. However, the assessment team is currently waiting to receive copies of the films, and will be unable to provide a recommendation concerning this project until that time.

AED, which currently supports 66 locally-hosted public forums throughout the country, requested WCI funding to sustain this effort after 2008.

5) Women's Political Campaign Fund

Lack of funds is one of the larger challenges that women face when trying to enter politics as independent candidates. Thus, as previously mentioned, few women without influential family or political party support are able to enter the public arena. The Secretary of the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment indicated that establishing a nonpartisan campaign fund for women candidates would be crucial to increasing women's political participation.

Because most political parties have long histories of corruption and violence, creating a secure means for women to contest independently will be a powerful way to enhance their political participation. However, for this program to be a viable option, WCI would need to identify and partner with another organization or organizations that could monitor the fund. The legal implications of this project would also need to be explored further.

CONCLUSION

The results of the assessment indicate that WCI has the capacity to make a meaningful impact in regards to women's participation in conflict transformation processes in Sri Lanka. This document describes the most promising program possibilities (based on WCI's goals and technical abilities, as well as expected impact) that were generated during the assessment. WCI has the capacity to implement a strategic combination of these programs by using its strengths in areas such as workshop facilitation, the provision and management of sub-grants and program monitoring and evaluation.

The comprehensive program possibilities (options 1-5) require careful structuring to ensure that they are conducted as collaborative efforts based on mutually beneficial partnerships between relevant organizations. However, these programs have the largest and most sustainable potential impact. The sub-grants would be for relatively small amounts and can be monitored through direct reports or, when necessary, through in-country (or in-country representative) visits.

The majority of the potential partner organizations work on issues that reflect WCI's program goals. They cover a wide geographic area, work with diverse populations, utilize multiple languages and aim to ensure that their programs have a sustainable impact. Many of the local organizations working on conflict transformation and women's empowerment have a great deal of institutional experience despite their small size and limited resources. WCI's support could further enhance institutional and programmatic capacity building efforts (such as technical expertise in the administration of funds, building and maintaining staff capacities, obtaining grants, providing program reports and creating and maintaining strategic links).

Currently, many of the trainings facilitated by these organizations are being carried out in the western and central regions of the country. WCI can help expand these efforts to include women from minority-dominated and conflict-affected areas as well as underrepresented groups (such as the plantation workers in the central region, poor segments of the majority Sinhalese population and Muslims in the South).

WCI's decade of institutional experience will allow it to successfully tailor the suggested programs to fulfill the needs on the ground and make a substantive impact on women's participation in conflict transformation processes in Sri Lanka.

Appendix A: List of Assessment Meetings

Academy for Educational Development Colombo, Kim DeRidder, Chief of Party, Upali Amarasinghe, Senior Program Manager/DCOP and Naomi Berman

Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC, Mathew Pietz, Program Coordinator

Agence France Presse, Sri Lanka, Amal Jayasinghe, Bureau Chief

ARD Inc., Colombo, Minari Fernando, Consultative Council Coordinator

Army II Division, Panagoda, Gen. Sarath Karunaratne, General Office Command

Asia Foundation, Colombo, Dinesha De Silva, Deputy Country Representative, Ramani Jayasundera, Program Manager and Nilan Fernando, Country Representative

Association of War Affected Women, Kandy, Visaka Dharmadhasa, Chairperson

Baduwita Community Welfare Society, Matara, C. Atapattu, Chairperson

British High Commission, Sri Lanka, Mahendra Ratnaweera

Business for Peace Alliance, Colombo, Manique Mendis, Secretary General/ Chief Executive Officer

Center for Policy Alternatives, Colombo, Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Executive Director and Mirak Raheem, Senior Researcher, Peace and Conflict Analysis Unit

Center for Women's Research, Colombo, Professor Swarna Jayaweera, and Malsiri Dias, Joint Coordinators

Ceylon Chambers of Commerce, Colombo, Chandrarathna Vithanage, Senior Assistant Secretary General

CHF International, Washington DC, Rebecca Schaaf, Program Officer

Community Welfare Society, Matara, D.M. Sumanawathie, Chairperson and Sagarika Jayasuriya, Assistant Secretary

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Colombo, F. Hashim, Deputy Executive Director

Gurukula Elders and Community Welfare Society, Matara, Banduwathie Kumarasinghe, Secretary and W.R. Prema Nona, Coordinator

Institute for Development of Community Strengths, Matara, Conrad Ranawake, Director

International Center for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, Rama Mani, Executive Director and Charan Rainford, Programme Manager/Researcher

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Colombo, Sri Lanka Delegation, Rukshan Ratnam, Information Manager

International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, Colombo, Nimalka Fernando, President

Internews, Colombo, Matthew Abud, Country Director

International Republican Institute, Washington DC, Linnea Beatty, Program Officer and Jacob Dowd, Program Assistant

Kalidasa (regional) Welfare Group, Matara, Ranjith Gamage, Coordinator

Kirana Youth Society, Kottegoda, T.H. Chamil Priyanga, Chairperson

Kottegoda Karanna Organization (Volunteer Youth League), Matara, T. Chamil Priyanga, Chairperson

Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment, Colombo, Indrani Sugathadasa, Secretary

Mirissa Mihirisi Women's Action Group, Matara, Namageeganage, Secretary

Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum, Colombo, Jezima Ismail, President

National Endowment for Democracy, Washington DC, Mona Dave, Assistant Program Officer

National Peace Council, Colombo, Saro Thiruppathy, Head of Gender Unit

Natural Resources Management Foundation, Matara, Deeptha Hemachandra, Secretary

Public Development Center, Matara, W.Wedelawa, Chairperson

Social Scientists' Association, Colombo, Kumari Jayawardena, Secretary of SSA Council of Management

Sri Lanka Press Institute, Colombo, Namal Perera, Manager Special Training Programmes

Suhada Women's Organization, Colombo, Wasanthi Jayasinghe, Chairperson

The Human Development Organization, Kandy, P. Logeswary (Logesh), Program Coordinator

UNDP, Dev Anand Ramiah, New York, Project and Operations Support Cluster, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery

UNDP, Colombo, Thusitha Perera Coordinator Strong Places Project (Tsunami Recovery)

USAID, Sri Lanka Mission, Mark Silva, Democracy and Governance Advisor

USAID, Richard Steelman, Washington DC, Deputy, Office of South Asian Affairs

United Fisheries Welfare Society (Women's Organization), Matara, Suvineetha Amadooru, Chairperson

University of Colombo/International Center for Ethnic Studies Professor Neloufer De Mel

Women and Media Collective, Colombo, Kumi Samuel and Sepali Kottegoda, Directors

Women's Development Center, Kandy, Pearl Stephen, Coordinator and staff

Women's Education and Research Center, Colombo, Thillainathan Thurimakal, Project Coordinator and Malathy, Assistant to Director

Women's Environment Foundation, Matara, Nilmini Mudalige, Chairperson

World Bank, Colombo, Patrick Vandenbrauene, Coordination Facilitator

Young Asia Television, Colombo, Sharmini Boyle, Chief Editor

Youth Society-East, Matara, H.P. Shammi, Chairperson