

## Country Gender Profile- Sri Lanka

### A. Human Development Indicators : Progress on the Mugs

Target Number/ Indicator Number	Series name	Data for Year which ever is latest
3/6	Education enrolment ratio, net, primary level, both sexes MDG Dept of Census and statistics	97.5 (2006/07)
3/6	Education enrolment ratio, net, primary level, girls MDG Dept of Census and statistics	97.4 (2006/07)
3/6	Education enrolment ratio, net, primary level, boys girls MDG Dept of Census and statistics	97.5((2006/07)
3/8	Literacy rates, aged 15-24, both sexes, per cent girls MDG Dept of Census and statistics	95.8 (2006/07)
3/8	Literacy rates, aged 15-24, women, per cent MDG Dept of Census and statistics	96.6(2006/07)
3/8	Literacy rates, aged 15-24, men, per cent MDG Dept of Census and statistics	94.8(2006/07)
5/14	Infant mortality rate (0-1 year) per 1,000 live births, Human development report UNDP 2007/08	12 ( 2005)
6/16	Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births, Human development report UNDP 2007/08	43( 2005)

#### HDI Rank

#### GDI Rank

#### GEM Rank

99

89

85

### B. Women in Decision making roles - Gender disaggregated data

#### 1) Legislature

	% Women	No of women	<u>Total No</u>
National – May 2007- Census and statistics	5.8	13	<u>255</u>
State ( <b>Provincial Governors</b> )	12.5	1	8
Local Bodies(data maybe aggregated or indicative)- 2004 election			

#### 2) Executive

##### a) Government – Ministerial Positions

	% of women	No. of women		Comment
National Ministers	6.0	3	52	<u>Todate2008</u>
State ( <b>Provincial Chief Ministers + Ministers</b> )	0	0	40	<u>2004 election</u>
Provincial MPs	5	19	380	<u>2004 election</u>
Local Bodies ( <b>Mayors, Chairpersons, MPs</b> )	1.71	76	4439	<u>2004 election</u>
<b>b) Top Bureaucracy</b>	% of women	No. of women	Total No	Comment

National	10.16	6	59	<i>To date (ministry secretaries)</i>
State (Provincial)	17.5	7	40	<i>Provincial ministry secretaries</i>
<b>3) Judiciary</b>				
	No. of women	Total No.		
Supreme Court	2	10		
Court of Appeal	2	11		
<b>4) Political Parties</b>				
	% of women	No. of women		NA
Membership of men and women Such data is not maintained accurately.	NA	NA		
<b>Women in executive committees or equivalent decision making bodies in the party</b>				73
United National Party (UNP)	1.36	01		71
Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)	4.22	3		7
Janatha Vimukthi Party (JVP) Political Bureau	0	1		25
<b>5) Trade Union</b>				
	% of women	No. of women		
<b>Women in the governing bodies of major National Trade Unions</b>				
Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya	9.41	8		
Ceylon Workers Congress	6.66	7		
Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya	8.82	3		
(as available in respective countries)	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>	<b>Female %</b>	
	Garment industry	10	90	
	Ceramic	20	80	
	Plantation	25	75	
<b>Initiatives for gender equality in the trade unions</b>				
<p>According to National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) a concerted and a cohesive approach among Trade Unions on the issues of gender equality is notably lacking in Sri Lanka. However, there exist a few isolated ‘symbolic’ attempts that pretend to promote or encourage gender equality. These efforts hardly meet the challenges of the day or have become practical solutions to overcome the glaring disparities. Therefore, subject to these limitations some of the visible initiatives would be:</p> <p>a) Quotas on women’s participation in union activities  b) Education and sensitization programmers on gender issues  c) Women centered informal action programmers  d) Setting up of women’s wings/ apparatus in unions</p>				
<b>6) Private, public corporations, statutory Boards and Authorities – Census and Statistics 2005</b>				
	<b>Male (%)</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>		
Senior officials and Managers	70.2	29.8		
Managers	68.2	31.8		
Technicians and associate professionals	72.6	27.4		

Administrative Associate professionals	56.1	43.9
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**Women entrepreneurs**

It is difficult to accurately estimate the number of women entrepreneurs, as aggregate data on women entrepreneurs is difficult to come by. Lack of clarity on definitional issues, particularly on the definition of the SMEs, and the absence of gender disaggregated data makes it difficult to quantify the number of entrepreneurs and the economic contribution of their enterprises in such a way that it is comparable.

However, the national labor force survey of 2006, under the broad category of own account workers provides gender disaggregated data.

Those are: for year 2006, excluding North and East, Male % is 35.2 and female% is 22.7.

**7) Academic World**

	% of women	No. of women	Total
<b>Top and middle academic positions</b>			
<b>Universities – Census and statistics 2007</b>			
Professors, Lecturers and Deans	37.3	1,727	4,624

**C) Women in the workforce – Gender Disaggregated Data**

	Sector	Male (%)	Female (%)
Formal Sector – 2006 labor force survey	<i>Agriculture, Forestry &amp; fishing</i>	29.1	37.8
	<i>Manufacturing</i>	14.8	27.2
	<i>Construction, mining &amp; Quarrying</i>	11.0	0.78
Informal Sector – dept of census and statistics 2007		% of women	
	Share of women in wage employment in the non agricultural sector	32.2	

**D) Policy framework for gender equality**

**UN/ International Conventions ratified**

- a.) Ratification of CEDAW in 1981 without any reservations
- b) Convention on the Rights of the Child - 1990
- c) Signatory to the International Convention on Protection of Migrant Women - 1996
- d) Convention against Torture
- e) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution - 2004

**Ratification of ILO Conventions**

Sri Lanka ratified 8 core Conventions and 24 non core conventions

The Conventions below apply to women labour rights

- ❖ C9 Forced labour Convention
- ❖ C87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to organise Convention
- ❖ C98 Right to organise and Collective Bargaining Convention

- ❖ C100 Equal remuneration Convention
- ❖ C105 Abolition of Forced labour Convention
- ❖ C111 Discrimination ( employment and occupation Convention)
- ❖ C138 Minimum age of admission to employment
- ❖ C182 Prohibition and immediate action for elimination of worst form of child Labour

**Sri Lanka has withdrawn from the ILO convention Prohibiting night work**

**National policies/ plans for gender equality/mainstreaming**

- a) The State Policy on Women is addressed in the Sri Lanka Women’s Charter – 1991. Seven Areas of concern are specified in the Charter –Civil and Political Rights, right to education and training, Right to economic activity and benefits, Right to health care and nutrition, Right to protection from social discrimination and Right to protection from gender based violence.
- b) The National Plan of Action
- c) 1978 Constitution recognizes that women shall not be discriminated against on the basis of their sex.
- d) Mahinda Chinthanaya does mention women in their programmes but in practice no initiatives have taken place.
- e) World Bank funded – “Gemidiriya” poverty reduction programme implemented through a Ministry.

**E) Institutional Mechanisms**

Role and functioning of statutory bodies

Women’s Bureau was set up in 1978 which has a broad mandate to promote action for improvement of the quality of life of women. This subsequently came under the Ministry of women’s Affairs. The main focus is awareness raising training programmers on law and women rights, health and nutrition, violence against women and training of migrant women. Few counseling centers have been set up by the Bureau in locations close to the FTZs.

The ministry of women empowerment and child development is the National machinery for women and The National Committee on Women are the institutions responsible for formulating State Policies on women’s issues and its implementation. NCW is mandated to monitor the provisions of the Women’s Charter. A Bill has been drafted to strengthen the Committee to transform it to a Commission with legal powers.

(No websites developed to date for Ministry of Women’s Affairs and NCW)

**Parliamentary Committees**

Caucus of women’s group lobbying for women’s issues is supposed to be formed but no there is no dissemination of information of their role and functions.

Other

Sri Lanka Women’s NGO forum ( SLWNGOF) which is lobbying for legal equality.

**F) Legal Equality**

Landmark legislation for gender equality in the last 25 years

- a) Amendments to the Panel Code with regard to the age of marriage for both men and women. This however does not apply to the Muslim Law
- b) Domestic Violence Act – This Act which came into force in 2005 is in keeping with Sri Lanka’s

obligation under the Constitution, the Women's Charter 1993, the children's Charter 1992, and CEDAW ratified in 1981.

c) Grant of citizenship to persons of Indian origin – any person of Indian origin who has been a permanent resident of Sri Lanka since 30<sup>th</sup> October 1964 or a descendent of such person is eligible to be granted citizenship.

Discriminatory laws/ policies/practices

a) Discriminatory personal law along with the general law. (especially with reference to Muslim law)

b) Applicability of Fundamental rights to the non – State sector/ Private sector

c) The Land Ordinance

d) Non legal entity to Women's Charter

e) The Factory Ordinance, Children's and Young persons Act does not apply to private sector employment.

f) The shop and office Act which is followed by the private sector does not cover Maternity and Paternity benefits that are enjoyed by the Public sector.

g) Non acceptance of the original bill which recognised marital rape and abortion in situations of rape, incest or fetal abnormality.

h) Informal sector is not covered under the General labour laws.

### **G) Affirmative Action Measures**

- **Quotas**

In 1997 it was proposed to the Government to reserve 25% of the seats at Local Government level for women on the understanding that the local level is more accessible to women than the Provincial or Parliamentary level. This proposal was later removed from the draft document.

A recommendation was made by the Youth Commission, with support of all Political parties that 40% of the candidates at Provincial and Local levels had to be youth between the ages of 18-35. This however didn't benefit women.

- **Incentives**
- **Other**

### **H) Women's Movement in the country**

- Brief history
- Main issues
- Achievements
- Links with political parties/ movements for democracy/peace/social justice

Although the country gained political independence in 1948 women of upper and middle classes belonging to all ethnic groups have been in the forefront agitating for reforms with regard to social, economic and political space, even prior to independence. They reflected anti colonial and anti imperialistic sentiments in their struggles and were able to contribute to social changes within the existing structure through formation of women's organizations.

In the forefront of such organizations was the Women's Franchise Union (WFU) and was mainly constituted of a small number of women belonging to upper social strata. However, women members contested and were elected to the State Council and Colombo Municipal Council in the 1930s, despite their limited numbers. The first Parliament of Ceylon had only one woman out of 101 members. The

introduction of the Universal Franchise facilitated this outcome in 1931, which allowed women above 21 years the right to vote.

Since 1948 Sri Lanka underwent three constitutional reforms. (1948,1972 and 1978)

The States welfare approach introduced during the postcolonial time included free education, health services and subsided food schemes, which had a positive impact on the lives of women but did little to increase choices available for women.

During this time the leftist movements (Communist party, Lanka Samasamaja party, Mahajana Eksath Peramuna) which were agitating against the economic and political oppression of the masses had very active and outstanding women taking part in the decision making positions of such parties. These women not only actively took part in demonstrations and other protests but also formed an alliance with other working class movements and established solidarity amongst them.

In the 1961 the first woman Prime Minister was elected from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP a left leaning party as opposed to the right winged United National Party, which is the other major Political party.)

During the two regimes headed by her (1960 – 1965 and 1970 – 1977) no efforts were made to encourage women to enter active politics or to hold decision-making positions within the party or the Government. These two major political parties too had Trade Unions where female representation was confined to a women's wing.

In the mid early 70's the country's economy took a turn from that of a closed economy to a more liberalized and open policy regime. The new policies affected women both positively and negatively. As a result women workers became the principal source of foreign exchange into the country. They were unskilled women migrant women workers, women in the Free Trade Zones and the women workers in the plantation sector.

Thus emerged a group of socially involved "feminist" both academics and activists belonging to different ethnic groups and social classes Their objective was to liberate women from economic, sexual and gender based oppression.

The youth uprisings that took place in 1971 and 1989 organized by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, (JVP) had women members who took active role in the movement. The JVP is now in the mainstream politics and has put forward more women into active formal politics at local level compared to other parties. Yet at legislation levels the numbers are few.

The ethnic conflict that emerged in the later part of 1970 saw many women from all ethnic groups taking part actively protesting against the war and its consequences especially violence against women and children.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam, (LTTE) prevented Tamil women from North and East, entering formal politics and looked upon such women as traitors to the separatist cause. However, women were engaged as fighters within the LTTE and is reported that 50% of its force constitute of women.

With the change of the State constitution and the appointment of the Executive presidency (UNP) in 1978, the role played by women in May Day participation was cleverly transformed. The face of the women's events on May Day changed completely to one of welfare over political statements. One such

instance is the “Seva Vanitha Movement” headed by the President’s wife herself.

During the tenure of the first woman President (1994 – 2000) no attempts were done to enhance the position of women and their representation in formal politics at any level, although considerable executive and legislative powers were at her disposal.

Women consist of more than 50% of the population both rural and urban and have been active in exercising they’re voting rights. However, their active participation in political decision-making levels was minimal. The violence that prevailed during the period 1970s and 1990s (the southern insurrection) led to loss of many lives both men and women who were involved in politics. The gun culture that emerged further marginalized women and hindered their political participation. The few women who entered politics did so either because of the political violence perpetrated against their husbands or fathers or because a male family member involved in politics was disenfranchised.

In the 1970’s and 1980s through the formation of NGOs, women activists formed “feminist movement” organizations to address issues related to patriarchal cultural norms through workshops, seminars, and research and discussion groups and through print media.

In 1993 the Sri Lanka Women’s NGO Forum consisting of nearly fifty women’s organizations was set up which enabled to common platform to address rights of women and legal justice.

In 1997 the Women’s Coalition for Peace was formed which comprised of women belonging to all Political, ethnic and religious groups. Its aim was to lobby for justice and address issues related to women and peace by organizing campaigns and demonstrations, which are directed towards peace.

### **I) Issues in the country that need immediate attention for gender justice**

- a) Women’s political participation at Parliamentary, Provincial and Local levels
- b) Women’s participation in senior administrative positions
- c) Adequate allocation of resources to the women and children’s Police desks and other departments addressing women’s issues.
- d) Gender mainstreaming in Public Policies and programmes
- e) Gender sensitive culture in both Public and Private organisation
- f) Non Maintenance of gender disaggregated data by the public and the private sectors
- g) Strengthening the gender focal points in the Ministries.
- h) Higher rate of unemployment of women
- i) Imbalances in the Technical vocational trades
- j) Lack of protection for migrant workers – no bilateral agreements
- k) Increasing numbers of Female headed households due to the conflict and Internally Displaced persons.
- l) Opportunities for women in rural areas and urban slum areas
- m) Income distribution is biased towards males.
- n) Sex discrimination in employment
- o) Labour protection of factory women workers
- p) Negative portrayal of women by the State media.
- q) State owned child day care facilities for working women.

**J) Enabling factors in the country for gender justice**

- a) First, a legal system has taken its shape with the *constitution of 1978* as the foundation and other relevant policies, laws and regulations on women's rights and interests as important complements.
- b) Health and education indicators
- c) Culturally liberal practices.
- d) A code conduct and guidelines introduced by the Employers federation and the ILO on gender equality.

**K) Main Challenges/deterrents**

Although women have made significant improvements in education and health there is much to be done with regard to equal opportunities in the labour market, poverty, protection from domestic violence and gender based violence. Especially older women and Female heads of Households (the number is increasing due to the on going conflict) are vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. Ever increasing numbers of female migration to foreign countries and rural to urban migration place women in vulnerable situations.

In addition, prevention of HIV/AIDS, combating trafficking in women and girl children are also urgent tasks to be dealt with in the future.

**L) Comments and regional comparisons**

Good health and education indicators.