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**Sri Lanka\***

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## Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DOL	Department of Labour
DV Act	Domestic Violence Act
FBR	Family Background Report
FHH	Female Headed Households
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCE A/L	General Certificate in Education, Advanced Level
GCE O/L	General Certificate in Education, Ordinary Level
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GN	Grama Niladri
GNI	Gross National Income
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ILO	International Labour Organization
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
MMDA	Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MN	Million
MOFE	Ministry of Foreign Employment
MOH	Ministry of Health
MWCA	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
NAITA	National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSACP	National STD/AIDS Control Programme
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PHM	Public Health Midwife
SLBFE	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
SME	Small &Medium Enterprises

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SMWCDPSE	State Ministry of Women & Child Development, Pre-schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TVEC	Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
WDF	Women Development Federation
WDO	Women Development Officers
WDS	Women Development Societies
WHHs	Women Headed Households

## I. General information about the reporting State

### A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics of the State

1. The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island state situated off the Southern coast of India in the Northern Indian Ocean of South Asia, separated from the Indian sub-continent by a narrow strip of shallow water known as Palk Strait. Sri Lanka lies between northern latitudes 50 55' - 90 50' and eastern longitudes 790 42' - 810 52'. It has a total area of 65,610 square kilometers, including 2,905 square kilometers of inland water.

#### Area

Total Area sqkm	Land area			
	sqkm	Inland water sqkm	Maximum Length km	Maximum Breadth km
65,610	62,705	2,905	435	225

*Reference: Statistical data sheet 2020, Department of Census & Statistics*

2. The climatic condition of the country is also affected by its proximity to the equator as well as the elevation above sea level and the monsoons. The mean temperature ranges from 26.50C to 28.50C (79.70F to 83.30F) in the low country and from 140C to 240C (580F to 750F) in the hill country. Sri Lanka receives an average 2,000 mm of rain annually, amounting to about 130 billion cubic meters of water. The hill country as well as the South West region, receives sufficient rain.<sup>1</sup>

3. For the purpose of administration, Sri Lanka is divided into 9 provinces, 25 districts and 332 divisional secretariat divisions. Sri Lanka has a centralized system of Governance as well as a decentralized system through nine provincial councils.

4. Sri Lanka has a higher percentage of females 51.58% (11,306,000) in the population while males constitute 48.42% (10,613,000) according to mid-year population estimates of 2020.<sup>2</sup> The statistics has always shown a marginally high female population in 2016 (51.59%), 2017 (51.59), 2018 (51.58%), 2019 (51.58%) respectively.<sup>3</sup> According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the 2020 mid-year population growth rate was reduced to 0.62% in 2019 from 1.05% in 2018. Female death rates are lesser than male death rates throughout the reporting period.

#### Population

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total ('000)	21,203	21,444	21,670	21,803	21,919
Male ('000)	10,265	10,382	10,492	10,556	10,613
Female ('000)	10,938	11,062	11,178	11,247	11,306
Population density (per sq.km)	338	342	346	348	
Population growth rate	1.1	1.1	1.05	0.62	
Dependency ratio	49.4	49.4	49.4	49.4	

Source: Statistical data sheet 2020, Department of Census & Statistics

*According to 2012 Census data of Department of Census & Statistics*

<sup>1</sup> Annual Health Bulletin 2018, MoH.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Register General's Department, Reference: <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Population/StaticInformation/VitalStatistics>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Register General's Department, Reference: <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Population/StaticInformation/VitalStatistics>.

Population by Age Groups	%
0 -14	25.2
15-59	62.4
60 & above	12.4

*The dependency rate continued to be 49.4 during reporting period*

### Vital Statistics

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Live births	331,073	326,052	328,112	319,010
Male	169,177	165,926	166,946	163,019
Female	161,896	160,126	161,166	155,991
Sex ratio at birth <sup>4</sup>	104.5	103.6	103.6	104.5
Crude birth rate ( per 1000 population)	15.6	15.2	15.1	14.6
Deaths	130,765	139,822	139,498	146,056
Male	73,056	77,206	77,311	79,728
Female	57,709	62,616	62,187	66,328
Crude death rate( per 1000 population)	62	65	64	67

*Source: Registrar General's Department. Reference: Statistical data sheet 2020, Department of Census & Statistics*

5. As a result of declining overall mortality and infant mortality rates, life expectancy (females 80.3 and males 73.6 in 2019) has continuously risen. At the same time, low fertility rates (2.19 in 2019) and high life expectancy resulted in declining share of children and increasing share of elderly.

### Ethnic distribution in the population

Year	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Indian Tamils	Sri Lankan Moor	Other
2012	74.9%	11.2%	4.1%	9.3%	0.5%

*Source: Department of Census & Statistics*

6. Population by religion was Buddhist 70.1%, Hindu 12.6%, Islam 9.7%, Christian & Roman Catholic 7.6% (Source: Central Bank Report 2019).

7. In 2019 the urban population was 18.2%, the rural population was 77.4% and Estate population was 4.4%. More people are living in rural areas than in urban areas. More women live in rural areas (62.5%) as compared to (37.5%) in urban areas. <sup>5</sup>This can also be attributed to migratory labour patterns in the country.

8. Sri Lanka is far ahead of her South Asian neighbours in the accomplishment of human development goals. Life expectancy at birth is currently 72 yrs. and is close to the estimated lifespan in the developed countries. High literacy rates, low mortality rates and the steadily declining population growth, reflect the country's progress in the sphere of social development. All these human development indicators are a tribute to Sri Lanka's social service network, which was established in the latter part of the 1940 decade, ensuring sound educational policies, an extensive health care programme and an effective medical system for all sectors of the nation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Number of male births per 100 female births.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Labour Force Report 2019, Department of Census & Statistics.

<sup>6</sup> Demographic Health Survey 2016, Department of Census & Statistics.

**Literacy rates**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
Adult Literacy Average	92.39	91.90	91.71	92.9
Literacy male	93.46	92.98	92.77	93.6
Literacy female	91.49	90.97	90.80	92.3
Computer literacy average	27.6	28.6	29.0	30.8
Computer literacy male		31.1	31.0	32.9
Computer literacy female		26.4	27.2	28.9
Digital Literacy average				46.0
Digital Literacy Male				49.7
Digital Literacy female				42.6

*Source: Annual Labour Force Report 2019, Department of Census & Statistics*

9. As for digital literacy 46.0% of the population (aged 5 -69) has digital literacy. Digital literacy is higher than computer literacy for all disaggregated levels, showing the drift from Personal computer to smartphones/Tablets. However, rates in adult literacy, computer literacy and digital literacy, the rates of males are higher than that of females.

**Other Socio-economic indicators included in the Human Development Report****Human Development Index**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
HDI	0.776 rank 76	0.780 rank 71	0.782 rank 72
Female HDI	0.738	0.749	0.759
Male HDI	0.789	0.799	0.794

*Source: Human Development Reports 2019 and 2020*

10. According to the Human Development Report in 2019 HDI is 0.782 ranking Sri Lanka 72 out of 189 countries. The Female Human Development Index (HDI) value for Sri Lanka is 0.759 in contrast with 0.794 for males. The 2018 HDI values is 0.799 with a rank of 71 which is better than 2017. The female HDI in 2018 was 0.749 against male HDI 0.799. It is visible that female HDI had increased in 2018 and 2019. The progression in the HDI ranking of Sri Lanka was visible in 2018 with a rank of 71 compared to the previous year rank of 76. The HD report reveals Sri Lanka's 2018 HDI value to be 0.780, which is above the average of 0.750 for countries in the group and above the average of 0.642 for countries in South Asia. Sri Lanka's rank of 71 positions it ahead of India and Pakistan which hold the ranks of 129 and 152 respectively in 2018 and this progress is due to the investment made in areas of social and economic development.

**Gender Development Index**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
<b>GDI</b>	<b>0.935</b>	<b>0.938</b>	<b>0.955</b>
Life Expectancy females	78.8	80.1	80.3
Life Expectancy males	72.1	73.4	73.6
Expected years of schooling - for females	14.1	14.2	14.5
Expected years of schooling - for males	13.6	13.7	13.8
Mean years of schooling - female	10.3	10.5	10.6
Mean years of schooling - male	11.4	11.6	10.5
GNI per capita females PPP \$	6,462	6766	7433

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
GNI per capita males	16,581	16,852	18,423

*Source: Human Development Reports 2019 and 2020*

11. The GDI for 2019 was 0.955. In 2017 and 2018 Sri Lanka's Gender Development Index (GDI) was 0.935 and 0.938 respectively. GNI per capita of females is much lower than that of male's right through the years. Life expectancy and expected years of schooling of females have been slightly higher than males throughout the years. Overall, 2018 had better values in all measurements and the GDI recorded a stronger value of 0.938 compared to 2017 value of 0.935.

### Gender Inequality Index

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019 value and rank</i>
GII	0.354	0.380	0.401
	Rank 80	Rank 86	Rank 90
Maternal mortality rate <sup>7</sup>	30	32	36
Adolescent birth rates	14.1	20.9	20.9
Share of parliamentary seats held by females	5.8	5.8%	5.3%
Attainment in secondary education – females	82.6	82.6%	79.2%
Attainment in secondary education males	83.1	83.1%	81.0%
Labour force participation rate (% 15 years and older) female	35.1%	34.9%	35.4%
Labour force participation rate (% 15 years and older) male	74.1%	72.2%	74.6%

*Source: Human Development Reports 2018, 2019 and 2020*

12. By 2019, Sri Lanka has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.401, ranking 90 out of 162 countries. In 2017, Sri Lanka's GII value was 0.354, ranking it 80 out of 160 countries and in 2018 it was 0.380 with a rank of 86. The GII can be interpreted as the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions of reproductive health, education and economic empowerment. The share of parliamentary seats held by females dropped by 5% in 2019 which is a concern when reflecting on the already low performance in this indicator. The low level of labour force participation by females continued in 2019 which has implications in gender related indicators in the Human Development Report. MMR (deaths per 100,000 live births) was also increased by 4 in 2019 which is a concern in the health sector. However, health sector has already taken measures to bring this number down and initiated systematic investigation into each and every death of pregnant mothers.

### Life-course Gender Gap (Female to male ratio)

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
Sex Ratio(male to female births)	1.04	1.04
Pre-primary(gross enrolment female to male ratio)	0.97	0.99
Primary( gross enrolment female to male ratio)	0.99	0.99
Secondary( gross enrolment female to male ratio)	1.05	1.05

<sup>7</sup> Deaths per 100,000 live births.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
Youth unemployment(female to male ratio)	1.76	1.77
Population with at least some secondary education (female to male ratio)	0.99	0.98
Total unemployment rate (female to male ratio)	2.33	2.33
Share of employment in non-agriculture female (% of total employment in non-agriculture)	32.5	32.5
Share of seats in Parliament held by women	5.8	5.3
Share of seats in local government held by women	10.9	10.9

13. The share of seats in the Local Government held by women was increased to 10.9 from the previously held 1.9 (2017) due to the 25% mandatory quota for women granted in the Local Government elections in early 2018.

14. According to the Women Empowerment Dash Board reported in the Human development Report of 2020, Sri Lanka is placed in the top or middle category except for the indicator “Female share of employment in senior and middle level management” which is 22.5% and Sri Lanka is placed in the bottom third.

15. Average size of the households was 3.8 and the mean monthly household income in Sri Lanka was Rs. 62,237 in 2016. The mean monthly household income among three sectorsurban, rural and estate sectors were Rs.88,692, Rs.58,137 and Rs.34,804 respectively. When the provinces are compared, the Western province reported the highest household income level which was more than 2 times higher than the values reported by the Eastern province with reported lowest values for both the median and the mean income. Considering the district figures, Colombo district has indicated the highest monthly household income for both mean and median. (Rs104, 581 for mean and Rs. 70,000 for median).The mean householdexpenditure country wise was SLRs. 54,999.<sup>8</sup>

### Key Economic Indicators

	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019(a)</i>
GDP at current market price (Rs.billion)	9,592	10,361	10,951	11,996	13,328(d)	14,366(a)(d)	15,016
GNI at current market price (Rs.billion)	9,366	10,125	10,676	11,676	12,975 (d)	13,977(a)(d)	14,584
GDP at current market price (US\$billion)	74.3	79.4	80.6	82.4	87.4(d)	88.4(a)(d)	84.0
GNI at current market price (US\$billion)	72.5	77.6	78.5	80.2	85.1 (d)	86.0(a)(d)	81.6
Per capita GDP at current market price (Rs.)(h)	465,976	498,660	522,204	565,773	621,531(d)	662,949(a)	(d)688,719
Per capita GNI at current market price (Rs.)(h)	454,993	487,298	509,103	550,697	605,076(d)	644,970(a)	(d)668,894
Per capita GDP at current market price(US\$(h)	3,609	3,819	3,841	3,886	4,077(d)	4,079(a)(d)	3,852

<sup>8</sup> Department of Census and Statistics Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016

(a)Provisional ;

(d)Revised ;

(h) Estimates are updated with the latest population figures.



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019(a)
Per capita GNI at current market price(US\$(h))	3,524	3,732	3,745	3,782	3,969(d)	3,968(a)(d)	3,741
GDP	3.4	5.0	5.0	4.5	3.6(d)	3.3(a)(d)	2.3
Major economic activities of GDP							
Agriculture	3.2	4.6	4.7	-3.7	-0.4(d)	6.5(a)(d)	0.6
Industry	4.1	4.7	2.2	5.7	4.7(d)	1.2(a)(d)	2.7
Services	3.8	4.8	6.0	4.8	3.6(d)	4.6(a)(d)	2.3
GNI	2.8	5.1	4.8	4.3	3.6(d)	3.2(a)(d)	2.2

Source: Annual Report of Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2020

16. During 2019, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant market prices recorded a slower growth of 2.3 per cent compared to the growth of 3.3 per cent recorded in 2018. “The Easter Sunday attacks had a severe impact on the tourism sector, and their adverse spillover effects were felt across the economy, worsening the sluggish growth of the economy and further dampening business confidence”<sup>9</sup>. GDP at constant prices was estimated at Rs. 9,889.4 billion in 2019, in comparison to Rs. 9,668.6 billion in 2018. GDP growth was 4.5% in 2016, 3.6% in 2017, 3.3% in 2018 and 2.3% in 2019.

17. Poverty headcount index in Sri Lanka was 4.1% in 2016 and it differs by sector: urban 1.9%, rural 4.3% and estate sector is 8.8%. Poverty headcount index female was 3.9% in 2016 compared to male 4.1%. The dependency ratio in 2016 was 49.4% and did not show much change since then. Although the poor account for only 4.1% of the population, a considerable proportion of the vulnerable population is clustered just above the poverty line, facing the risk of slipping into poverty due to various shocks like natural disasters (e.g. floods, droughts and landslides). It is important to improve the resilience of the poor and the vulnerable, especially given the rising incidence of climate-related extreme events in the country affecting lives and livelihoods of households. (SDG Target 1.5).<sup>10</sup>

18. Poverty statistics in Sri Lanka shows that there are districts where poverty headcount and household poverty indices are high. According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey in 2016, estate sector reports the highest headcount poverty index (8.8%) than the urban (1.9%) and rural (4.3%). District wise Kilinochchi district reports the highest headcount poverty Index of 18.2% whereas Colombo reports 0.9%. The poverty head count index for other districts in the North and East are Mullathivu 12.7%, Batticaloa 11.3%, Trincomalee 10.0% and Jaffna 7.7%. In other areas, the districts that show high poverty head count index are Kegalle 7.1%, Badulla 6.8%, Ratnapura 6.5%, Nuwara Eliya 6.3%, Moneragala 5.8% and Kandy 5.5%. They are above the national average of 4.1%. The percentage of poor households are also high in these districts compared to other districts. According to the same source the total number of households live in poverty in Sri Lanka is 169,392. Of them, majority are living in the rural sector 142,312 and the Estate sector reports to have 15,603 families where as urban sector reports 11,477 families.<sup>11</sup>

19. By 2017 nearly 45% of the elderly population (aged above 60 years) are covered by social protection, with a slightly higher coverage of elderly females (46.4% compared to 41.9% for males).<sup>12</sup>

20. The Household Income and Expenditure Survey conducted in 2016 was the last of such survey conducted in Sri Lanka during the reporting period.

<sup>9</sup> Annual Report 2019 of Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

<sup>10</sup> Sri Lanka Voluntary National Review on the Status of Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Household Income and Expenditure Survey in 2016, Department of Census & Statistics.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Census & Statistics.

### Female Headed Households

21. By 2018, out of the total 5.4 MN households in Sri Lanka 1,414,164 were female headed. The following table shows the increase during the reporting period;

Year	Female Headed Households	Widows
2016	1,414,164	1,112,079
2017	1,448,168	1,148,574
2018	1,460,367	762,596

Source: Annual Labour Force Surveys, 2016, 2017, 2018, Department of Census & Statistics

22. The data shows the following age breakdown of the female heads of the household:

- 15-4 years 509,948 ;
- 50-59 years 304,611 ;
- Above 60 years 645,808 ;

23. High percentage of the female heads of households are in the above 60 age category and their income earning capacity is relatively low. Out of the total of 1,460,367 females heading the households in 2018, 36.3% were married, 5% were never married, 52% were widows, 1.5% were divorced, and 4.8% were never married. By 2018, there is a drop in the number of widows.

24. Considering the poverty situation of these FHHs, only 2.8% were below the official poverty line of Sri Lanka. (Official poverty line was Rs.4, 166/- per month in 2016) Half of the female heads of these very poor household were widows. <sup>13</sup>The MWCA has developed a National Action Plan to improve the status of FHHs and it is being implemented since 2016.

### Sri Lanka Employment data

Employed population	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	7,947,683	8,208,179	8,015,166	8,180,693
Male	5,149,948	5,279,158	5,300,310	5,368,869
Female	2,797,735	2,929,021	2,714,855	2,811,796

Source: Annual Labour Force Survey 2019, Department of Census & Statistics

### Economically active / inactive population by gender - 2019

	Number Economically Active	%	Number Economically inactive	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,592,010</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7,832,006</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Male	5,554,192	64.6	2,055,920	26.3
Female	3,037,818	35.4	5,776,085	73.7

Source: Annual Labour Force Survey 2019, Department of Census & Statistics

25. In Sri Lanka, the estimated economically active population is about 8.5MN. in the last quarter of 2019. Out of this, 64.6% are males and 35.4% are females. The economically inactive population is about 7.8MN. Out of the economically inactive population 26.3% are males and 73.3% are females. In all urban, rural and estate sectors women are economically inactive more than males. The highest participation rate for males is reported from age group 40—44 years (96.2%), while that for female is reported from 45—49 age group (45.4%).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Annual Labour Force Survey 2018, Department of Census and Statistics.

<sup>14</sup> Labour Force Survey 2nd Quarter 2020, Department of Census & Statistics

## Labour Force Rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter
<b>Labour Force Participation Rate</b>					
Total	53.8	54.1	51.8	52.3	50.2
Male	75.1	74.5	73.0	73.0	71.7
Female	35.9	36.6	33.6	34.5	31.6
<b>By Residential Sector</b>					
Total	53.8	54.1	51.8	52.3	50.2
Urban	49.8	50.5	49.6	50.2	46.4
Rural	54.6	54.8	52.3	52.7	51.0
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>					
Total	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.8	5.4
Male	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.3	4.1
Female	7.0	6.5	7.1	7.4	8.2
<b>Unemployment -GCE A/L and above</b>					
Total	8.3	8.1	9.1	8.5	10.0
Male	4.7	5.0	5.1	5.0	6.3
Female	11.9	11.3	13.2	11.9	14.2

*Source: Labour force survey reports 2016-2020 of Dept. of Census & statistics*

26. Female labour force participation rate has been lower than that of males' right through the reporting period and it correlates with the rate of unemployment between males and females. It is also a concern that unemployment among educated women are higher than that of educated males. Throughout the reporting period, female unemployment among A/L and above qualified women is more than double of the unemployment rate of the qualified males.

### By industry Group

	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020 Q2	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture	25.4	31.7	25.5	29.7	23.9	28.0	27.4	26.5	26.4	28.4
Industry	26.6	23.9	28.8	27.4	29.4	27.4	26.5	27.5	27.0	26.7
Services	48.0	44.3	45.8	42.9	46.8	44.6	46.1	46.0	46.5	44.9

*Source: Labour force survey reports 2016-2020 of Dept. of Census & statistics*

27. Highest employment share is in service sector and this is true for both male (46.5%) & female (44.9%), while the lowest shares are for industry sector (male 27% and females 26.7%). Among employed females 28.4 percent is in agriculture sector while this share is 26.4 percent for employed males. One reason for this situation could be that women can engage in agricultural activities while attending to household chores. However, women are mainly in small hold agriculture than in commercial agriculture. Share of employment in non-agriculture female is 32.5%. Women in the industry sector is lesser than men despite high female employment in the export zones.

28. 2018 LFS data shows that women work in their own family land as unpaid family workers and among the contributing family workers<sup>15</sup> women are 78.9 % and men are

<sup>15</sup> When a household member is engaging in a family business or farming and the other members who engage in this activity without any payment are identified as contributing family workers.

21.1%.<sup>16</sup> Women also work as day labourers in other farms and agricultural ventures, as full time or part time estate workers (economically active population in estate sector is 44.7% women and 55.3% men)<sup>17</sup>, or engage in food processing in factories or home based. Despite such engagement and contribution, women are still not accepted as farmers or fishers, or as key producers of agricultural products in Sri Lanka. While agriculture remains an important sector for family livelihoods, the economy and the nation's food supply, it is also a sector in which productivity and earnings are low.<sup>18</sup>

### Formal and Informal sector employment 2019

Gender	Total Employed		Sector			
			Formal		Informal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	8,180,693	100.0	3,482,505	42.6	4,698,187	57.4
Male	5,368,896	100.0	2,106,990	39.2	3,261,906	60.8
Female	2,811,796	100.0	1,375,515	48.9	1,436,281	51.1

Source: Annual Labour Force survey 2019, Department of Census & Statistics

29. According to the above table, among both employed males and females, majority are working in the informal sector. The percentages are 60.8 percent for males and 51.1 percent for females. Female formal sector participation is higher compared to that of male, when the percentage is considered. However, out of the employed population, females are more in the informal sector (51.1%) than in formal (48.9%) sector.

### Managers Senior Officials and Legislators Employed in 2016

Year	Male %	Female %
2016	6.7	4.9
2019	8.4	6.0

Source: Annual Labour Force Survey Reports 2016, 2019, Department of Census & Statistics

### Women in Administrative Service -2017

Grade	Male	Female	Total	Female %
Super Grade	256	130	386	33
Grade 1	314	298	612	8.6
Grade 11	219	384	598	64.0
Grade 111	324	512	836	61.4
	<b>1108</b>	<b>1324</b>	<b>2432</b>	<b>54.44</b>

Source: Department of Census and Statistics

### Employed population by occupation and gender – 2019

Occupation	Gender		% Contribution of females to the total employment
	Male	Female	
Total	100	100	34.4
Managers, senior officers and legislators	7.6	8.4	27.2
Professionals	7.4	4.3	62.4
Technical and Associate Professionals	9.1	8.9	35.6
Clerks and clerical support workers	3.8	2.8	51.9

<sup>16</sup> Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey 4th Quarter – 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Sri Lanka Gender Equality Diagnostic of Selected Sectors 2016,ADB.

Occupation	Gender		% Contribution of females to the total employment
	Male	Female	
Services and sales workers	8.7	9.2	30.2
Skilled agricultural, forestry, fishery workers	16.8	17.6	31.4
Craft and related trades workers	16.0	16.6	31.7
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	8.7	11.5	13.3
Elementary occupations	21.5	20.1	38.5
Armed forces occupations	0.4	0.6	14.6

*Source: Annual Labour Force Survey Report, 2019, Department of Census & Statistics*

30. According to the Labour Force Survey 2019, 6 % of the female workforce was in the occupational category of Managers, Senior Officials and Legislators, which was an increase from 4.9% in 2016. Altogether there is an increase of both male and female categories in this occupational group. More than 35% females are working as Additional Secretaries but only 12.5% are functioning as Secretaries. Reaching the top is still difficult for women.

### **Migration for Employment Sector and Factors Affecting Women Engagement in the Sector**

31. Sri Lanka's labour migration sector makes a considerable contribution to the growth and development of the country. It continues to be an important and essential sector that reduces domestic employment pressures. Migrant workers have been a major source of foreign exchange for the Sri Lankan economy for nearly four decades. In 2018 private remittances to Sri Lanka were USD 7.0 billion accounting for 7.9% of GDP of the country.<sup>19</sup>

32. In Sri Lanka, the labour migration sector is managed by the Ministry of Foreign Employment and Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau, set up by an Act of Parliament in 1985. It operates through local and foreign recruitment agencies on which the country relies upon to source jobs overseas and to feed the overseas labour demand from within the country. The Government also has its own Recruitment Agency which acts as a public employment agency.

33. The annual registered departures exceeded 300,000 in 2014 but has been on the decline since then due to various factors over and above the economic downturn and labour market reforms in countries of destination. These include certain restriction of categories of migrant workers. According to the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employments' (SLBFE) 2018 provisional statistics, 2018 has had the lowest registered departures since 2006.

34. 2018 performance in migration for employment sector:

- In 2018 the total departures for employment was 211,461 out of which 61.37 percent was males and 38.63 percent or 81,687 were females. Out of this number 64,940 females went as housemaids;
- The total number of departures has been decreased by 25% in the year 2018 when compared to the year 2017 (i.e. 211,990 in the year 2017 and 211,461 in the year 2018);
- According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the workers' remittances had reached US\$ 7,015 for the Year 2018 which is lower than in 2017 which was \$ 7,164.

35. Some of the regulations imposed over the years have also contributed to discrimination of women in the labour migration sector. The Family Background Report, imposed by the Government in 2013/2014 for prospective female domestic workers has resulted in reducing the outflow of females migrating for domestic work, and not necessarily acting as a measure of protection, as intended originally. Many studies and field experience

<sup>19</sup> Institute of Policy studies Blog on Remittances.

indicate that such regulations have compelled women to seek illegal or irregular channels to depart the country for employment, leaving them and their families vulnerable.

36. A new National Policy & Action Plan on Migration for Employment for Sri Lanka, 2021 – 2023 is in place and await the Cabinet approval. It has four core policy areas:

i. Governance of labour migration to promote decent and productive employment, has as its policy objective: “Sri Lanka benefits from a well governed labour migration sector that promotes decent, safe and productive employment.” ;

ii. Secure rights and protection of migrant workers and ensure well-being of their families, has as its policy objective: “Sri Lanka strengthens all rights of migrant workers ensuring protection, social security and wellbeing of all migrant workers and their families in all stages of labour migration.” ;

iii. Promotion of employment opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers in local and global economies aims at fulfilling the policy objective: “Sri Lanka facilitates its labour force to effectively access global labour market opportunities and benefit from better socio-economic gains.” ;

iv. Enhance benefits of migration and its nexus with national development has outlined the following policy objective: “Sri Lanka effectively positions migration for employment as a productive sector in the development of the country.”.

37. The new policy has looked at the key horizontal policy linkages between migration policy and the other national policies such as National Policy for Decent Work in Sri Lanka 2006, The National Human Resources and Employment Policy for Sri Lanka 2017, National Youth Policy 2014, TVET Policy 2016, SME Policy 2017.

38. The new policy has taken the gender equality as a premise that needs high priority. It is important to pay greater attention to the strategies proposed in the new policy that proposes gender equitable outcomes and outputs.

39. In an effort to seek safer alternatives, the migration sector seeks to promote higher skilled work for prospective female migrant workers in the care giving and hospitality sector. For male migrant workers, jobs in specified technical areas such as mechanical and electronic engineering and manufacturing are being promoted. The demand for workers with specific skills and competencies is so high that after a mandatory period of employment is completed, naturalization for permanent citizenship is also being offered by countries of destination who are facing severe shortages of blue collar workers. Such jobs would have decent working conditions and higher wages which would counter the losses from declining departure numbers in terms of remittance contributions. The Government has secured bilateral agreements with countries such as United States of America, Republic of Korea and Japan for nursing and technical areas of work. It is in the best interest of the country to promote such jobs and facilitate skills training and sensitization to cater to these demands.

40. The National Policy Framework of Vistas of Prosperity & Splendour (2020 -2025) proposes the following strategies under its migration sector:

i. Introduce programmes to send skilled workers instead of unskilled workers ;

ii. A programme to be in place to train women for high demand and globally competitive professions such as nursing ;

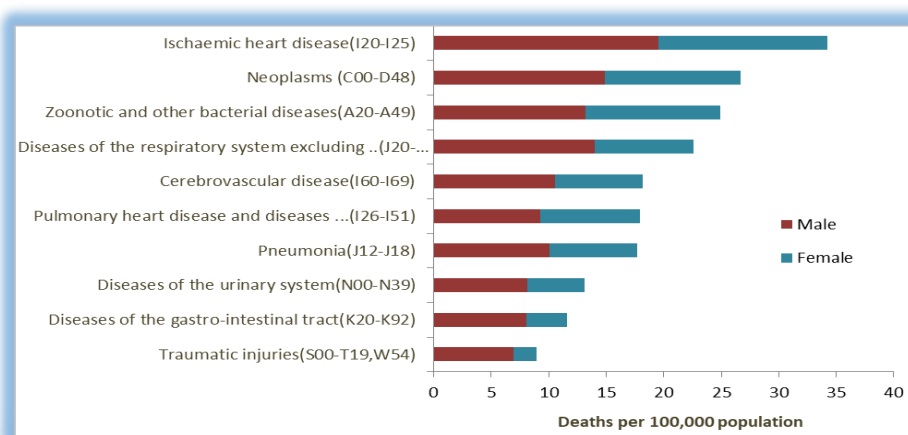
iii. Our embassies in Middle East will be made to bear greater responsibility in protecting Sri Lankan housemaids working in these countries.

### **Health Sector**

41. At present, all the health services including curative and preventive services are equally distributed in each and every district of the country. Country is divided in to 353 field health divisions named as Medical Officer of Health areas. Public Health Midwife (PHMs) as the grass root level health care provider at field level, caters for 3000-5000 population with regard to women’s reproductive health needs. PHMs provide a comprehensive package of maternal and child health care inclusive of Pre Conception Care, Antenatal care, Pregnancy care, Post-partum care, Well women clinic service, Family Planning, prevention of SGBV

and supporting survivors of SGBV. Domiciliary care is provided by the PHMs all over the country.

### 2018 Ten major causes of death among males and females<sup>20</sup>



42. Ischemic heart disease is the main leading cause of death in Sri Lanka and it is high in males than in females. Neoplasms is ranked as the second leading cause of death in 2018. Zoonotic and other bacterial diseases was ranked as the third in rank in 2018. Cerebrovascular disease which was the sixth leading cause of death in 2015 and 2016 is ranked fifth in 2018.<sup>21</sup> Traumatic injuries as a main cause of death is comparatively high among males than among females.

43. Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), constitute a major public health challenge threatening the well-being of people and sustainable development of Sri Lanka. The challenge of NCDs is compounded by the increasing proportion of the elderly in the population. Addressing the complexity of risk factors of NCDs - tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet and air pollution - requires multisectoral responses which are challenging to implement.<sup>22</sup>

### Total Fertility Rate

44. According to the 2016 Demographic and Health Survey of DCS, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for the three years preceding the survey was 2.2 births per woman. The fertility of women age 25-34 has increased while, among women in the other age groups it has decreased over the past 20 years. TFR differentials: The TFR for the richest wealth quintile is 2.3 while the TFR for the poorest quintile is 2.2. The mean number of children ever born at age 40-49 is 2.7 in the lowest and 2.1 in the highest quintile, testifying in this way to the high levels of fertility in the past among women of the poorest households, a situation that seems to have changed in the younger cohorts of women in the poorest households. Women aged 40-49 in kilinochchi, Batticaloa and Trincomalee have on average more than 3 children. More than half of births (other than first birth) in the country occur within five years of the previous birth, with 33 percent of births occurring in the interval of 24-27 months. Teenage pregnancy: Thirty women out of thousands of age 15-19 have begun childbearing. The fertility rate for Sri Lanka in 2019 was 2.194 births per woman, a 0.72% decline from 2018. The fertility rate for Sri Lanka in 2018 was 2.210 births per woman, a 0.05% decline from 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Annual Health Bulletin 2018 MoH.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, Think Globally - Act Locally; Lessons from Sri Lanka 2018 MoH.

**Reproductive Health Data<sup>23</sup>**

<i>INDICATORS</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
Birth Rate (per 1000 population)	17.9	16.9	16	16	15.2
Percentage of pregnant mothers registered before 8 weeks of gestation	77.08	78.47	79.4	79.8	80.6
Percentage of teenage pregnant mothers registered	5.25	4.85	4.6	4.4	4.4
Percentage of primi mothers registered	32.68	32.71	32.6	32.6	32.3
Percentage of pregnant mothers protected for Rubella	97.57	96.63	98.2	98.5	98.5
Tetanus Toxoid coverage among pregnant mothers	99.3	100	99.3	99.5	99.6
Percentage of Mothers tested for VDRL at the time of delivery	98.66	100	98.7	99.2	99.5
Grouping and Rh coverage among pregnant mothers	98.98	100	99.3	99.6	99.7
Percentage of pregnant mothers visited at least once at home by Public Health Midwife (PHM)	88.49	91.07	90.9	91.9	94.3
Percentage of pregnant mothers attending clinics at least once during pregnancy	94.65	94.7	96.9	95.8	95.4
Average number of clinic visits by a mother	6.42	6.5	6.4	6.5	6.4
Percentage of pregnant mothers with low BMI as it is on or before 12 weeks of gestation	20.2	18.8	17.5	16.6	15.5
Percentage of mothers reported with antenatal morbidities	27.04	32.1	35.4	39.4	42
Percentage of institutional deliveries	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9
Percentage of home deliveries registered	0.09	0.1	0.08	0.08	0.09
Percentage of deliveries with LSCS	34.53	36.3	37.3	39.1	40.5
Percentage of untrained deliveries reported	0.06	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.06
Percentage of post partum mothers receiving at least one home visit within the 1st 10 postpartum days	92.75	78.5	80.7	84.2	82.6
Average number of postnatal visits within first 10 days	1.73	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7
Percentage of postpartum mothers visited by PHM at or around 42 days	75.62	79	77.5	79.2	83
Percentage of postpartum mothers receiving Vitamin A mega dose	93.31	96.4	95.3	89.7	88.6
Percentage of pregnant mothers reported postnatal morbidities	11.28	10.8	11	11.4	12
Percentage of infants visited at least once at home after 42 days by Public Health Midwife	53.74	53.35	77.5	-	51.4
Percentage of infants making at least one clinic visit	100	100	100	100	110
Average number of clinic visits for an infant	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.9	5.1
Percentage of children received Vitamin A mega dose at 18 months	74.89	80.6	86.1	86.1	78.6
Percentage of children received Vitamin A mega dose at 3 years	74.47	90.5	91.2	92.9	83.1
Percentage Low Birth Weight	11.36	11.2	11.8	11.9	12.3
Percentage of infants weighed	88.16	88.5	87.5	88.1	73.5
Percentage of infants who are underweight	6.94	6.47	6.2	6.6	6.4
Percentage of young children (1-2 years) who are underweight	11.38	14.25	12.8	12.4	12.4
Percentage of preschoolers' (2 - 5 year) weighed	52.45	80.35	80.3	80.2	81.7
Percentage of preschoolers' (2 - 5 year) who are underweight	16.97	21.23	20.5	19.8	19.7
Percentage of schools in which Health Survey completed	97.64	96.1	93.6	98.2	99.6
Percentage of children screened at School Medical Inspection	80.01	78.23	74.74	-	97

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.fhb.health.gov.lk/index.php/en/statistics>.



INDICATORS	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Percentage of eligible families using any contraceptive method (All methods)	65.32	66.45	67.3	67.7	66.9
Percentage of eligible families using modern methods	55.93	57.01	57.9	58.4	57.9
Percentage of eligible families using traditional methods	9.4	9.44	9.4	9.2	9
Percentage of eligible families with unmet need for family planning	6.55	6.22	6.3	6.1	5.8
Percentage of 35-year age cohort attendance to WWC	45.1	52.8	53.3	61.2	59.1
Neonatal Mortality Rate (1000 live births)	6.59	5.8	6.3	6.5	7
Infant Mortality Rate (1000 live births)	9.16	8.2	9	9.1	10.1
Still Birth Rate (per 1000 births)	6.54	5.92	6.1	6.1	6.5
Under Five Mortality Rate (1000 live births)	10.75	9.27	10.9	10.5	11
Maternal Mortality Ratio (100,000 live births)	33.7	33.8	39.0	32.0	
Percentage of pregnant mothers >35 years registered	11.0	11.5	12.0	12.7	12.9

<https://www.fhb.health.gov.lk/index.php/en/statistics>

45. Sri Lanka records a very high percentage of institutionalized deliveries at 99% and only 0.009 home deliveries in 2019. A “National Strategic Plan on Well –Woman Programme 2019-2023” developed by the Family Health Bureau with support from UNFPA Sri Lanka is being implemented at present. This plan is in line with the National Strategic Framework for Development of Health Services 2016-2025, the National Multi-sectoral Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2016-2020, the National Policy and Strategic Framework on Cancer Prevention and Control- Sri Lanka 2015 and the commitments of the Government to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

46. Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child Adolescent and Youth Health programme (RMNCAYH) has been evolved over many decades. Origin of the programme dated back to 1926 in which the first field-based health unit system was established in Kalutara. By 2018, RMNCAYH programme has reached almost all families in the country forming a well-organized health care system with 353 Medical Officer of Health (MOH) areas. RMNCAYH programme in Sri Lanka includes provision of services in relation to reproductive, maternal, child, school, adolescent and youth health. It also includes gender and women’s health components. The maternal component is further sub-divided into areas such as; Antenatal, Intrapartum, Postpartum and Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Surveillance entities. Child health component includes new-born care, child nutrition, child development and special needs, child morbidity and mortality prevention and surveillance elements. In addition, RMNCAYH programme includes maternal and child oral health care service component. RMNCAYH programme provide services to about 54% of the population, which includes pregnant mothers, infants, children, adolescents, youth and women in the reproductive ages.

47. Family Health Bureau of Ministry of Health in collaboration with Health Promotion Bureau of Ministry of Health develop and disseminate sexual health information applicable to women and girls. These information is accessible for girls and women in the country. It is delivered through different methods as appropriate to the target population. Ex: posters, leaflets, social media campaigns, media workshops, websites, group discussions, workshops, seminars.

48. Selected district level reproductive health data from Annual Report of the Family Health Bureau 2018 from 4 different districts. (This data reflects that there is no significant difference in service provision between the districts).

<i>District</i>	<i>% of eligible couples using a modern family planning method</i>	<i>% of pregnant mothers registered before 8<sup>th</sup> weeks of pregnancy</i>	<i>% of 35 yrs. age cohort attended well women clinics</i>	<i>Total number of new GBV survivors identified</i>	<i>District Characteristics</i>
Batticaloa	45.7	79.2	77	844	Previously conflict affected
Colombo	55.6	71.4	80.4	486	Capital, main district
Jaffna	51.4	85.4	70.7	442	Previously conflict affected
Nuwara Eliya	68.7	68.7	121.1	281	Consists of highest (estate) plantation population

### Health services in the estate sector

49. There are about 220,000 families with about 930,000 people residing in the estate sector within five provinces in the country. Majority of the estate sector population reside in the Nuwara Eliya district. Plantation sector is an important contributor to GNP and therefore the health and wellbeing of these populations are a priority need of the country. When population is considered, about 40% of the women are between the age group of 15 to 45 years in the estate sector according to Demographic Health Survey 2016. After receiving citizenship in the late 1970s, the estate sector population is enjoying all health services and benefits without any discrimination. In the estate sector Preventive health services are provided to grass root level through Public Health Midwives just as for all other communities. Maternal and Child Health services are improved to a great extent with 99% receiving skilled care at childbirth. Furthermore, 97% of females in the reproductive age have heard of at least one modern method of contraception according to 2016 DHS survey. Nuwara Eliya, which has the highest estate (plantation) population became island first in providing Well Woman Clinic services in the year 2018. At present, Sri Lanka is in the process of acquiring all estate health institutions to the government sector. This will further benefit the estate sector population to reap the benefits of the free health care service in Sri Lanka.

### Psycho-social trauma management programmes

50. There is a well-established island wide state hospital and community based/domiciliary Mental Health service. The service is provided through the team of Consultant Psychiatrist, Medical Officer- Mental Health and Nursing Officer- Mental Health. The teams are based in the hospitals.

### HIV

51. Sri Lanka has not reported any case of mother-to-child transmission of HIV since 2017 and its congenital syphilis cases has consistently been two per 100 000 live births, much less than fifty per 100 000 live births needed for elimination certification, as per the findings of the Global Validation Advisory Committee. Sri Lanka was validated for elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis in November 2019, and Sri Lanka is the third country in WHO South-East Asia Region to achieve this after Thailand and Maldives.

### Reported HIV Cases

52. Table below shows HIV cases reported to the National STD/AIDS Control Programme (NSACP) during 2018-2020.

<i>Age group</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
0-14 Yrs.	1	3	2
15-24 Yrs.	3	6	4
25-49 Yrs.	44	54	48
>50 Yrs.	16	17	11

Age group	2018	2019	2020
Total	64	80	65

53. Regarding early detection of HIV among females the interventions are : NSACP conducts voluntary HIV screening, HIV awareness programmes are conducted among garment factories and HIV screening offered, HIV screening of pregnant mothers on voluntary basis, Pre-employment STD screening is conducted as a requirement to government employment, HIV screening is part of visa screening as a mandatory requirement to go to some countries, blood donors are screened for HIV, women who undergo sub fertility investigations are screened for HIV, before any major Surgical or Medical interventions patients are screened for HIV, Tri Forces members are screened for HIV, spouses of male forces officials are screened for HIV, all TB patients are screened for HIV, prison inmates are screened for HIV.

#### Geographical distribution of Females Living with HIV from 2018 -2020(district wise)

District	2018			2019			2020
	2018	2019	2020	District	2018	2019	2020
Ampara	2	1	2	Kilinochchi	0	1	0
Anuradhapura	1	0	6	Kurunegala	2	2	3
Badulla	1	1	2	Mannar	0	0	1
Batticaloa	0	3	3	Matale	2	2	1
Colombo	14	20	13	Matara	3	3	5
Galle	3	2	2	Monaragala	0	0	3
Gampaha	10	14	7	Mullativu	0	0	0
Hambanthota	1	2	1	Nuwara Eliya	2	1	3
Jaffna	1	2	3	Polonnaruwa	4	4	2
Kalutara	5	4	2	Puttlum	0	3	1
Kandy	5	2	0	Ratnapura	2	6	2
Kegalle	4	5	1	Trincomalee	0	0	2

Source:MoH

#### Access to Family Planning services

54. According to the National Family Planning Programme Review - Sri Lanka 2016<sup>24</sup> “poor women incur out of pocket expenditure for transport costs to obtain the method of their choice when it is not available close to home or to pay private sector providers when the method of their choice is not available in the public sector.”. The review also explains that “Though the majority of Sri Lankans know at least one method of contraception there is a

<sup>24</sup> National Family Planning Programme Review - Sri Lanka 2016 UNFPA published in 2017.

wide gap between knowledge about contraceptives and utilization in Sri Lanka. Modern contraception uptake is hampered by misconceptions or misinformation about side effects and cultural and religious beliefs also serve as barriers in some communities.”.

55. It is crucial also to note that finding: “The number of unintended pregnancies leading to unintended births and abortions is the most obvious evidence of unmet need for family planning among women of reproductive age. While there are significant problems in measuring both of these events, there are some estimates of the magnitude of these problems.”.<sup>25</sup>

### Abortion

56. The draft bill on liberalizing the current law on abortion continues to include the termination of pregnancy to save a life of a woman in a life threatening medical indication. It is further recommended to expand the exception to include rape and congenital anomalies of the fetus.

57. Authentic data on abortions are not available in the health system. Abortion is a criminal offence under 1883 Penal Code section 303 except if performed to save the life of the mother. “Voluntarily causing a miscarriage” is an offence punishable up to 3 years imprisonment and /or five to seven years of imprisonment if the woman is “quick with child”. If the woman dies the conduct becomes a grave crime punishable with up to 20 years and a fine.

58. A recent study conducted<sup>26</sup> “Perceptions on the abortion laws in Sri Lanka – A community based study in the city of Colombo” concludes that “the awareness on current law on abortion of the Sri Lankan adults living in the selected geographical area is considerably low. In general, the respondents appear to, have conservative attitudes towards liberalizing of abortion. However, a majority of the respondents supported legalization of abortion for rape, incest and lethal fetal abnormality. Less than one tenth of respondents agreed to legalize induced abortion in other situations such poor economic conditions, contraceptive failure, on request of the couple or woman”.

### Education sector

59. Due to the attention paid by successive Governments since 1990s, enrolment, participation and retention rates of girls have surpassed that of boys. Sri Lanka has achieved near universal enrolment in basic and secondary education. Female literacy rate is 92.9% (2019) almost equal to male literacy rate of 93.6%, as a result of free education and expansion of education facilities.<sup>27</sup>

60. Sri Lanka education sector records high female achievements at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary. In 2019, expected years of schooling for females was 14.5 and for males it was 13.8 (in 2018 it was 14.2 females and 13.7 males). In 2019, mean years of schooling was female 10.6 and males 10.6 (in 2018 it was 10.5 females and 11.6 males).

61. As for school enrolment: in 2019, primary level enrolment was 49.3% females and 50.7% males. In junior secondary, 49.8% females and 50.2% males, senior secondary female enrolment was 55.6% and male 44.4%. This shows a high dropout male student rate in senior secondary compared to that of females.

### School Enrolment rate in 2019

<i>Type of Education</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Primary	50.7	49.3%
Junior secondary	50.2	49.8%
Senior secondary	49.5%	50.5%
Senior secondary (Grade 12 and 13)	44.4%	55.6%

*Source: School census, Ministry of Education, 2019*

<sup>25</sup> National Family Planning Programme Review - Sri Lanka 2016 UNFPA published in 2017

<sup>26</sup> Ceylon Medical Journal 2016; 61: 171-175 <http://doi.org/10.4038/cmj.v61i4.8384>

<sup>27</sup> Department of Census and Statistics

62. The table shows almost equal participation of male and female up to junior secondary level. Females outnumber males in senior secondary level and it is more prominent in senior secondary (grade 12 and 13) which is 55.6%.

63. The non-schooling children are from the poorest families living in the urban and rural areas and the plantations and children with disabilities. Plantation Children who were disadvantaged earlier has a high participation rate at present in primary education.

### Student enrolment in grade 12 and 13

<i>Advanced level streams</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Females</i>
Bio Science	29.1%	70.9%
Physical Science	62.4%	36.6%
Arts	33.3%	66.7%
Commerce	48.3%	51.7%
Bio technology	45.1%	54.9%
Engineering technology	86.5%	13.5%
Vocational	62.2%	37.8%

*School Census - Ministry of Education 2019*

64. Girls outnumber boys accounting for 55.6% in grades 12 and 13. Girls are very much over represented in arts and biological science streams, while there are more boys in physical sciences and in technological stream. Girls represent only about one third of those in physical sciences.

65. As for school teachers, in 2019, of the total teacher population, 74.7% were female teachers.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Male %</i>	<i>Female %</i>
<b>Principals</b>	<b>71.5</b>	<b>28.5</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>74.7</b>

*Source: Annual School Census 2019, Ministry of Education*

66. It is evident that despite the high number of females in teacher cadre, the school principals are mostly males. This is an area where attention is needed to ensure more gender balance.

67. The technical education and vocational training (TEVT) sector have been revamped by introducing a seven tier National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) scheme. Although the enrolment in vocational and technical institutes has increased among women, the skills they obtain from these institutes are limited to those occupations which are socially determined as feminine work. However, through media and awareness programmes and through career counselling conducted by the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training, women are encouraged to participate in non-traditional vocations.

### University entrance data

	<i>2015/2016</i>	<i>Female%</i>	<i>2016/2017</i>	<i>Female %</i>
Engineering	393/1766	22.25	425/1808	24.88
Computer Science/IT	716/1421	50.38	736/1562	47.11
Technology	833/1825	45.64	840/2016	41.66
Science	2496/5011	49.81	2851/5797	49.18
Architecture/quantity surveying	155/366	42.34	169/386	43.78
Arts	7534/9141	82.41	7181/8702	82.52

*Source: 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 university entrance data, University Grants Commission*

68. Females in the engineering stream has been lower than their male counterpartsthroughout the reporting period. In the arts stream females have dominated and this is one reason for unemployment among educated females. The current demand in the labour force is more for technical competencies,therefore arts graduates find it difficult to get good employment due to skill mismatch.

### **Vocational and Technical Education Sector**

69. Skills mis-matching, unemployment and under-employment, and many other gaps including wage inequalities among females and males for the same work, still remain in many of the Sri Lanka's development sectors and has contributed to a somewhat stagnant labour force participation rate (LFPR) and low productivity especially among women and young people.

70. The local labour market trends are also different now with the gig<sup>28</sup> economy getting more popular, where the labour market is characterized by short term contracts and freelance work with less and less permanent positions offered and thus expelling uncertainties in the labour market. Many companies are also starting to work through the platform economy where services are requested and delivered through web-based platforms. Most often the work is done in a separate location and one does not have face to face interactions with their colleagues. Development of client specific web-based applications, food delivery services and taxi services are a few of the well-known examples within Sri Lanka that were increased during the Covid 19 lockdowns.

71. As such, the skills required in the present day labour market is also changing. Rather than only educational qualifications, employers now also seek specific competencies that compliment such qualifications and seek persons with multiple skills. While they may have passed examinations and obtained qualifications, many lack the soft skills and competencies to work in a team and achieve the results needed. Soft skilling is becoming a required filed. This is reflected in some of the training programmes offered by the national public and private vocational training institutions that now offer competency based training based on soft skill assessment. Unfortunately the education and higher education system of the country is yet to be revamped to cater to such emerging needs.

72. In some situations, employees are over qualified for the jobs they are recruited in to and therefore do not contribute their full potential resulting in their under-employment. Wage inequalities can be discriminatory and demotivating, especially for women which lead them to drop out of employment.

73. The skills development sector in Sri Lanka has received major attention by successive Governments due to its important contribution towards the labour market and therefore the economy and well-being of the country. It received a major boost in the late 1990s and has developed in leaps and bounds since then with the upgrading of systems and standards comparable to that of international levels.

74. Currently, the Skill Development Sector is developing a 10 year National Action Plan for Skills Development in Sri Lanka. Further, the National Policy Framework of Vistas of Prosperity & Splendour has given priority to skill development through its policy component” Towards a skilled society” and it includes the strategy “A trained, energetic workforce to achieve accelerated development to reduce the unskilled category in the labour force” This strategy is broken down to the following key activities:

- i. Provide vocational and technical opportunities to needy students regardless of academic performance ;
- ii. Rationalize the existing vocational training, institutes by introducing “one TVET” concept and establish properly scattered technical university colleges ;
- iii. Increase present scheme of NVQ certificate level 7-10 and revise Sri Lanka Qualification Framework accordingly ;

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<sup>28</sup> A labour market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.

- iv. Provide wider opportunity to existing workforce to upgrade their skills.

75. As for increasing female entry to the labour force the same national policy and plan has included the following activities:

- i. Regulate and standardize and expand child care facilities for increasing women participation in the labour force ;
- ii. Introduce flexible working arrangement for young mothers ;
- iii. Develop a Youth Human Resource data bank ;
- iv. Eradicate the culture of ragging from educational institutions ;
- v. Promote home based export oriented industries.

### Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Sri Lanka

76. The reported cases of VAW and SGBV for the reporting period collected through the Child and Women desks of the Sri Lanka Police is given below:

#### Reported Minor Offences Against Women

<i>Offence</i>	<i>Year</i>				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Sexual Harassment	2594	2443	2312	2144	2440
Abortions and related offences	64	32	30	8	27
Injuries	4079	4210	3865	3667	3411
Verbal abuse and threatening	341	462	262	219	200
Prosecutions under Prevention of Domestic Violence Act	481	540	564	536	562
Publishing libel or factual remarks	1	3	3	2	1
Prostitution	37	59	56	53	12
Other offences	345	348	241	183	178
<b>Total</b>	<b>7942</b>	<b>8097</b>	<b>7333</b>	<b>6812</b>	<b>6831</b>

#### Reported Grave Crimes against Women

<i>Offence</i>	<i>Year</i>				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Murder	81	75	96	96	74
Attempted murder	24	15	09	7	16
Severe injuries	276	284	261	236	180
Abduction	98	76	69	53	37
Rape	273	220	252	188	215
Incest or attempted incest	4	7	4	10	8
Trafficking	7	2	2	3	7
Trading Humanbeings	12	10	10	0	0
Unnatural offences	5	4	6	2	1
Severe abuse	1	0	0	1	0
Severe sexual abuse	39	24	33	45	20
Other				5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>562</b>

*Source: Children & Women Bureau of Sri Lanka Police*

77. The Sri Lanka Police is most often the first point of contact in Sri Lanka for women seeking redress from acts of violence, including sexual abuse. The Children and Women's Bureau (CWB) with its optimum coverage, plays a crucial role in addressing incidents of violence against women and children that are reported to the police. Each of 492 police stations has a Children & Women Desk headed by a female police officer. In addition to intervention in SGBV matters, these units are also responsible for prevention, awareness raising among schools, Government institutions and among at risk groups. CWB maintains a data base of the cases reported to each police station across the country.

78. The SGBV survivors are encouraged to report the incidences at the Police stations and immediate action is taken to bring redress to them. The responses include medical and psycho-social referrals, legal assistance through legal aid commission, prosecutions, and referrals to shelter homes. The staff of these Children and Women Desks are trained regularly on gender sensitive response mechanisms. However, the CWDs in the Police stations are understaffed and also have language barriers to accommodate complaints from different ethnic groups. These issues are being addressed by the recently established Ministry of Public Security. This ministry has brought public security more into focus, with mandates and responsibilities. One of the key priority areas of this Ministry is to ensure protection of all citizens, specifically women and children so that they lead a free and secure life.

79. The hotline of the Ministry "1938" established in 2014, has extended its operations to cover 24 hours enabling the victims to make complaints at any time of the day. With the publicity and the awareness raising campaigns launched, the number of complaints received by the 1938 hotline has increased as indicated below.

#### Complaints received (2014-2020) through 1938 hotline of MWCA

Type of complaint	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Sexual							
Harassment	5	5	22	13	14	5	42
Guardianship				2	6	15	4
Child Abuse	2	1	0	3	2	1	11
Employment							
Promotion	4	11	7	4	2	10	23
Land Dispute	5	14	15	12	9	17	19
Rape	5	7	12	14	5	5	10
Maintenance & divorce	10	22	27	26	23	27	97
Violation of Human Rights	3	3	4	3	1	1	
Murder & Hurt	19	25	39	35	68	58	187
Foreign							
Employment	2	4	3	2	2	1	
Miscellaneous	140	286	409	305	312	387	764
Family Dispute	154	293	544	550	564	786	1109
Domestic							
Violence	49	106	247	204	282	387	1215
Cyber Crime			53	31	47	106	290
	<b>398</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>1382</b>	<b>1204</b>	<b>1337</b>	<b>1806</b>	<b>3771</b>

Source – National Committee on women -2020

80. The table shows that the number of complaints received has been increased from 2014 to 2020. During the last years it has increased from 398 to 3771 incidences. During COVID 19 pandemic the increase is significant. The NCW has launched media campaigns and raised awareness on the issues of SGBV among the Women Development Officers working at the district and divisional levels. The WDOs take keen interest in supporting survivors and making necessary referrals to the service providers. It is also revealed that majority of the



incidences are on family disputes and domestic violence where women seek redress/ counselling as a relief mechanism for the agony encountered. Increase of cyber violence is also significant and recent phenomenon among male and female youth.

81. It is common knowledge that the incidence of SGBV is much severe than the actual number of cases reported to the Police stations. The recently published “Women Wellbeing National Study” of Department of Census and Statistics has the following data:

*Ever partnered women experienced:*

- Physical violence 18.9% ;
- Sexual violence is 6.8% ;
- Psychological violence is 27.9% ;
- Economic violence 18.1% ;

*One in five Sri Lankan women have experienced more than one form of violence in their life time :*

- 19.1% Women experienced controlling of their behavior ;
- All forms of violence was highest among younger women ;
- 14.6% women who faced violence attempted suicide ;
- Children of the women who faced violence, 4.5% children dropped out of school, 21.2% complained of nightmares ;
- SGBV in Estate sector – 37.9%, Rural sector – 18.6%, Urban sector – 15.7% ;
- 47.5% women said men should show he is boss ;
- 46.5% women said women should obey her husband even if she disagree with him ;
- 39.5% women said its wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband even she doesn’t feel like it ;
- Strongest risks – men under influence of alcohol, men who fight with other men, men with extra-marital affairs.

82. The National Action Plan to address SGBV 2016-2020 is multi-sectoral with 13 Ministries collaborating with Ministry of Women Affairs to address the issues of SGBV in Sri Lanka. The key Ministries: Health, Education, Justice, Labour, Disaster, Media have their own sector plans to address this national menace of SGBV. The National Action Plan to address SGBV 2016-2020 is under review now. It is revealed that the health sector has so far implemented 65.5% of the planned activities under the broader areas of prevention, intervention and policy advocacy. The state agencies in the VT sector has implemented 42% of the planned activities whereas the Ministry of Labour and Trade Union Relations and affiliated agencies have implemented 46.25% of the activities included under the labour sector strategies in the NAP. MWCA has implemented the most part of the NAP. The review of the NAP is ongoing. Ministry of Public Security has plans to support and steer this multi sectoral drive to address SGBV and protect women and children. The UN Agencies, INGOs, NGOs, and civil society has also contributed immensely to combat SGBV in the country.

### **Response to SGBV in Sri Lanka**

83. The most recent mapping exercise on the services to SGBV survivors conducted with UNFPA support concludes that :<sup>29</sup>

- The SGBV prevention response in the four provinces linked officers of the Women and Child Unit of the MWCA and MPISE Counseling Unit, at the Divisional Secretariat, health professionals and volunteers at the Mithuru piyasa/Natpu Nilayam

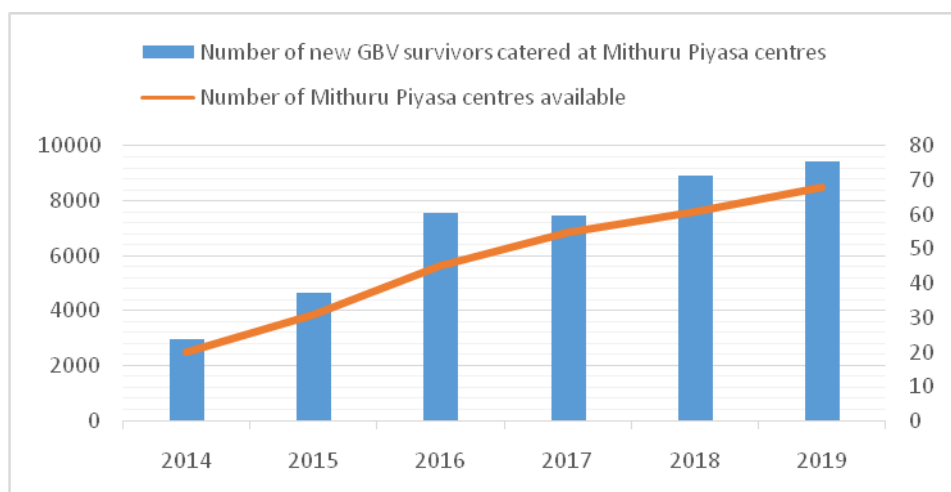
<sup>29</sup> Mapping of social services sector for the prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence affecting women and girls 2019 unfpa.

(MP/NP) befriending clinics in state hospitals, women officers of the police women and child desks, and Attorneys –at-Law of the Legal Aid Commission and NGOs ;

- Crisis information was available and accessible free of charge during regular working hours of the Women & Child Unit and Counseling Units at the Divisional Secretariats, MP/NP befriending clinics , NGO crisis centers and LAC regional centers. The index service providers (Divisional and district officers of the MWCA and MPISE, Mithuru piyasa/Natpu Nilayam (MP/NP) befriending clinics in state hospitals, the police women and child desks, LAC regional centres , NGOs (service of first contact) ) provided crisis information through help/hot lines and face to face client–provider discussions. Depending on the service, access was limited after hours, on weekends and public holidays. . Crisis information was also provided in IEC material (posters, pamphlets and brochures) at MP/NP clinics and NGO crisis centers, TV and radio programs, organizational websites and social media ;
- Crisis counseling was provided free of charge by the staff at Women and Child unit and Counseling Units MP/NP clinics, NGO crisis centers and LAC regional centers. Counselors at the Divisional Secretariat could be met at their offices on Wednesday and Monday on a walk–in-basis, by referral or by appointment and on the other three week days during their field visits. Crisis counseling provided empathetic support to affected women and girls and included information on other service providers<sup>30</sup> but referral was provided only on request which highlights that the survivors rights are respected ;
- The toll free hot lines (Table 2) with 24-hour island wide coverage were limited as they were general service lines requiring referral of women to specific SGBV crisis support services. Hot lines/Help lines routinely connect women with support services but are particularly important in crisis situations when physical access to services is prevented by barriers of distance, transport, and the risk of provoking further violence ;
- Shelters provided safe and secure accommodation in crisis situations (100%), were sited in confidential locations (83%), had security personnel (50%), used access protocols for entry and exiting from shelter (83%), provided basic accommodation needs free of charge (100%), and ensured accommodation is accessible for girls and women with disability (33%). Shelters did not have security systems.

84. Gender and Women’s Health Unit of Family Health Bureau of MoH has responded to SGBV in Sri Lanka through prevention of GBV and responding to GBV survivors. One of the main approaches targeted survivor care is establishment of hospital based GBV care centres named as Mithuru Piyasa. At present 76 such centres are distributed all over the country covering all the provinces in Sri Lanka. Mithuru Piyasa is placed near or in the outpatient department of hospitals to optimize the accessibility and to minimize stigma. The services are provided free of charge. A Medical Officer and a Nursing Officer, especially trained on GBV care by the Family Health Bureau provide the services for the survivors. Each and every client is empowered through provision of befriending and basic emotional support. Maximum privacy and confidentiality of the clients is assured. Depending on the need and the consent of the client she/he is referred to other relevant services within (such as Medico legal, Surgical, Medical, and Psychiatry) and out of the hospitals such as police, legal services, social services. Follow up of the clients is arranged in the same Mithuru Piyasa setting.

### Mithurupiyasa response 2014 - 2019



Source: Women's Health Unit of Family Health Bureau, MoH

### Covid 19 and its impact on incidence of SGBV in Sri Lanka

85. There is evidence that the Epidemic and the lockdown accompanied by the loss of income, which is critical to the survival of the family, isolation from community and friends and the widespread uncertainty and panic that prevailed is a fertile ground for violence / cruelty within the family – which largely affected many women and children. Such conditions may trigger violence in families where it did not exist before and worsen situations in homes where mistreatment and violence has been a problem. Other factors may also contribute to aggravate domestic violence such as fewer options to find safety or help. Before the pandemic, a survivor or victim could flee a violent situation by staying with a family member or going to a shelter. The lock down leaves many survivors trapped in an escalating cycle of tension and violence.

86. Even in the non-pandemic situation 17.4% of married women aged 15-45 years in Sri Lanka undergo some form of intimate partner violence within the preceding 12 months<sup>30</sup>. It is likely that Sri Lankan experience during the pandemic and lockdown would mirror the global picture and unpublished information and anecdotal evidence is emerging suggesting an increasing trend in gender based violence in Sri Lanka as well.

87. Anticipating such a possibility, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs & Social Security has expanded its' 1938 Hotline service to a 24/7 service and some of the Mithuru Piyasa/Natpu Nilayam Centers, the Mental Health Unit and some NGOs have enhanced their online and off line services to support the survivors.

88. These responses synchronize with the National Policy Framework of the Government: Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor (2019) which recognizes the need to “reduce all kind of sexual and gender-based violence for women and set up a 24-hour emotional support and advisory help line”.

## B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the state

### First Republican Constitution (1972) of Sri Lanka

89. The first constitution originated in Sri Lanka was the Constitution of 1972. It also referred to as first republican constitution after. Sri Lanka completely finished her allegiance with British government and became a sovereign and independent republic. The main features of the 1972 constitution are:

<sup>30</sup> Demographic and Health Survey (DHS, 2016) Department of Health and Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka.

i. The President. The President was Head of the State, Head of the Executive and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. The President was nominated by the Prime Minister and required to act on the Prime Minister's advice. President was only a nominal executive and had immunity from civil and criminal proceedings for the period of appointment ;

ii. The Prime Minister. He is effective Head of the State. He advised the President to declare a state of emergency and invoke the Public Security Ordinance;

iii. National State Assembly. Constituent Assembly renamed as National State Assembly. Members of the Constituent Assembly and House of Representatives became as members of the National State Assembly. Duration was six years. Initially it consisted of 151 members.

90. The other salient features are as follows:

i. Constitutional conventions were incorporated to the constitution ;

ii. Public Service had been reorganized ;

iii. Public Security became an important factor ;

iv. Parliamentary supremacy with the abolition of the judicial review of legislation, that means limited role given to the judiciary as guardians of the constitution.

### **Second Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka**

91. Presently Sri Lanka is ruled under the 1978 Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka which is commonly known as second republican constitution of Sri Lanka. The preamble of the constitution declares the principles of freedom, equality, justice, fundamental human rights and the independence of judiciary as the intangible heritage of people both present and future. The important chapters of the constitution are as follows:

Chapter One: the People, the State and Sovereignty. It contains general provisions with regard to the people, the state and sovereignty. Sovereignty is with the people and it includes following : i. The legislative power of the people, to be exercised by the parliament, ii. The executive power of the people, to be exercised by the President, iii. The judicial power of the people, to be exercised through courts, tribunals and designated institutions, iv. Fundamental rights, v. the franchise. The first three of these are to be exercised collectively, through representatives, and not individually or directly. The other two, fundamental rights and the right to vote are exercised individually ;

Chapter Three : Fundamental Rights. Fundamental Rights and Freedoms enshrined in our constitution. They are contained in article 10 to 14 of the constitution and cannot be violated by any executive or administrative persons or authority. Remedies for infringement or imminent infringement of fundamental rights are available only in respect of executive or administrative action. Article 126 of the constitution will describe the procedure and only the Supreme Court is vested with fundamental rights jurisdiction. However the constitution describes a number of situations in which different fundamental rights can be restricted by law ;

Chapter Seven Executive President of the Republic and His Powers. According to the 1978 constitution there shall be a President for the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. He is the Head of the State, the Head of the Executive, the Head of the Government and the Commander-in- Chief of the Armed Forces. The President of Sri Lanka is elected by the people and shall hold office for a term of six years. One President can hold the appointment only two terms. Article 31 of the constitution mentioned the qualifications required to nominate the presidential election.

### **Amendments**

92. From the date constitution was introduced it was amended eighteen times up to date.

### **Gender Equality guaranteed by the 1978 Constitution**

93. Gender equality is guaranteed by the 1978 Constitution through in the following articles:

*« Article 12(1): All persons are equal before law and are entitled to the equal protection of law.*

*Article 12(2): No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth, or any one of such grounds.*

*Article 12 (4) Nothing in this Article shall prevent special provision being made, by law, subordinate legislation or executive action, for the advancement of women children or disabled persons.*

*Article 4 (e) Exercise of Sovereignty by every citizen who has attained the age of eighteen years, and who being qualified to be an elector as hereinafter provided, has his name entered in the register of electors.*

*Article 90 every person who is qualified to be an elector shall be qualified to be elected as a Member of Parliament unless he is disqualified under the provisions of article 91. ».*

94. However the constitution does not provide for non-discrimination on other vital grounds, such as gender, marital status, maternity, disability, parental status, sexual orientation, transgender status or being HIV positive. The voting rights of the migrant workers (approximately 60% are females) are not recognized and they become disenfranchised unless special provisions are made.

### **Amendments effected to the Constitution Bill during the reporting period**

95. 19th Amendment to the Constitution Bill was presented to the Parliament in 2015 by the newly appointed Government with the key objectives of reducing the powers of the Executive Presidency and making the Presidency more accountable to the Parliament and the Court of law and to ensure the independence of commissions. The Nineteenth Amendment was passed with wide support from Parliament, with 215 MPs voting in its favour. A key feature of this amendment was the Constitutional Council, a body which replaced a body known as the Parliamentary Council which was set up by the Eighteenth Amendment. The primary role of the Constitutional Council was to maintain and monitor the affairs of the Independent Commissions (such as the Election commission, Public Service Commission, Bribery Commission and the Human Rights Commission). This Council is mandated with multiple roles, with an important role being that it acts as a check on appointments to several important positions, including the members of these commissions (Article 41B of the Constitution), and other offices such as Judges of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, the Attorney – General and the Inspector General of Police (Article 41C of the Constitution).

96. The Council is structured in a manner to ensure wide representation, including numerous political parties. In the first phase of reforms following the 2015 presidential election, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution effected changes to the executive presidency that changed the nature of the 1978 Constitution from a ‘president-parliamentary’ system into a ‘premier-presidential’ system.

97. The Nineteenth Amendment brought in a limitation to the number of MPs who could be appointed as Ministers (30), non – cabinet Ministers and State Ministers (40 in total) (Article 46(1) of the Constitution).

98. Under the Nineteenth Amendment, there is a restriction on when the President can dissolve Parliament, that is, the President can only dissolve Parliament after it has completed 4 and a half years of its five-year term. To dissolve Parliament before that point, the President needs a resolution requesting it to be dissolved, signed by at least 2/3rds of the MPs (Article 70(1)).

99. A 20th amendment to the Constitution Bill was proposed by a Gazette Supplement dated 2nd September 2020 by the present Government and made available to the public on the 3rd of September 2020. The 20th amendment replaced the Constitutional Council with a

Parliamentary Council which existed under the Eighteenth Amendment. The Parliamentary Council consists of Members of Parliament whereas the Constitutional Council has three non – political figures.

100. The following 3 key features introduced by the Nineteenth Amendment that will remain intact under the proposed 20th Amendment :

- The Nineteenth Amendment introduced the Right to Information into the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Sri Lankan Constitution (Article 14A). The proposed Twentieth Amendment does not take away this right ;
- Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka were held every 6 years prior to the Nineteenth Amendment. After the Nineteenth Amendment both these elections are to be held every 5 years (Term of the President – Article 30(2), Term of Parliament – Article 62(2)). The proposed Amendment does not change this position ;
- Prior to the Eighteenth Amendment, there was a limitation in the Constitution that any person who had been elected as President twice was not qualified to be elected a third time (two-term limit). The proposed Amendment leaves the two-term limit in place.

101. Proposed new constitution: Following the 20th Amendment to the Constitution Bill, an experts committee was appointed by the President on the 2nd of September 2020 to prepare a preliminary draft of a new Constitution for Sri Lanka. At present the expert committee is engaged in the drafting of the new constitution and suggestions from the public is welcomed through a paper advertisement. A number of civil society groups and women's rights movements are working on proposals to the expert committee.

### **Multi-party and electoral system in Sri Lanka**

102. Sri Lanka has 70 recognized and registered political parties at the national level. However, during the last presidential election held in 2019, the two parties, namely Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna ( 52.25% votes) and New Democratic Front ( 41.9% votes ) secured the bulk of the votes. At the 2020 parliamentary election, the Sri Lanka Peoples' Freedom Alliance that represented 13 political parties could secure 59.09% votes whereas Samagi Jana Balawegaya that was formed with 9 political party representation secured 23.90% votes. Other smaller alliances could secure insignificant percentages of votes.

103. There are 22 electoral districts in the country and the highest number of voters are in Gampaha and Colombo electoral districts. The least is in Vanni electoral district. Sri Lanka currently utilises a single ballot to elect its 225 Parliamentarians: 196 seats to 22 multi-member constituencies and 29 national seats. Each voter is allowed to select up to three candidates (without a rank ordering) from within their chosen party as their preferred representatives within their electoral district. This system referred to as 'preferential voting'.

104. During this reporting period , local elections were held in Sri Lanka on 10 February 2018. 15.7 million Sri Lankans were eligible to elect 8,327 members to 340 local authorities (24 municipal councils, 41 urban councils and 275 divisional councils) in the country.

105. Revision in local government legislation introduced a reserved quota of council seats for women, and after the 2018 local elections, 29.1% of councillors were female, up from 1.9% in 2011. The Local Authorities Elections (amendments) Act 201743.4b requires a minimum 25% women's representation in each council. Section 27F of the amendment, states that 10 percent of the members assigned to a ward must be women and 50 percent of members on the additional persons list must be women. At the end of the election mandatory 25% women seats are to be made up of a mixture of ward winners and from the additional persons list. The only exception is when a party receives three or less seats.

106. Following the 2018 election, 29.1% of councillors were women, 6.2% (535/8,690) were directly elected, with the proportion being raised through the appointment of a further 1,991 from party lists to ensure the minimum requirement. 15 councils in the North and North East were not able to fulfil the 25% requirement due to the number of parties contesting not winning more than three seats. This is a significant rise from 2011 when approximately 1.8% (85/~4,600) were women, and 1.8% (64/3,622) following the 2008 elections.

### Governance Structure

107. Sri Lanka is a unitary democratic republic with three levels of government: national, provincial and local. Local government is enshrined in the 13th amendment to the constitution. The second-tier provincial authorities are governed by the Provincial Councils Act 1987. The main Acts relating to third-tier local authorities are the Urban Councils Ordinance 1939, the Municipal Councils Ordinance 1947 and the Pradeshiya Sabhas Act (No. 15 of 1987). There are nine second-tier provinces and 341 third-level local government: 24 municipal councils, 41 urban councils and 276 pradeshiya sabhas (village councils).

### Legal Structure

108. Under the Constitution, the highest court is the Supreme Court, headed by a Chief Justice and eleven associate judges. The Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and High Court judges are appointed by the President. Supreme Court and Court of Appeal judges can be removed on grounds of incompetence or misdemeanour by a majority of Parliament, whereas High Court judges can be removed only by the Judicial Service Commission consisting of the Chief Justice and two Supreme Court judges. The Supreme Court has the power of judicial review of Bills; it can determine whether an Act of Parliament is consistent with the principles of the Constitution and whether a referendum must be taken on a Bill.

## II. General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

### A. Acceptance of international human rights norms

109. Sri Lanka has ratified all the main UN International Human Rights Conventions. No reservations have been lodged with respect to these treaties.

110. Sri Lanka has engaged with the Committees of each of these conventions submits reports periodically.

111. On 05 December 2017, Sri Lanka acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), its most recent commitment. The OPCAT came into force on 04 January 2018. The main objective of the Optional Protocol is to establish a system of regular visits to be undertaken by independent international and national bodies to places of detention.

Treaty	Date of Signature	Date of Ratification/Accession(a)
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966		11 Jun 1980 (a)
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966		11 June 1980 (a)
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979	17 July 1980	05 October 1981
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), 1984		03 January 1994 (a)
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989	26 January 1990	12 July 1991
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, (ICMW), 1990		11 Mar 1996 (a)
Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED), 2006	10 December 2015	25 May 2016
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)		08 February 2016

Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 2000	21 August 2000	08 September 2000
Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, 2000	08 May 2002	22 September 2006
Optional Protocol to ICCPR, concerning individual petition, 1966		03 October 1997
Optional Protocol to CEDAW, concerning individual complaints and inquiry procedures, 1999		05 October 2002
Optional Protocol to CAT, concerning regular visits by national and international institutions to places of detention, 2002		05 December 2017

*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka*

112. Sri Lanka is also signatory to ILO Convention No.100 of 1951 (Equal Remuneration), ILO Convention on 103 of 1952 on Maternity Benefits and revisions made in 1983), UN Convention on Trafficking in Women and the UN Declaration on Violence against Women. Despite Sri Lanka being signatory to the above international human rights and legal standards, there are instances where the application of general law, personal laws, and municipal law come into conflict and needs compromise. One such instance is the wage differences between female and male daily labourers.

## **B. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level**

113. Sri Lanka practices both Roman Dutch and British Law in combination and these applies to most of the population in Sri Lanka. The Roman Dutch and British laws largely provide for gender equality and covers areas of equal rights marriage and property. The marriage laws prohibit bigamy, child marriages, and provide for equal maintenance rights. However, the other three legal systems operating in Sri Lanka, namely, Kandyan, Thesawalmi and Muslim laws that tend to discriminate women in certain provisions.

114. Under the general law, the Married Women's Property Ordinance, 1923, a married woman is capable of holding, acquiring and disposing of any movable or immovable property as if she were a femme sole, without the consent or intervention of her husband. This applies to all property belonging to her at the time of marriage and property acquired or devolved to her after marriage. She also has the same remedies and redress by way of criminal proceedings for the protection and security of her separate property (16).

115. However, under the Thesawalamai law, the Matrimonial Rights and Inheritance Jaffna Ordinance, 1911, amended in 1947 states movable or immovable property a woman acquires during or before marriage remains her separate property. A woman has the power to deal with her movable property during her lifetime without the consent of her husband. However, a married woman may deal with or dispose of any immovable property to which she is entitled only with the written consent of her husband, except in the case of last wills.

116. For example, these personal laws under the area of age of majority: marriage, divorce and related rights, rights on succession, capacity, adoption, and legitimacy can have discriminatory impact on women.

117. The Kandyan Law Declaration and Amendment Ordinance, 1938, amended in 1944, that applies to Kandyan Sinhalese in property matters states: Legitimate sons and daughters inherit their parents' property in equal shares, although a daughter who marries in diga - whereby the bride moves to the husband's house or that of his parents - after the death of her father must transfer any immovable property she inherited from him to her brothers or Binna-married sisters, upon their request for such property (16).

118. The Muslim Intestate Succession Ordinance, 1931 provides that the applicable law is that of the sect to which the party belongs, states: With respect to almost all sects, female



heirs inherit a lesser share than male heirs of the same degree of relationship to the deceased. A widow inherits half the portion that a widower would inherit. The mother of the deceased is entitled to half of the share of the father of the deceased. Although daughters are not excluded from inheritance, they receive a smaller share than that of their brothers' (16).

119. The personal laws accept cultural rights over women's rights. It needs to be noted that the Ministry of Justice under the present Government has appointed 11 committees to explore the possibilities of law reforms and one such committee is appointed to look into the discriminatory Muslim laws that needs to be amended. There were concerns expressed over the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act by the Muslim community and by human rights activists. Thereby the Ministry of Justice has proposed to look into amendment of Muslim laws relating to: i. age of marriage to be 18 for both male and females, ii. Provision for consent of the bride to be mandatory to validate the marriage, iii. Provision for the female party to be signatory to the marriage certificate, iv. qualifications for Quazi, v. provision for appointment of female Quazi on the qualifications stipulated therein, vii. dowry to be mentioned in the marriage registration certificate, and viii. Provisions relating to payment of Mathaa ( permanent alimony).

## **Framework within which human rights are promoted at the national level**

### **National mechanisms for gender equality and ensuring the state obligations under the Provisions as Outlined in CEDAW Convention**

120. A change in the national machinery was prompted by an extraordinary gazette notification on 9th August 2020 that effected a change in the previously established Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Security. Since then, a State Ministry was established under the Ministry of Education and the portfolio changes to State Ministry of Women & Child Development, Pre-schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services.

121. Despite this recent change in the institutional mechanism, the previously held national mechanism for gender equality in Sri Lanka continue to function and is consisting of a few different institutional mechanisms and partnerships.

122. The focal institution for gender equality is the SMWCDPSE that has the mandate to the formulation of policies, guidelines, and national action plans and programmes to advance the rights of women and girls in the country. The vision of the ministry is "A strong nation of women and children with ensured rights that contributes towards sustainable development". The other statutory institutions affiliated to this Ministry are Sri Lanka Women's Bureau, National Committee on Women, Department of Probation and Child Care Services, National Child Protection Authority and Children's Secretariat are the Departments. Ministry.

123. The Women's Bureau is established with the mission to become an integral part of the national mechanism operating for women's wellbeing in keeping with state policy. The Women's Bureau facilitates social and economic empowerment of women through a well-planned provision of awareness, and other socio-economic support to the women at all levels. The women's Bureau structure is extend to the village level through an organized women's society system that apex at different levels as women action societies, divisional women's federation and district women federations. This structure is the arm that the Ministry uses to reach out to the women at different governance levels in the country. Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka conducts programmes under the key areas of empowering Women Headed Families economically and socially, preventing Gender-Based Violence and creating equality. Women's Charter is the policy document that guides the Women's Bureau. A cadre of Women Development Officers are attached to the Women's Bureau who has the duty to advance the socio-economic and political empowerment of women and support women and members of the communities to combat SGBV.

124. The National Committee on Women (NCW) established in 1993 under the Women's Charter is a very important entity that has its mission of making recommendations and

providing assistance for the formulation of policies and legislation that safeguard and promote the rights of Sri Lankan women, ensure quality and contribute to their comprehensive development and stimulating the proper implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the same. NCW role as a watch dog on policy implementation is contributing to the safe guard of women's rights in the country.

125. Apart from these key nationally established mechanisms to promote gender equality and women's rights in the country, the donor community has established strong partnership with the State Ministry of Women & Child Development, Pre-schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services on different fronts. The partnerships with the donor community has reaped a number of benefits in the areas of policy formulation, development of National Plans, capacity development of sectoral line ministries on gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting, and also supporting in enhancement of gender technical knowhow of the Ministry of Women & Child Affairs.

126. The donor groups have provided funding and technical assistance to formulate the recent policies and plans as follows:

- i. Multi sectoral National Policy Framework and National Action Plan to Address SGBV ;
- ii. Implementation plan for the prevention of domestic violence Act no 34 ;
- iii. National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325 ;
- iv. The National Action Plan to Address Issues Female Headed Households.

127. The partnership with UN, INGOs have contributed in taking forward the SDG 5 agenda, women and peace agenda, financing for women empowerment and gender responsive budgeting which are generally difficult to push in a national context, solely by the national women's machinery. These partnership and solidarity with the donor community, the UN agencies, INGOs, and other foreign funded agencies and the local NGO sector is of great value to the State Ministry of Women & Child Development, Pre-schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services.

128. TheSMWCDPSE is also in constructive partnership with academia and research institutions. The Colombo University research unit has supported this Ministry to formulate an overarching policy framework on women' rights which is a long awaited policy in Sri Lanka. It is now being prepared to be presented to the Cabinet for approval.

129. The national mechanism on gender equality is also linked to other sectoral ministries through a policy guidelines that was approved by the Cabinet. Through the Cabinet memorandum No 01/2017 the Ministry of Women & Child Affairs have established gender focal persons at a high level ( Additional Secretary level ) in all sectoral ministries and have also positioned middle level cadre to support the focal persons. This structure is very effective in mainstreaming gender equality in the other development sectors. The same Cabinet memorandum has directed the line ministries to establish committees to address workplace harassment. Gender Responsive budgeting strategy is also pushed through the gender focal mechanism. Sri Lanka considered this multi sectoral partnership as a very important set up for advancing gender equality in the country. The issues of SGBV is addressed through multi-sectoral collaboration which is a very effective way to bring redress to the victims and prevent and intervene in the incidence of SGBV.

130. The national mechanism on women is working closely with the Finance Commission and the Treasury to push the Gender Responsive Budgeting strategy in Sri Lanka and have taken a few steps to link SDG 5 and other cross cutting indicators to the annual planning processes at sub-national and national levels.

### **An integrated approach to development and mainstream gender**

131. It has recently been observed that an integral part of the national development process in Sri Lanka is the implementation and regulation of development programs from the national level to the rural level through a well-coordinated and integrated approach. The National

Policy and Action Plan “Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour” is the development plan which guides this integrated development approach where gender is mainstreamed into all sectors. The main aim of this integrated approach is to minimize the provincial and district level disparities in development and strengthening collaborative and multi-sectoral approach to deliver services to the people. The people centered approach to development is promoted in realizing the development goals.

132. Accordingly, a group of key sectoral ministries are given the task of realizing short and long term development goals in collaboration with the sub-national level structures and in close consultation with the women and men at the grass roots level. The SMWCDPSE plays a key role in this collective of ministries by taking women’s rights issues to the forefront during consultations and promoting the redress mechanisms with other sectoral ministry support. This is a much quicker and effective way to respond to the demands of the women.

133. A Presidential Task Force for Economic Revival and Poverty Alleviation is responsible for effectively monitoring this integrated mechanism and ensuring that the agreed action is operationalized by the ministries to enable the realization of the common goal. The Presidential Task Force has the key objective of reviving the economy and eradication of poverty while paying special attention to the challenges posed and opportunities that emerged in Sri Lanka in the wake of COVID – 19 outbreak. Implementation of joint operations to establish a people-centric economy that will promote domestic industries and entrepreneurs is another objective of the Task Force. Women entrepreneurs are provided with more grants and facilities through village based cooperative system.

134. Moreover, as per the Government’s policy declaration four committees, including Cabinet Ministries and State Ministries, have been set up for the National Economic Building Program, which will cover all districts to build the rural economy. The committees are: Community Infrastructure Development Committee, Livelihood Development Committee, Development Committee to promote the domestic manufacturing sector, and Rural Infrastructure Development Committee. These committees work closely with the State Ministry of Women & Child Development, Pre-schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services and its Women’s Bureau to support women economic development. Increased budget allocations for women entrepreneurship is seen despite the fact that the earlier Cabinet Ministry for Women Affairs is replaced by a State Ministry.

135. The diverse collaborative work and partnership development has made the national mechanism very rich and effective and to hold the state agencies accountable to advance the rights of women and girls. The Women Development Societies established at the village level with divisional and district level apex federations facilitate stronger consultations with women groups and community level analysis of the issues of women.

136. State Ministry of Women & Child Development, Pre-schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services holds a main responsibility for preparing the reports to the CEDAW committee in collaboration with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and supported by UN Women.

## **Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka**

137. Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has the vision of “A society that recognizes diversity and respects the human rights of all” and its mission is to provide leadership in Sri Lanka in promoting and protecting human rights, human dignity and the rule of law within a democracy based on the sovereignty of the people. Equality and non-discrimination is a core value of the HRC.

138. Strategically HRC focuses on i. Accessibility of the HRCSL and its services to all people, especially the poor and marginalized, ii. Gender mainstreaming within and through the HRCSL and its programs and services, iii. Recognition of and respect for diversity within the HRCSL and through its programs and services. HRC give priority focus to women rights violations in the country.

139. The Commission was established in 1996 by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act, No. 21 of 1996 (the Act). The Act sets out the legal basis and operational

principles of the HRCSL. The HRCSL is a scheduled commission under the 19th amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka but it is not formally established by the Constitution. HRCSL is an independent Commission, established to promote and protect human rights in the country and answerable to the Parliament. The Act recognizes the jurisdiction in the Commission in terms of fundamental rights and human rights. Fundamental rights are certain civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights guaranteed in Chapter III of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Basically HRC inquiries into the human rights violations and make recommendations to the Government to take measures to secure the human rights and meet international standards.

140. Board of the HRC comprise of the Chairperson and Commissioners. The outreach is guaranteed by 10 regional offices and six sub offices. People have easy access to the HRC through this structure. This outreach mechanism is responsible for receiving complaints, investigating into allegations of violations, providing consultations on alleged violations of human rights, mediating in the settlement of disputes, referral of violations to the Head Office for recommendations, carrying out monitoring activities, conducting awareness raising at regional level, and collaborating and coordinating with civil society organizations.

141. At the HRC head office there are four sub committees appointed, namely sub committees on i. Rights of plantation workers, ii. Rights on gender, iii. Rights of migrant workers, iv. Rights of LGBTIQ persons.

142. The key achievement of the HRC during the reporting period include:

#### **2020**

- To mark the International Day in Support of Torture Victims, 2020, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka organized a webinar on the theme “Torture and other Forms of Societal Violence in Sri Lanka: Parts of One Spectrum?” ;
- HE the President appointed a new Chairperson and members of the HRC in December 2020 ;

#### **2019**

- Following on the Easter Sunday attack on 21 April 2019 in which three churches in different parts of Sri Lanka and three luxury hotels in Colombo were targeted in a series of coordinated suicide bombings. HRC made numerous interventions to safeguard the rights of the people, particularly to ensure that emergency laws are applied without discrimination and with cultural and religious sensitivity. The Commission hastened to respond by appealing to the general public to refrain from retaliatory violence, addressing various government entities on the necessity to stop discriminatory treatment against the members of the Muslim Community (e.g. preventing access to public spaces by Muslim women wearing cultural attire, allegations impeding commercial activities by Muslim traders), visiting communities affected by the violence, holding and facilitating Island-wide inter-community dialogues and conducting inquiries into the complaints lodged with the Commission ;
- In light of public protests against members of the refugee community belonging to the Muslim faith and Ahmadiya sect, in the aftermath of the bombings, the Commission also visited the Immigration Detention Centre in Mirihana and holding Centres for refugees and asylum seekers in several areas in order to examine their conditions and make interventions to improve their human rights situation as necessary ;
- Special discussion was held on 30. 04. 2019 at the Head Office of the Commission to create co-ordination among relevant state entities, United Nations Agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in responding to the public protests against refugees building up in the country following 21 April attacks ;
- In 2019, the Commission received 8983 complaints and concluded 5096 cases (which includes complaints accepted in previous years). Out of the 5096 concluded cases the Commission was able to successfully mediate settlements in 635 cases. The

Commission issued 77 recommendations in response to individual complaints made to the Commission ;

- In 2019, the Commission successfully conducted a variety of outreach programmes in order to promote human rights awareness and educate the public on human rights issues ;
- HRC also promoted interaction among different ethnic groups to foster religious and ethnic harmony among communities and as a possible solution to neutralize the hostile attitudes among the communities ;
- The Commission also focused extensively on the right to exercise franchise in an inclusive manner during the Presidential Election held in November 2019 ;

## 2018

- The HRCSL was accredited as an ‘A’ status (fully compliant with the Paris Principles) Human Rights Institution by the Global Alliance of Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in May 2018 ;
- In 2018, the Commission received 6641 complaints and concluded 5687 cases (which includes complaints accepted in previous years). Out of the 5687 concluded cases the Commission was able to successfully mediate settlements in 628 cases. The Commission issued 93 recommendations in response to individual complaints made to the Commission, which is a significant increase from the previous years, i.e. 44 in 2016 and 84 in 2017 ;
- The Commission also issued a ground breaking recommendation pertaining to equal access to higher education to students with disabilities. The Commission entertained a complaint from a female student with disabilities who had gained admission to the Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo ;
- One of the most significant outreach programmes during the period under review was the youth camp on human rights. The Commission inaugurated its first ever annual Youth Camp on Human Rights (25-29, September 2018) underscoring its recognition of the importance to conscientize youth on human rights ;
- In 2018, the Commission successfully conducted a variety of outreach programmes in order to promote awareness and educate the public on human rights issues ;<sup>31</sup>

## 2017

- The HRCSL finalized and adopted the strategic plan for the Commission, which was initiated in 2016 ;
- In 2017, the Commission received 7711 complaints and concluded 5711 cases. Out of the 5711 concluded cases the Commission was able to successfully mediate settlements in 1332 cases. The Commission issued 84 recommendations in response to individual complaints made;

## 2016

- HRC hosted a regional workshop on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics (SOGI Rights), which was organized by the Asia Pacific Forum and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to strengthen the capacity of NHRIs and Civil-Society Organizations in the region to work with LGBTIQ communities to strengthen advocacy for promotion and protection of their human rights. This included a blended learning course consisting of two components; an online course and a face to face workshop. It was held from 12 – 16 December 2016 at Colombo. Participants included persons from 07 countries ;

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Annual report 2018.

- A recommendation was issued to abolish the death penalty in Sri Lanka in keeping with Sri Lankan commitment to a more humane society consonant with human rights principles and values ;
- The Commission recommended to the Ministry of Health to issue a circular to enable transgender persons to change their sex in their personal documentation, such as the National Identity Card (NIC). The Registrar-General issued circular No 06/2016 dated 28.07.2016 instructing all registrars in the country to change the sex and name in the birth certificate based on the gender recognition certificate ;
- The Human Rights Commission issued directives on arrest and detention of persons arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act No. 48 of 1979 ;
- The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka in a public statement commended the adoption of Office on Missing Persons (Establishment, Administration and Discharge of functions) Act and reiterated a number of important elements that have to be given serious consideration in establishing the Office.<sup>32</sup>

143. It needs to be stated that HRC of Sri Lanka has been investigating on violations of women's rights and gender rights and has made its recommendations to the Government in line with the CEDAW articles.

144. Expanding the Government's commitment to human rights further, a National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) for 2017-2021 was prepared in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders including those in government, independent institutions including the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and the Election Commission, civil society actors and the general public. The plan envisions Sri Lanka's vision for human rights for 2017-2021 and a separate section on Women's Rights is included in the NHRAP.

### **Reporting process at the national level**

145. CEDAW articles 17 to 30 has outlined the State commitment to implement and report progress periodically to CEDAW committee. This 9th State party report is prepared in line with the CEDAW Article 18.

146. The process that led to the preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> report was as follows:

i. Review of secondary information and data : a comprehensive literature review was carried out to gather qualitative and quantitative information to be included in the Common Core Document and the Treaty Specific Document. Review of policies and programmes related to CEDAW concluding observations performed by state and non-state stakeholders was also carried out ;

ii. Consultations with State agencies at National, Provincial and District Levels : through the SMWCDPSE consultations were conducted to obtain firsthand information in relation to implementation of programmes/projects at different levels that have direct relevance to CEDAW articles. Consultative meetings were conducted through Zoom due to the prevailing Covid 19 situation in the country and information were elicited on the issues related to the Concluding Observations and CEDAW implementation at each of the level. Questionnaires were developed separately for each of the meetings based on the issues raised in the Concluding observations :

- At the National level: Discussions were held with Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Employment and the relevant State Ministries under these Cabinet ministries ;
- At the Provincial level: Reports on the gender and development work of the Eastern and Southern Provincial were reviewed ;

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<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Annual report 2016

- At the District Level: Virtual discussions were held with District Secretariat staff in Anuradhapura, Killinochchi and Nuwara Eliya ;

iii. Consultation with civil society and women groups : discussions with women groups and Women Development Societies (WDSs) in a few districts were carried out and responses from the community groups were elicited with special reference to the issues raised on rural women in the report. Written submissions were obtained from the UN agencies, INGOs and CSOs who have membership of the anti-gender-based violence forum facilitated by UNFPA.

147. In addition to the above secondary data collection and information review was done on the national machinery on women and its recent changes, Gender Responsiveness of the policy and programme formulation, annual planning and budget allocations, establishment of workplace anti-sexual harassment committees, on women holding positions at decision making levels of the ministries and institutions. Further, discussions were held with Government officials on the delays in establishing the National Commission on Women, how women's issues are addressed in the government agenda and on the political will. With the civil society the discussions also included aspects of cultural barriers which impaired women's empowerment with special reference to patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotyping.

148. A virtual validation workshop was organized by the SMWCDPSE with Cabinet and State Ministries relevant to the implementation of CEDAW. Key UN agencies were also present at this validation exercise. The comments and suggestions proposed at the validation workshop was incorporated to the Part I – Common Core Document and Part II Treaty Specific document.

### **Other related human rights information**

149. Legal Aid Commission: The Legal Aid Commission of Sri Lanka was established by Law, No. 27 of 1978. The Commission comprises nine members, three of whom are appointed by the Minister of Justice and six members nominated by the Bar Council of Sri Lanka. The Legal Aid Commission offers legal aid to the needy people island wide irrespective of nationality, cast, creed, religion, locality or political affinity. The Legal Aid Commission gives legal advice and provides representation in litigation and assistance for and on behalf of deserving persons, including the services of Attorneys-at-Law and also other assistance as may be necessary for the conduct of legal proceedings.

150. The powers and functions of the Legal Aid Commission include areas such as research in respect of legal aid, making of submissions to law reform agencies both in Sri Lanka and abroad and also to the State, provision of information to the public on the availability of legal aid, cooperating with institutions and bodies responsible for the education and training of persons providing legal aid, etc.

151. The Legal Aid Commission at its inception carried out its functions on a small state grant supplemented with limited funding from funding agencies. However, in 2006 a new era for Legal Aid Commission started with receiving, for the first time, an enhanced grant of Rs. 27 million from the State. Additional funds were also received from certain funding sources.

## **III. Information on non-discrimination and equality and effective remedies**

152. Women's groups have advocated for a quota for a long period of time through awareness raising, and media campaigns advocating for a quota for women in all political bodies. This claim was included in Women Manifestoes prepared during election periods. A quota for women was included in the manifestoes of the political parties as well. As a result of the agitations made it had been possible to get a 25% quota for women in the Local Government bodies by amending the Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act, No. 1 of 2016. This has helped in the outcome of an increase to 22% by 2018 from the previously held 1.9% (2017) of women in Local Government.

153. Allocation of women specific budget since 2016: In order to enhance women economic empowerment, in 2016, the Cabinet Memorandum of 15/1983/740/005 dated 18.12.2015 submitted by Hon. Minister of Women and Child Affairs and approved by the cabinet on 09.03.2016 calling upon the specially selected ministries to reserve minimum of 25% of the all the allocations for rural development for the development of women and for their economic advancement. This circular was disseminated to all Ministries and Provincial Councils. This has brought about significant results.

154. Out of the total annual PSDG and CBG budget of Eastern province, 16.3% was allocated for women development activities and addressing gender gaps in 2017. Categorically under the Local Government and Rural Development budget the allocation for 2017 was nearly 45% i.e. SLRS 157 MN for women economic empowerment. The tourist sector budget had ensured at least 25% of beneficiaries to be women. As for Health and Social services sector women specific allocation was SLRS 12.50 MN which was 50% of the total allocation. For agriculture and Irrigation sector around 40% was allocated for women specific projects/activities in agriculture which was SLRS 141 MN, 65% of the animal production budget for women specific activities which was SLRS 65 MN, allocated mostly for economic empowerment of Women Headed Families.

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