



Beijing
+30



NATIONAL REPORT OF SRI LANKA BEIJING+30 REVIEW

July 2024

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CBSL	Central Bank of Sri Lanka
CERT	Computer Emergency Readiness Team
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CENWOR	Centre for Women’s Research
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CRPO	Child Rights Protection Officer
DMC	Disaster Management Unit
DPCCS	Department of Child Care Services
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FEDO	Foreign Employment Development Officer
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FHH	Female Headed Households
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Integration
HDR	Human Development Report
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTA	Information Communication and Technology Agency
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Government Organizations
IPPF	Indigenous People Planning Framework
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JSDF	Japan Supplementary Development Fund
LFP	Labour Force Participation
LGBTQI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer and Intersex
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHM	Menstrual Health Management
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance Economic Stabilization & National Policies
MWCASE	Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment
MMDA	Muslim Marriages and Divorce Act
NAP	National Action Plan
NCGI	National Credit Guarantee Institution
NEPF	National Education Policy Framework
NCW	National Committee on Women
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NTC	National Transport Commission
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OR	Office of Reparations
PWD	Persons with Disabilities

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SLWB	Sri Lanka Women's Bureau
SLTB	Sri Lanka Transport Board
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Program
VAW	Violence against Women
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
VTA	Vocational Training Authority
WBSL	Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka
WDC	Women Development Centre
WDO	Women Development Officer
WIN	Women In Need
WMC	Women and Media Collective
WPS	Women Peace and Security

Introduction and Context of National Review

The Sri Lanka national review will follow the structure set out in the Guidance Note sent by the UNESCAP and a fast-track approach to obtain the required information has been led by the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment Ministry with the support of UN Women in Sri Lanka.

The Declaration and BPfA identifies **12 critical areas of concern** for women and girls across the globe (see box 1) which have been synthesized to align with the goals, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda so that the national review will focus on both frameworks. Accordingly the 12 critical areas are clustered into 6 key dimensions in the Beijing+30 Review Guidance Note. These 6 dimensions aligned to the two frameworks include:

1. Inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work
2. Poverty eradication, social protection, and social services
3. Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes
4. Participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions
5. Peaceful and inclusive societies
6. Environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation

The national review will take stock of progress made, gaps, challenges, best practices along these key dimensions and as aligned under other international treaties, conventions and resolutions among others as relevant.

The national review is structured as per the 6 sections contained in the Guidance Note, and the guidance provided therein for the compilation of the narrative report with attention to the 41 questions contained from Section 2 to Section 5. The review is also aligned to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development.

Box 1: The 12 Critical Areas for women and girls identified in the BPfA:

- 1. Women and Poverty:** Challenges governments, private sector, NGOs, multi nationals to address the increase of women living in poverty throughout the globe.
- 2. Education and Training of Women:** Focuses on transforming the entire educational system into an environment ensuring all women the right to literacy and freedom to choose how to fulfill their potential.
- 3. Women and Health:** Establishes culturally sensitive health care (physical and mental) as a right for **all** women and girls and promotes funded research and dissemination of information on women's health issues.
- 4. Violence Against Women:** Demands that women be protected from violence in any form (physical, mental, emotional) in the home, at work or in the community, to protect their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- 5. Women and Armed Conflict:** Addresses the reality that women are particularly vulnerable during armed conflicts and that ending militarism is a priority for their advancement.
- 6. Women and the Economy:** Offers strategies for women's economic security through employment, cooperatives, businesses and other economic opportunities.
- 7. Women in Power and Decision Making:** Acknowledges the fundamental right and responsibility of women to participate at all levels of decision making in all spheres of society.
- 8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women:** Calls for modifying existing institutions and creating new mechanisms to facilitate the full integration of women into society and electing women to office.
- 9. Human Rights of Women:** Asserts that the human rights of women and girls are inalienable, and are integral to and indivisible from universal human rights. To ratify and implement CEDAW
- 10. Women and the Media:** Emphasizes the importance of changing stereotyping and inequality of women's access to and participation in all forms of communication.
- 11. Women and the Environment:** Promotes women's participation in the repair, healing and protection of the natural environment and polluted urban environments.
- 12. Girl Child:** Develops the girl-child's potential in a nurturing environment that meets their needs and safeguards their rights to full equality.

SECTION 1 – HIGHLIGHTS

The Beijing+30 Review Process in Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka will be submitting its national review on the Beijing Platform for Action after 10 years as the country was not able to compile and submit a national report in 2020 given the many crises the country faced, which has been unprecedented in the recent history, such as Covid-19 pandemic from early 2020 which imposed restrictions as well as lockdowns. Covid-19 crisis being a world-wide pandemic, had global implications which affected Sri Lanka in an expounded manner given the setbacks of the previous crisis affecting the economic and social wellbeing of all people.



The situation deepened further with the multidimensional economic crisis of 2022. The adverse impacts of these social and economic downturns were felt across the country. Thus, Sri Lanka experienced its most challenging periods in recent times amidst unprecedented global and local crises, during this reporting period. The political changes, mass uprising by the people during this period, saw changes in Government, where a new President was appointed. In overcoming these challenges, the Government has ensured that our democratic traditions and institutions have remained stable. During the past year, the GoSL has been successful in restoring economic stabilization, while addressing the underlying fiscal and financial governance issues on a priority basis. Inflation has dramatically decreased to one digit. The exchange rate has shown positive movement. Tourist arrivals have increased exponentially. Foreign remittances have revived, and shortages of essential items, fuel and medicine have been overcome. Sri Lanka is witnessing the stabilizing outcomes of the economic reforms and the revival of confidence internally and externally in the progress of the country. Furthermore, the national machinery on women, the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (MWCASE) was shifted under the President, as the Cabinet minister with two state ministers one for women and children and the other for social empowerment. This is indeed a positive change towards accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of women in Sri Lanka.

Despite the many socio-economic changes and challenges during this period the country submitted the Ninth Periodic Report of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in April 2022¹ and the Fourth National Report of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in February 2023. The reporting period 2020-2024 also sees the enactment of laws and policies on gender equality, non-discrimination and the advancement women's empowerment at a much greater extent than seen in the recent past.

Methodology:

The Sri Lanka national review will focus on the last 5 years primarily (2020 – 2024) but any key landmark achievements and core challenges before 2020 will be also briefly mentioned as relevant to the review process. The Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment (MWCASE) in Sri Lanka leads the process of undertaking the national review and has been supported by UN Women in the 2024

¹United Nations CEDAW, [Ninth periodic report submitted by Sri Lanka under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2021](#), 22 April 2022.

cycle. Due to the above mentioned crisis that have impacted workflow due to humanitarian efforts in Sri Lanka, there has been a delay in commencing the Beijing+30 national review and hence the process has been fast tracked. Accordingly, the following steps were followed to gather information for this national review.

STEP 1. Internal consultation and briefing at MWCASE with all Departments on Beijing+30 Review requirements including guiding questions

STEP 2. MWCASE collect required information from key stakeholders for Beijing+30 Review & follow-up on gaps

STEP 3. Convene the multi-stakeholder validation meeting and discuss the response to the online survey questions related to the Beijing+30 National Report and obtain further feedback

STEP 4. Formulation of the Draft Beijing+30 National Review Report and incorporate feedback from Ministry of Foreign Affairs & MWCASE

STEP 5. MWCASE to fill the online questionnaire & submit

STEP 6. Submission of final Beijing+30 National Review Report to ESCAP after incorporating feedback from MWCASE, MOFA and other stakeholders

Achievements – Promising Practices:

During the reporting period (2020 -2024) there are several promising practices relevant to other countries, where key lessons can be drawn in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Sri Lanka. Three such practices are provided below. First, the amendment of the Land Development Ordinance No. 19 of 1935, second the formulation of a National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Sri Lanka paving the way for the Women’s Empowerment Act to establish a National Commission on Women, appointment of a Woman Ombudsperson on ensuring women’s rights and setting up a national fund for women. The third promising practice is the review of the first National Action Plan to address SGBV which informed the formulation of the second National Action Plan on SGBV. These are important best practices that have addressed exclusions, paved the way to remove barriers of discrimination and to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Women faced exclusions since 1935 due to the Land Development Ordinance and were not equal to men in relation to succession, inheritance and joint ownership with regard to state lands. The landmark Act to amend the 1935 Land Development Ordinance (LDO) namely Land Development (Amendment) Act No 11 of 2022 has provisions to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in land inheritance (where the eldest male child was accorded preference in land inheritance and the female child only inherited in the absence of male siblings). The amendment is as follows: “According to the ordinance there was lesser priority given to women when bestowing land, gender equality is to be resolved in this regard. In an event where the succession is not nominated; the person who has developed or in occupancy or in possession of the property or who has the certificate, or the donation given in their name gets the ownership of the land. The names of the adopted children are also to be included in the entitlement schedule”. CEDAW’s Concluding Observations (2017; 12) called on the State to review and repeal discriminatory laws including provisions of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) 1935 in relation to succession, inheritance and joint ownership. This is a significant promising practice as well as

a lesson learnt where continued advocacy against such gender-based discrimination has resulted in amending discriminatory laws.

The 2023 Cabinet approved National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sri Lanka, formulated by MWCASE is a key development and promising practice leading to the submission² of the Women's Empowerment Act to Parliament and its approval in July 2024. The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment has eight thematic areas that address key gender inequalities in Sri Lanka. These include; Identity and autonomy, economic empowerment and productive employment, social equality and empowerment, environment and disaster management, equality in decision making, access to justice peace and security, freedom from gender-based violence, children – with special focus on the girl child. In essence, “The National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy envisions a just society where the equality of women and men and gender minorities is upheld, all women, men and gender minorities enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms, and both women, men and gender minorities are able to realize their full potential and participate equally and equitably in and benefit from democracy and development, both in public and private life.”³ The overarching focus of the Policy is on non-discrimination and ensuring substantive equality as per CEDAW and also include most areas as per the BPfA. In July 2024 the Parliament enacted the Women Empowerment Act No.37 of 2024, giving endorsement for the establishment of the National Commission on Women, appointment of a Woman Ombudsperson on ensuring women's rights, setting up a national fund for women and implements the National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy. This signals an important milestone in the history of Sri Lanka and a significant step towards the realization of women's rights and empowerment of women.⁴The principles enshrined in CEDAW on women's rights and non-discrimination is also incorporated in this landmark Act.

Another key promising practice is the Formulation of the second SGBV National Action Plan following a review of the implementation of the first NAP. The formulation and successfully operationalizing the Cabinet approved Policy Framework and first National Plan of Action to address SGBV in Sri Lanka (2016 -2020)⁵ has led to the review of its implementation which has informed the formulation of the second NAP to address SGBV which had several national consultations. The review of the first NAP on SGBV (2016-2020) indicated overall achievement of 64%. The multi-sectoral Second National Action Plan to address SGBV in Sri Lanka (2024-2028), led by the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment was approved by Cabinet in July 2024. This signals another important practice where lessons learnt and evidence informs the formulation of policy and action to address SGBV in Sri Lanka.

²[Parliament of Sri Lanka - Committee News - The Sectoral Oversight Committee approves the Women's Empowerment Bill to be presented in Parliament tomorrow](#)

³Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, 2023. National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sri Lanka, Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment.

⁴Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Women Empowerment Bill (No. 254)

⁵[Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment \(childwomenmin.gov.lk\)](#)

SECTION 2 – PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

Q1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and culturally diverse country with a population of 21.9 million, of which 51% are women. Sri Lanka ranks 78 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index 2023-24 (HDI) and is categorized as a lower middle-income country with high levels of literacy, life expectancy, healthcare and primary, secondary and tertiary education levels for both men and women. Besides these indicators that have remained high over the years, some of the most significant achievements during this reporting period 2020 – 2024 are seen in the area of policy and legal amendments. As mentioned in the section one these include the following:

- Amendment of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) No. 19 of 1935 to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in land inheritance, succession and joint ownership– passed in Parliament on 4th January 2021 which has been a discriminatory law highlighted for several year including as part of CEDAW Concluding Observations.
- The 2023 Cabinet approved National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Sri Lanka, formulated by MWCASE leading to the submission and approval of the Women’s Empowerment Act by Parliament in July 2024 enabling the establishment of the long-advocated National Commission on Women.⁶
- Cabinet approved First National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security⁷ on February 2023,
- The multi-sectoral Second National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka (2024-2028)–submitted to Cabinet in June 2024 for endorsement and received Cabinet approval in July 2024. The Action Plan contains 13 thematic areas to address SGBV in different spheres.
- National Guidelines for the Management of Shelter for victim-survivors of sexual and gender-based violence was launched in April 2024.
- In October 2020, following recommendations of a study on Achieving Gender Equality in Sri Lanka Police: *An analysis of Women Police Officers*⁸ commissioned by the National Police Commission in Sri Lanka undertaken by CENWOR and supported by UNDP saw landmark gender transformative changes in the Sri Lanka Police service where the first woman Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police was appointed in October 2020, breaking gender discriminatory practice in promotion over the span of 154 years in the Sri Lanka Police service. A year later, in October 2021, three more women police officers were promoted to the rank of DIG, advancing gender equality and institutionalizing women in high ranks of the Sri Lanka Police service.
- Adoption of the National Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking (2021-2025) by the Government of Sri Lanka. The NAP was developed through a consultative process and builds on the 2015-2019 Action Plan. The National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force was active in the formulation of the NAP together with key stakeholders with the support of IOM and the UN.

⁶ Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2024. Women’s Empowerment a Bill (Bill No. 254), Battaramulla: Government Publications Bureau.

⁷ Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, 2022. Women, Peace and Security: Sri Lanka’s National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Security Council’s Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, Battaramulla: MWCASE.

⁸ National Police Commission of Sri Lanka, [Achieving Gender Equality in the Sri Lanka Police: An Analysis of Women Officers | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#)

Women’s representation in politics remains a key gender inequality at 5.3% of women in Parliament for several years. Women’s political participation at the local level stood at 2% until the introduction of the Local Authorities Election Act No. 16 of 2017, which has provision for 25% of representation of women. Today women’s political representation at the local level stands at 22%. These temporary special measures have enabled greater representation of women at local level and greater sensitivity to the challenges faced by women. The Parliamentary women’s caucus continues to advocate for similar temporary special measures to be adopted at national level as well.

Women’s participation in the labour force which was already low and has declined even further from 2017 figure of 36.6% for women and 74.5% for men to 29.4% for women and 67.4% for men as per the 2023 Q4 Labour Force Survey estimates where the total labour force participation (LFP) rate stood at 47.1%.⁹ The multiple crises during the reporting period have most likely led to this situation. At national level more women than men are experiencing multi-dimensional poverty and higher unemployment rates than men at 6.8% for women and 3.1% for men in 2023. Measures implemented by the Government to address these gaps and inequalities will be addressed in this report in the next sections.

Criteria	2017			2020			2021/22			2023		
	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M
Labour Force Participation Rate % (15 years and over)	54.1	36.6	74.5	50.6	32.0	71.9	49.8	32.1	70.5	47.1	29.4	67.4
Unemployment rate %	4.4	7.1	3.0	5.5	8.5	4.0	5.1	7.9	3.7	4.3	6.8	3.1

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2017, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report http://www.statistics.gov.lk/samplesurvey/LFS_Annual%20Report_2017_version2.pdf. For 2022 & 2023/24 [2023Q4report.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/samplesurvey/LFS_2023Q4report.pdf) ([statistics.gov.lk](http://www.statistics.gov.lk))

Q2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and / or programmes, as relevant to Sri Lanka according to the list provided in the Guidance Note are listed and explained below.

1. Equality and Non-discrimination under the Law and Access to Justice:

In the 1978 Constitution non-discrimination and gender equality is guaranteed through 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) of the Constitution enables special provisions to be made by law, subordinate legislation or executive action for the advancement of women.

⁹Department of Census and Statistics, 2017, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report http://www.statistics.gov.lk/samplesurvey/LFS_Annual%20Report_2017_version2.pdf. For 2022 & 2023/24 [2023Q4report.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/samplesurvey/LFS_2023Q4report.pdf) ([statistics.gov.lk](http://www.statistics.gov.lk))

Accordingly, Article 12 (2) of the Constitution stipulates that ‘no citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion language caste, sex political opinion place of birth or any such grounds.’ Hence the Constitution with reference to non-discrimination covers all ethnic groups, all religious groups etc.

The Women’s Charter of Sri Lanka (approved on 3rd March 1993), was a policy formulated on women’s rights where the principle of non-discrimination was ingrained as enshrined in CEDAW. The Women’s Charter identified 7 areas where women’s rights were secured. Other key achievements are the formulation of the Cabinet approved National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Sri Lanka in 2023, formulated by MWCASE and the enactment of the Women’s Empowerment Act by Parliament in July 2024 enabling the establishment of the National Commission on Women and giving legal status to securing women’s rights and women’s empowerment. The Women’s Empowerment Act highlights the importance given “to protect women from all forms of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation”¹⁰This is aligned to *SDG 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere*.

2. Quality Education, Training and Lifelong Learning for Women and Girls

Sri Lanka has performed exceptionally well in the area of enrollment education for women and girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education, recording no gender gap as per the Global Gender Gap Report 2024. Compulsory education is also from a minimum of 5 years to a maximum of 16 years of age as per the circular issued by the Ministry of Education. Literacy level of both women (92.3%) and men (94.3%)¹¹are high, and as per table below the number of years of schooling is slightly higher for girls (14.1 years) than for boys (13.2 years). When taking gender disaggregated data for population aged 25 years and over with some secondary education for men (83.3%) is higher than for women (80.6%) (see table below).

Category	2017 - 2019			2022 -2023		
	Total	F	M	Total	F	M
Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and over)		82.6	83.1		80.6	83.3
Expected years of schooling (years)		14.5	13.8		14.1	13.2
Life expectancy at birth (years)	76.8	80.1	73.4		80.2	72.9
Literacy Rate (%)	92.5	91.6	93.4	93.3	92.3	94.3

Source: Human Development Report 2023/24 and Human Development Report 2020 [hdr2020.pdf \(undp.org\)](#)
 Central Bank of Sri Lanka, [Annual Reports \(2013-2022\)](#). Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2023. [Annual Economic Review 2023 / Literacy Rate of Sri Lanka | Lanka Statistics](#)

However, the unemployment and the gender gap in the labour force as well as the need for quality education directed at the job market rather than quantity has necessitated the Government of Sri Lanka to draft the National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) 2020 -2030 to ensure that the standards and quality of education in Sri Lanka integrates professionalism at the highest level. The policy is a comprehensive and a forward-looking policy document with the goal, “nurturing a society of productive, caring, and patriotic citizens.”¹²Accordingly, a committee has been appointed to take this forward.

¹⁰ Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2024. Women’s Empowerment Act No. 37 of 2024

¹¹Central Bank of Sri Lanka, [Annual Reports \(2013-2022\)](#). Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2023. [Annual Economic Review 2023 / Literacy Rate of Sri Lanka | Lanka Statistics](#)

¹² https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/09/NEPF_English_final.pdf

The policy recognizes that only 8.9% of student in 2021 entered national universities to pursue academic studies as per University Grants Commission. Its core areas ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in education.

- Aim 2: Core Area - Equity and Inclusiveness – ensures “Access to education regardless of gender, race, religion or social status.”
- Aim 3: Core Area - Quality Education – ensures: “Learning environments that are healthy, safe, protective, and gender sensitive.”

National Policy on Preschool Education 2019 formulated by the National Education Commission¹³ has gender inclusive guiding principles. Accordingly, “every child should be valued and supported equally. To ensure that they are provided with safe and caring environments, a preschool setting shall be free from any form of discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived ethnicity, language, colour, ancestry, national origin, religion, religious practice, parental status, physical or mental disability, gender, or socio-economic conditions.” Strategies include strengthening a network of preschools managed by Provincial Regulatory Authorities, to cater to children at risk from poverty, disability, violence, disasters, gender bias, institutionalized care, truancy and children residing with their mothers in prison.

Socio-emotional skills approach published by School Activities Branch (2022)¹⁴ addresses extensively on relationships mainly interpersonal relationships and is a document that can be used to institute information on healthy relationships, uphold gender equality and prevent SGBV.

Legal amendments to note during the reporting period include; amendments to the Children and Young Persons Ordinance (CYPO) No. 48 of 1939 by Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act No.39 of 2022, where the age was increased from 16 years to 18 years for the protection of children in need of care and protection or in contact with the law. Another important development is the Cabinet approval of the policy paper to prohibit corporal punishment of children in all sectors by amending the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code.

Greater attention is provided by the Government to the education sector to ensure STEM integration in the curriculum as well as to integrate standards and best practices from other countries¹⁵ thereby facilitating a more gender-inclusive environment for women to enter and access opportunities in non-traditional male dominated fields. Given the high importance placed on education for all girls and boys the Government through the Department of Samurdhi Development, has a scholarship scheme for children of low-income households irrespective of ethnicity, religion or gender. The number of beneficiaries and budget allocated as well as expenditure for the scholarship program during the reporting period is provided below as per data submitted by the Department of Samurdhi Development.

¹³ National Policy on Preschool Education 2019:

http://nec.gov.lk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/PreSchoolPolicy_EN.pdf

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, guruwaraya.lk

¹⁵ Ministry of Education website. [STEM education method implemented in 96 countries in the world is included in the education system of this country. – MOE](#)

Scholarship Program for School Children 2019 -2023		
Year	Number of Beneficiaries	Total Expenditure (Rs.)
2019	15,000	385,950,500.00
2020	10,000	1,173,287,500.00
2021	37,240	1,633,126,050.00
2022	38,317	1,586,657,950.00
2023	15,562	968,289,000.00
Source: Department of Samurdhi		

3. *Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls*

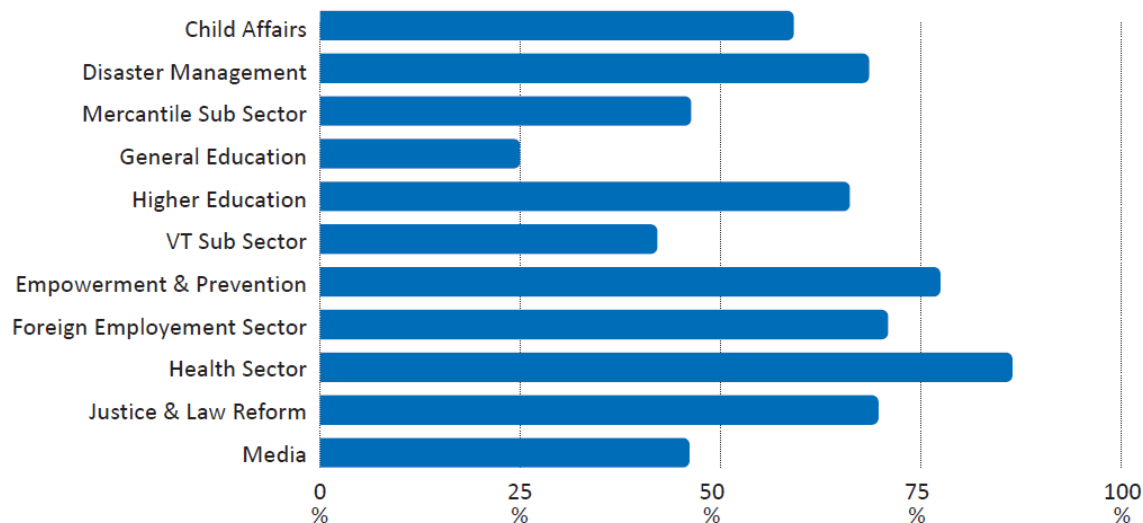
Violence against women (VAW) and girls is a crime that affects many women around the world. According to Women’s Wellbeing survey 2019,¹⁶24.9% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, with 1 in 5 ever partnered women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime and 1 in 3 female homicides in Sri Lanka are related to intimate partner violence.

The formulation and operationalizing of the Cabinet approved first multi-sectoral National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2016 – 2020 led by the then Ministry of Women and Child Development, introduced a holistic national vision to eliminate SGBV in Sri Lanka. At the end of the period of implementation of the first National Plan to address SGBV, a review of the implementation of the first NAP to address SGBV was commissioned by MWCASE where initiatives of state as well as non-state actors including CSOs who are actively engaged in prevention, response and policy formulation to address SGBV were assessed to understand the level of implementation and to also understand gaps and challenges. An extensive consultative process informed the review of the National Plan.

According to the review, the overall implementation of activities to address SGBV across all sectors under the first NAP was 62%. Each multi-sectoral plan is designed along 3 areas – prevention, intervention and policy advocacy. Accordingly, 64% of the activities under prevention have been implemented. Some initiatives were reflected under sectoral sub-sector plans and had budgets allocated to take them forward. The initiatives were funded by Government through the national budget, donor agencies, INGOs, UN agencies and implemented by the State, CSOs, private sector and other development partners. The review indicates the commitment of Government to reflect and take stock of progress made as well understand and address remaining gaps for future action.

¹⁶ Department of Census and Statistics and UNFPA, 2020. Women’s Wellbeing Survey 2019. Department of Census and Statistics

Sector wise Progress by 2021



The findings of the review as well as wide national consultations held in all sectors and all levels engaging with State and non-state agencies informed the formulation of the Second multi-sectoral National Action Plan to address SGBV in Sri Lanka (2024-2028), led by the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment which was submitted to Cabinet in June 2024 for endorsement, and was approved by Cabinet in July 2024. This indicates the national commitment of Government to address SGBV at all levels engaging with all actors. The SGBV – NAP II has 13 sectors and 5 sub-sectors and focuses on prevention programmes in schools, places of work, community-based initiatives as well as programmes on engaging men to address GBV among others. It further strengthens response efforts of service provision by state and non-state actors in the area of counseling, legal assistance, shelters, ensuring access to justice and a continued strengthening of the SGBV referral mechanism. It also advocates for policies and laws to address SGBV, discrimination and promote dignity and respect for all women, men, girls, boys and persons of other genders. The vision of this policy framework and the Multi-sectoral National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2024-2028 promotes, “a violence free life for women, men, girls and boys and those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations” and the underlying principle is “zero tolerance of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sri Lanka.”¹⁷

The Government led by the MWCASE also formulated the National Guidelines for the Management of Shelters for Victim-Survivors of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2024) to ensure the maintenance of best standards, services for survivors of SGBV in Shelters. The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Sri Lanka (2023) *Thematic Area 07: Freedom from Gender-based Violence* identifies key policy objectives and 4 strategies to address this area. The Women’s Empowerment Act (2024) gives provision to implement this thematic area.

¹⁷ Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, 2024. Multi-sectoral National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) - II in Sri Lanka 2024-2028, MWCASE.

4. Access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Sri Lanka has made significant progress in the health sector and has been placed 1st indicating ‘no gender gap’ in the health sector as per the Global Gender Gap Report 2024 which considers sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy to assess this score.

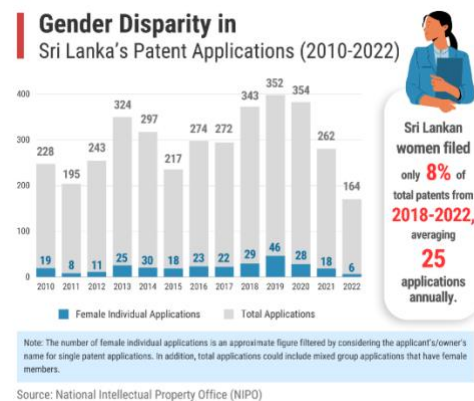
In order to streamline and work together to improve menstrual health in Sri Lanka a working group has been formed consisting of key Government stakeholders who came together and agreed on 30th March 2024 to improve the ‘menstrual health and environmental impact in Sri Lanka recognizing its importance to achieve the sustainable development goals. In so doing approved a programme of action that focused on advocacy, implementation of the policy on sanitary waste, capacity building, WASH implementation and in particular ‘ensure delivery of age appropriate comprehensive SRHR education with emphasis on Menstrual Health Management (MHM).

The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Sri Lanka (2023) *Thematic Area 03: Social Equality and Empowerment, sub-area 3.2 Health*, identifies key policy, commitments, policy objectives and strategies to address this area. The Women’s Empowerment Act (2024) gives provision to implement this thematic area.

5. Women’s entrepreneurship and women’s enterprise

Small and Medium Enterprises form 75% of all enterprises and account for 45% of the employed and account for 52% of the GDP in the country.¹⁸ Furthermore 90% of the business have sole ownership, with 25% of these being led by women. Though men are dominant in the SME sector, women entrepreneurs are seen as an important ‘wave’ that is emerging and will trigger much needed economic growth in Sri Lanka in the future, particularly given the multiple crises that have adversely affected Sri Lanka.

SMEs provide the platform for entrepreneurs to transition to the formal economy. However, many women face multiple barriers that hinder this transition. These include lack of collateral and financial strength, no access to credit and few investor opportunities, poor knowledge, no market access, poor bargaining power, no mentors and no coalition to support their journey. If this transition is addressed the gender gap in the labour force could be narrowed. As indicated in the figure “Gender Disparity in Sri Lanka’s Patent Applications (2010 -2020) the number of female individual applications for patent applications averages only 25 annually. This signals the fact that though women are present in the SME sector, their voice and power are not recognized on par with men.



Recognizing this fact, programmes to strengthen women’s entrepreneurship, women MSMEs as well as credit schemes have commenced by the Government and non-state institutions. Some of these include:

¹⁸ Business Lanka, Women Entrepreneurs will Drive the next Wave of Growth, Sri Lanka Export Development Board. Vol.32- Issue 01- 2019 (referral link: https://www.srilankabusiness.com/ebooks/business_lanka_2019_jan.pdf)

- The Sri Lanka Women’s Bureau (SLWB) carry out livelihood and entrepreneurship development, market support, counseling and legal literacy programmes for the empowerment of rural women. Special measures have been taken to uplift the lives of women in the estate sector through implementing family cash management programmes, economic empowerment programmes and initiatives to address SGBV. A programme for women in the fisheries sector has also been developed and implemented.
- Information Communication and Technology Agency (ICTA) the national agency for digital transformation in Sri Lanka has initiated a Spirulation project in 2010, which inspires and supports tech entrepreneurs and early-stage tech-related firms in Sri Lanka. Contributing to the nation's startup ecosystem, this program fosters innovation, industry advancement and economic growth in Sri Lanka. Young women and men are part of this project.
- Ministry of Industries – *Vidatha* Unit: One Entrepreneur per one village programme 2021 -2022 was established under the Ministry of Industries to transfer technology to entrepreneurs. Budget expended in 2021 is Rs. 669.3Mn and in year 2022 Rs. 47.5Mn. The total number of beneficiaries is 10,871 of which 55% are female. The *Vidatha* programme provides necessary equipment, conducting training programs to solve technical problems faced by entrepreneurs and issues certificates assuring quality for selected entrepreneurs out of the selected and trained entrepreneurs. This project was initiated to uplift new entrepreneurs. Once the relevant training is provided, basic equipment required to start a business is also provided with 25% contribution from the entrepreneur and 75% contribution from the Government. Accordingly, this project is ongoing since 2021.
- The Department of Textile Industries conduct training programs and self-employment projects related to the Handloom sector in the Country in order to empower youth and women economically and socially.
- Samurdhi special loan scheme known as *LiyaSaviya* is dedicated purely for the empowerment of women entrepreneurs and provides a maximum loan amount of Rs. 500,000/- for women. Furthermore, in the last few years Government through Department of Samurdhi Development broadened access to land, housing, finance, and technology and / or agriculture extension services.
- Under the Ministry of Skills Development, the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) places special attention to channel women and girls to non-traditional fields while supporting them with on-the- job training and job placements once they complete the training. The National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) System provided by the VTA will enable those trained to obtain jobs globally and in Sri Lanka given its wide recognition.

In a bold move to strengthen the struggling SME sector which will further benefit women entrepreneurs, the Government has taken an important step to formulate a new agency title “Enterprise Sri Lanka”¹⁹ to develop and monitor the SME sector in Sri Lanka and to also bring existing institutions performing related activities under one umbrella.

¹⁹ Daily Mirror, [‘Enterprise Sri Lanka’ to be established as dedicated agency for SME support, 5 June 2024.](#)

Q3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?

Marginalized groups in Sri Lanka range from women headed households, widows, women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, persons with different sexual orientation, migrant women and girls as well as rural women, indigenous women and girls who have less access to resources and opportunities.

Female Headed Households: Though the 30 year long ethnic war ended almost 15 years ago, the scars of the conflict are still felt among women and girls who have lost someone on account of the war. Hence gender inequalities significantly widened as a result of the impact of the ethnic conflict with women being disproportionately affected (especially women survivors in the North, North-Central and East of Sri Lanka). The Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)²⁰ highlight that 25.8% (or 1.4 million) of all households, are female headed households (FHH), with highest concentration in the Eastern and Northern Provinces, with 16.7% identified as widowed. Considering the social constraints and economic dependency, most of these FHH lack economic resilience, and in this context, became the primary income earner of the family. The Covid-19 pandemic and economic crises further affected these FHH, widows, and single women as they were largely reliant on one source of income.

In the past 5 years significant measures have been taken by the Government to uplift the situation of FHH in the north of the country. According to the Annual Report Office of Reparations 2023,²¹ the following areas were prioritized to be undertaken by Office of Reparations (OR) these include:

- a) Livelihood support via knowledge transfer and technology transfer programmes to enhance incomes of affected persons and ensure economic stability
- b) Granting monetary relief
- c) Providing Psychosocial support

Accordingly, most of the start-up programmes under livelihoods, targeted women (10 women to engage in Fiber based Thawashi brush production), FHH (30 households making candles/ literacy programmes/ Palmyra leaf products) in the North. All livelihood programmes used local resources for the startup businesses. Self-employment projects for war affected women are also conducted by the National Center for Empowering Female Headed Households in Kilinochchi which is monitored by the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau, MWCASE.²²

The National Secretariat for *Disable Persons, under MWCASE* has provided numerous forms of support to women and girls with disabilities. These include the following (please see Annex 2 for more details);

- *Provision of assistive devices* (spectacles, wheelchairs, hearing aids, crutches, walkers, artificial limbs, special shoes etc.) to enhance their wellbeing and quality of life to a total of 7,759 persons (Rs. 11.24Mn) in 2023 of which 4,811 were for women and girls and to 71 persons (Rs. 0.26Mn) in the first 4 months of 2024, of which 41 were for women and girls.

²⁰ Department of Census and Statistics, 2016. Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016.

²¹ Office for Reparations Sri Lanka, 2023. Annual Report 2023, Rajagiriya: Office for Reparations (referral link: [OR-Annual Report - 2023 Final.pdf \(reparations.gov.lk\)](#))

²² Office for Reparations Sri Lanka, 2023. Annual Report 2023, Rajagiriya: Office for Reparations. (referrallink: [OR-Annual Report - 2023 Final.pdf \(reparations.gov.lk\)](#))

- Provision of medical assistance of a maximum of Rs. 30,000/- for low-income families to be used to buy medicines not provided by Government hospitals, attend clinics, cover expenses for surgeries such as kidney, cardiac, eye, brain, pelvic bone transplant and ear drum replacement. In this respect assistance was provided for 542 disabled persons in 2023 of which 261 are women/ girls with a disability and in 2024 (first 4 months) 71 persons with disabilities received support of which 41 were women/ girls with a disability.
- Provision of employment opportunities for PWD who have capacities to be deployed for a job in the private sector receive up to a maximum of Rs. 15,000 monthly from the Disabled Secretariat towards the salary of the disabled persons (benefit will be provided up to 24 months) while 50% will be paid by the recruiting agency. Job placements in the reporting period reduced as a result of retrenchment during Covid-19 and due to the economic crisis. Nevertheless in 2023, 35 PWD were placed in jobs with 4 persons being women. In 2024 (first 4 months) signs of economic recovery are more apparent with 35 PWD placed in jobs of which 9 are women.
- Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) and National Transport Commission (NTC) have taken action to reserve seats in buses for pregnant women as part of special measures taken for women.
- Department of Social Services has several programmes for persons with disabilities such as community-based rehabilitation programme for persons with disabilities to integrate them into society and provide relevant services. Other services include vocational training programmes for young person between 16 to 35 years of age with any impairment of hearing, speech, visually handicapped, intellectually or physically challenged and also provide care and shelter for intellectually impaired and vulnerable children who are without parents or guardians. Visually Impaired Trust Fund provides necessary relief for the visually impaired persons. Sign language interpretation service is offered to hearing and speech impaired persons to communicate as required. Rehabilitation of drug addicts is done through vocational and skills training to integrate them back to society.

Q4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

The multiple crises that affected Sri Lanka have disproportionately affected women and girls and the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the BPfA. Preventing negative impact on women and girls in these scenarios were limited given the gravity of the multiple crises that affected Sri Lanka, however the Government of Sri Lanka with the support of donors, UN, CSOs and INGOs, women's groups were able to respond in multiple ways to assist women, girls and other vulnerable groups.

A key important area of response was the **digitalization** of consultations with communities and the use of online methods where persons from different parts of the country were included. The Government was able to establish strong coordination links in times of crises given these digital modalities, as transport was also impeded during these times. Digitalization also enabled the finalization of important gender equality documents aligned to BPfA that were in the pipeline, which have been finalized leading to the acceleration of gender equality and empowerment of women. These policies include; the finalization of National Guidelines for the Management of Shelters for Victim-Survivors of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2024), National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security SCR 1325 (2023 -

2027), National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2023) which led to a landmark Act on Women's Empowerment being approved by the Parliament and the formulation of the multi-sectoral Second National Action Plan to address SGBV (2024-2028). All these national policies and guidelines have enabled the realization of a rights-based approach to gender equality and empowerment of women towards realization of the BPfA.

To address **feminization of poverty** the Government implemented mitigation measures through social welfare programmes where cash transfers and other forms of assistance were provided through *Samurdhi* (poverty alleviation programme of the Government) and *Aswesuma* (the new social protection scheme) to poor households/ FHH, elderly women, PWD and persons with chronic kidney disease.

During the COVID-19 pandemic **women in leadership as well as women's role in addressing crises** were visible in the response efforts as well as in the Presidential Task force appointed to monitor services during the period. In this respect the health sector played a crucial role where the majority of healthcare workers were women including women-front-line workers. Women workforce in all sectors also adapted to the new conditions and reported to duty or adapted to remote working conditions and ensured an almost uninterrupted provision of services.

The Government provided **economic support during Covid-19 to uplift loss of income of women entrepreneurs** to develop their businesses and provided equipment and technical assistance linking with international donor agencies such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Livelihood support was also provided to returning migrant workers to address loss of income supported by Government of Japan and Swedish Agency for Development Cooperation

Supported **vulnerable groups such as FHH, widows, disabled women** from low-income families through special social protection measures, where the Government provided supplementary monetary assistances to those who lost their livelihood due to lockdowns. Furthermore, the Government spent around Rs. Bn.72 during COVID-19 pandemic for cash grants in addition to the regular cash transfer and 5.9 million people benefited from this. In addition, the nutrition allowance for pregnant mothers was increased from Rs. 20,000/- to 45,000/- during the economic crisis, while identified pre-school teachers were provided with a monthly allowance of Rs. 2,500/- for nutrition support to children which was increased to Rs.5000/- in 2024.

To address the **increase of violence against women (VAW), especially domestic violence** referred to as the shadow pandemic, the National Committee on Women (NCW) extended the operation of the trilingual toll-free women's helpline '1938' to operate 24 hours in to facilitate complaints of victims of SGBV who were largely women and girls trapped in their homes with their perpetrators. The Legal Aid Commission addressed the high volume of complaints and provided free legal assistance, counseling, psycho-social support and shelter services to women and girl victim-survivors of SGBV. The Police Women and Child Bureaus also attended to the increase volume of calls to their hotline 011-2444444 in this regard and linked with MWCASE and CSOs in responding to the issues. In 2024 the police Women & Children Bureau commenced the 109 help line to assist victims of SGBV.

Q5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

Key areas identified to accelerate progress for women and girls in the next 5 years in line with the broad priorities identified in the guided questionnaire include; equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice, eliminating VAW and girls, political participation and representation, women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises and gender responsive budgeting. Accordingly, the following laws, policies and programmes are prioritized by GoSL.

Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice:

- Operationalizing the Cabinet approved National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sri Lanka (2023), formulated by MWCASE and operationalizing the Women's Empowerment Act (2024). In this respect the Government will facilitate the establishment of the National Commission on Women and appoint strong women advocates as the 7 members of the Commission.
- Operationalize the Cabinet approved First National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2023).

Eliminating VAW and girls:

- Operationalize the multi-sectoral Second National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka (2024-2028) – approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in July 2024.
- Continue to strengthen the SGBV referral mechanism to ensure there is no re-victimization of women and girls and focus on reintegration and economic empowerment of women and girl victim-survivors.
- Rollout the Cabinet approved National Guidelines for the Management of Shelters for victim survivors of SGBV.
- Approved the amendments to the Prevention of the Domestic Violence Act (with the repeal of the previous PDV Act. No. 2005) which has been sent to the Legal Draftsman Department and the Ministry has sent its observations for the drafted Act.
- Repeal the Vagrants Ordinance as per the recommendation of the committee appointed to review the law.
- National roll out of the Paralegal training programme to enhance knowledge on relevant laws related to women and children among Women Development Officers and other public officials in all districts.
- The National Alternative Care Policy for Children in Sri Lanka approved by the Cabinet in 2019 ensures family-based care for all children. Action plans to roll-out the policy have been formulated at Provincial level.

Political participation and representation:

- In the areas of political participation of women action is being taken to campaign for a quota to be secured at Provincial and Parliamentary level.
- Encouraging and empowering youth (young women and young men) for future leadership through Youth Parliament, conducted by National Youth Services Council with special focus to empower young women for leadership.

Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises

- Strengthened roll-out of all existing programmes directed at enhancing the potential of women entrepreneurs.
- Establish proposed agency “Enterprise Sri Lanka” to develop and monitor the SME sector and to also bring existing institutions performing related activities under one umbrella.
- Operationalize the National Credit Guarantee Institution (NCGI) ensuring priority to women and other marginalized groups.²³

Gender responsive budgeting

- Formulate the Gender Responsive Budgeting Act which is a legislative tool to streamline the existing measures on GRB in an inclusive manner.
- Roll-out the formulated GESI budget manual for Parliamentarians.

Quality education and training and lifelong learning for women and girls

- Operationalize fully the National Education Policy Framework (2020 – 2030) – In this respect take forward quality education at primary and secondary levels integrating gender equality and empowerment of girls at all levels, while addressing gaps such as rural-urban gaps, as well as gender bias in education curricular and integrating market demand and niche including AI techniques with a higher standard of English to meet market standards into the present education system is critical.
- Take forward STEM education for girls as a national priority integrating affirmative action at all levels and digital technology driven standards.
- National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) 2018 is in place and will continue to inform ECCD work

Unpaid care and domestic work:

- Daycare Policy has been formulated and submitted to the Cabinet of Minister for endorsement at the time of reporting
- Daycare guideline has been approved by the Cabinet of the ministers

Other: ensuring rights of women and girls who are disabled& marginalized

- The Ministry of Transport and Highways has drafted the National Land Transport Policy of Sri Lanka, which is presently at the stage of obtaining approval by the Cabinet of Ministers. The policy focuses on reducing social exclusion by providing internationally recognized passenger transport facilities for the improved mobility of socio-economically vulnerable, under privileged and economically marginalized social segments to be considered as a policy priority. Transport issues pertaining to women and girls will be addressed under this policy accordingly. Furthermore, as the policy has provisions to be updated every 6 months, any other aspects can be included in the review.
- Sign language Bill has been drafted and submitted to the Attorney General for his clearance. Thereafter Bill will be submitted for the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers and rolled out.

²³ National Credit Guarantee Institution brief [77b82729-fe46-41cc-b886-287b436cd933 \(treasury.gov.lk\)](https://www.treasury.gov.lk/77b82729-fe46-41cc-b886-287b436cd933)

- National Institute of Social Development has upgraded the NISD Diploma on Social work to degree level which is now recognized by the University Grants Commission. The NISD is under the purview of the MWCASE.

SECTION 3 - PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

This section will focus on a more substantive analysis of the manner in which gender equality has advanced as per the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA as aligned to the relevant SDGs in the last 5 years. The guiding questions encourages the review process to reflect on the how the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda can be implemented so as to strengthen progress further in accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

It needs to be noted that the multiple crises experienced during the reporting period have negatively affected the pace of development work, with funds where available being allocated for humanitarian assistance.

I. Inclusive Development, shared Prosperity and Decent Work

Q6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

Sri Lanka is a country with high literacy for men and women, yet a persistent gender gap in the labour force remains. During the reporting period the labour force participation rate for women has reduced even further to 29.4% and has also reduced for men at 67.4% (refer Table below). Between 2015 and 2017 the agriculture and services sector grew in productivity, while services sector grew in employment as well. Between 2018- 2020 the services sector showed only productivity increase, while employment decreased given the setback due to the Easter bombs. Following the pandemic there was a shift to the agricultural employment sector and a shrinking of the industry and services sector where employment is more secure with higher incomes.

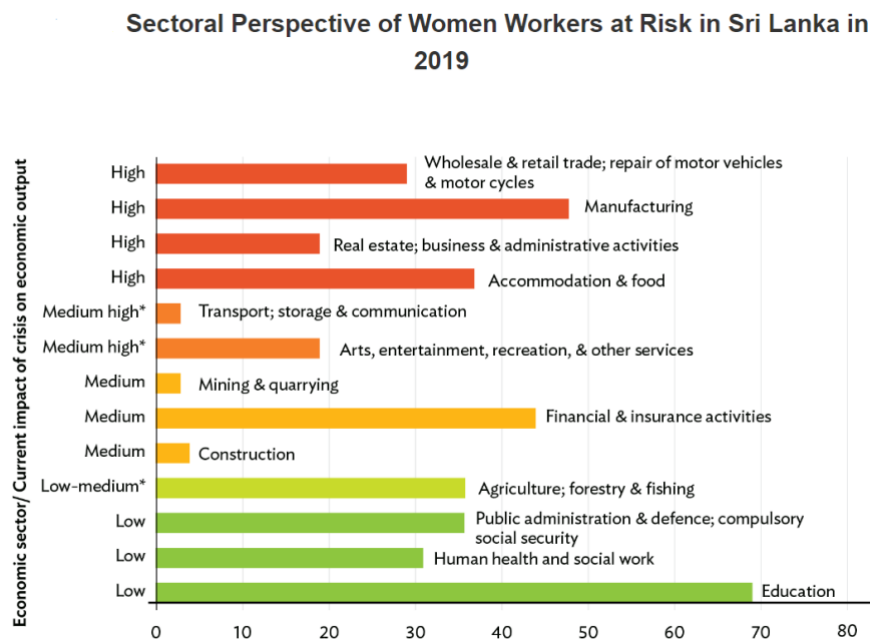
Labour Force Participation Rate and Unemployment Rate 2017 – 2024												
Criteria	2017			2020			2021/22			2023		
	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M
Labour Force Participation Rate % (15 years and over)	54.1	36.6	74.5	50.6	32.0	71.9	49.8	32.1	70.5	47.1	29.4	67.4
Unemployment rate %	4.4	7.1	3.0	5.5	8.5	4.0	5.1	7.9	3.7	4.3	6.8	3.1

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2017, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report http://www.statistics.gov.lk/samplesurvey/LFS_Annual%20Report_2017_version2.pdf. For 2022 & 2023/24 [2023Q4report.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/samplesurvey/LFS_Annual%20Report_2022_2023%20Q4report.pdf) (statistics.gov.lk)

Decent work which is Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is an important component aligned to the BPfA. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines ‘decent work,’ as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity"²⁴The report notes an important gender angle that women with children were the least likely to access fulltime decent work, while women without children experienced high access to decent work. Men with children also were able to access decent work and faced no barriers. This highlights the care

²⁴ Development Asia, 2023. Promoting Access to Decent Work in Sri Lanka, 27 February 2023. 2023.(referral link: <https://development.asia/insight/promoting-access-decent-work-sri-lanka#:~:text=Decent%20work%20is%20an%20important,%2C%20security%20and%20human%20dignity.%22>)

and nurture role associated with women with children and highlights a critical need for the provision of quality child care services which the Government is looking to strengthen further. Women’s labour gap and decline in the LFP rate is also due to the fact that women engage in jobs that are high risk, where they are dominant such as the garment sector and maybe retrenched easily. The figure below gives a sectoral overview of the level of risk faced by women workers.²⁵



The Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment has taken forward steps to meet the demands of the present labour force. Accordingly, the proposed Employment Bill related to terms and conditions of employment as a necessary step in addressing the current requirement of labour market and promoting the economic development of the country. The proposed Employment Bill will address disparities among existing laws and bring uniformity to the terms and conditions of employment while promoting gender equality and preventing discrimination/ violence against women and other vulnerable groups. The Employment Bill will streamline the existing complex and fragmented labour laws into a comprehensive and easy-to-understand framework. This will help to reduce compliance burdens on businesses and improve ease of doing business, while not reducing protections for workers. The following proposals have been included in the Employment Bill to increase the labour force participation of female employees by the Government.

- *Equal pay for equal value of work to ensure equal pay for equal work:* There are no discriminations on salaries and wages based on gender with regard to current labour laws. However, provisions have been made in the Proposed Employment Bill to pay equal remuneration to every employee for work of equal value without discrimination based on sex.
- *Night work relaxation:* In the Shop and Office Employees (Regulation of Employment and Remuneration) Act No. 19 of 1954, there was a restriction on the time period within which female workers are allowed to work. However, in the proposed new Bill, this restriction has been removed

²⁵ Development Asia, 2022. Reducing women’s employment vulnerability, 7 March 2022. (referral link: <https://development.asia/insight/reducing-womens-employment-vulnerability-sri-lanka-beyond-pandemic>)

and the above provision applies to all employees. The existing legal provisions are incorporated without any change and if an employee needs to work exceeding 8 hours per day provisions are included in the proposed Bill.

- *Provision to mandate institutional level policy and mechanism against violence and harassment at workplace:* Provisions have been made in the proposed Employment Bill, to prevent any act of violence or sexual harassment to another employee in the workplace. Furthermore, every employer employing 50 or more employees need to prepare a policy and mechanism for the prevention of violence or sexual harassment in the workplace.
- *Provisions against discrimination at workplace:* As per the Proposed Employment Bill, every person has the right to prevent and be protected from all forms of discrimination based on gender and disability and to strengthen measures for all forms of labour services and matters in Industries and services.
- *Working from Remote locations:* Provisions have been made in the proposed employment law, to perform any work or tasks related to employment from remote location, depending on the need of the service or the nature of the work.
- *Flexible work arrangements:* To accommodate needs of working women, flexible work arrangements such as part-time and compressed work week have been introduced by the new Employment Bill.
- *Paternity Leave:* The proposed Employment law allows granting paternity leave with pay for 03 working days for the birth of a live child to his wife.
- *Women representation in executive bodies of trade unions:* Provisions have been made to have at least 25% representation from women members for the Executive Committee of the Trade Union, where considerable number of women employees hold membership.
- *Labour legislation for domestic workers (who are largely women):* Domestic workers are not covered by the current legislations, enforced by the Department of Labour. Arrangements have been made to include domestic workers (who are mostly women) into the definition “employee” of the proposed Bill.
- *Social Protection - Introducing a new social security system for employees:* At present, occupational safety and health benefits, maternity benefits, unemployment benefits, workmen’s compensation benefits are borne by the employer. In order to provide these benefits without being an additional burden to the employer, as well as to provide social security and insurance facilities for the unemployed, a new system will be introduced and a study has been undertaken in this regard.
- *Initiative for bringing informal sector to the formal sector:* Necessary actions are being taken to guide and introduce career guidance for professions identified as blue-collar jobs in the society to enable them to enhance the quality of work. By providing the necessary knowledge and introducing ethical principles to persons in these professions, will enable them to introduce high standards of service delivery and provide quality service. The categories of informal sector jobs in each sector will be identified. This process will commence shortly and future plans will be prepared accordingly.
- *Anti-harassment Guidelines for workplaces:* At national level anti-harassment / respectful workplace guidelines for public institutions were drafted by MWCASE in 2021.

Q7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

Unpaid care and domestic work in Sri Lanka is higher for women than for men before Covid-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, and stood at 86.4% for women and 54% for men. When considering SDG indicator 5.4.1 the “proportion of time spent in a day on unpaid domestic and care work”, for women and men in Sri Lanka (% of 24-hour day) it is estimated at 25.4% for women with 6.8% for men.²⁶The Sri Lanka Time Use Survey (2017) noted “around 91% of females aged 15 years and above participate in unpaid activities (in contrast to 63% for males). Employed females aged 15 and above spent on average 5 hours and 42 minutes for unpaid activities, whereas economically inactive females spent as much as 7 hours and 24 minutes on unpaid work. By contrast, men in all categories spent only between 2 to 3 hours per day on unpaid activities.”²⁷

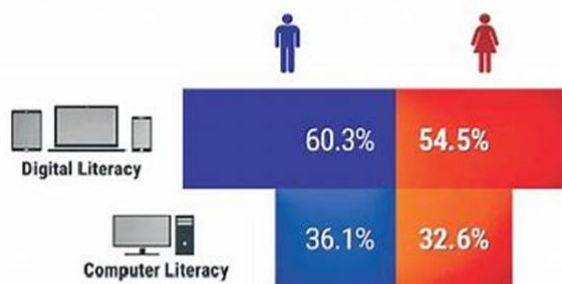
The efforts made by Government to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work done by women is largely in the area of flexi work arrangements, greater acceptance of work from home options, facilitating a few child day care centers, as well as a few media programmes that contained aspects of unpaid care work including the *Equal Partners Campaign: Engaging Men and Boys for Change*²⁸ initiated by MWCASE in partnership with UNDP and Men Engage Alliance Sri Lanka which is available in audio-visual form and was part of a campaign that was broadcast on national television.

Q8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

Technology and access to the internet, computers, mobile phones and other communication devices have become an essential part of accessing jobs, education and lifelong learning. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the world advanced in digital technology with a huge leap, advancing at a pace not reached before. Education in schools was taught online, Government services were accessible online, businesses and financial services were available online. Furthermore, full time onsite work transformed to online work from home, while new jobs became available from home with meetings, consultations and workshops held online. In this new normal context for many homes in Sri Lanka, smart phones offered the way forward to enter the digital world.

In 2021 the digital literacy rate for Sri Lanka was 54.1%, while the computer literacy was 34.3%. However, women and girls were a little behind men and boys in digital literacy 54.5% as well as computer literacy 32.6% as indicated in the figure ‘Gender Gap in Sri Lanka’. The gender digital

Digital and Computer Literacy Rates, 2021
Gender Gap in Sri Lanka's
 Digital and Computer Literacy Rates, 2021



Source: Labour Force Survey - Annual Report, (2021)

²⁶Department of Census and Statistics, 2020. Sri Lanka Tim Economy and Policy Development. UNFPA, 2022. Rapid Ge

²⁷ Department of Census and Statistics, 2020. Sri Lanka Tin Economy and Policy Development.

²⁸Ministry of Women and Child Development, MenEngage and Boys for Gender Equality.

divide, is more apparent in rural and plantation sectors rather than in more urban settings.²⁹ Women and girls face inequalities in access as well as knowledge of these advances in technology given gender bias and promotion of stereotypical traditional roles for women and girls.

In order to bridge the digital gap a few programmes have taken place, which include:

- The National Information Communication and Technology Agency (ICTA) leads advances in the digital landscape for Sri Lanka and is presently forming a **National Digital Strategy 2030**³⁰ for Sri Lanka. The Strategy intends to position Sri Lanka to meet 3 key areas, of which one prioritizes women and addresses the urban-rural gap seeking to “create high paying jobs for young people, women, and rural populations” while the other two areas are more generic namely “enhance economic competitiveness to drive exports and foreign exchange earnings” and “deliver trusted and inclusive public services to everyone, everywhere” which highlights inclusion of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities.
- ICTA’s Spiration project, which began in 2010, inspires and supports tech entrepreneurs and early-stage tech-related firms in Sri Lanka. Contributing to the nation's startup ecosystem, this program fosters innovation, industry advancement and economic growth in Sri Lanka. Young women and men are part of this project.
- HackaDev National Youth Social Innovation Challenge Sri Lanka is led by CITRA Social Innovation Lab a joint venture of the Government/ Prime Minister’s Office and UNDP together with other national and international partners where each social innovation challenge team requires the participation of at least one woman, accordingly 49% of women have been engaged as part of these innovation challenges that address social problems as well as enable youth entrepreneurs.³¹
- Lanka Women e-Market is established to enhance the marketing and promotion of women entrepreneur production. There are 464 women entrepreneurs registered in this system.
- Legal protection for online digital harassment: The recently approved ‘Online Safety Act No.9 of 2024’³² provides legal protection for digital harassment including sharing of photos that were shared privately when in a relationship.
- Cyber safety and security that are barriers for women and girls in accessing digital platforms is addressed by organizations such as Sri Lanka CERT (Computer Emergency Readiness Team) the National Centre for Cyber Security, which has the national responsibility of protecting the nation's cyberspace from cyber threats. The National Women’s Helpline 1938 provides referral services and counseling for online GBV victim-survivors. ‘Hithawathi’ managed by LK domain also provides a reporting and referral platform for victims of cyber violence. Police Women and Child desk where an online cyber violence unit is in operation provide support to report cyber violence crimes. “Prathya” offers trilingual hotline support to women, girls, LGBTQI+ community who have experienced online gender-based violence by providing free technological assistance, psychosocial support/referrals and legal support/referrals.

²⁹Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2023. [DigitALL: Are Sri Lankan Women Abandoned in Digital Transformation?, Talking Economies, IPS.](#)

³⁰* [Annex-1-National-Digital-Strategy-2030.pdf \(icta.lk\)](#)

³¹[HackaDev Sri Lanka | UNDP – HackaDev Sri Lanka | UNDP](#)

³² Online Safety Act No.9 of 2024 Sri Lanka. [6311.pdf \(parliament.lk\)](#)

Q.9 In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

As mentioned earlier the crisis and climate change issues disrupted the wellbeing of the women and girls with mostly negative consequences to the implementation of the BPfA. Recovery from the crisis necessitated much austerity measure to be put in place. In this situation the Government, donors, CSOs, INGOs and UN launched social and economic recovery policies and programmes.

Government implemented numerous relief measures in 2020 to mitigate the adverse impact on low-income households (especially households with the elderly, disabled, women and children) and small businesses. Besides the regular subsidy and social welfare and poverty eradication programs such as *Samurdhi* program, the authorities allocated Rs. 117.5 billion in 2020 to finance support and welfare packages during COVID-19. Cash transfers accounted for a large portion of this approximately Rs. 79 billion, to poor and vulnerable households.³³ Funds were also allocated to support quarantine measures, improve health infrastructure, uplift state-owned enterprises (SOEs), as well as address emergency funding requirements under transport, education, agriculture, IT etc., which changed with the onset of the economic crisis.

Some key programmes include:

- *Samurdhi Social Welfare and poverty Eradication Program*: households with women and FHH with children were prioritized under this scheme. Including Households with disabled persons, kidney patients and the elderly. The *Samurdhi* program provides assistance to 1.8 million households (which is 33% of all households in Sri Lanka). The cash transfer assistance provided from 2019 – 2023 by the Department of Samurdhi Development is provided in the Table below:

Samurdhi Subsidy Program 2019 – 2023		
Year	Number of Beneficiaries	Value of Benefits (Rs)
2019	1,800,182	45,688,364,500.00
2020	1,770,086	52,471,893,980.00
2021	1,760,485	51,557,419,980.00
2022	1,727,266	63,705,938,820.00
2023	1,637,672	31,292,519,00.00
Source: Department of Samurdhi		

- *Aswesuma Scheme*: Expected to empower 2 million families/ households (from 2024 – 2026) by using strategies of economic empowerment, social empowerment, psychological empowerment. Going forward in the next 3 years the following pilot projects will be undertaken. Accordingly, 65% of the beneficiaries for these programmes will be from existing identified beneficiaries who are under this assistance programme.

³³International Monetary Fund, The Informal sector and the impact if the Covid-19 Pandemic in Sri Lanka. (referral link: [THE INFORMAL SECTOR AND THE IMPACT OF THE](#))

- *Savings and Credit Programmes:* Up to 2023 total disbursement of loan amount is Rs. 463,599,062.00 with several credit facilities offered to beneficiaries amounting to Rs.12,309,875. 00
- *Freeze in Loan repayments:* During the period of the Covid-19 crisis, the Government issued a notification to all loan disbursement organizations to provide a moratorium for the repayment of the loans, which provided a short respite to many low-income and middle-income households.
- *Establishment of the National Credit Guarantee Institution (NCGI):* To support and assist the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector in the country to address challenges faced by an inability to adapt to changing technology, market demands and limited access to finances and lack of acceptable collateral. The signing of the shareholders namely 13 Financial Institution joining this cause was held in June, 2023. This initiative by Government supported by ADB will pave the way to strengthen the SME sector and has a priority to support women-led SMEs.

II. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Q10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Due to the multiple crises poverty increased in Sri Lanka from 13.1% in 2021 to 25% in 2022 and may rise further according to the World Bank.³⁴ As a positive step the Sri Lanka economy grew moderately at 2.2% in 2024 and shows signs of stability with a decline in inflation levels, higher revenues, increased remittances, account surplus and a rebound in tourism.³⁵ To respond to the increase in poverty, the Government response broadened access to land, agriculture, finance, technology through the *Samurdhi* welfare programme. Three main concrete actions taken by the Government in addressing and reducing poverty are the following:

- *Samurdhi Social Welfare and Poverty Eradication Program:* Households with women and FHH with children were prioritized. Including Households with disabled persons, kidney patients and the elderly. The *Samurdhi* program provides assistance to 1.8 million households (which is 33% of all households in Sri Lanka). The cash transfer assistance provided from 2019 – 2024 by the Department of Samurdhi Development is provided in the Table below:

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Source: Department of Samurdhi Development		

³⁴Sustainable Development Council Sri Lanka, 2023. Integrated SDG Insights Report Sri Lanka, SDG Council. SDC. (Referral link: https://srilanka.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/undp_sdg_insights_sri_lanka_final_pdf%20%281%29.pdf)

³⁵World Bank, 2024. Sri Lanka Development Update, April 2024: Bridge to Recovery, World Bank.

- **Savings and Credit Programmes:** Up to 2023 total disbursement of loan amount is Rs. 463,599,062.00 with a several credit facilities offered to beneficiaries amounting to Rs.12,309,875.00
- **Housing Development Schemes for low-income families:** Under these schemes FHH with children are prioritized. The schemes that are in operation annually are the Rs. 125,000.00 housing scheme, Rs. 200,000.00 housing scheme, Rs. 250,000.00 housing scheme and the Rs. 750,000.00 housing scheme. Accordingly, from 2019 to 2023 the numbers of beneficiaries that have received assistance from any of the above scheme are provided below.

Year	Number of families
2019	306
2020	2879
2021	2031
2022	2996
2023	2092

Source: Department of Samurdhi Development

Q11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

All national social welfare schemes prioritize women and children, FHH, persons with disabilities, elderly and kidney patients. Gender disaggregated data was not available for all schemes and where available the data has been provided.

- **Aswesuma Scheme:** The introduction of the *Aswesuma scheme* or the Welfare Benefit Payments Scheme (WBPS) by Government which was supported by the World Bank, targets poor households is a further strengthening of the social protection benefits provided by the State to strengthen families, especially the most disadvantaged. The *Aswesuma* beneficiaries are classified into four categories; severely poor, poor, vulnerable and transitional. The scheme intends to provide cash transfer to approximately 35% of the population classified along these categories amounting 2 million families/ households. The families identified initially for the *Aswesuma* scheme are provided in the table below as per *Gazette No. 2328/13 (2023.04.21)*. Accordingly, as of July 2024 cash transfers have been provided/ identified to a “total of 1,854,000 individuals who were qualified for the first phase of the “Aswesuma” program, with the government allocating Rs.58.5 billion for this phase. The Welfare Benefits Board has provided an opportunity for those who missed or could not apply during the first stage to reapply.”³⁶ Under the second phase at present 450,924 new applicants have qualified for the *Aswesuma* benefit scheme.

³⁶ President’s Media Division, “Aswesuma” Second Phase Information Census from July 15 – 30, 9th July 2024. (Referral link: [“Aswesuma” Second Phase Information Census from July 15 to 30 - PMD | PMD](#))

Social group	Number of Beneficiaries/ Families	Proposed Monthly Welfare Allowance per Family Unit (Rs.)
Transitional (until 31 st Dec. 2023)	400,000	2,500
Vulnerable (until 31 st March 2024)	400,000	5,000
Poor (for 3 years from 01 st July 2023)	800,000	8,500
Severely Poor (for 3 years from 01 st July 2023)	400,000	15,000

Source: President's Media division

In April 2024 the MOF and MWCASE put forward a Social Protection Project (SPP) and Indigenous People Planning Framework (IPPF).³⁷The SPP intends to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis on the poor by providing income support, promote livelihoods and strengthen the social protection system in the country by targeting the most vulnerable groups (approximately 2 million households of which 20% will be FHH given their increased vulnerability). SPP will support the implementation of *Aswesuma* scheme and provide cash transfers, enhance opportunities for the poor and vulnerable households and strengthen the social protection system in the country. The IPPPF has focused on the indigenous people in Sri Lanka known as the *Veddhas* to ensure that they too are fully included in the social protection and development efforts of the country.

- *Savings and Credit Programmes*: Up to 2023 total disbursement of loan amount is Rs. 463,599,062.00 with several credit facilities offered to beneficiaries amounting to Rs. 12,309,875.00 (as provided by the Department of Samurdhi Development)
- *Nutrition Assistance program for Pregnant and Lactating Mothers*: This program is directed at supporting nutrition to pregnant and lactating mothers. The assistance provided since 2015 is Rs. 2,000.00 which was increased to Rs. 4,500.00 in 2024 taking into account inflation and rising cost of living. The Table below provides details of Government support, through MWCASE provided to pregnant and lactating mothers during the reporting period.

Nutrition Assistance Programme for Pregnant and Lactating Mothers 2018 - 2023				
Year	Financial Target (Rs.Mn)	Physical Target (Food packages for No. pregnant mothers)	Financial Progress (Rs.Mn)	Physical Progress
2018	5500	2,750,000	5499.78	329,047
2019	5500	2,750,000	5278.92	300,246
2020	5500	2,381,450	4760.67	280230
2021	5350		5238.24	250,848
2022	4000	2,000,000	3690.13	1,583,179
2023	11000	244,444	5999.333	231,346

³⁷ MoF and MWCASE, 2024. Social Protection Project (P178973) Indigenous People Planning Framework (IPPF), Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. (Referral link <https://www.wbb.gov.lk/backend/assets/publications/SocialSafeguard.pdf>)

Source: MWCASE

- **Social Welfare Assistance to Women and Men with Disabilities:**

Women, men, girls and boys with disabilities are considered a key vulnerable group that requires priority and assistance. Accordingly, the Disability Secretariat provides assistance to PWDs under different schemes, where women with disabilities are targeted. Please see Annex 2 for details of support provided by the Disability Secretariat.

Q12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

Sri Lanka has made significant progress in the health sector which is apparent in key health sector indicators provided in the Table below with Sri Lanka being placed 1st indicating ‘no gender gap’ in the health sector as per the Global Gender Gap Report 2024 which considers sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy to assess this score.

Health Sector Indicators for Sri Lanka 2018, 2020, 2022			
Category	Total	F	M
Life expectancy at birth (years) - 2018 [Ⓐ]	76.8	80.1	73.4
Life Expectancy at birth (years) - 2022		80.2	72.9
Maternal Mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) (SDG 3.1) - 2020	29*		
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate, any method (% of married women ages 15 – 49) [Ⓓ]	65%		
Antenatal coverage of at least one visit [Ⓓ]	99%		
Birth attended by skilled health personnel [Ⓓ]	99.5%		
Total Fertility Rate [Ⓓ]	2.2%		
Child Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births) *	6		
Adolescent birth rate (births per 1000 women aged 15- 19) (SDG 3.7) - 2022	15		
[Ⓐ] UNDP, 2019, Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/LKA.pdf [Ⓓ] Department of Census and Statistics, 2016, Demographic and Health Survey http://www.statistics.gov.lk/page.asp?page=Health * https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN?locations=LK			

In order to streamline and work together to improve menstrual health in Sri Lanka a working group has been formed consisting of key Government stakeholders who came together and agreed on 30th March 2024 to improve the ‘menstrual health and environmental impact in Sri Lanka recognizing its importance on achieve the sustainable development goals. In so doing approved a programme of action that focused on advocacy, implementation of the policy on sanitary waste, capacity building, WASH implementation and in particular ‘ensure delivery of age appropriate comprehensive SRHR education with emphasis on Menstrual Health Management (MHM).

Q13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

Despite disruption of the normal face-to-face system and online schooling becoming the ‘new normal’ during the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, Sri Lanka has achieved high enrollment rates in education for women and girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education, recording no gender gap as per the Global Gender Gap Report 2024. Literacy level of both women (92.3%) and men (94.3%)³⁸ are high, and as per table below the number of years of schooling is slightly higher for girls (14.1 years) than for boys (13.2 years). When taking gender disaggregated data for population aged 25 years and over with some secondary education for men (83.3%) is higher than for women (80.6%) (See table below). On further comparison of data before the reporting period and data towards the end of the reporting period as indicated in the table below, education indicators have not decline and has maintained its high standards.

Education Indicators for Sri Lanka						
Category	2017 - 2019			2022 -2023		
	Total	F	M	Total	F	M
Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and over)		82.6%	83.1%		80.6%	83.3%
Expected years of schooling (years)		14.5	13.8		14.1	13.2
Life expectancy at birth (years)	76.8	80.1	73.4		80.2	72.9
Literacy Rate	92.5 %	91.6	93.4	93.3%	92.3%	94.3%

Source:
Human Development Report 2023/24 and Human Development Report 2020 [hdr2020.pdf \(undp.org\)/ Literacy Rate of Sri Lanka | Lanka Statistics](#)

Policy Frameworks formulated during the reporting period:

However, the unemployment and the gender gap in the labour force as well as the need for quality education directed at the job market rather than quantity has necessitated the Government to draft the National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) 2020-2030 to ensure that the standards and quality of education in Sri Lanka integrates professionalism at the highest level and maintains the status achieved. The policy is a comprehensive and a forward-looking policy document with the goal, “nurturing a society of productive, caring, and patriotic citizens.” Accordingly, a committee has been appointed to take this forward.³⁹ The policy recognizes that only 8.9% of student in 2021 entered national universities to pursue academic studies as per University Grants Commission⁴⁰ Its core areas ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in education.

- Aim 2: Core Area - Equity and Inclusiveness – ensures “Access to education regardless of gender, race, religion or social status.”
- Aim 3: Core Area - Quality Education – ensures: “Learning environments that are healthy, safe, protective, and gender sensitive.”

Furthermore, the policy stresses “curriculum content and delivery that aims to promote the acquisition of basic life skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, creativity and critical

³⁸Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Reports (2013-2022), CBSL. Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2023. Annual Economic Review 2023. CBSL.

³⁹News.lk Government Official News Portal, (referral link: <https://www.news.lk/news/political-current-affairs/item/36252-president-convenes-cabinet-committee-to-formulate-and-implement-a-national-education-policy-framework-nepf>)

⁴⁰Ministry of Education (referral link: https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/09/NEPF_English_final.pdf)

thinking, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition.”⁴¹ The policy further highlights the importance of vocational and technical education.

National Policy on Preschool Education: National Education Commission Sri Lanka 2019⁴² too has gender inclusive guiding principles. Accordingly, “every child should be valued and supported equally. To ensure that they are provided with safe and caring environments, a preschool setting shall be free from any form of discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived ethnicity, language, colour, ancestry, national origin, religion, religious practice, parental status, physical or mental disability, gender, or socioeconomic conditions.” Strategies include strengthening a network of preschools managed by Provincial Regulatory Authorities, to especially cater to children at risk from poverty, disability, violence, disasters, gender biases, institutionalized care, truancy and children residing with their mothers in prison.

Focus on relationships: Socio-emotional skills approach Published by School Activities Branch (2022)⁴³ addresses extensively on relationships mainly interpersonal relationships and is a document that can be used to institute information on healthy relationships uphold gender equality and prevent SGBV. This could give entry to the inclusion of age-appropriate sex education and SRHR needs to be also a priority area, discussed openly in the classroom.

Legal amendments: During the reporting period the following legal amendments have been undertaken; Amendments to the Children and Young persons’ ordinance of 1939 (Children and Young Persons amendment Act No.39 of 2022) where an increase in the age from 16 years to 18 years for the protection provided for children who are in need of care and protection or who are in contact with the law - .⁴⁴ Furthermore, another important development is that the Cabinet has approved the policy paper to prohibit corporal punishment of boys and girls in all sectors by amending the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code.⁴⁵

STEM Education: Greater attention is being provided to the education sector to ensure STEM integration in the curriculum and integrating standards and best practices from other countries.⁴⁶ In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF has developed a Teacher Digital Competency Curriculum during the reporting period. Currently 500 master trainers across the nine provinces are being trained on the curriculum that is expected to train the entire teacher cohort. The programme aims to strengthen the capacity of teachers in using digital technologies in teaching-learning practices, which contributes to strengthening STEAM education for both girls and boys. Under the ongoing curriculum reforms, led by the National Institute of Education (NIE) supported by UNICEF, on strengthening skills promotion particularly in Health and Physical Education subject in secondary education. Training on gender has

⁴¹Ministry of Education, National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030). (Referral link: http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-EDUCATION-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-2020-2030_Full-Text.pdf)

⁴²National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019. National Policy on Preschool Education Sri Lanka. (referral link: National Policy on Preschool Education 2019: http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PreSchoolPolicy_EN.pdf)

⁴³ Ministry of Education, n.d.: guruwaraya.lk

⁴⁴ Colombo Gazette, [Age of a person recognised as a child raised from 16 to 18 years | Colombo Gazette](#)

⁴⁵[Sri Lanka bans corporal punishment in all sectors, 28 Sep 2022.](#)

⁴⁶Ministry of Education, [STEM education method implemented in 96 countries in the world is included in the education system of this country. – MOE](#)

been provided to the curriculum developers and provincial coordinators who are expected to train the teachers.

Education of children of Migrant Workers: The National Policy and Action Plan on Migration for Employment Sri Lanka (2023 - 2027)⁴⁷ approved by Cabinet of Ministers in 2023, focuses on ensuring the education of children of migrant workers by providing them with education support, assistance for school equipment, scholarships, awareness on drug abuse and prevention. School-based education upgrades will be undertaken jointly through the engagement of the Ministry of Education and Foreign Employment Development Officer (FEDO). Furthermore, the policy outlines development of family welfare plans where continuous monitoring at divisional and district level by all related officers is to be undertaken of the children of migrant workers to ensure their wellbeing (family welfare, health and education) as well as ensure their protection and security.

Skills for women and girls: Vocational Education plays an important role in Sri Lanka, especially given the fact that only a small number enter tertiary academic institutions. Women and young women/ girls in Sri Lanka have entered non-traditional male dominated field such as engineering, IT and computer science, a few surgeons in the medical profession and in the vocational education sector fields such as plumbing, electrician, construction engineer, motor mechanic etc., however the numbers are low. Greater efforts are being made to ensure job placements to women that qualify in nontraditional fields. Given the recent economic setbacks, there is a heightened priority to provide skills to women aligned to the formal or informal job market across numerous trades and fields. According to the Sri Lanka Institute of Textiles and Apparels, of the training programmes offered most women follow training courses in the areas of Batik Dyeing and garment manufacturing, sandal making. Sewing machine maintenance, clothing technology (which is relatively high income areas) among others as indicated in the table below.

No	Course	Female participation		
		2021	2022	2023
1	Batik Dyeing & Garment Manufacturing	375	843	
2	Batik Dyeing Technology			325
3	Sandal Manufacturing	413		
4	Certificate in Clothing Technology		62	9
5	Sewing Machine Maintenance	58	12	
6	Certificate in Sewing Machine Mechanic		39	10
7	Certificate in Clothing Manufacture		30	11
8	Training of Trainers for Apparel Design Technicians	21		

Source: Sri Lanka Institute of Textiles and Apparels

According to the Ministry of Fisheries women from three districts namely Puttlam (80 women), Kilinochchi (25 women) and Polonnaruwa (25 women) have been trained in new technology in the areas of fish processing and making dry fish (including in the area of inland fisheries) to enhance their revenue and build their economic empowerment.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment, 2023. [National-Policy-and-National-Action-Plan-on-Migration-for-Employment-Sri-Lanka-2023-2027-English-Ver. compressed.pdf \(labourmin.gov.lk\)](#)

Q14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

COVID19 pandemic aggravated existing gender inequalities and discriminations faced by women, girls and other vulnerable groups, making access to **healthcare and health-related services** difficult to access. Many faced issues obtaining general medications, SRH care, mental health services and medications, HIV medications and menstrual hygiene products. Many women, men and youth had lost their jobs or could not access their jobs due to Covid- 19 travel restrictions. Victim-survivors of SGBV also found it difficult to access counseling services, legal assistance and shelter as usual ways of access were closed and most people either did not have funds (due to loss of employment) to access home delivery services and in the case of GBV found themselves trapped with the perpetrators in the same home. Sri Lanka plunged to even greater depths as a result of the economic crisis which further widened the gender gap. Therefore, Sri Lanka’s situation is unique, given its prolonged crises both external and internal.

The Government response to crises was swift and coordinated to a large extent. The help lines in operation such as at *Mithuru Piyasa* network in the Ministry of Health run hospitals(also known as GBV health desks), 1938 women’s helpline operated by the National Committee on Women of MWCASE that commenced a 24-hour service at this time, 1929 child helpline operated by the National Child Protection Authority, National Mental Health Helpline 1926 and Police Bureau for Women and Children among others enabled to address issues of access to women victim-survivors of GBV which helped ease some adverse effects.

Education for all school aged children was delivered online during the Covid 19 Pandemic and also during the economic crisis and access to a lap top and smart phone was a challenge for many families, especially those from rural areas. However community support system of help emerged as an important mechanism. The Government has ensured that education continued despite these setbacks.

Sauhbagya Production Village Program, a social protection and economic empowerment program was launched in 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic led by the Department of *Sauhbagya*. It helped ease food shortages, enhanced nutrition and the loss of income due to unemployment. Over 30,000 persons from rural areas were assisted under this program to engage in some form of economic activity from home. The production villages are classified under 5 sectors namely agriculture, fisheries, industries, animal husbandry and services. Some of the activities promoted in these sectors ranged from mushroom production, poultry and egg production and vegetable production among others. In 2021, 574 *Sauhbagya* Production Villages were setup, where women and girls were key beneficiaries as indicated in the Table below.

Allocated Amount (Rs.Mn)				Number of Beneficiaries			
2021	2022	2023	2024	2021-2023		2024	
				Male	Female	Male	Female
2821	1271	101.96	150	20,100	17,067 (46%)	1,379	978 (41%)

Source: Department of Sauhbagya

Furthermore, under the *Saubhagya Village Production* program, there are also all women centered villages established providing economic revival to many families. These include:

District	Division	Project Name	Allocated Amount (Rs.Mn)	No of Women Beneficiaries	Main Products	Income Level in 2024 (Rs.)
Ampara	Navithanveli	Palmyrah based production village	8.16	424	Handicraft Items (Bags, Buckets, Vase etc.), Food Items (Palm pulbs, Odiyal, Panaddu etc.), Palm fruit soap, Palm fruit Shampoo	10,000-20,000
Monaragala	Medagama	Cane based production village	7.91	108	Chairs, Racks, Boxes, Dustbin etc.	30,000-50,000
	Badalkumbura	Ornamental plants and flowers production village	4.51	40	Anthurium, Boganwila, Rose, Orchid etc	10,000-20,000

Source: Department of Saubhagya

III. Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes

Q15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

Gender-based violence is a violation of the human rights and freedom of individuals, where the majority of victims are largely women and girls. According to the Women’s Wellbeing survey 2019, 47.5% of women felt men are superior to women, 46.5% of women believed that a good wife obeys her husband and 39.5% of women disagree with sexual autonomy. In Sri Lanka the most prevalent forms of SGBV include rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence, incest and sexual abuse as evident in research studies, reports and police records. As per the Women’s Wellbeing survey 2019, 24.9% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, with 1 in 5 ever partnered women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime and 1 in 3 female homicides in Sri Lanka are related to intimate partner violence.⁴⁸

Sri Lanka has taken action on all types of GBV crimes reported and has also taken steps to amend the law. According to the data of the Police Women and Child Bureau, highest recorded crimes among women from 2018 to 2023 is ‘beatings and inflicting harm’ which is highest in 2023 with 3,884 complaints. The second highest crime is ‘sexual harassment’ with the highest number of complaints being in 2020 with 2,440 complaints. Both these crimes are in the minor crimes category. When

⁴⁸ Department of Census and Statistics and UNFPA, 2020. Women’s Wellbeing Survey 2019. Department of Census and Statistics

considering the data related to children from 2018 to 2023, the highest number of complaints is for 'rape with or without consent' with highest number of reported cases 1,584 reported in 2023.

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) is responsible for the protection of children below the age of 18 years of age. The 1929 Helpline for children to report any form of abuse / harassment is managed by the NCPA, which has its own Police Unit. According to the 1929 Helpline in 2020 there were 9,298 complaints, in 2021 there were 12,462 complaints and in 2022 there were 11,863 complaints. Most of the complaints were reported from the Western Province, Southern Province and the North Western Province. The highest type of violence against children include; where children (Under CYPO) needed protection and care, sexual harassment, violation of compulsory education law, neglect and grave sexual abuse. Accordingly, most of the victim survivors are girls in all three years.

Q16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

Four key priority actions by Government in the reporting period are included below:

- *Strengthened laws and its implementation:* To ensure that victim-survivors are not revictimized the following amendments have been undertaken.
 - Amendments to Section 3(1)f, Section 3(2) and Section 38 of Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crimes and Witnesses Act, No. 10 of 2023. Accordingly, Section 3(1) A victim of crime shall have the right – (f) where such victim of crime is a female who has to be medically examined, to make a request to be so examined by a female medical professional. In this situation the State has to provide the requested gender as per the request of the victim of crime. Section 38(1) each police station to be assigned by the IGP, police officers designated as, 'Victims and Witness Protection Officers' where at least one officer will be female. (2) When allocating police officers per police station the IGP will consider the population size of the police division, prevalence of crimes, vulnerability of special categories of persons including children, women, disabled persons in the particular police division.
- *Updated and expanded National Action Plan on SGBV:*
 - The multi-sectoral Second National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka (2024-2028) was submitted to Cabinet in June 2024 for endorsement and was approved in July 2024 by Cabinet. The second plan was informed by the review of the implementation and lessons learnt best practices of the first NAP to address SGBV (2016 -2020). The vision of the second NAP to address GBV is "a violence free life for women, men, girls and boys and those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations" and the underlying principle is "zero tolerance of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sri Lanka."⁴⁹ The second NAP to address SGBV speaks to all genders and has expanded its reach to 13 main sectors and 5 sub-sectors which include; Gender Empowerment, Child Affairs, Social Protection & Welfare, Education (General Education, Higher Education, Vocational and Technical Education & Training), Health &

⁴⁹ Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, 2024. Multi-sectoral National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sri Lanka -II 2024 – 2028, MWCASE.

Indigenous Medicine, Economic Empowerment, Plantation, Justice and Law Reform, Labour and Foreign Employment, Disaster Management, Mass Media, Youth & Sports, and Transport. The national plan went through extensive national consultations at provincial, district and national levels engaging with state and non-state actors at each level.

- Strengthened services for survivors of GBV:
 - Government is supporting 10 Women’s shelters, through engagement with CSOs. The Shelters for victim-survivors of GBV are located in 9 districts (Colombo, Jaffna, Matara, Anuradhapura, Gampaha, Ratnapura, Moneragala, Mullativu and Batticaloa) of Sri Lanka. In these safe heavens women and girl survivors receive psychosocial support and counseling, free legal aid and a ‘place free from violence ‘to remain until their situation is addressed. In 2023 a total of 637 women and 390 girls received Shelter in these homes. Most of the shelters are manned by civil society organizations that focus on addressing VAWG namely Women In Need, JSAC. One of the shelters supports disabled women and girls who are survivors of GBV. The Ministry also formulated the National Guidelines for the Management of Shelters for Victim-Survivors of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2024).
 - Strengthened the 1938 Helpline for women managed by the National Committee on Women under the purview of MWCASE operates 24 hours, with the onset of the Covid - 19 Pandemic. In this respect it is observed that in 2021 the highest number of complaints 4,976 have been recorded in total, with domestic violence (3489 complaints) being the highest complaint as well the highest complaint when taking the cumulative number from 2019 to 2023. Most number of interventions has been for legal counseling to the NCW legal Officer, followed by psychosocial counseling to the NCW officer with the third highest referral to the WDO.
 - *Mithuru Piyasa* (GBV Health desks) operated by the Ministry of Health in Hospitals around the country continue to provide support to survivors of GBV who are able to access these centers safely given their located with hospitals where women are freely able to visit.
 - *Protection of Children and the Girl Child*: The NCPA child helpline 1929 responds annually to several complaints of children, especially girls and is committed to address VAWG and also undertake video recording of victim statements. The Department of Probation and Childcare services (DPCCS) support the wellbeing and protection of children in Childcare/ remand Homes. Children, who are subject to SGBV, neglect, parents in prison etc., are placed in the care of the Homes run by the provincial DPCCS. According to 2019 data, there are more girls (6,615) than boys (4,017) in the care of the Probation run homes. Whist the Probation Homes are monitored at Provincial level, the Human Rights Commission and the National Child Protection Authority has the authority to undertake monitoring of the care of children in protective care.

Types of Child care institutions and other information (2019 census)

Type	Number of institutions	Total population	male	female
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Remand homes	14	221	64	157
Safe Homes	04	35	07	28
Certified schools	09	291	180	111
State receiving homes	09	264	126	138
Approved schools	01	105	105	-
Detention homes	01	93	47	46
Voluntary Children's homes	331	9382	3461	5921
Training and Counseling centers	04	57		57
Other	06	84	27	157
Total	379	10,632	4,017	6,615
Source Department of Probation and Childcare Services				

Q17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

Three key strategies used in the last 5 years include the following:

- *Promoting positive gender equitable attitudes, beliefs, values and norms especially among men and boys and*
- *Raising public awareness to change attitude and behaviors:*
 - Equal Partners: Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality-Ten audio-visual products on prevention of GBV, unpaid care work, decision making, a responsible son, loving husband etc., which is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Men Engage Alliance and UNDP was launched in 2021. The series [Equal Partners: Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality](#) was broadcast over national television, using a talk show platform where state as well as non-state officials shared their thoughts.
 - Engaging men in a male dominated sector –addressing sexual harassment in public transport: The Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) and the National Transport Commission (NTC) as part of their training to bus drivers and conductors have integrated a module on addressing violence against women and girls in public transport and have also briefed bus crews on reporting help lines.
 - Beginning from 2020, collaborative initiative engaging the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Vocational Training and Skills Development, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment and Men Engage Alliance in Sri Lanka promoted gender equality and women’s empowerment through mainstreaming gender into sectoral projects of education, transport, energy, urban, agriculture and finance supported by the ADB.
- *Empowering women and girls to promote their economic independence and access to resources, and promote equitable relations within households, communities and society*
The Sri Lanka Women’s Bureau carry out livelihood and entrepreneurship development, market support, counseling and legal literacy programmes for the empowerment of women especially

rural women. Special measures have been taken to uplift the lives of women in the estate sector through implementing family cash management programmes, economic empowerment programmes and initiatives to address SGBV. A programme for women in the fisheries sector has also been developed and implemented.

Q18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence

There was a need for a more strengthened legal protection for online digital harassment which was addressed recently through approval of the ‘Online Safety Act No.9 of 2024’⁵⁰ which provides legal protection for digital harassment including sharing of photos that were shared privately when in a relationship.

The Police Women and Child Bureau has a cyber violence reporting and monitoring unit. Accordingly, sexual harassment incidents (both online and offline) are given in the table below.

	2023		2022		2021		2020		2018	
	women	children	Women	children	women	children	women	children	women	children
<i>Sexual Harassment (online and offline)</i>	2377	1497	2026	1232	2331	1339	2440	1315	2312	1332

Source: Police Women and Children Bureau, June 2024.

Cyber safety and security that are barriers for women and girls in accessing digital platforms is addressed by organizations such as Sri Lanka CERT (Computer Emergency Readiness Team) the National Centre for Cyber Security, which has the national responsibility of protecting the nation’s cyberspace from cyber threats. The Cyber Unit of the Police Central Investigation Department provides services in this regard.

The National Women’s 24-hour trilingual Helpline 1938 operated by NCW provides referral services and counseling for GBV victim-survivors who have faced harassment online. NCW has conducted programmes at community level on cyber violence and the need for reporting these crimes. ‘Hithawathi’ managed by LK domain also provides a reporting and referral platform for victims of cyber violence. In addition CSOs offer legal, counseling support to victim-survivors of cyber violence and GBV as a Public Private Partnership with MWCASE.

The National Child Protection Authority is commencing an Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) Sri Lanka Portal in collaboration with Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) UK (an independent UK charity) for taking down online child sexual imagery. This will support Sri Lanka in taking down online child sexual abuse imagery.

⁵⁰Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2024. Online Safety Act No.9 of 2024 Sri Lanka. [6311.pdf \(parliament.lk\)](#)

Q19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women’s organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

Government is supporting 10 Women’s shelters, through engagement with CSOs. The Shelters for victim-survivors of GBV are located in 9 districts (Colombo, Jaffna, Matara, Anuradhapura, Gampaha, Ratnapura, Moneragala, Mullativu and Batticaloa) of Sri Lanka. Most of the shelters are manned by civil society organizations and women-led CSOs that focus on addressing VAW namely such as Women In Need, Women Development Centre and JSAC and are maintained by the public private partnership under the overview of the Sri Lanka Women’s Bureau, of the MWCASE. One of the shelters (Akasa) supports disabled women and girls who are survivors of GBV. In 2023 there were 157 women in the shelter and in the first few months of 2024 the shelter housed 45 disabled women.

The Ministry also formulated the National Guidelines for the Management of Shelters for Victim-Survivors of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2024) and intends to operationalize the guidelines to ensure best standards and services for SGBV women survivors in all shelters. The budget allocated by Government for the shelters during the reporting period has increased (see table below) as per the number of shelters supported.

**Women Shelters Allocation and Expenditure Summary
Women’s Bureau Sri Lanka, MWCASE**

Year	Allocation(RS.Mn)	Expenditure(RS.Mn)
2020	1.483	1.433
2021	1.400	1.200
2022	10.144	10.950
2023	12.000	11.947
2024	12.670	9.471 (Up to 2024.06.30)

(Source – Annual Progress Report – WBSL)

Q20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

Ministry of Mass Media leads programmes in this area, where programmes have been held initiated by Ministry of Mass Media, MWCASE and CSOs for media institutions, journalists and editors on the need for ethical reporting of GBV incidents where the victim is not subjected to re-victimization. However, given the increase in social media and internet-based communication monitoring these platforms have been more difficult than the print media.

*Drafted National Digital Policy for Sri Lanka (2020-2025)*⁵¹ which highlights the need to “promote fostering digital literacy.... for elderly, disabled, women and marginalized groups”(Strategy 3.5) and notes the importance of “securing right skills in digitalization across the economy to satisfy the job seekers and to pull more women in to the formal labour force (strategy 6.4).” *Online safety Act 09 of 2024* which is designed to provide safe and secure cyber security environment to promote the awareness of citizens on risks in cyber space.

⁵¹Ministry of Digital Infrastructure and Information Technology and Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka, 2019

National Action plan on SGBV 2024-2028 has incorporated a separate sector plan on mass media to address issues of SGBV in address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media.

Q21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

Action taken to address violence against women and girls is discussed in relation to teenage pregnancy among girls, sexual bribery faced by women, FHH and LGBTQI persons and widows that face discrimination due to their gender/ vulnerability or as a result of personal laws.

- *Addressing Teenage Pregnancy among Girls:* Government supported shelters and shelters maintained by CSOs provide a safe space for pregnant girls. Government continues to take steps to address teenage pregnancy and build awareness. In 2021 a specific training module with training tools designed for preventing and addressing teenage pregnancy was developed. Two Training of Trainer (ToT) programmes initiated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development were conducted for officials responsible including CRPO (Child Rights Promotion Officer) and WDO (Women Development Officer) for securing the rights of children at the District and Divisional levels. Furthermore, 89 ripple effect trainings were conducted by the trainers who participated in the ToT, and each WDO/CRPO developed a plan to conduct activities related to the prevention of teenage pregnancy at District and Divisional levels. Contraceptive services are provided for needy adolescents by all Medical Officer of Health *and hospital-* based family planning clinics. Programmes to address nutrition for adolescents and adolescent pregnant women, aligned with the National Nutrition policy and the Emergency Nutrition Plan
- *Addressing sexual bribery of Female-headed households and Widows:* Awareness programmes have been held at community level in targeted districts by MWCASE engaging with other stakeholders to address sexual exploitation and sexual bribery. To address this violation of rights of vulnerable persons sexual bribery is now an offence under the Anti-corruption Act No. 9 of 2023. The MWCASE has also rolled out the paralegal training programme which makes all public officials (who are non-lawyers) aware of laws related to women and children, including laws on sexual bribery and exploitation.
- *Rights of Widows and right to non-discrimination under Kandyan personal law:* The Cabinet of Ministers has granted approval to amend the Kandyan law Declaration and Amendment Ordinance to provide that a Kandyan widow should have the same rights of inheritance which apply to widows under the general law. Accordingly, Kandyan Marriage & Divorce (Amendment) Act, No. 37 of 2022 repealed the Part II of the principal enactment which contained provisions that a parent can consent for the marriage of a minor. The lawful age of marriage has been raised to 18 years and an absolute prohibition to the marriage of a minor was introduced.

IV. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Q22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

Women's political participation at the local level stood at 2% until the introduction of the Local Authorities Election Act No. 16 of 2017, which has provision for 25% of representation of women. Today women's political representation at the local level stands at 22%. At Parliamentary level women's political representation stands at 4.9 %. Women's representation in Parliament consists of 11 Members, consisting of 8 elected members and 3 members through the national list out of a total of 225 Members of Parliament.

During the reporting period MWCASE has engaged with UN and other development partners to strengthen the capacity of women councillors on core gender issues, so that they are able to speak out against key development challenges that affect women and girls. MWCASE launched short courses on political participation of women as well as discussions on increasing women's voice and agency at district level.

During the reporting period the Parliamentary Women's Caucus has been active in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in several areas paving the way for the adoption of the Women's Empowerment Act. The Act has also given power to the Women's Caucus together with Constitutional Council in selecting the members of the National Commission on Women.

More recently a Submission was made to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on Electoral Reform by the Sri Lanka Women Parliamentarians' Caucus on 21 February 2024, by way of a Technical Paper on Electoral Reforms for Increased Women's Political Representation at the national level in Sri Lanka by advocating for a quota. Advocating for this quota as part of temporary special measures to accelerate gender equality needs to be prioritized further if gender inequality is to be addressed. Equality in decision making has been identified in the thematic area 05 of the national policy on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. Accordingly policy objectives and strategies have been setup to execute that thematic area.

Q23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

Gender inequality exists at decision-making levels with very few women holding managerial positions. Media Ministry in collaboration with UNDP held journalist training workshops in all nine Provinces from 2023-2024 for journalist in each province, where 'gender sensitivity in media reporting' and how to portray women and girls in media reporting were discussed at length. Ethical factors and ensuring zero re-victimization of victim survivors in media reporting was discussed. Actual reporting of area specific criminal cases on rape, murder were considered and analyzed by journalist to strengthen their understanding on the importance of gender sensitivity in media reporting. A follow-up on this training is ongoing led by the Ministry of Mass media undertaken through online webinars.

Though women at decision making level are few in media organizations – women are not absent. Many organizations show case the few women as role models for young journalists and school children.

Government, through its focus on non-traditional areas of employment for women will continue to engage stakeholders in this area to inspire change and greater gender sensitivity to the media sector. Social Equality and Empowerment has been identified in the thematic area 03 of the national policy on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. Accordingly media sector has been identified in 3.4 and policy objectives and strategies have been setup to execute that thematic area.

Q24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country has taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

The Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment⁵² was established as per the Gazette Extraordinary No: 2289/43 of 22nd July 2022, and is a Cabinet Ministry where the President functions as the Minister of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment. Two state ministers support the work of the MWCASE, namely State Minister on Women and Child Affairs and the State Minister on Social Empowerment.

The Institutions that function under the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment include:

- Sri Lanka Women's Bureau (SLWB)
- National Committee on Women (NCW)
- Department of Probation and Childcare Services (DPCCS)
- National Child Protection Authority (NCPA)
- National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development
- Department of Samurdhi Development
- Department of Social Services
- National Institute of Social Development
- National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities
- National Secretariat for Elders
- Sri Lanka Social Security Board
- Rural Development Training and Research Institute
- Saubaghya Development Bureau
- Counseling Division

The National Machinery on Women is stronger today, than it has been in the last decade or so and has taken forward landmark policies on the rights and empowerment of women and girls in keeping with the BPfA and CEDAW. The Ministry also has the support of UN agencies, INGOs, development partners and CSOs in taking forward and accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The MWCASE will continue to address bureaucratic and institutional bottlenecks integrating strong monitoring of key areas of vulnerability that are overseen by the MWCASE. Furthermore, enabling the

⁵²[Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment \(childwomenmin.gov.lk\)](http://childwomenmin.gov.lk)

strength of the professional technical workforce the Ministry commands and continually strengthening their capacity to drive transformative change at an elevated level is a long-term plan of the Ministry to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women is driven as a transformative priority action in all department of the MWCASE.

Q25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors?

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy endorsed in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 to ensure the advancement of gender equality. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs introduced a policy for Gender Mainstreaming in all sectoral ministries in the previous reporting period which has continued during this reporting period as well. The policy promoted, establishment of gender focal points, gender responsive budgeting and establishment of anti-sexual harassment committees. Further hand book on Gender Mainstreaming and Gender budgeting has been formulated as a guideline for the government institutions.

Guidelines for anti-sexual harassment committees termed ‘Respectful Workplace Guidelines’ were formed in 2021. However, due to the pandemic and economic crisis, they were not taken forward and the committees have ceased to function. Previously (before 2020) Gender Focal Points were also appointed by each Ministry reporting to the Additional Secretary and coordination was taking place from the MWCASE. However, there were challenges in this modality as well as in the ability of all gender focal points to mainstream gender in their respective Ministries.

The gender mainstreaming process has enabled the mainstreaming of gender equality in other sectoral policies such as National Human Resource Policy, National Disaster Policy, National SME policy and the TVET policy among others.

Through the Child and Women Development Units set up at District and Divisional levels, that are under the purview of the MWCASE, gender mainstreaming is taken forward in different ways given the pivotal role these units perform at district and divisional level to implement the meeting of Child and Women Committees to discuss issues of GBV, vulnerabilities, relief programmes at district and divisional level. Capacity building on gender as well as consultations and implementation of national plans on GBV, Women Peace and Security SCR 1325 etc., are directed through these units.

Q26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women’s rights and promote gender equality?

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL)⁵³ with a broad mandate to protect and promote human rights was established in March 1997 as an independent body under the human rights commission Act No.21 of 1996. HRCSL was designed to be an apex national body with a multi-functional role, combining investigative, adversary and awareness raising tasks.

⁵³Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. <https://www.hrsl.lk/home/>

The vision of HRCSL is to ensure human rights for all and promote and protect Rule of Law.⁵⁴ The Commission will comprise of five members appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council. The five persons selected, will be from among persons who have practical experience and knowledge in the area of human rights and its application. The Commission will have a chairperson who will be able to nominate one of the 5 members appointed to the HRCSL. The Commission is appointed for a term of three years. The work and related activities of the HRCSL cover the following 4 areas; investigation and inquiries, monitoring, advocacy and education.

The

Complaints received by the Human Right Commission 2023 - 2024		
Name of the public authority	Number of complaints received	
	2023	2024 (01.01.2024 – 06.05.1012)
Police Stations	28	14
Hospitals	22	7
Department of Registrar General	2	5
Sri Lanka Army	2	
Public Bank	1	

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has the mandate to receive complaints of fundamental rights and investigate these cases including their validity and take them to court. The HRCSL hotline 1996 is accessible for any complaints. Complaints made by public entities to HRCSL during 2023 – 2024 period are provided below.

⁵⁴<https://srilanka.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Women%27s%20rights%20are%20human%20rights.compressed.pdf>

Government Schools	2	
National Blood transfusion Center	1	
Department of Immigration and Emigration	1	
Divisional Secretaries	2	3
Ministry of Education	1	
ETF Office	1	
Train stations		2
Prisons		2
Other		3
Total	63	36
Source: Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka		

According to the Human Rights Commission Act No 21 of 1996, section 10(a) and (b) two tasks are assigned to the Commission. These include to monitor executive and administrative practices and investigate and inquire to the infringement of fundamental rights and take measure to resolve them irrespective of gender.

Monitoring: The main focus here is to monitor the welfare of persons detained either by judicial order or otherwise. Carrying out research in the area of human rights with focus on area of discriminations or violations such as discrimination of rights of women and girls and also barriers to the advancement of women’s rights. In 2005 the HRCSL put forward the “Policy against Sexual Harassment in the Work Place,” where the Commission identified steps to setup ant-harassment Committees in public institutions. Further to these anti-harassment committees were setup with cases being brought forward. The commission also advocated on response to domestic violence and action to address GBV and held monitoring programmes in places of detention. In June 2024 the HRCSL has formulated a practical guide for the gender focal points of the HRC to ensure gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming across all HRC work.

The HRCSL also engages in promoting women’s rights and related areas such as human trafficking. In essence the role of HRCSL is to uphold human rights, women’s rights, making recommendations on law reform, building awareness / education programmes on policies such as the Anti-sexual harassment policy and to ensure the rights and status of women and girl-children. The HRCSL has also developed a guideline for police to protect transgender persons Furthermore, HRCSL seeks to ensure human rights standards as part and parcel of professional training curricular of public institutions as relevant.

Advocacy: the HRCL has the power to advise on law reform, examine Bills and formulate legislation and also ensure that all policies and laws integrate a gender perspective including adopting special measures and affirmative action.

V. Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

Q27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

Sri Lanka has advocated for a National Plan of Action for several years and following the G7 WPS framework directive in 2018, the Government of Japan signed a partnership agreement with Sri Lanka, with UN Women identified to technically support the Government to develop the NAP. A series of consultations were held online and face-to-face with national and provincial stakeholders as well as CSOs, UN and development partners. These efforts led to the formation of the Cabinet approved First National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security on February 2023.

The National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security adds to the country's legal and policy frameworks to protect and empower women in line with international commitments set out in the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 (2000). It also aims to strengthen coordination between stakeholders of the women, peace and security agenda, which is vital to sustainable peace and development in Sri Lanka.

The initiatives of CSOs, UN agencies, INGOs and development partners in building knowledge on WPS agenda, campaigning for women to be part of dialogues on peace and security as well as responding to crises enabled the adoption of the NAP on 1325. Operationalizing the NAP fully is a key area to take forward in the next few years. There are six Inter Agency Coordination and Assessment Committees in relation to the identified 06 thematic areas. A Core Steering Committee formed by members from each of the Coordination and Assessment Committee, is to consolidate and coordinate all M&E efforts and to ensure quality and accountability of such efforts.

Q28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

During the reporting period, women's leadership in the most recent crises has highlighted the importance of women at the top decision making levels. In relation to Covid-19 several women beginning with the Minister of Health who was a woman, led the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Women were visible in key decision-making junctures during the pandemic as well as in the uprising that followed women from different walks of life from actresses to activists were making their voices heard. These are positive signs in a democratic country such as Sri Lanka to strengthen women's participation and engagement.

During the reporting period several national action plans and policies have been adopted with a significant support from women's activist and at policy making level the Women's Caucus. When taking the drafting process of National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (NAPWPS) for the Implementation of the UN Security Council's Resolutions 1325 (2023 – 2027), many consultations with

stakeholders from all 9 provinces in Sri Lanka, including women leaders, women with direct experiences of conflicts and crises and women led CSO were engaged.

Q29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

The Office of National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) was established through a Cabinet decision in April 2015, and entrusted under the previous National Integration and Reconciliation Ministry as per Gazette No. 1945/41. However, in August 2020 through the issuance of an extraordinary gazette the ONUR was placed under the Justice Ministry.⁵⁵The Board of Control of ONUR agreed to implement programmes in 8 key areas in the period 2021-2024. These include;

- Unity and reconciliation through higher education
- Reconciliation through economic engagement programmes
- Psychosocial support programme
- Media and communication programme
- Education for reconciliation programme
- Conflict transformation programme
- Arts and culture for reconciliation program

The National Reparations Policy and Guidelines formulated by the Office of Reparation (OR) was approved by the Cabinet in August 2021 and tabled in Parliament in February 2022 as required by the Office of Reparation Act. Accordingly, relief and assistance provided through the OR extends to eight key interventions namely provision of livelihood support, restitution of land rights, provision of housing, development of community infrastructure, administrative relief, psychosocial support and measures to advance unity, reconciliation and non-recurrence of violence.

According to the Annual Report OR 2023,⁵⁶ the following areas were prioritized to be undertaken by OR these include:

- d) Livelihood support via knowledge transfer and technology transfer programmes to enhance incomes of affected persons and ensure economic stability
- e) Granting monetary relief
- f) Providing Psycho social support

Accordingly, most of the start-up programmes under livelihoods, targeted women (10 women to engage in Fiber based Thawashi brush production), FHH (30 households making candles/ literacy programmes/ palmyra leaf products) in the North. All livelihood programmes used local resources for the startup businesses.

Self-employment projects for war affected women are conducted by The National Center for Empowering Female Headed Households in Kilinochchi which is monitored by the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau, MWCASE. To build social cohesion and address key issues faced by women, men, girls and boys the Northern Provincial Council has organized Town hall meeting which takes place in the different

⁵⁵Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, (referral link: [ONUR – English – Office for National Unity and Reconciliation](#)).

⁵⁶ Office for Reparations Sri Lanka, 2023. Annual Report 2023, Rajagiriya: Office for Reparations (referral link: [OR- Annual Report - 2023 Final.pdf \(reparations.gov.lk\)](#))

districts of the Northern Province. There are also good practices of enterprise development especially targeting FHH with focus on areas such as supporting dairy, veterinary support and development of the Palmyra industry for export. The National Nutrition Policy for Sri Lanka 2021-2030⁵⁷ advocates for the Provincial level Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plans which is taken forward at different levels in Sri Lanka, including in the North through the formulated Northern Provincial Nutrition Action Plan which seeks to address malnutrition, stunting and anemia which affects many girls and pregnant mothers. These development activities are coordinated by Women Rural Development Societies (WRDS).

Q30. In the last five years, what actions have your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

Under this category three key areas of discrimination against the girl child are discussed as well as action taken to redress the situations thus far. These include:

- *Measures to address discriminatory social norms* regarding menstrual health among adolescent girls as well as sanitation facilities in schools is a cause for absenteeism from school among girls. To address this situation the Government has begun a voucher system to all school girls in rural and plantation sector to buy sanitary pads. This is a pilot project begun by the Ministry of Education to ease this situation and provide access to hygiene products. Furthermore, in order to streamline and work together to improve menstrual health in Sri Lanka a working group has been formed consisting of key Government stakeholders who came together and agreed on 30th March 2024 to improve the 'menstrual health and environmental impact in Sri Lanka recognizing its importance on achieve the sustainable development goals. In so doing approved a programme of action that focused on advocacy, implementation of the policy on sanitary waste, capacity building, WASH implementation and in particular 'ensure delivery of age appropriate comprehensive SRHR education with emphasis on Menstrual Health Management (MHM).
- *Policies to amended laws to address child marriage:* The Muslims of Sri Lanka are governed by national law in all areas of life expect in the situation of marriage, divorce, inheritance and family which falls under the 1951 Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA). Under this law girls below the age of 12 once reaching puberty are able to marry. The Government has obtained endorsement by the Cabinet of Ministers to amend the MMDA by increasing the age of marriage to 18 years of age and appointment of women as Quazis. Furthermore, matrimonial disputes which are not settled within one year before the Quazi to be referred to District Court for further proceedings. Approval of the Cabinet of Ministers was also obtained to amend the Civil Procedure Code No. 2 of 1889 to allow Muslims to marry under the Marriage Registration Ordinance No. 19 of 1907.
- *Address violence against the girl child:* The Cabinet approved NAP to address SGBV engages multiple sectors to eliminate violence against the girl child and violence against persons of different sexual orientation. The NCPA child helpline 1929 responds annually to several complaints of children, especially girls and is committed to address VAWG. Continuous strengthening of the SGBV referral system.

⁵⁷ The National Nutritional Policy for Sri Lanka, 2020. (referral link: <https://nutrition.health.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NNP-English.pdf>)

VI. Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation

Q31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

At national level Government has made significant efforts to integrate gender to environmental policies given the heightened area of climate change, disasters that have impacted the lives of women, men and children. In this respect the following policies have been developed and are being rolled out.

- The National Policy on Climate Change (2023)⁵⁸ includes as guiding principle the shared responsibility of all citizens in addressing climate-induced issues while incorporating youth, children, vulnerable groups including women for the decision-making process in climate action at all levels. As a policy objective, focuses on creating awareness on the multifaceted issues of climate change and to empower communities, especially women, youth and children on their roles and responsibilities as agents of change in implementing climate action. Accordingly,
 - Strategy 4.5 focuses on enhancing knowledge and understanding of comprehensive risk management approaches among communities, particularly among children, youth and women with necessary skills development mechanisms to address climate-induced risks.
 - Strategy 8.5 focuses on promoting nature/ ecosystem-based solutions to empower livelihoods, especially focusing on the poor, women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
 - Strategy 14.6 focuses on promoting mechanisms to recognize and transfer appropriate and gender responsive climate technologies to vulnerable communities.
 - Strategy 14.7 focuses on mobilizing social capital to invest in and facilitate participation of women, children, and youth as agents of change to lead technological innovation and transformation required for climate action.

- National Environment Policy (2022) focuses on the following core areas.
 - 4.5.1.3. focuses on decreasing the vulnerability of individual and community stakeholders in vulnerable sectors, regions and communities, including women.
 - 4.7.1.2. focuses on establishing institutional and e-communication linkages to enhance the cooperation and coordination between government institutions and key stakeholders, including women organizations.
 - 4.7.7.2. focuses on enhancing the participation of different stakeholder groups including women, in the implementation of policy measures and environmental management plans.
 - 4.1.7.4. focuses on enhancing female and youth participation and empowering gender and youth in environmental management.

- Updated *Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2021-2030)*:⁵⁹ Sri Lanka" as party to the Paris Agreement, presented its updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2021. Dedicated chapter on integrating gender into NDCs as a cross-cutting

⁵⁸Ministry of Environment, 2023. National Policy on Climate Change(referral link: http://www.climatechange.lk/CCS2023/NPCC_2023_ENGLISH.pdf).

⁵⁹Ministry of Environment, 2021. Updated Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Climate Change Secretariat MoE. (Referral link: [NDC2021-English.pdf \(climatechange.lk\)](#)).

issue, Proposes a multi-step approach to integrate gender into NDC implementation plans by sector through sector-specific gender analysis, development of gender responsive actions, improved capacities to engage women in planning and monitoring of NDCs, and allocation of budgets/ resources for gender-responsive actions. Highlights the importance of mainstreaming gender and social safeguards into adaptation priorities and integrating specific needs, vulnerabilities, skills, knowledge, and capacities of women, young children, disabled and elderly populations.”

- *Nationally Determined Contributions Implementation Plan (2021 -2030):*⁶⁰ Subsequent to the submission of the Updated NDCs in 2021, an implementation Plan was developed to assist to monitor the progress and highlight the national priorities of the NDC sectors. Here, climate responsive gender actions were integrated into four sectors. Namely, Power (mitigation-reduction of Greenhouse gas emissions); Livestock, Fisheries and Water which are adaptation (increasing climate resilience) sectors.
- *National Environmental Action Plan 2022-2030:*⁶¹
 - Strategy 6.2. Focuses on increasing women's participation to combat climate change and including gender aspects into new policies and plans related to climate change.
 - Strategy 7.8 focuses on ensuring gender mainstreaming when providing extension and support services for agro forestry and woodlot establishment. The action plan for information and knowledge management, includes poster and video-based knowledge products annually for social media with women social media influencers to speak on sustainable lifestyles.
- *Third National Communication (TNC) (2022):*
Includes a section on gender-responsive climate action, which focuses on the need to develop a Gender Action Plan for Climate Change in Sri Lanka, establish an M&E, system for gender-based participation, ensure gender balance, conduct capacity-building on gender responsiveness, and conduct research on gender and climate change. It also highlights that, indicators for women and other vulnerable groups were considered in developing the indicator list for risk/ hazard vulnerability maps and proposed adaptation opportunities. Notes that educating girls and women is one of the best ways of strengthening community adaptation measures to climate change. Commits to developing activities for specific stakeholders that have lower representation in climate change-related activities, including women.
- *Carbon Net Zero 2050 Roadmap and Strategic Plan (2023)*
Towards a just transition to net zero pathways, social and gender inclusion aspects related to the proposed strategies and actions were analyzed and recommendations are provided.
- *On -going programmes:*⁶²

⁶⁰Ministry of Environment, 2023. Nationally Determined Contributions Implementation Plan (2021-2030), MoE. (Referral link: [Final_NDC_IP_-_10072023.pdf \(env.gov.lk\)](#))

⁶¹Ministry of Environment, 2022. National Environmental Action Plan, MoE. (referral link: [NEAP_2022.pdf \(env.gov.lk\)](#))

⁶²Ministry of Environment, National Adaptation Plan (referral link: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/wboil/ltaw/#p=1>)

Under the National Adaptation Plan Readiness Support Project, the following documents are being developed. These will integrate gender responsive actions in the plan. Currently, stakeholder consultations are being held. It is expected to finalize these documents by December 2024.

- a) National Adaptation Plan revision (2025-2035)
- b) Provincial Adaptation Plans (9 plans)
- c) Gender & Social Inclusion Action Plan

Q32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

The Disaster Management Act No. 13 of 2005 and the Disaster Management Policy of Sri Lanka highlight the importance of gender-responsive risk reduction and resilience building. Women and children are identified as vulnerable groups in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Also, the National Disaster Management Plan 2023-2030, under social inclusion all marginalized communities are given priority on DRR and building resilience for potential risks.

Sub-national plans were developed on DRR and contingency management which include gender aspects as well as conducting responsive respondent training. A Gender Handbook was created and relevant stakeholders in Districts were trained. During disasters, the Disaster Management Unit coordinates meetings with humanitarian agencies to provide services such as distributing dignity kits to women.

The National Disaster Management Plan 2023-2030, includes provisions for gender-responsive disaster risk prevention, reduction and resilience building and DMC is in the process of implementing the activities related to the above. Also, MWCASE developed a National Plan of Action 2023-2027 to address SGBV and other related impacts on women, children, and marginalized groups during disasters which are led by the Ministry of Disaster Management.

In line with the National Plan of Action on addressing SGBV 2016-2020, the Disaster Management Center conducted National and sub national-level workshops with all relevant stakeholders at the policy level, first respondents, and community level and adopted gender-responsive approaches to humanitarian action and crisis response to address SGBV in Disasters

Under No. 13 of the National Policy on Disaster Management, it mentions that special attention should be given to the women and children in situation of disasters. This is undertaken at district and divisional level when assistance and rescue operations are taken forward in collaboration with CSOs, UN agencies and other development partners.

The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sri Lanka (2023) *Thematic Area 04: Environment and Disaster Management* identifies key policy objectives and strategies to address this area. The Women's Empowerment Act (2024) gives provision to implement this thematic area.

SECTION 4- NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES:

Focuses on national mechanisms and processors responsible for the monitoring of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda for Action for Sustainable Development.

Q33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

The 2023 Cabinet approved National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sri Lanka, formulated by MWCASE marks a key turning point in the history of Sri Lanka and the journey towards gender equality and empowerment of women.⁶³ The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (NPGewe) has eight thematic areas that address key gender issues in Sri Lanka. These include; Identity and autonomy, economic empowerment and productive employment, social equality and empowerment, environment and disaster management, equality in decision making, access to justice peace and security, freedom from gender-based violence, children – with special focus on the girl child.

In essence, "The National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy envisions a just society where the equality of women and men and gender minorities is upheld, all women, men and gender minorities enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms, and both women, men and gender minorities are able to realize their full potential and participate equally and equitably in and benefit from democracy and development, both in public and private life."⁶⁴ The overarching focus of the Policy is on non-discrimination and ensuring substantive equality as per CEDAW and also include most areas as per the BPfA such as focus on the girl child, violence against women, environment, decision making, economy among others. To operationalize the NPGewe a time bound, action plan will be formulated.

In July 2024 the Parliament enacted the Women's Empowerment Act, giving endorsement for the establishment of the National Commission on Women. This signals an important milestone in the history of Sri Lanka by the Government and a significant step towards the realization of women's rights and empowerment of women. The Act has been enacted to enable empowerment of women, to formulate and implement the National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, to establish a National Commission on Women, to setup mechanisms for the protection of women's rights and to prosecute against the violation of these rights.⁶⁵ The principles enshrined in CEDAW on women's rights and non-discrimination is also incorporated in this landmark Act on establishing a National Commission on Women.

⁶³Parliament of Sri Lanka, [The Sectoral Oversight Committee approves the Women's Empowerment Bill to be presented in Parliament tomorrow](#), Committee News, 3 June 2024.

⁶⁴Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, 2023. National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sri Lanka, Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment.

⁶⁵Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Women Empowerment Bill (No. 254)

Q34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

Following the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, Sri Lanka initiated the process of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). Accordingly, a study was initiated on the gender impact of the 1996 budget jointly initiated by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Ministry of Finance and Planning and CIDA. Technical support was provided by CENWOR for the study, which focused on a few key sectors such as education, health, agriculture and considered the gender distribution of employment within the public sector. Following this study a few steps such as recommending the allocation of 20% of the district budget for women's advancement in 2002, post budget gender assessment facilitated by UNIFEM in 2003 were explored but did not carry through to fruition.

In 2015, following the Cabinet memorandum submitted by Hon. Minister of Women and Child Affairs to the Cabinet which was approved in 2016, the Government took a policy decision to invest on a minimum of 25% of the government development budget for the economic empowerment of rural women. A scoping study was conducted in 2016 on the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting and strategic recommendations were provided to the national machinery. Following this UN Women undertook an orientation program on GRB with policy makers and officials from Provincial and District level. As follow-up, 12 macro level KPIs were developed in 2019 to guide the line ministries and SDG budget coding and also include SDG 5.

In 2022, a circular was issued in November by MWCASE in consultation with the Department of National Budgeting to incorporate gender responsive budgeting when preparing the National budget for 2023. As a follow up, Gender Responsive Budgeting Guidelines were drafted by the Finance Commission to be used in preparing the Annual Action plans of the Provincial Councils.

Current practices are to undertake a quick analysis of the national budgets from a gender equality perspective (this was done in 2019, 2020, 2024) to position the Parliamentary debates and inform the respective ministries on the gaps. Presently a GRB Act is being formulated engaging with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus and the Sectoral Oversight Committee on Women and Children to regularize GRB within the national planning and budgeting process. MWCASE is leading the formulation of the GRB Act in coordination with the Ministry of Finance. The GRB Act is a legislative tool to streamline the existing measures on GRB in an inclusive manner. AGESI budget manual for Parliamentarians has also been developed.

Q35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

At the national level the Cabinet Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment leads the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which has been integrated to the most recently adopted National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Sri Lanka (2023) and to the NAP to address SGBV-II (2024-2028). BPfA is also integrated to CEDAW reporting process and the 2030 Agenda led by the SDG Council and UN agencies. The

MWCASE continues to take the lead in the implementation, monitoring and review of the BPfA and consultations were led by the Government and held for state and non-state actors such as Ministries, UN agencies, CSOs, INGOs and other development partners who were invited to participate in a consultative process of reflection to feed the review process.

Q36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

The present national report of the Beijing+30 review and the 2030 Agenda had a delay in commencing the process, largely due to the recovery status of the country from the economic crisis and the priority given to the formulation and adoption of the Women's Empowerment Act which took place in July endorsing the setting-up of the National Commission on Women. Hence this review was fast tracked.

The MWCASE commenced the process through an internal discussion of the Guidance Note and Guidance Questionnaire and brainstorming on progress as well as gaps. Further to this the MWCASE wrote to all relevant Ministries, CSOs, UN agencies, INGOs and development partners sharing Ministry's input to the Guidance questionnaire and asking for their submission of progress. Following this, a hybrid consultative meeting was held at the Ministry which was attended by several Ministries, CSOs, INGOs and UN agencies where Ministry requested input and feedback on the areas covered in the Guidance questionnaire. Submissions were received from several Ministries, CSOs, INGOs and UN agencies with follow-up questions asked where relevant. The draft national report was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by MWCASE and feedback incorporated and submitted online while also completing the online questionnaire.

Q37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

The Government has submitted the Ninth Periodic State Party CEDAW Report in 2022.⁶⁶ Following this the CEDAW Committee sent a document where list of issues was raised and the Government responded in September 2023 to these issues. The fourth Universal Periodic Review has also been submitted by the Government.

The Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment regularly updates progress in relation to any matters rose by the CEDAW Committee and has seen the adoption of many recommendations contained in the previous CEDAW Concluding Observations during this reporting period. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also ensures that Sri Lanka reports on its entire treaty obligation.

⁶⁶United Nations CEDAW, [Ninth periodic report submitted by Sri Lanka under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2021](#), 22 April 2022.

SECTION 5 - DATA AND STATISTICS:

This section focuses on the availability of gender disaggregated data and should highlight progress on the availability of data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics, linking the monitoring of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

The country is undertaking its 10 year national census (2023-2024) at present where key gender categories have been integrated and will shed important information on the status of socio-economic and political data. Data of key vulnerable groups were also part of the national census. The Department of Census and Statistics have the most recent data for Sri Lanka, which is updated regularly.

The Sustainable Development Council leads data collection on the SDGs and has an online data portal which is updated with significant insight on gender disaggregated data. The portal draws data from different sources such as the Demographic and Health Survey, HIES and the Department of Census and Statistics with many areas providing data disaggregated according to sex, age, region among others.

Data on Intimate Partner Violence is available through the Women's Wellness Survey undertaken by UNFPA. GBV data at national level is also available with the Sri Lanka Police Department, Women and Child Bureaus, the NCPA and NCW. CSOs that are service providers also engage in data collection on SGBV.

39. Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

As Sri Lanka is undertaking its national census 2023 -2024, this will shed important light on gender statistics. Gender sensitization of the national census area of data gathering was also done by key stakeholders. Working with the Department of Census and Statistics and ensuring gender aspects are integrated and gender disaggregated data is gathered is the best way forward. Other key national surveys include the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) and Demographic Health Survey (DHS) which are key source of data. The Government initiated Sustainable Development Council regularly updates gender data as per the Meta data requirements of the SDGs and offers integrated insights on SDG progress. However as gender data under SDG5 is indicated as insufficient in the portal, , data gathering along SDG criteria will be further aligned, to address the issue of missing gender data to report accurately on SDG indicators.

Going forward gender disaggregated data in all area is essential and technical support to the Department of Census and Statistics will be strengthened.

40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

The Sustainable Development Council Sri Lanka, established under the Sri Lanka Sustainable Development Act, No. 19 of 2017, is the nodal government institution with responsibilities for

coordination, facilitation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Action and Sustainable Development in Sri Lanka as per the 17 sustainable development goals.

One of the greatest challenges that impede the monitoring of the progress of SDGs is the lack of data as per the indicators and sub parameters identified for data gathering. The report ‘Status of SDG Indicators in Sri Lanka’ issued by the Department of Census and Statistics in 2017, noted that data was available only for 46 SDG indicators out of the 247 SDG indicators as per the SDG Global Framework.⁶⁷A localized agency framework has also been designed where designated agencies are indicated to enable operationalizing of the SDGs. To strengthen the SDG data governance and management system the SDG council has formulated a SDG Data portal where the status if SDGs is accessible to all. The Figure below provides a snapshot of the national status of the SDG implementation taken from the SDG portal.⁶⁸



SDG5 on Gender Equality is indicated as missing data, which is unfortunately the reality of the Asia Pacific region. This highlights the importance of collecting gender data along the parameters defined in the SDGs. Hence a greater alignment on gender disaggregated data needs to be incorporated when data is collected as part of national surveys and census. The data portal managed by the SDG Council further

⁶⁷ Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka, 2024. Status of SDG Indicators and Baseline Data, (referral link: https://sdc.gov.lk/sites/default/files/2024-07/Status%20update%20of%20SDG%20Indicators-%20updated_31.08.2023.pdf)

⁶⁸ Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka, National SDG Data Portal (referral link: <https://sdc.gov.lk/en/sdg-lka-23>)

displays the progress of targets under each goal. The targets of SDG 5 are provided below as relevant to Sri Lanka.

Goal: Goal 5 Gender equality



Gender specific indicators are being considered across all SDGs, but hampered by the inadequacy of relevant data as per the required parameters in the UN Meta data guidelines. Given the Covid-19 pandemic and shocks of the economic crisis there is a trend that is observed in the attention given to the implementation of SDGs, where in the recent past greater attention is focused on SDGs focusing on climate change (SDG 13), poverty alleviation (SDG 1), decent work (SDG 8) and gender equality (SDG 5) as well as the gender indicators in other SDGs.

41. Which data disaggregations are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

Major surveys usually capture data on sex, age, disability (but sometimes not gender disaggregated). Gender data and the inclusion of persons from other genders are usually not captured. Rural, Urban, plantation data is available as well as religion and ethnic breakdown. However cross cutting categories such as which ethnic group has the most number of disabled women and men is usually not available.

Major survey that are routinely undertaken include the National Census (once every 10 years which is undertaken at present), Demographic Health Survey (DHS), Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), SDG data gathering by the SDG Council, Police data on Grave and Minor Crimes which are disaggregated by sex, but data is available only after contacting the authority. The Grave Crimes index is published and available to the public. National Help lines such as 1929, 1938 etc., also have ongoing data collection as relevant to the particular service offered. CSOs also collect data as relevant to the services offered. National surveys on GBV, disability, care work have not been undertaken and surveys of different types of GBV have been done such as sexual harassment, intimate partner violence etc.

SECTION 6 - CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:

In conclusion, this section identifies forward-looking priority actions at national level, future challenges and key reflections and lessons learnt as part of the review process of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda for Action of achieving the SDGs. These include the following:

- *Principle of non-discrimination, gender equality and empowerment of women:* as enshrined in CEDAW, BPfA contained in the Women's Empowerment Act (2024) to be fully operationalized as well as the establishment of the National Commission on Women to function independently led by women's rights advocates to accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of women through a rights-based approach ensuring the principle of substantive equality as enshrined in CEDAW.
- *Access to better work opportunities:* Government will take concerted efforts to address further gender gaps in the labour force and access to decent work, including gender inequalities among the managerial and other tiers in the Sri Lankan workforce, Government will focus on investing in sectors that have the best potential for increased productivity as well as job creation while providing equity measures and promoting women, young women, rural women, FHH, disabled women and other vulnerable groups that are furthest behind and hence have less access to better job opportunities.
- *Addressing Sexual and Gender-based Violence:* Government in collaboration with donors, UN and INGOs and CSOs will fully support the implementation of the second National Action Plan to address SGBV in Sri Lanka as a matter of priority and to operationalize the high-level Steering Committee to monitor the progress of implementation of the NAP to address SGBV-II which was approved by Cabinet in July 2024.
- *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:* Comprehensive reproductive health education for adolescent girls and women, as well as efforts to reduce the financial burden of menstrual hygiene products, to improve the management of menstruation for women in Sri Lanka will be prioritized further.
- *Narrowing the Gender Digital Gap and enhancing girls and women's entry to STEM:* Technology and digital education in schools will be expanded further and girls will be encouraged to pursue and take on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects as a priority, as girls in STEM is linked to the widening of the technology and digital landscape in Sri Lanka "there won't be any women in tech without girls in STEM."⁶⁹ Girls and women in STEM and technology and digital fields has the potential to also bridge the gender gap in the labour force. Expansion in digital and technology landscape including employment in Sri Lanka and abroad is a key path identified by Government for economic progress and poverty alleviation.
- *Affirmative action to increase women's political participation of women:* Given the low level of women in the Parliament, discussions of a quota to be allocated for women to ensure greater, visibility, participation and voice has been initiated by the Women Parliamentarian's Caucus and will be discussed further at a policy level for concrete action.

⁶⁹Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2023. [DigitALL: Are Sri Lankan Women Abandoned in Digital Transformation?, Talking Economies, IPS.](#)

