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GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ANALYSIS

USAID/SRI LANKA

June 2020 | Final Report

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ACRONYMS

ADS	Automated Directives System
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DO	Development Objective
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EFC	Employers Federation of Ceylon
FBR	Family Background Report
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FHH	Female-Headed Household
FY	Fiscal Year
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
HR	Human Resources
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labor Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
LED	Light-Emitting Diode
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MMDA	Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
NCW	National Committee on Women
NEPS	National Energy Policy and Strategies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHREP	National Human Resources and Employment Policy
OMP	Office on Missing Persons
PES	Provincial Energy Statutes
RDMA	Regional Development Mission for Asia
SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation

SDGAP	Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability Project
SI	Social Impact, Inc.
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SOW	Scope of Work
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
TO	Task Order
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WEEE	Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Equality
WHH	Women-Headed Households

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) contracted Social Impact, Inc. (SI), to conduct a countrywide gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) analysis to inform USAID/Sri Lanka's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2021–2024. The analysis concentrates on eight key sectors: Public Finance Management, Labor Force Participation, Private Sector, Entrepreneurship & Trade, Youth Employability, Governance, Reconciliation, Media, and Natural Resource Management.

The analysis team comprised four team members, who collected data over four weeks in March 2020. The research process included an extensive literature review; development of research tools and approval by an Institutional Review Board, key informant interviews (KIIs) with 92 respondents from the Government of Sri Lanka, national and international civil society organizations (CSOs), USAID, and implementing partners; two focus group discussions (FGDs); and a remote outbrief workshop with USAID/Sri Lanka staff to share preliminary findings for each sector and seek input before drafting this report. The research team triangulated data and performed content and pattern analysis as a team as data was collected. The team mapped its findings onto the five gender domains and the nine priority sectors, as well as by social group.

KEY FINDINGS

Social groups: While this report focuses on the state of women and girls, other social groups face their own forms of discrimination in Sri Lankan society. Men and boys must adhere to masculine stereotypes that focus on dominance, not displaying emotions, and being the family breadwinners. The LGBTI community faces high levels of violence, discrimination, and hate crimes, driven by a lack of legal protection for gender identity and sexual orientation. People living with disabilities receive very limited government and NGO assistance and suffer from social stigmas, leading to substantial undereducation and underemployment. Plantation estate workers have some of the worst demographic indicators in Sri Lanka and are exposed to elevated levels of gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence owing, in part, to cultural patriarchal narratives. Garment factory workers—who are mostly female—are generally overworked, isolated from family, and forbidden from collectively organizing.

Public financial management: Public institutions either do not carry out gender-responsive budgeting uniformly or at all, and central institutions often lack gender-segregated data on programming. Predatory lending in microfinance is common in Sri Lanka and disproportionately affects women.

Labor force participation: Women make up only one third of the workforce and have double the unemployment rate of men in Sri Lanka. A plurality of women enjoy formal work in the services industry; however, women still play a large role in the informal workforce, particularly in agriculture-related jobs.

Private Sector: Women face significant barriers to private sector employment, lacking safe and accessible transport, flexible working hours, on-site day care, part-time work, and accommodations. Most working women report experiencing some form of sexual harassment in the workplace. The number of women in leadership at a company is positively correlated with the return on total assets.

Entrepreneurship and trade: Compared to their male counterparts, female entrepreneurs have generally poor access to markets and limited access to credit outside high-interest microlenders. Women with access to business development services are more likely own small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Youth employability: Those with lower education and poorer socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to work in the informal sector, with a lack of social protections. While technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a viable option for youth, much of the population does not perceive it as preferable. The current school curriculum promotes traditional gender stereotypes for women. Young women are more likely than young men to exit the labor force early and spend more time looking for jobs. Rural youth largely work in agriculture and generally unaware of other job opportunities available to them. Period poverty, or limited access to sanitary products, negatively affects girls' and women's educational and professional potential.

Governance: Women are underrepresented in politics, and female politicians are under supported. A women's police cadre exists but is limited in its effectiveness because of caps on promotion. Muslim women living in Sri Lanka have little to no voice in judicial matters, particularly those involving marriage, as they are not permitted to serve on Quazi courts. Early marriage is legal in the Muslim community and threatens the future educational and health outcomes of Muslim girls.

Reconciliation: A decade after the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) conflict, peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts have hit many roadblocks, mostly owing to a lack of confidence in public institutions and a lack of resources for integration. Islamic extremism in the form of the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks fanned anti-Muslim sentiment and Buddhist extremism. In war-torn areas, women endure GBV and economic and social vulnerabilities more so than in other areas. Psychosocial support services are not equitably distributed across the country.

Media: Sri Lanka is one of the most dangerous places for journalists in Asia. Mainstream media tends to have political leanings, and fake news on social media exacerbates ethnic and racial tensions, particularly between Muslims and non-Muslims. GBV toward female journalists is pervasive, there are few women in leadership roles in media, and the media generally portrays women and girls negatively.

Natural resource management: Natural disasters in Sri Lanka and the effects of climate change disproportionately affect women, and post-disaster recovery efforts exacerbate gender disparities. Women have limited engagement and representation in decision making and consultation processes in the energy sector and are more likely than men to be exposed to the harmful effects of indoor pollution.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report, each of the nine sections of priority themes has its own recommendations. The analysis team identified five overarching key recommendations spanning the themes and domains. These key recommendations are below, in order of priority. Evidence and rationale for these recommendations can be found in Section 4.0 Recommendations.

- Support civil society as a means to sustainably and legitimately chip away at structural gender stereotypes and social norms that hinder the advancement of women and other vulnerable groups. Support civil society groups that work on, in particular, strengthening women’s networks (e.g., entrepreneurs), media accountability, electoral accountability, educational curriculum reform, peacebuilding among communities (especially with Muslims), and GBV. Include male colleagues in programming, particularly on GBV.
- Intervene in primary and secondary education to sustainably address and preemptively mitigate extremism and transform cultural stereotypes and norms. Focus support on school-based interventions that work with youth to promote good citizenship among the many ethnic and religious groups of Sri Lanka. Revise primary school curriculum to push the boundaries on traditional ideas of gender and vulnerable social groups from a young age.
- Work with the business community to push for structural changes to business practices and workers’ rights for women and vulnerable groups. Target provincial chambers, associations, and other umbrella organizations as a sustainable means of instituting reforms to workplace conditions and workers’ rights. In particular, focus on childcare, flexible working arrangements, and, above all, addressing sexual harassment and GBV.
- At the policy level, focus interventions on realistic partnerships with public institutions committed to GESI and sustainable, sweeping actions. Work specifically with the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MOWCA) to identify low-hanging fruit at the policy level, such as consistent inclusion and alignment of policies and programming with the 12 gender key performance indicators (KPIs). Focus efforts on reforming the TVET system to ensure that women and other vulnerable groups have a professional pipeline from secondary school to training and beyond.
- Incorporate psychosocial components into all programming, particularly in war-affected areas and among vulnerable populations. Create modules on psychosocial support and healing activities that can be adapted to all types of programming, no matter the sector or group. Focus particularly on women-headed households in war-affected areas.

I.0 ASSESSMENT PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY, AND LIMITATIONS

I.1 PURPOSE OF THE USAID/SRI LANKA GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ANALYSIS

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA), on behalf of USAID/Sri Lanka, contracted Social Impact, Inc. (SI), to conduct a countrywide gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) analysis to inform USAID/Sri Lanka's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2021–2024. This analysis responds to the requirements of Automated Directives System (ADS) 201.3.2.9¹ regarding gender analysis as part of the CDCS development process. The CDCS will align with the 2012 USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy² and the 2016 updated United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (GBV).³

The objectives of this GESI analysis are to (1) identify significant macro-level and sectoral barriers to gender equality and female empowerment and (2) prioritize and justify which of these barriers should be addressed in each section of the CDCS: Goal, Development Hypotheses and Results Framework, Development Objective (DO), and Intermediate Result (IR) narratives. The analysis also provides recommendations for how to strengthen GESI in Sri Lanka.⁴

The USAID/Sri Lanka GESI analysis aims to provide data to enhance the integration of gender equality and female empowerment in USAID/Sri Lanka's strategy and programming. The GESI analysis focuses on the following priority thematic areas identified by USAID/Sri Lanka: public finance management, entrepreneurship, trade, private sector, youth employability, justice, reconciliation, media, and natural resource management.

I.2 DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The analysis team used a mixed methods approach with an integrated analysis framework in accordance with the USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy⁵ and the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Equality (WEEE) Act of 2018.⁶

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The analysis team reviewed documents on gender and other social inclusion issues affecting rural inhabitants, ethnic and religious minorities, youth, the LGBTI community, and people living with disabilities in Sri Lanka. These documents included gender policies and assessments conducted by USAID and other donors and multilateral organizations, sector-specific gender assessments and policy analyses, evaluations of programs with a significant gender component, reports from civil society organizations (CSOs), and academic research from peer reviewed journals. This review helped the team identify the most relevant questions for the key informant interview (KII) guide and identify sources of quantitative data, as well as providing a foundation for data triangulation for the analysis.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The research team met with a total of 92 key informants during 60 separate interviews. Most interviews took place in Colombo, with additional field visits in Central Province (Kandy), Eastern Province

(Batticaloa and Ampara), Uva Province (Monaragala), and Southern Province (Hambantota/Matara). The team purposefully selected the key informants and field visit sites in consultation with USAID staff, targeting expertise on GESI across the full range of government representatives, donors, USAID staff, USAID implementing partners (IPs), and civil society, as well as across all nine priority sectors. The distribution of key informants across locations and categories is in Table 4 and Table 5 in Annex B.

In addition to KIIs, the research team conducted two focus group discussions (FGDs) with two organizations, covering topics such as access to financial services and experience with predatory lending, which the team had identified as key challenges for women. The English versions of the interview and FGD guides are available in Annex D. Table 6 in Annex B breaks down the KIIs and FGDs by priority themes addressed. Among priority themes, reconciliation and entrepreneurship were discussed the most, while themes such as trade and natural resource management were more specialized and therefore discussed by fewer stakeholders.

I.3 ASSESSMENT LIMITATIONS

Representativeness: While the research team aimed to examine population-level outcomes through secondary data, the qualitative sample is small and not representative of the broader population to a statistically significant degree. The research team visited eight field locations to increase confidence in and triangulation of findings, but a relatively small sample size combined with purposive sampling limits the representativeness of the findings.

Response Bias: Response bias is the tendency of respondents to provide answers that are not completely truthful, for any number of reasons. For example, respondents may overreport positive feedback or underreport negative feedback (social desirability bias), knowing that evaluation results can inform future funding. The team mitigated response bias by administering an informed consent script that encouraged honest responses, reassured respondents of their anonymity, explained that there are no inherent benefits to them from participating in the study, and clarified that their responses would not affect their receipt of services now or in the future (see Annex D for the informed consent script). By administering informed consent, the analysis team expected to elicit more candid answers from respondents, particularly by assuring respondents of confidentiality. Further, the team designed the data collection tools to minimize response bias by using neutral, non-leading questions. The research team fostered a neutral environment by introducing themselves as independent researchers, not representatives of USAID, and did not respond negatively or positively to responses. However, some respondents still may have answered based on what they believed the interviewers wanted to hear.

Selection Bias: Given the purposive nature of the sample, the analysis team ran the risk of stakeholders guiding the research team to key informants who might express inaccurate (either favorable or unfavorable) responses. The team minimized this bias by ensuring a diverse range of key informants with varying levels of engagement with the issues being studied. The team also used data triangulation to validate qualitative data. By comparing data provided in interviews against reviewed documents, for example, the team ensured that no single biased data point could skew the analysis.

Challenges Related to COVID-19: The coronavirus pandemic escalated in the middle of field work, making it necessary to reduce face-to-face data collection. The research team adjusted by continuing data collection with key informants via telephone. However, the team could only complete two focus groups, including one in Negombo (about an hour outside Colombo), before social distancing and

mobility restrictions began. Because of the shortened fieldwork, the team could not collect as much data as intended on the challenges of working with the government, gender-based responsive budgeting, and supporting marginalized groups to develop small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Despite these limitations, the team is confident in the depth and range of information collected and the value of the subsequent analysis.

2.0 SRI LANKAN CONTEXT

2.1 BACKGROUND

Sri Lanka has a relatively high level of gender equality in comparison to other South Asian and developing countries. Sri Lanka has made major strides in achieving parity in female education and increasing women’s access to health services by providing free and universal schooling and healthcare. This has led to relatively high rankings on development indices such as the Human Development Index (see Table I). However, the high levels of gender parity in education and health are offset by low levels of female participation in the government and the labor force. These rankings are also based on national aggregates, obscuring large disparities between urban centers (including the Western Province more broadly) and rural areas.

TABLE I: SRI LANKA'S POSITION ON GLOBAL INDICES (FAO, 2018)

INDEX	VALUE AND RANK
Human Development Index (HDI) 2016 (UNDP, 2016)	Value: 0.766 Rank: 73rd out of 168 countries
Gender Development Index (GDI) 2016 (UNDP, 2016)	Value: 0.934 Rank: Group 3 (countries with medium equality in HDI achievements between men and women)
Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2016 (UNDP, 2016)	Value: 0.386 Rank: 87th out of 159 countries
Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) 2017 (World Economic Forum, 2017)	Value: 0.669 Rank: 109th out of 144 countries
Women’s Economic Opportunity Index (WEOI) 2012 (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2012)	Value: 47.6 Rank: 84th out of 128 countries

Every year since 2006, the gender gap has been widening in Sri Lanka. In 2006, Sri Lanka ranked 13th out of 115 countries; now, Sri Lanka’s gender gap index of 0.68 places it at 102nd out of 153 countries.⁷ The low rates of female participation in governance may be surprising, since Sri Lanka elected the world’s first female prime minister in 1960 and an elected female president held office from 1994 to 2004. Inequality in political representation, barriers in the labor market, imbalances in skill development, and gendered social norms and practices have disadvantaged women and girls in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, sexual violence, the feminization of poverty, large numbers of female-headed households, and regional disparities have serious implications for Sri Lankan society and future generations.⁸

Overall, since the end of the conflict in 2009, poverty has declined while economic growth has been on the rise. Sri Lanka's poverty level declined from 6.7 percent in 2012 to 4.1 percent in 2016; however, this decline is uneven across economic sectors and regions.⁹ Studies have shown that besides the unemployed, new vulnerable groups have emerged, and women form the majority of virtually all these groups. Men and women across the country were economically, socially, and psychologically victimized and traumatized by the 26-year conflict, but women were a particularly vulnerable group, whether as perpetrators, victims, or widows of the war. Twenty-six years of conflict led to high levels of displacement and loss of assets, livelihoods, and incomes. Post-conflict militarization has exacerbated the situation.

Without proper coping skills, some have turned to alcohol and drug use as a means of self-medication or thrill seeking. Men are much more likely than women to consume alcohol in Sri Lanka. A national WHO study in 2016 estimated the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking for those 15 years of age and older to be 16.6 percent for males and 2.4 percent for females.¹⁰ Alcohol use frequently contributes to domestic violence. A study found that 76 percent of domestic violence perpetrators consumed alcohol regularly.¹¹

Rates of child marriage are relatively low in Sri Lanka, especially in comparison to other countries in South Asia. According to the most recent data provided by UNICEF, 2 percent of children were married by 15 years of age, and 12 percent were married by 18 years of age.¹² The median age at first marriage was lowest in Anuradhapura, the northern central province of Sri Lanka.¹³ Cohabitation is more common than early marriage and occurs when a young couple lives together and intends to formally register their marriage once they are of legal age.¹⁴ National law establishes 18 as the minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls. However, the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA) permits marriage before 18 among the Muslim population. A UNICEF study found "a strong link between early marriage and statutory rape with many incidences of early marriage and cohabitation preceded by incidents of statutory rape."¹⁵

The MMDA contributes to higher rates of child marriage in Muslim communities. During the war, parents believed that the armed group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would not recruit married girls.¹⁶ In 2017, a human rights lawyer attributed a further rise from 14 to 22 percent child marriage rates among Muslims in the Eastern Province to increased conservatism.¹⁷ Efforts to reform the MMDA have ramped up since the Easter Sunday attacks. However, the ongoing effort to revise this law demonstrates the deep-seated role culture and tradition play.

Female children, people with disabilities, war widows, and LGBTI persons are especially vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and violence. Gender-based violence (GBV) is on the rise. In 2018, a UNFPA survey found that 90 percent of women and girls in Sri Lanka have experienced sexual harassment on public buses or trains in Sri Lanka at least once.¹⁸ The majority of women (60 percent) were not aware that there is a criminal penalty for sexual harassment, and only 4 percent decided to report the incident to a relevant authority. In Sri Lanka, domestic violence is usually thought of as a "private" matter that should be handled within families. Domestic violence and sexual harassment are rarely reported because of shame and lack of belief in the system, and because police are likely to trivialize or blame women who do try to report.

Despite high levels of secondary school completion, youth find it difficult to transition into the labor market and therefore experience high unemployment.¹⁹ In rural areas, youth are likely to follow in their

parents' footsteps because of limited options or awareness of other opportunities. Youth are often disengaged from civic and political participation.²⁰ In war-affected areas, youth have shortsighted visions and goals that prevent them from contributing to their community in a meaningful way.²¹ They are coping with trauma and need more access to psychosocial services. Alcohol and drug use start early and are likely to continue into adulthood, especially as a means of self-medication in the absence of other ways of dealing with trauma.²²

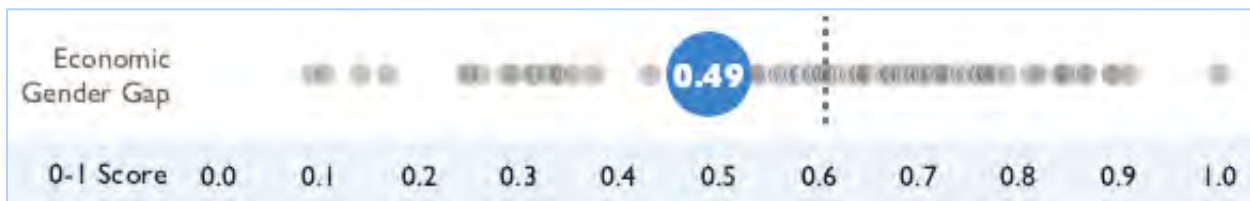
Sri Lanka is a relatively small island nation, but it is rich in cultural diversity, with several ethnic and religious minorities. When communities and schools are divided along ethnic and religious lines, people have limited interaction with those from other ethnic and religious groups. This can contribute to misunderstandings and increase tensions that lead to conflict. Nearly three decades of conflict, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, loss of assets, and the disruption of livelihoods and incomes have eroded the social fabric in Sri Lanka. Significant reconciliation work is still needed to restore justice and services to marginalized individuals and communities, especially for youth and female heads of households.

2.2 SRI LANKA AND THE JOURNEY TO SELF RELIANCE

Given the importance of USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) principles in programming, the analysis team assessed Sri Lanka's position with respect to J2SR metrics related to gender and social inclusion. The following analysis examines Sri Lanka in two GESI-related J2SR metrics: economic gender gap and liberal democracy.

ECONOMIC GENDER GAP

One indicator of inclusive development in USAID's J2SR roadmap is the economic gender gap. This indicator synthesizes data on several aspects of women's economic status: wage equality, earned income, labor force participation, and participation in high-ranking/professional jobs (legislature, managers, etc.). On a scale from 0 to 1, Sri Lanka scored 0.49 in fiscal year (FY) 2020, ranking below the average score for middle-and low-income countries, which was 0.61.²³



In FY 2020, across all 17 J2SR indicators, Sri Lanka's lowest ranking as compared to other countries was in the economic gender gap, where it placed in the bottom third. Findings from this report highlight GESI-specific gaps that would improve Sri Lanka's score on this indicator:

- Wage inequality (women make less than male counterparts at the same job)
- Low participation of women in the workforce
- “Glass ceiling” for women in the private sector
- Limited women's representation in government positions
- Concentration of women's employment in low paying, informal sectors

- Large percentage of economy in the informal sector, leaving much of the workforce (both men and women) vulnerable to exploitation and social exclusion

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

One indicator of open and accountable governance in USAID’s J2SR roadmap is liberal democracy. This indicator uses metrics from Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), including freedom of expression, access to justice, equitable power distribution, and equal protection of civil liberties. On a scale from 0 to 1, Sri Lanka scored 0.5 in FY2020, ranking well above the average score for middle-and-low-income countries, which was 0.33.²⁴



Despite this comparatively high global ranking, a score of 0.50 still represents lagging progress in democratic equality. Findings from this report highlight GESI-specific gaps that would improve Sri Lanka’s score on this indicator:

- Low rates of female participation in governance
- Need for further reform of Muslim Law (MMDA) to increase gender equality
- Discrepancy between laws for GESI and their implementation
- Discriminatory customary law and cultural practices
- High vulnerability of marginalized groups (LGBTI, disabled, women) to harassment and violence
- Limited government assistance for people living with disabilities

3.0 FINDINGS

The findings section includes three parts. The first part (section 3.1) covers the five domains of gender: (1) laws and policies; (2) cultural norms and beliefs; (3) gender roles, responsibilities, and time use; (4) access to and control over land and resources; and (5) patterns of power and decision making. The second part (section 3.2) is a summary of findings on social inclusion, organized by social groups in Sri Lankan society. The third part (sections 3.3–3.11) covers the nine priority themes identified by USAID/Sri Lanka: (1) public finance management, (2) trade, (3) private sector, (4) female entrepreneurship, (5) youth employability, (6) governance (originally justice), (7) reconciliation, (8) media, and (9) natural resource management. Recommendations for all priority themes are included in section 4.0 Recommendations.

3.1 FIVE DOMAINS OF GENDER ANALYSIS

LAWS AND POLICIES

There is a substantial legal framework in Sri Lanka around women’s rights, gender equality, and GBV prevention and response, including several action plans. The foundational legal framework for gender

equality is summarized in Table 3 in Annex A; these laws and policies were included in the desk review for this analysis.

The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MOWCA) is the lead ministry on gender equality. The National Committee on Women was established in 1993 to monitor implementation of the Women's Charter through policy formulation and advocacy to raise awareness about issues that impact women, and a Gender Complaints Unit receives complaints on gender-based discrimination."²⁵ This Center for Gender-Based Complaints within the MOWCA was active as of the writing of this report, complete with a "Women's Help Line" hotline number.²⁶ The Women's Bureau is situated within MOWCA but is more project-based and focuses mainly on income generation issues.

The National Plan of Action for Women identifies eight sectors, including "violence against women, human rights and armed conflict, political participation and decision making, health, education and training, economic activities and poverty, media and communication, environment, and institutional strengthening and support."²⁷

Sri Lanka has indicated a commitment to addressing GESI in several policies, including the country's previous national policy framework, Vision 2025, and its most recent framework, Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour. In Vision 2025 (2017), the government expressed a desire to "improve access to good quality, affordable childcare facilities and transportation, facilitating part-time and flexible work arrangements, improving maternity benefits for private sector employees, and improving access to tertiary education and vocational training."²⁸

However, there is often a discrepancy between laws and implementation, in part because of limited government capacity, budget challenges, and conflicting customary laws. Further, in some areas, the right to culture and religion has superseded the right to equality and allowed customary laws to take precedence over national laws. The 1951 MMDA has several discriminatory provisions regarding marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, property rights, and access to justice for Muslim women. Discriminatory principles in the Kandyan law on divorce and inheritance continue to apply for a minority of Sinhala women, as do limitations on property rights in Thesawalamai law for a minority of Tamil women in Jaffna.²⁹ The laws listed in Table 2 discriminate against women in relation to ownership of land and property inheritance, marriage, divorce, and child custody:

TABLE 2: LAWS IN SRI LANKA THAT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST WOMEN AND OTHER GROUPS

LAW	DISCRIMINATION ³⁰
State land: Land Development Ordinance No.19 of 1935	A surviving spouse of a recently deceased landowner may not necessarily have right to the deceased’s land if the deceased had not previously nominated the spouse as a successor. State land permits are overwhelmingly given to husbands, so this stipulation most often applies to women (and therefore disfavors them more often). Absent any nominated person, male primogeniture is still the prevailing tradition, and land will go to sons, grandsons, and fathers before their female counterparts.
Private land: Matrimonial Rights and Inheritance Ordinance (Jaffna) No. 1 of 1911	The law stipulates that a husband has power over his wife’s immovable property. The law also says that a woman must gain permission from her husband to dispose of any of her own immovable property before doing so. If a husband cannot be found, the wife must gain approval from a court to dispose of the property, a process that places undue burden on women and is not applicable to men.
Covert discrimination: Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No.34 of 2005	The law indirectly discriminates against women in that it is gender neutral, thereby granting protections to all people, when the reality is quite different. Further, the definitions of domestic violence are limited and restricted, making it increasingly difficult to include, for example, marital rape in its definition.
Access to justice: Structural discrimination - Concept of head of household	Current law is in line with traditional views that informally recognize a head of household as “the man of the house.” The de facto head of household is generally male unless specified as a “female head of household,” which indirectly relegates females to a secondary status within a household. This traditional denotation makes it particularly difficult for female spouses of missing or dead men to claim rights to their husband’s property.
Constitution of Sri Lanka of 1978	Article 16 (1) includes a clause in the Fundamental Rights chapter that says that all written and unwritten laws that existed prior to the 1978 Constitution remain “valid and operative” even if they are “inconsistent” with fundamental rights granted to all citizens. It effectively allows for a continuity of discrimination against women.
Kandyan Marriage and Divorce Act No. 44 of 1952	Grounds for dissolution of a marriage due to adultery are highly unequal for females compared to males: to be considered grounds for dissolution, a husband’s adultery must reach the level of incest or gross cruelty, whereas a female’s is simply listed as adultery. Further, incest is vaguely defined as those of “near relations,” which leaves open the door to interpretation of the law for men.
Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA) No. 13 of 1951	Women are outright banned from being marriage registrars in the Sharia court. Registrars are essential for resolving marriage-related disputes; a lack of women in these positions substantially disempowers them. Further, the law defines the age of 12 as the minimum for marriage, well below the legal age of marriage, with additional loopholes to allow for girls younger than 12 to be married if approved by a local Sharia court. To officially recognize a marriage, a bride is not required to be present, and only the signatures of the husband or the bride’s representative are needed. In a divorce hearing, evidence presented by the husband does not require corroboration, while the wife’s evidence must be corroborated by two parties.

The challenge lies in operationalizing Sri Lanka’s laws, policies, and action plans into material actions and programs that will decrease gender disparities.

CULTURAL NORMS AND BELIEFS

Gender inequality is a global phenomenon. Most traditional gender norms revolve around the premise that men are supposed to be providers, while women must assume the role of caregiver. This means that women are generally responsible for all household chores, including taking care of children and elderly family members.

Patriarchal norms and attitudes prevail in Sri Lanka, granting power to men and excluding women from many spheres of public and community life.³¹ Women's autonomy is restricted, especially in regard to their ability to move about freely.³² In some areas, there are sociocultural norms that stigmatize women who travel outside their village; more generally, women who are outside their homes at night and unescorted are stigmatized as “loose” or improper.³³ Sexual harassment that women frequently face on public transportation reinforces the idea that women are unsafe outside the home.

Gender norms reinforce the role of women as wives and mothers, in turn reinforcing their low rates of participation in the labor force. Research in Sri Lanka has shown that women who are married or have children under five years old (whether married or not) are less likely to engage in paid employment. A World Bank study found that married women are 26 percent less likely to be employed than their unmarried counterparts, and women who have children under the age of five were 7.4 percent less likely to be employed compared to women without young children. Marriage status and children did not have a similar effect on male labor force participation.³⁴ There is often a lack of family support for women choosing to work outside the home.

Gender stereotypes also limit women's access to employment. The majority of employed women are concentrated in relatively few sectors: education, health, textiles/garments, agriculture, and office administration. Respondents to a 2018 YouLead Youth Survey indicated a strong preference for women to work as a salesperson in a clothing store rather than as a waiter in a hotel (52 percent versus 11.5 percent) because a hotel setting would provide opportunities to indulge in permissive behavior.³⁵ Similarly, additional research found that women who work in free trade zones are looked down on as “single, independent, salaried, and living alone,” which are taken to imply moral laxity.³⁶ Stereotypes regarding women's capacities as leaders persist among men and women alike.

Strong cultural norms in Sri Lanka ingrain passive acceptance of domestic violence within the private sphere as something shameful to discuss in public.³⁷ When domestic violence occurs, it is often presumed to be the women's fault—that she must have done something to provoke or deserve the violence. If a woman decides to leave a violent husband, it is perceived as a failure on her part that results in shame.³⁸

In Sri Lanka, cultural norms vary based on caste, religion, and ethnicity, and are more influential in rural areas.³⁹ For instance, there are several distinct marriage patterns that vary by region. *Deega* marriages follow a patriarchal structure where the wife goes to live with her husband's family, forgoing any inheritance of land from her parents. In contrast, *Binna* marriages follow a matriarchal lineage, where the new husband goes to live in the wife's village on land that has been given to them by her parents.⁴⁰ Early marriage (the legal age of marriage in Sri Lanka is 18) is not frowned upon in rural areas and is more common in Muslim communities.

GENDER ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TIME USE

Within the household, women bear a large share of responsibilities relative to males. Women are responsible for the majority of domestic labor, and this burden, along with unpaid care work, leaves them with little or no time to pursue other activities. They can make suggestions in homes, but final decision making often lies with men. Women and girls are responsible for fetching water in rural areas, which can impact their safety and security when they have to travel long distances to fetch water. A 2018 study involving 118 in-depth interviews with women heads of household in Sri Lanka concluded that women have internalized these traditional roles and often do not envision or strive for possibilities beyond caregiver and homemaker.⁴¹

Women subsidize the economy, with a disproportionate responsibility for unpaid household and care work. A 2017 time use survey conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics found that women (age 15 and above) dedicate 6.8 hours per day to unpaid work around the house, more than double the 2.7 hours men spend.⁴² Employed women spend about one hour less on housework but still dedicate an average of 5.7 hours each day to unpaid domestic responsibilities.⁴³ In urban middle-class families, men may share some of the domestic work when women are employed, but it is more common that the children, especially the daughters, will be asked to pitch in. In areas of the north heavily affected by the conflict, unpaid care demands are even greater, because many women must also tend to disabled and injured family members.⁴⁴ Women who engage in paid work outside the home are more likely to experience stress, mental depletion, and exhaustion from the double burden of working outside the home and the domestic labor of caregiving.⁴⁵

Women's lack of mobility due to safety concerns and cultural stereotyping limits their ability to participate in public life. In mixed groups, women rarely take on leadership positions, and it is not uncommon for female leaders to be marginalized by their communities. The types of responsibilities that men and women are responsible for differ significantly. While traditional gender norms dictate that men are expected to do more manual labor while women do lighter labor, evidence shows that this trend may be shifting. This is particularly true in agriculture, where both sexes engage in labor-intensive field-based production activities. However, mostly men work in the later-stage activities further along the agricultural value chain that garner the most income.⁴⁶ For example, women will help grow produce, and men will transport and sell produce, except for certain markets (village fairs or polas) where women feel welcome.

ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER LAND AND RESOURCES

There are large gender disparities in land ownership and inheritance. Laws establish an equal right to own land for men and women, but in reality, most land is owned by men: women own a meager 16 percent of all private land in Sri Lanka.⁴⁷ This lack of land ownership and control over household assets creates a barrier for women to obtain services and benefits. For instance, women have trouble obtaining loans from banks when family assets are all listed in the husband's name.⁴⁸ In the agricultural sector, women often experience difficulty in qualifying for subsidies, irrigation water, and access to land management groups, such as farmer organizations, because they do not own enough land.

Women-headed households (WHHs) in conflict-affected areas, particularly Tamil communities in the north, confront additional challenges. Thesawalamai Law requires a married woman to have her husband's consent before selling or managing property.⁴⁹ A widow who is the head of her household

may not have a death certificate if her husband is missing or presumed dead and therefore experiences difficulties in land ownership and management.⁵⁰

Women often have less control over household finances when they do not participate in paid work. Women who engage in paid work are more likely to work part-time or in the informal sector, receive lower pay, and face significant hurdles to advancement. This results in substantial wage gaps between males and females that decrease women's control over household finances. Rural inhabitants and especially plantation sector workers, both male and female, have less access to government services because of the terrain, lack of awareness of rights, and language barriers.⁵¹

PATTERNS OF POWER AND DECISIONMAKING

Patriarchal attitudes further erode women's bargaining power and voice in their homes, communities, and institutions. Traditional beliefs and practices manifest in women playing subordinate roles to men. A 2018 World Bank study found that "parents, teachers, and students agree that parents keep a tighter rein on girls and that they have less freedom to do what they want with their extra-curricular time."⁵² Even protective restrictions can prevent girls from developing autonomy and decision making skills to reach their full potential, putting them at a disadvantage later in life.⁵³

Discrimination in employment is usually based on gender, ethnicity, caste, or religion. Women often face sexual harassment in the workplace or are pressured to engage in sexual activity to secure their job or to advance in the workplace. WHHs are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and are pressured into transactional sex in exchange for food, favors, and protection. Female councilors elected at the district level often face discrimination and are not allocated funds comparable to their male counterparts to advance their initiatives.

Few women occupy leadership roles, leading to gender-biased representation and decision making. Similarly, low participation in governance means that women's experiences are not taken into account during policy design and project planning. Women are often excluded from networks where power brokering and knowledge sharing take place and therefore lack access to training and technical skills. Female business leaders interviewed as part of a 2019 IFC study emphasized that building a strong network was just as important for women to advance as developing technical skills.⁵⁴ Around two-thirds of the female labor force participate in informal employment, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation because they are outside the bounds of protective labor legislation.⁵⁵

Already low levels of female labor force participation are even lower at the managerial and skilled worker levels, indicating a glass ceiling for female workers. In 2018, only 8.2 percent of board directors in the Colombo Stock Exchange-listed companies were women.⁵⁶ This glass ceiling means that companies are less likely to seek out and coach women to fill leadership positions.

3.2 SOCIAL INCLUSION

While this report focuses on the marginalization of women and girls, other social groups face their own forms of discrimination in Sri Lankan society. This section includes summary findings for several social groups of particular interest for USAID programming: men and boys, LGBTI, people living with disabilities, plantation estate workers, and garment factory workers. Additional findings for many of these groups appear in later sector-specific sections of the report.

MEN AND BOYS

Gender is a construct that impacts entire societies, not just women and girls. Gender equality requires negotiation between males and females for equitable relations. It is important to emphasize that men and society as a whole, not just women and girls, stand to benefit from advancements toward gender equality.

Men and boys also suffer negative consequences from adhering to rigid expectations about gender. “Masculinity” can be harmful when it drives men to be dominant, refrain from displaying emotions, and take on the responsibility of primary provider. In Sri Lanka, CARE International found that more than two thirds of men and women agreed that “to be a man means providing for your family.” This pressure may make men feel inadequate if they are not able to provide enough for their families. The majority of men, 58 percent, believed that “it is manly to defend the honor of your family even by violent means.”

Some initiatives to engage men and boys have been implemented over the last decade. Some good examples include the “Be the Change” national campaign to involve men and boys in the prevention of gender-based violence. Care International conducted foundational research that has informed innovative gender transformative programs. Save the Children has conducted outreach with plantation communities to get fathers more involved in early child development and care.

LGBTI

The LGBTI community experiences high levels of violence, discrimination, and hate crimes. Homosexual relations are illegal Under Section 365(A) of the Penal Code, and sexual orientation and gender identity are not protected categories in the constitution or the National Plan of Action to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. LGBTI persons can be subjected to arbitrary detention and therefore are often reluctant to report violence to police, who may perpetrate violence against them. An Equal Ground shadow report to the CEDAW Committee documents that “Sri Lanka’s Vagrancy Order of 1842 is often used to harass, arrest, and detain individuals on the basis of their appearance, using the example of ‘masculine looking’ women who are perceived to be lesbians.” The report also documented that police harass and extort money and sexual favors from LGBTI individuals.

The LGBTI community, and trans women in particular, face high rates of discrimination leading to unemployment and difficulty obtaining safe housing. LGBTI youth are also more likely to drop out of school in response to stigma and ragging/bullying. Some progress has been made in gender recognition certificates that allow trans people to update their national identity cards and other documentation to reflect their preferred name and gender.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Social integration is a challenge for the approximately 8-10 percent of Sri Lankan people living with disabilities. People living with disabilities are among the poorest and the most marginalized people in Sri Lanka because there is little targeted government assistance and few NGOs providing services for them. Of people who reported disabilities, 43 percent are male, and 57 percent female. The three most common forms of disability involve difficulty seeing, walking, or hearing. Stigma is associated with both physical and mental disabilities and contributes to limited access to healthcare, education, and employment. Disabilities are more common in the heavily war-affected Northern and Eastern Provinces.

Addressing the needs of people living with disabilities is often not a priority for many NGOs, whose budgets are already stretched thin. However, one network consists of 26 organizations that serve people living with visual, auditory, physical, and mental disabilities, as well as the parents of disabled children. The network asserts that the lack of a rights-based approach in Sri Lanka limits accessibility, inclusivity, and participation of people living with disabilities.

The 2011 census found that 34 percent of children with disabilities do not receive any education whatsoever. Limited access to primary and secondary education makes it impossible for people living with disabilities to meet the minimum education requirements to gain admission to mainstream vocational training facilities. The vast majority—70.9 percent—of people living with disabilities above the age of 18 are not engaged in any economic activity. The established 3 percent quota for people living with disabilities in government jobs is not being met because people living with disabilities are not actively recruited.

PLANTATION ESTATE WORKERS

Estate workers are among the most marginalized and exploited populations in Sri Lanka, owing to the intersection of class, ethnicity, and the nature of plantation economics. The high rate of poverty in the plantation sector (10.9 percent) is significantly higher in comparison to the overall rural and urban poverty rates (6.8 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively). Early education levels are low, and enrollment in child development centers (serving 3-month to 5-year-olds) is around 35 percent, in comparison to 65 percent at the national level. Plantation workers have limited access to proper sanitation services and lack basic education on hygiene. They often face discrimination when seeking employment outside the plantation sector. Government officials do not visit plantations frequently because it requires long distance travel to remote areas. Additionally, most services are provided in Sinhalese by the government (due to a lack of language capacity in government service), while the majority of the plantation population speaks Tamil.

Women in the estate sector experience high levels of domestic violence and sexual harassment because of cultural narratives of patriarchal privilege and the sanctity of family. One study found that 83 percent of female estate workers surveyed had experienced GBV. Plantation supervisors are usually men, and there are no sexual harassment complaints mechanisms, so GBV goes largely unpunished.

GARMENT FACTORY WORKERS

Women account for 71 percent of the garment worker industry. Many of these workers migrated from rural areas to free trade zones in urban areas in search of economic opportunity. They often leave behind their families and children and live in shared accommodations in boarding houses. Many garment workers experience high levels of dissatisfaction and stress because they must work long hours six days per week to earn a living wage, making it very difficult for them to visit their families.

Even though trade unions are forbidden, collectives have evolved to support garment workers. For instance, the Stand Up Movement Lanka educates workers about their rights and has set up a social security system for its members. Members of the network pay into the system monthly. They can borrow—interest-free—up to LKR 25,000 (\$167 USD). In the case of a death in their family, they are given a donation of LKR 15,000 (\$100 USD) to help pay for funeral expenses.

3.3 PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

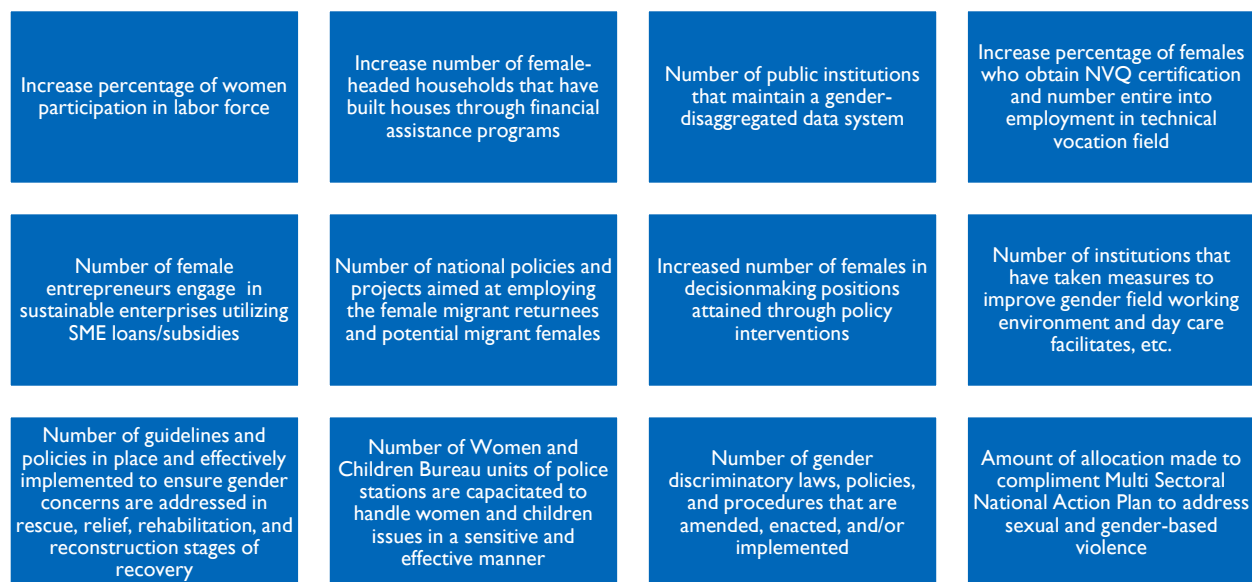
Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a powerful public finance management tool to disaggregate budgets and ensure funds will be allocated specifically to reduce gender disparities. GRB provides a vehicle to mainstream gender and considers the differential impact of government policies on men and women throughout the planning process. GRB is not only an enabling policy framework; it also promotes accountability and improves the use of public funds by providing a means to assess the impact of the allocated funds.⁵⁷

Efforts to implement GRB indicate a strong government commitment to gender equality, establishing a road map to diminish gender disparities. Even though efforts to implement GRB in Sri Lanka began in the 1990s, there is currently limited gender-disaggregated data showing how much public money is dedicated to promoting gender equality. MOWCA is expected to lead GRB implementation; however, owing to perceptions that GRB is a women's issue and not a concern for them, other agencies have not supported MOWCA's efforts. MOWCA and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) have received training on GRB. For GRB to be successful, cross-sector cooperation is needed among government agencies to develop coordinated strategies. The draft Gender Policy for Sri Lanka (if approved by the government) would provide a framework for sectoral coordination on gender and can accelerate GRB.

USAID's Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability Project (SDGAP) has made strides in implementing GRB in Sri Lanka. In partnership with the MOF and others, SDGAP has piloted GRB initiatives in several districts in Sri Lanka. The MOF takes the lead through the Treasury Department in working with other ministries who rely on the MOF for support to prepare annual budgets, since the MOWCA has limited capacity to implement GRB or support from other government agencies to do so.

Twelve gender-disaggregated key performance indicators (KPIs), listed in Figure I, have been established as a means of achieving better results and monitoring outcomes.⁵⁸ Online platforms can increase transparency and track progress in achieving outcomes and adhering to allocated budgets.

FIGURE 1: KPIS TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS



REGULATION OF CREDIT TO PROTECT AGAINST PREDATORY LENDING

Predatory lending is common in Sri Lanka; many women find themselves stuck in a vicious cycle of debt from which they cannot escape. There are reports of predatory lending with rates of up to 220 percent.⁵⁹ Women, especially those in rural areas or from low income families, have limited access to formal credit and do not have adequate financial literacy to understand the terms of the loans and how interest will compound exponentially.

Microfinance Act No. 6 was enacted in 2016 to specify licensing requirements for microfinance businesses. This regulation applies to banks, limiting the amount of interest that can be charged to 35 percent. However, these regulations have not been sufficiently implemented, because they do not apply to the majority of microlenders who are offering these predatory loans outside of formal banking institutions.⁶⁰ Women also need legal aid to disrupt the cycle of compounding interest—declaring bankruptcy might be one option—once they are stuck too deep and it is nearly impossible to pay off what they owe. There are cases of people committing suicide or families fleeing their villages when they cannot extricate themselves from the hefty debt that quickly accrues.⁶¹

3.4 LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Gender gaps in the labor market remain one of the most pressing challenges for Sri Lanka to overcome. High levels of education have not translated into an increase in labor force participation, and, for the past two decades, women in Sri Lanka have consistently accounted for approximately one third of the workforce, while men’s participation rate has solidified at 75 percent. Between 2009 and 2017, the

“The International Monetary Fund estimates that closing the workforce gender gap would increase Sri Lanka’s long-term GDP by 20 percent.”

International Finance Corporation (IFC). 2018. Tackling childcare: The business case for employer-supported childcare in Sri Lanka.

female unemployment rate of 7 percent averaged more than double the male unemployment rate of 3 percent.⁶²

“Investing in the workforce participation of women has a direct and positive impact on a country’s economic and development outcomes, with research showing that women’s exclusion from the workforce can potentially reduce a country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by as much as 2 percent.”

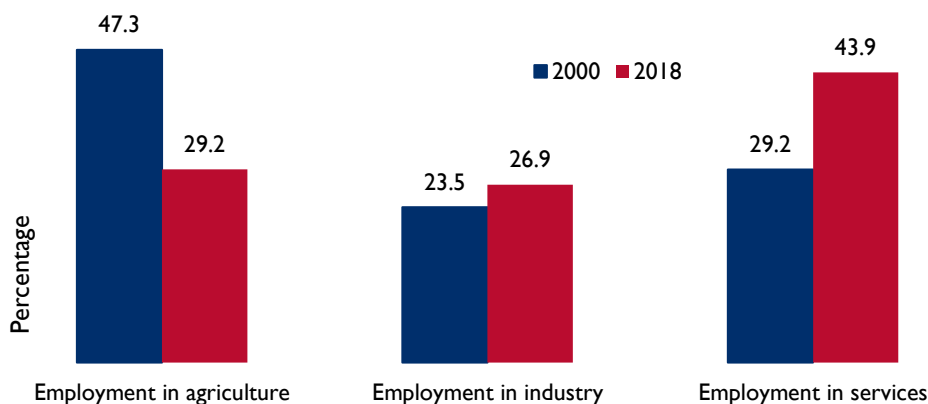
Verité Research. 2018.

You Lead: Youth Labor Market Assessment — Sri Lanka.

Women have been concentrated in a few sectors of employment: teaching, nursing, and agriculture. Research has found “that [Sri Lankan] women tend to display a preference for the humanities, arts, and biological sciences in their education primarily because occupations in these fields tend to have family-friendly policies, such as steady work

hours, maternity leave, and other benefits.”⁶³ As seen in Figure 2, agriculture has historically been the largest source of employment for women, but that has shifted over the last decade, as more women are moving into the services sector. The adoption of the open economy policy in 1977 led the way for the garment sector to become one of the largest sources of employment for women. People from rural areas, especially the plantation sector, are migrating in search of better job opportunities.

FIGURE 2: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR, 2000 VERSUS 2018



Source: World Bank data portal, <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/sri-lanka>.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is a major livelihood for many people in Sri Lanka, especially in rural communities. In the agricultural sector, women are especially likely to be involved in unpaid labor contributing to the production of their family plot/SME-business or in subsistence farming to feed their own family. Women are more likely to be involved in tedious activities lower in the value chains (weeding, picking) and have less control over the later stages of production that are more closely tied to income generation.⁶⁴

Sri Lanka’s constitution is nondiscriminatory regarding land ownership. However, inequalities in land ownership persist due to gender biases in Sri Lanka’s Land Development Ordinance and other customary laws. Within the agricultural sector, gender mainstreaming or gender sensitivity is rare. There are programs that have supported the livelihoods of women, but they have “not promoted

women as active participants in agricultural operations, enabling them to receive their fair share of agricultural assistance or participate equally in decision making processes.”⁶⁵

There are large gender disparities in land ownership, control over resources such as water, access to markets, and skills training, all of which are critical for agricultural production and livelihoods. The “lack of land ownership limits women’s ability to obtain agricultural assets, services, and benefits (e.g. subsidies, credit, and irrigation water).”⁶⁶ Paddy rice is the primary crop in Sri Lanka that requires irrigation. Farmers’ organizations control access to irrigation water provided by the government. They only accept registration from farmers who own land, so women without land titles cannot access water through these formal channels.⁶⁷

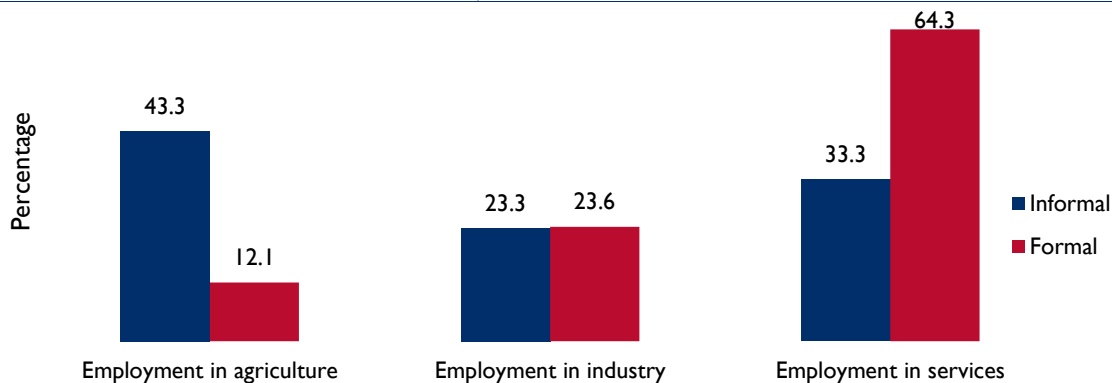
In the plantation sector, men and women usually receive the same wages, even though women end up working considerably more hours than men (sometimes double).⁶⁸ This is because men do the “heavy” labor (such as ploughing, contouring, loading, and pushing wooden barrows) while women do the more time-consuming “light” labor (such as picking tea and weeding).

INFORMAL ECONOMY

Most of the labor force in Sri Lanka is channeled through the informal sector, with 55 percent of employed women and 72.5 percent of employed men in Sri Lanka working in the informal sector.⁶⁹ Youth tend to have even higher rates of informal employment. The informal sector operates outside the regulatory framework and therefore does not comply with protective legislation. Jobs in the informal sector tend to be of lower quality, pay less, and adhere to lower safety standards. Since informal workers are not registered, they are often unrecognized, do not qualify for benefits, and are socially excluded.⁷⁰

Rates of informal employment for women were highest in the agricultural sector (43.3 percent), while rates of formal employment were highest in the services sector (64.3 percent). This indicates that a significant proportion of women need to be integrated into formal systems to receive protections and benefits, especially in the agricultural sector (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR, FORMAL AND INFORMAL



Source: World Bank data portal, <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/sri-lanka>.

The problems informal workers face are compounded by the lack of organization that would give them a voice in the workplace. Industry practices in the plantation and garment sectors often result in failure to pay a living wage. Workers' weak collective power to bargain employment terms for themselves also compels low wages.⁷¹

3.5 PRIVATE SECTOR

Women face many barriers to entering the workplace, including traditional gender norms, the double burden of unpaid household work, limited options around what is considered appropriate work for women, lack of flexibility in work hours, and unsafe public transportation. Discrimination on the part of employers is also a major factor limiting female participation in the labor force. A 2019 IFC report found that “nearly 60 percent of employers in Sri Lanka reported difficulty in finding new workers. Yet, a substantial proportion of employers surveyed (53 percent) are not planning to increase the number of female workers.”⁷² Outright gender bias is clear in job advertisements that specifically call for either male or female applicants.⁷³

Even when women wrestle against the odds and get hired, they are likely to face wage discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. In the private sector, women sometimes earn as much as one third (between 30–36 percent) less than their male counterparts for the same jobs.⁷⁴ Men are only given three days of paid paternity leave, while women get 12 weeks. Having to pay for maternity leave for women is viewed as a disincentive to hire women by some employers, while others may reduce women's salaries to compensate for the women-specific benefits.⁷⁵ Employers also cite women's inability to work for long hours as an additional drawback to hiring and promotion.⁷⁶

A Verité study identified 5 factors that are the most likely to increase labor force participation: “transport services, flexible working hours, on-site crèches/day care centers, part-time work, and accommodation for employees.”⁷⁷ The study went on to summarize the ideal working conditions for women as “a job that enables them to work a maximum of 8-9 hours a day (41-50 hours per week), receive a minimum wage of Rs. 25,000, and entails a maximum travel time of 0.5 hours.”⁷⁸

Sexual harassment reveals unequal patriarchal power relations. Sexual harassment is often hidden or underreported in the workplace, in both the public and private sector, so specific statistics are hard to come by. Nonetheless, research has confirmed that sexual harassment occurs, and there are widespread complaints in many organizations.^{79,80} A UNFPA study found that 62.3 percent of women in the wholesale and retail industry, educational sector, and financial intermediary sector had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.⁸¹ Another study suggests an increase in reporting of sexual harassment and found that the Ministry of Health receives about 10 sexual harassment complaints per day.⁸²

Many large corporations in Sri Lanka have policies to address sexual harassment in the workplace, but smaller corporations are less likely to have formal policies. Victims who attempt to register complaints are more likely to be penalized in institutions that have not established a complaint and accountability mechanism.⁸³

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT IN GENDER DIVERSITY

An IFC study assessed the impact of gender diversity on financial performance in Sri Lanka and found a positive correlation between the percentage of women among independent directors and return on total assets.⁸⁴ Similarly, the authors found the percentage of women on senior management teams to be positively correlated with price-to-earnings ratio. Attracting and retaining more women into the workforce is also expected to increase participation of women in leadership positions, in management, and on boards.

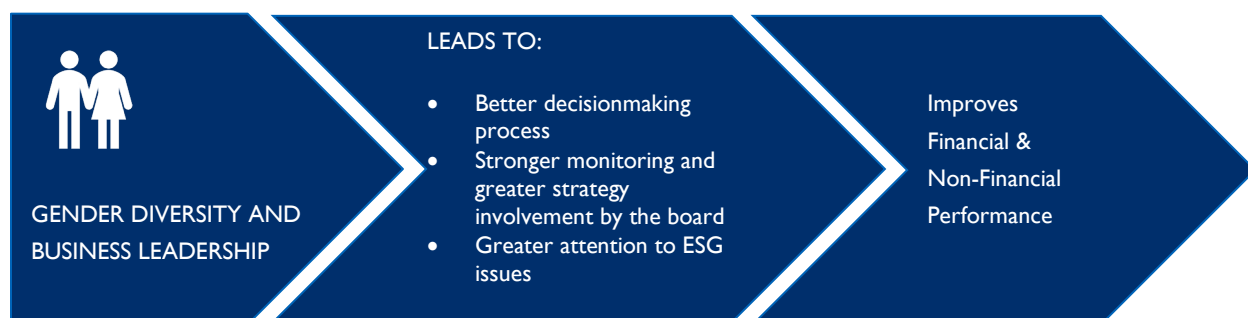
“Extensive global research shows that having more women in business leadership positions leads to higher environmental, social, and governance standards. . . . Companies with enhanced environmental, social, and governance standards also perform better on critical metrics: stronger internal controls and management oversight, reduced risk of fraud or other ethical violations, positive workplace environment, greater stakeholder engagement, and improved reputation and brand. Therefore, having a more gender-balanced board and leadership team contributes to stronger environmental, social, and governance performance, which in turn leads to better business performance.”

International Finance Corporation. 2019.

Realizing Sustainability Through Diversity:

The Case for Gender Diversity Among Sri Lanka’s Business Leadership.

FIGURE 4: BENEFITS OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN BUSINESS⁸⁵



In addition to financial and performance gains, enabling women’s workforce participation will foster companies’ reputations as socially responsible and improve their ranking on business rating indices. In turn, this can open up access to new investors and markets to increase companies’ market share.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Sri Lanka has ratified International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 100 on Equal Remuneration and Convention No. 111 on Non-Discrimination with respect to Employment and Occupation, though it has not yet established specific equal opportunity or sex discrimination provisions in national legislation.⁸⁶ The law requires that employers give part-time and full-time workers the same compensation upon termination, which creates a disincentive to hiring women, who may need the flexible hours of part-time work.”⁸⁷

The Penal Code Act No. 22 of 1995 “includes the use of words and actions by persons in authority (e.g., Police, armed service personnel, school officials, medical officials, etc.) and unwelcome sexual advances in the workplace. This can also be applicable to cover misuse of the internet and emails that are obscene or make allegations of a sexual nature in order to harass, intimidate, or embarrass.”⁸⁸

The ILO and Employers Federation of Ceylon (EFC) established a “code of conduct and guidelines to prevent and address sexual harassment in workplaces” in 2013. Larger, international organizations with a presence in Sri Lanka have formal human resources policies, but many smaller organizations do not.

CASE STUDY: PRIVATE SECTOR TRAINING PROGRAMS IN THE PAINT INDUSTRY

A Verité study reports on a good example of a training program: “Multilac, one of Sri Lanka’s premier paint companies, provided a one-month training program on painting techniques. At the completion of this training, the women were given certificates at a graduation ceremony. Multilac provided each of the women with painting toolkits, a company ambassadorship and workmen’s compensation insurance. After this, the women were placed in on-the-job training programmed at the work sites of some of the big construction companies in Colombo, where they worked on-the-job for between six months to one year. The employers continued the payment of the Rs 5,000 allowance at the request of the Women in Construction Forum.”

Another example of a private-sector institution investing in women comes from the local lingerie company MAS Holdings, which started the Woman Go Beyond program to prepare women to take on leadership positions by building technical knowledge, soft skills, and English-language training.⁸⁹

3.6 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND TRADE

Gender norms and customary practices create barriers that prevent women from achieving their entrepreneurial potential by restricting how much time and capital women can dedicate to their pursuits.⁹⁰ Women also face greater obstacles in accessing information, networks, and training. Entrepreneurship is viewed as an inherently risky career option, so it is not widely encouraged, and most people prefer the stability of more traditional jobs. Many people are pushed into entrepreneurial pursuits after becoming dissatisfied with other options, or, as in the case of many women in rural areas, a lack of other options. In many cases, women are involved in microenterprises within the informal economy and would benefit from support to register their businesses so they can qualify for assistance to improve the viability of their home- and community-based economic activities.⁹¹ Entrepreneurs develop products, but they often do not know how to market them. They need to be taught how to differentiate their product, label and market it, and connect with value chains.

INTEGRATION INTO MARKETS

Trade facilitation initiatives that improve market access for female entrepreneurs is essential. Limited access to networks, especially those of large-scale purchasers, inhibits the competitiveness of women-owned SMEs from earning sufficient income for growth.⁹² Trade fairs for products produced by women provide additional marketing and promotional activities to improve the visibility and integration of women-owned SMEs. In field-based KIIs conducted for this analysis, some female entrepreneurs did not fully understand the benefits of attending trade fairs, and others expressed a need for more support to travel to attend the fairs. Key informants also expressed a desire for more mentorship and ongoing coaching to help them prepare for these fairs and then to follow up accordingly. Further, increasing access to technology and computer literacy helps women market their products and integrate with markets more effectively.

SUPPORTING SMES

There is much room to increase female leadership of SMEs, which account for more than 80 percent of all business in Sri Lanka.⁹³ Many women are involved in informal microscale commerce, but it is difficult to make the transition to an SME. Business development services (BDS) provide crucial support for entrepreneurs to grow and formalize their enterprises by enhancing technical skills, access to markets, and opportunities to connect with relevant stakeholders. Recent research in Sri Lanka found that women who had access to BDS were more likely to own an SME.⁹⁴ Expansion of criteria that allows for women-owned SMEs to qualify for incentives such as tax-free imports of raw material leads to more growth and expansion among SMEs.⁹⁵

A recent USAID assessment looking at how to support women to start SMEs identified tourism and information and communication technology (ICT) as two priority industries with potential for women.⁹⁶ It noted that tourism is a fast-growing industry that women could enter, if not directly in hotels, which carries some stigma, then in adjacent niches such as guesthouses, restaurants, tour guide services, and laundry facilities. The report also highlighted ICT as a good industry that makes use of women's high levels of education while providing flexibility that women need to juggle household responsibilities.

ACCESS TO CREDIT AND OTHER FINANCIAL SERVICES

In many cases, microfinance lenders are the only sources of capital women can access. A Verité report verified that female entrepreneurs lack support from microfinance institutions, and “even a relatively small amount of money was hard to come by for many of these women.” One respondent explained that “these bank officers don't give us money; they only give to the people who already have money. Sometimes 10 of us must get together to request a loan of Rs. 10,000.”⁹⁷ The study participants highlighted the lengthy processing times and the difficulty of securing guarantors and collateral to obtain loans.⁹⁸ Mobile technology can increase women's access to financial services through mobile banking and online money transfers.

Micro lenders often charge high interest rates and offer short repayment periods, forcing women to default and fall into a cycle of debt. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) stated that they provide financing at concessionary rates to several local banks for micro and small business enterprise lending to women, but many female entrepreneurs find it difficult to access the loans, as they have little or no collateral. Additionally, as the military engages in some activities which women typically do, such as running small shops, women have been unable to compete and been forced out of business. Information on laws, regulations, and policies to protect women from predatory lending is discussed earlier in this report under Section 3.3, on public financial management.

3.7 YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

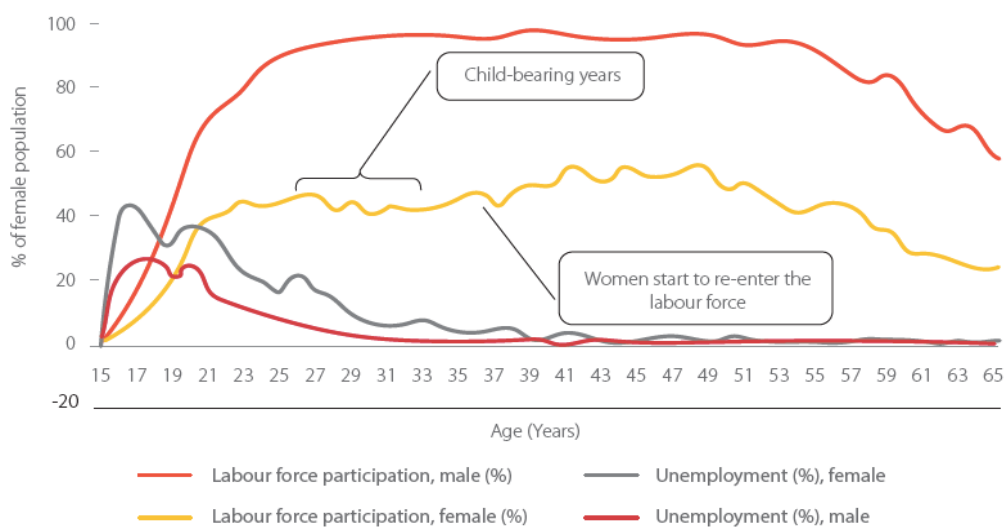
A recent World Bank report estimates that around 140,000 students complete general education each year in Sri Lanka without acquiring necessary job-related skills and that this is the third biggest reason why companies find it difficult to expand.⁹⁹ One of the key strategies of the National Youth Policy is increasing economic participation¹⁰⁰. Employability entails much more than the ability to get that first job. It also involves the capacity to network and market oneself, navigate through a career, and remain employable throughout life. It requires the ability to ask questions, acquire new skills, identify and evaluate options, and adapt successfully to changing situations, as well as the courage to innovate. Those

with lower education and from vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to work in the informal sector, which is characterized by a lack of social protection, career advancement, and training opportunities.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is traditionally considered an option for people who have dropped out of the formal education system.¹⁰¹ However, the government aims to promote TVET as a preferred option for young people by improving the systems of vocational training to enhance the employability of first-time jobseekers.

It is important to consider not just employed and unemployed women. Verité conducted a gender assessment of youth labor that identified a third group, “constrained women: women who are not in the labor force but register an interest in joining the labor force if certain conditions were to change.” This survey also found lower numbers of women in each category and that the average job search for young women was considerably longer—23 months for young women, compared to 18 months for young men.¹⁰² Both young men and women expressed that educational and training engagements and personal family responsibilities were the biggest obstacle to finding employment. A larger percentage of young women between the ages of 20 and 35 exited the labor market due to personal family responsibilities than young men (see Figure 5). Young men face their own set of challenges including, but are not limited to, educational and training engagements and personal family responsibilities, illness/injury, available work not meeting their expectations, qualifications/skills not meeting employers’ expectations, having already found work to start later, having already made arrangements for self-employment to start later, being unsure where to look for work, and other reasons not stated in the YouLead Youth Survey.¹⁰³

FIGURE 5: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT BY GENDER, 2016¹⁰⁴



UPDATING STANDARD CURRICULUM

Education systems generally reflect and reinforce prevailing belief systems that maintain the status quo. The standard curricula taught in primary and secondary schools, particularly social studies and civics, perpetuate traditional gender norms.¹⁰⁵ Teachers may also reinforce gender stereotypes when they

“only call upon female students to sweep classrooms or ask only the male students to move desks.”¹⁰⁶ Interviews in the field also indicated that career guidance counselors have a tendency to encourage girls to pursue career paths in more care and service sectors that align with gender stereotypes.

RURAL YOUTH

Most rural youth are engaged in the agricultural industry.¹⁰⁷ According to the National Human Resources and Employment Policy for Sri Lanka (NHREP), the government aims to increase competitiveness of the agricultural sector through practical and entrepreneurial skills training and attracting private sector investment in large and medium scale farming and food processing industry to create more desirable job opportunities for young people in rural areas.

Interviews in the field conducted for this study found that students are generally unaware of different career options available to them and do not have good job opportunities.¹⁰⁸ There are not enough job fairs, and students are often not aware that fairs are taking place. These interviews also elucidated the fact that students were generally unaware of the benefits of attending fairs to learn about and expand their employment options. Multiple staff on one youth-oriented USAID project reported that a substantial number of students in schools are depressed and bring up personal problems during career counselling.

PERIOD POVERTY

A 2015 survey of adolescent Sri Lankan girls conducted by UNICEF and the government found that more than half of girls had to miss school when they had their periods.¹⁰⁹ Usually this is because they do not have access to sanitary products due to financial constraints. They may also skip school because of stigma related to poverty. For instance, another UN study found that 60 percent of teachers in Sri Lanka thought menstrual blood was impure.¹¹⁰

“Period poverty is a serious issue in Sri Lanka. Sanitary products are considered luxury goods to most young girls and women. Young girls and women need access to cheap reliable sanitary products and access to restrooms with running water so that they can continue their education or work uninterrupted.”

Source: Premachandra, 2019.
It’s Bloody Unfair.

In Sri Lanka, imported sanitary products such as pads and tampons are taxed heavily at 62.6 percent (before 2018, the tax rate was 101.2 percent).¹¹¹ While imported sanitary towels can cost as much as Rs. 350, domestically produced brands typically sell between Rs. 120–175, which is still not affordable for many women.¹¹² The Sri Lanka Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs Council estimates that only 30 percent have access to disposable sanitary napkins, while most turn to semi-hygienic reusable options such as cloths and rags.¹¹³

A social enterprise called Sinidu produces affordable biodegradable sanitary napkins.¹¹⁴ The founder acquired a low-cost machine, and now 12 women are involved in the process to produce and sell sanitary napkins to local schools and women. Sinidu also sent a machine to a prison in Colombo so the female inmates have access to affordable sanitary products.

3.8 GOVERNANCE

Sri Lanka's political and justice sectors have had challenges and successes with respect to GESI. Women's representation in leadership positions in legislative and executive branches of government shows limited advancement over the last few decades.¹¹⁵ However, when recruitment, progression, and advancement is exclusively based on academic merit, women have been able to advance freely and, usually, outnumber and outshine their male counterparts.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The Sri Lankan government in 2015 introduced a mandatory quota for women nominees for local government and provincial elections. The Local Government Elections (Special Provisions) Act No. I of 2016 and the Provincial Councils Elections (Amendment) Act of 2017 make it mandatory that all political parties and independent groups field a percentage of female candidates at Local Government and Provincial Council elections.¹¹⁶ The quota system increased female participation at the local authority level from 2 to 23 percent.¹¹⁷

Data from field interviews suggests that once in local government, some women are not given enough funds to operate, since they were elected "because of the quota." Once in government, if they lack knowledge on certain topics, they are reluctant to speak up, as they lack the confidence to do so. Many women in local government are relatives of councilors and follow their male relatives' opinions when making decisions.¹¹⁸

Despite this progress, informal subcultures, a lack of resources, and limited capacities of some of the elected women are a deterrent to active female engagement across local, provincial, and national levels of government. The lingering patriarchy within political parties makes it difficult for women to excel, as they often face demeaning treatment.¹¹⁹

USAID's Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability Project (SDGAP) and Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) project have supported women to become elected to local government and implement their platforms. The programs have worked to support and advocate for the implementation of two key affirmative action laws—the Local Government Elections (Special Provisions) Act No. I of 2016 and the Provincial Councils Elections (Amendment) Act of 2017—so more women enter politics and are elected.

WOMEN IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

Women do not have equal access to promotions in the security sector. While a special police cadre has been developed exclusively for women, as of 2019 women accounted for only 10 percent of the police force and were unable to advance via promotions because of limits on higher positions available to women. This structural limitation of female cadres hinders advancement of women.¹²⁰

Secondary data analysis shows that when there are female police cadres, there is greater access to justice for females and children, especially young girls and women, who are victims of GBV. Female cadres also improve community relationships. Thus, the limited positions available for women as part of the female cadre in the police restricts further advancement of women's social interests.¹²¹

MUSLIM LAW LEGAL REFORMS

The MMDA (1951) contains multiple provisions that discriminate against women (See Section 3.1, on Laws and Policies). For example, the act stipulates that only males can hold the positions of judges in Quazi courts, marriage registrars, jurors, and Board of Quazi members. Muslim women and girls are the primary victims of failure on the part of Sri Lankan lawmakers to ensure comprehensive reform of the law and corresponding Quazi system.¹²² Recent events, however, have spurred reform to the MMDA in Sri Lanka. The Easter Sunday attacks in 2019 led to calls within various political factions for reform. As a result, in July 2019, Muslim members of parliament introduced a set of amendments to the MMDA, and, in August, the Sri Lankan Cabinet approved the reforms. While reforms to the MMDA are encouraging, the ones set forth in this recent round did not make meaningful changes to parts that discriminate against women: the stipulation that only males can serve as Quazi judges remained unchanged.¹²³

MIGRATION

Gender implications have always been present in labor migration, and nations are recognizing the correlation between gender and migration and the importance of addressing gender issues to enhance the benefits of migration for origin and destination countries. In Sri Lanka, the Family Background Report (FBR) policy introduced in 2013 restricts labor migration of women with children under the age of five. Women with children older than five will only be recommended for migration if satisfactory alternative care arrangements are in place. A married woman applicant must fill in her husband's name in the FBR form along with his consent to childcare arrangements, which confirms his "no objection" for his wife's migration. In contrast, there are no restrictions on single, married, separated, or widowed men.¹²⁴

3.9 RECONCILIATION

Despite important initial developments after the 2015 Resolution 30/1—including lifting severe restrictions on freedom of speech and association, holding consultations, releasing some civilian land held by the military, and reestablishing an independent government human rights commission—progress slowed considerably. Politicians continue to manipulate ethnic tensions to win elections.¹²⁵

IMMEDIATE POST-WAR FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN RECONCILIATION

The focus on post-war development and reconstruction led to a lack of trust in state institutions. As a result, the much-needed human security, justice, truth-seeking, and healing environment for community and national reconciliation was not fostered.¹²⁶ Government officers working on integration lack resources to organize community cultural events and discussions. In the provision of basic government services, language barriers prove an obstacle to predominantly Tamil-speaking communities.¹²⁷ According to a UN report, peacebuilding that generates confidence and is resilient at the level of communities and individual people

"Sri Lankan politics are increasingly volatile. The government is reluctant to address the legacy of civil war and authoritarian rule. Inter-ethnic relations remain fragile, with Sinhala majoritarianism resisting any accommodation of Tamil political claims and militant Buddhist groups' campaign of violence and hate speech against Muslims posing a considerable threat to the country's stability."

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka>

is needed to achieve reconciliation. Indeed, a 2018 report on reconciliation in Sri Lanka concluded that “the disconnectedness among communities and individuals has engendered a situation of ‘peace fatigue’; that is, war victims and war survivors are now tired of talking about peace that they believe will never truly come.”¹²⁸ Further, there are many lingering reconciliation issues connected to land rights and military occupation.¹²⁹ The military has yet to return all occupied land to civilians.¹³⁰

THE RISE OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM, ANTI-MUSLIM SENTIMENT, AND BUDDHIST EXTREMISTS

The terror attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday 2019 exposed the Islamic extremism that had infiltrated Sri Lanka through fundamentalist ideologies. Women too were active participants in this ideology. According to field interviews, activists in the east claimed that women from poor families were targeted and married off without dowries to extremists. The extremists targeted women from poor families for recruits to their ideology, as these poor families were happy to give their daughters in marriage to a man who did not ask for a dowry.¹³¹ The events of Easter Sunday set back reconciliation efforts, further complicating a process that has already seen its fair share of barriers. Relations between Muslim and non-Muslim groups continue to be strained, while poor women have, at the same time, been pushed to the forefront of the issue of Islamic extremism.

Following the Easter Sunday bombings, anti-Muslim rioting resulted in one death and extensive damage to homes and businesses, with Muslim Sri Lankan businesses boycotted. Approximately 1,100 Muslim refugees and asylum seekers were harassed and forced out of their homes into temporary shelters.¹³² This violence was not new; in 2018, Muslims were targeted in similar riots in the Kandy district. A report from Human Rights Watch concluded that amidst this violence, the government has not adequately protected vulnerable communities, prosecuted attackers, or confronted virulent anti-Muslim hate speech. In May 2019, President Sirisena stoked further tension when he pardoned a prominent Buddhist monk and leader of a militant anti-Muslim organization, who was serving a jail sentence for contempt of court.¹³³

WOMEN IN WAR-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Women are often the heads of household within war-affected communities. However, not all of these WHHs are identified as such: WHH categorization differs from program to program, with some programs not including elderly women, single women, war widows, or women whose husbands have died of natural causes. Some programs also do not consider never-married women to be WHHs.¹³⁴ The lack of standardization of a WHH definition among programming leads to situations where many female-headed households in war-affected areas are unintentionally left out of programming and services.

In war-affected communities, young widows face specific economic and social vulnerabilities that require tailored interventions. Research by the UN found that transactional sex is a consequence of these vulnerabilities. WHHs negotiate security, economic, and social concerns by entering into relationships with men for “in-kind” services. These men also provide them with income and help with household chores.¹³⁵

GBV is also relatively common in conflict-affected areas. Civil society actors interviewed for this report reported high levels of domestic violence in families due to trauma and the breakdown of usual routines. Men often take out their frustrations on their spouses. Dowry-related violence was also common in all communities, where women are married with no dowry or a relatively small dowry.¹³⁶

BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNITIES AND INADEQUATE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Generally, post-war recovery processes focus on key vulnerable groups, such as conflict-affected families, war widows, and ex-combatants. Post-war policies generally include systematic reparations, rehabilitation, reintegration, and overall livelihoods support for conflict-affected families, ex-combatants and other marginalized groups. With time, the recovery process is supposed to link with long-term political and democratic development goals.¹³⁷ The rehabilitation, reintegration, and resettlement of war-affected persons was facilitated by the government of Sri Lanka; however, a 2018 report on reconciliation concluded that there was inadequate prioritization of psychosocial healing and support among communities on the periphery (particularly those in the north and east) and on livelihoods concerns.¹³⁸

Family support is needed for men, women, and children in war-affected areas of Sri Lanka. CSOs currently provide this support through awareness-raising activities, such as children's plays on issues related to child abuse and domestic violence targeting both mothers and children. Agencies providing livelihoods interventions sometimes provide counselling services to relieve trauma so that beneficiaries can engage in livelihood activities productively. These programs work with Women's Development Officers and Women's Rural Development Societies as a link to grassroots-level engagement with WHHs. Key issues in implementation of these projects include the lack of well-trained public officers who can adequately use training and respond to needs on the ground. Counselling sessions done in groups or in the family environment often result in beneficiaries lacking adequate privacy to be honest and open.¹³⁹ Due to the short timeframes of many projects, no or very few post-project activities are undertaken to assess impacts of interventions.

3.10 MEDIA

Sri Lanka is one of the most dangerous places for journalists in Asia. Although extreme violence was experienced by Sri Lankan media workers over the past decade, there are many young people keen to join the industry.¹⁴⁰ Youth have paved the way, in particular, through their increased use of digital and online media. Increased access in this manner "has led to the rise of community-driven journalism that focuses more on how stories impact communities."¹⁴¹

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA BIAS

The independence of the media has often been called into question by civil society. Mainstream news channels have political leanings, and increased politicization of the media landscape increases political bias. In some cases, media outlets have underreported factual news regarding victims of racially motivated riots and crimes and have instead spread fake news that exacerbates racial tensions, particularly against the Muslim community.¹⁴² Active social media campaigns on WhatsApp and Facebook have been created by individuals to fuel racial tensions and create a culture of negativity and intolerance in the country against minority communities, with the most recent target being the Muslim community, particularly after the Easter Sunday attacks.

CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE JOURNALISTS

Many women journalists face resistance from their families due to the unconventional nature of the job. A report by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in 2015 found that Tamil women journalists

also had no cultural or institutional support.¹⁴³ When they do work as journalists, they are often pushed toward “softer” beats.

Gender-based violence is also pervasive in the media field. There is a lack of institutional gender and sexual harassment policies in media organizations. Female media personnel face sexual harassment from their male peers, supervisors, and sometimes from the people they interview. Owing to stigma faced by women who are harassed and the lack of peer support, very few women take action against their harassers or the respective institution. These incidents are more prevalent in the Sinhala and Tamil language media as compared with the English language media.¹⁴⁴ The same 2015 IFJ report cited above found that “the Sri Lankan media industry, despite employing significant numbers of women at different levels, has hardly considered the significance of creating a safe environment for women employees, beyond the entitlements that are ensured through their employment contracts.”¹⁴⁵

Although not openly discussed, income disparities remain a key concern for women journalists, with men often drawing higher salaries for the same work. Although there are strong labor laws to prevent this, women are often placed in lower pay grades or there are carefully built-in disparities in contracts.¹⁴⁶

LACK OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AND UPWARD MOBILITY

The number of women journalists in Sri Lanka has increased in recent years, and several women, particularly in the English language Colombo-based media, hold senior positions. However, overall numbers are still low when compared to male counterparts, with women continuing to struggle in unfriendly, unprofessional environments. At present, the percentage of women in executive level positions (e.g., CEOs or Directors) is 12 percent, with 17 percent at a senior management level.¹⁴⁷

Gender stereotyping and lack of gender sensitivity among men hinders women’s participation in media. In addition to gender bias, women’s talents are often not recognized, nor are women pushed toward leadership roles, thereby restricting the upward mobility of women. Sometimes, where women are in leadership positions, they are token leaders with actual high-level decisions being made by male management.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, women are generally included in unions; however, they are counted typically only to meet gender quotas or standards. Women have hardly any responsibilities or visibility in trade unions.¹⁴⁹ One organization has developed a gender charter for the media sector, which outlines minimum standards, principles, and actions to support gender equality in media, as well as practical steps to support the achievement of equality in media workplaces, journalists’ organizations, and media itself.

NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MEDIA

The media has come under scrutiny for negative portrayals of women. Sexist stereotypes persist, and women are depicted as either sexual objects, victims, homemakers, or good Samaritans.¹⁵⁰ In this way print, television, and radio reinforce gender stereotypes and rarely challenge them by depicting women as experts, heroines, survivors, or leaders.

Against best ethical practices, women’s identities are sometimes revealed when they appear in the media as victims of violence or those coping with loss, grief, or mental health issues. Graphic content is published or shown with no sense of ethical awareness or due respect, simply for shock value and heightening emotions.¹⁵¹ Despite this, some progress has been made in recognizing women as a sizeable

niche in the market that should be catered to with content developed specifically for them, specifically through the development of a gender charter and several capacity building programs.

3.11 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

It has become increasingly clear that climate change and natural disasters have a disproportionate effect on marginalized groups. Natural disasters reveal underlying vulnerabilities in certain social groups that result from unequal status. Sri Lanka is prone to natural hazards such as floods, landslides, cyclones, droughts, windstorms, coastal erosion, and occasional seismic events.¹⁵² In 2004, a catastrophic tsunami claimed the lives of more than 30,000 people in Sri Lanka. Although exact figures are not available about the gender breakdown of victims, research from Oxfam estimates that about two thirds of the casualties in Sri Lanka were women.¹⁵³ Oxfam cited several reasons for that gender disparity, including that women are less likely to know how to swim and climb trees and that women were more likely to be caring for children and other family members, thus having a harder time trying to secure the safety of multiple people, whereas men were more likely to be at work and, as unaccompanied individuals, found it easier to get to a safe place. Plan International reported that after the 2004 tsunami, some girls in Sri Lanka (and India and Indonesia) were forced into marriage with tsunami widowers and in many instances did so to receive state subsidies for marrying and starting a family.¹⁵⁴

In addition to natural disasters disproportionately affecting women, response and recovery efforts reinforce existing disparities.¹⁵⁵ Post-disaster needs assessments conducted after major flooding and landslides in 2016 and 2017 revealed that women were disproportionately vulnerable to negative consequences in the aftermath of the disasters.^{156,157} Flooding had a higher direct impact on women's livelihoods than men's and less of an effort was made to restore women's livelihood activities compared to men's after disasters.¹⁵⁸

CLIMATE CHANGE

Sri Lanka has been experiencing an unprecedented cycle of flooding and drought. A UNDP report found that “the rural Dry Zone has been particularly affected, with poor farming communities—those least equipped to deal with such situations—suffering the worst impacts.”¹⁵⁹ Supplies of water have been severely depleted, affecting households, agricultural production, and incomes. Women are impacted by climate vulnerability, as they are usually in charge of getting water for the family and sometimes have to travel long distances to do so, especially during times of drought. Women often engage in subsistence farming of household plots to help provide food for their families. During droughts, women need support to access water to continue this food production as well as maintain safe/clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices in their households.¹⁶⁰

CLEAN ENERGY AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Women have limited engagement and representation in decision making and consultation processes in the energy sector.¹⁶¹ Therefore, their unique needs are often overlooked. While Sri Lanka has achieved universal access to electricity, clean cooking is still an issue, as biomass continues to be the main energy source for cooking and heating.¹⁶² Approximately 65 percent of the biomass entering the primary energy supply is used for cooking and heating, and 15 million people in Sri Lanka rely on biomass for cooking,

mostly in the form of wood and biomass fuel.¹⁶³ Women and girls are responsible for gathering wood and are often exposed to indoor air pollution when cooking indoors, which can subsequently lead to respiratory disease.¹⁶⁴ Increased access to clean energy sources could reduce the time girls and women spend on household chores such as fetching water, gathering wood, and grinding grain. Increasing access to clean energy would also benefit the elderly and disabled, who cannot collect wood or perform manual household duties and must therefore rely on their extended family members. Field visits for this report with stakeholders in eastern provinces indicated that tension among communities exists around the use of natural resources, such as mangroves and lagoons. For example, before the war, one particular ethnic community may have been accessing an open resource, but then, during the war, a different ethnic community started using that particular resource. Now, after the war, both communities are fighting over the resource. To date, government involvement in resolving these issues has been nonexistent.¹⁶⁵

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The National Policy on Disaster Management of 2010 stresses the importance of “equality, diversity, and inclusion of disaster management,” and states that “disaster management should ensure gender equality, and in particular the empowerment of girls and women”¹⁶⁶ Even though the majority of disaster risk reduction (DRR) documents have incorporated this gender sensitive perspective laid out in the 2010 policy, the priority on girls and women has not always been implemented in practice, in part because women rarely participate in pre- and post-disaster decision making.¹⁶⁷

The energy sector has done less to mainstream GESI. The goal of the National Energy Policy and Strategies is to “provide affordable energy services to support socially equitable development of the citizens, without specific consideration of men and women.”¹⁶⁸ Global experience has debunked the assumption that men and women benefit equally from gender neutral policies. Sri Lanka does not have environmental safeguards standards for projects and follows donor-set standards—this means that the inclusion of women or women-targeted outcomes in natural resource management programming may vary considerably.

There is great potential to involve more women in natural resource management and use energy for productive enterprises. Several community-based initiatives have demonstrated women’s abilities to serve as custodians of local resources and as managers of decentralized energy systems.¹⁶⁹ For example, a program in Sri Lanka “trained women in assembling light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs and in resolving technical problems that can occur during their use. These women went on to start their own home-based businesses or to work in companies that manufacture LED bulbs.”¹⁷⁰

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY RECOMMENDATION	EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE
<p>Support civil society as a means to sustainably and legitimately chip away at structural gender stereotypes and social norms that hinder the advancement of women and other vulnerable groups. Support</p>	<p>Working with the government in GESI is difficult, as there is limited cooperation from many public institutions. Networks of CSOs and NGOs are strong in Sri Lanka and ensure legitimacy, as well as ownership and buy-in of</p>

KEY RECOMMENDATION

EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE

civil society groups that work on, in particular, strengthening women's networks (e.g., entrepreneurs), media accountability, electoral accountability, educational curriculum reform, peacebuilding among communities (especially with Muslims), and GBV. Include male colleagues in programming, particularly on GBV.

local communities through trusted relationships. Given deep-seated and entrenched gender norms, progress may be best made from the grassroots through civil society interventions, as opposed to top-down national policies.

Intervene in primary and secondary education to sustainably address and preemptively mitigate extremism and transform cultural stereotypes and norms.

Focus support on school-based interventions that work with youth to promote good citizenship among the many ethnic and religious groups of Sri Lanka. Revise primary school curriculum to push the boundaries on traditional ideas of gender and vulnerable social groups from a young age.

The Easter Sunday attacks, proliferation of fake news, and a recent history of conflict continue to contribute to racial and ethnic divisions in Sri Lanka. Exchanges among youth from different ethnic and religious groups has been shown to foster peacebuilding and reconciliation. Teaching lessons on the importance of women and other social groups at a young age plants the seed for sustainable attitudinal change away from negative traditional stereotypes.

Work with the business community to push for structural changes to business practices and workers' rights for women and vulnerable groups.

Target provincial chambers, associations, and other umbrella organizations as a sustainable means of instituting reforms to workplace conditions and workers' rights. In particular, focus on childcare, flexible working arrangements, and, above all, sexual harassment and GBV.

Between 2000 and 2018, the share of women working in the services sector has increased dramatically. Garment factory workers, who are mostly women, are a major sector of the formal workforce and continue to struggle due to a lack of basic workers' rights. Considering the importance of women in the private sector and the influence of convenor-level business groups, strong and targeted interventions with provincial business chambers, associations, and umbrella organizations can build momentum for sustainable changes in workers' rights.

At the policy level, focus interventions on realistic partnerships with public institutions committed to GESI and sustainable, sweeping actions.

Work specifically with MOF and MOWCA to identify low-hanging fruit at the policy level, such as consistent inclusion and alignment of policies and programming with the 12 gender KPIs. Focus efforts on reforming the TVET system to ensure that women and other vulnerable groups have a professional pipeline from secondary school to training and beyond.

To be successful, USAID should look to champions of GESI, particularly those institutions that have already proven open to working in this space. The MOF and MOWCA are leaders in this area and can facilitate programming. Consistent inclusion and alignment of the 12 gender KPIs identified by the Sri Lankan government itself in all policies and programming is a broad sweeping intervention that is both non-invasive and ensures that GESI issues remain an essential piece of all legislation moving forward. A well-

KEY RECOMMENDATION

EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE

Incorporate psychosocial components into all programming, particularly in war-affected areas and among vulnerable populations.

Create modules on psychosocial support and healing activities that can be adapted to all types of programming, no matter the sector or group. Focus particularly on women-headed households in war-affected areas.

functioning TVET system that affords professional opportunities for women and other groups after secondary school could help overcome barriers to entry into the professional world.

Research shows that reconciliation from the recent conflict has encountered many roadblocks and complicates peacebuilding efforts among the diverse communities of Sri Lanka. To sustainably meet longer-term goals, efforts must address this pervasive social challenge. Mandating psychosocial support and healing in Sri Lanka programming, just as gender is in all USAID programming, could help establish an institutionalized, normative approach to this issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY SECTOR

PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Continue to advocate for gender-responsive budgeting at the policy and program levels:

- Advocate for the integration of the 12 gender-responsive KPIs throughout the ministries' sector strategies (with MOF and MOWCA leading) and corresponding budgets.
- Recommend that implementing partners (IPs) align with and monitor the 12 gender-responsive KPIs whenever possible. This will also build cohesive sex-disaggregated data that will feed into the GRB system.
- Create an online platform in partnership with a local research organization (the Verité public finance management dashboard could potentially incorporate gender KPIs) to increase transparency, fiscal responsibility, and monitoring of GRB efforts.
- Work with Gender Focal Points within the ministries to strengthen their capacity and influence, to support GRB. Develop capacities of local authorities for GRB at provincial and local levels.

Strengthen regulation of microfinance and capacity of borrowers:

- Work with CSOs to conduct large-scale awareness and educational programs on types of financing, compounding interest rates, and how to pay back credit.
- Support legal aid programs (such as the Legal Aid Commission) to help women and families overburdened by microfinance debt. These programs should help them navigate their legal options to reduce debt and consider filing for bankruptcy if appropriate.

- Advocate for the expansion of Microfinance Act No. 6 to limit the percentage of interest that can be charged by all microcredit companies, not just banks.
- Promote village funding systems through local networks that foster an ethical bond between the borrower and the lender.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Increase female participation in the labor force by expanding employment options open to women:

- Expand programs with the national vocational training institute to enroll more females, members of the LGBTI community, and people with disabilities to increase their individual job skills.
- Support women's groups that are creating an enabling environment by pushing boundaries of female stereotypes to reduce the stigma of women working outside of the home.
- Work with universities to incentivize female inclusion in STEM academic programs.

Promote the leadership of women beyond production in the agricultural sector so that they can benefit from and participate in more aspects of the value chain:

- Ensure that a portion of agricultural trainings specifically target and cater to women by offering a schedule that is convenient to women with household duties, a location that is close to home so they don't have to rely on public transportation, and on-site childcare during trainings.
- Work with agricultural associations to expand membership criteria so that women can participate in their networks and access resources such as government services, technology transfer, markets, export licenses, microfinance, and physical and natural resources such as water.
- Support groups of women traders, collectors, and processors as a catalyst to getting women participating higher up in the value chain.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Work with the private sector to encourage participation of females and marginalized groups in the labor force and increase recruitment and retention of female staff:

- Require all implementing partners to disclose diversity-related metrics in harmony with OAA requirements, including the percentage of women and other minorities across all levels of the organization, pay gaps, turnover rates, expenditure on training and development, and actions taken to enforce gender equality and inclusivity throughout the supply chain.
- Identify private companies interested in improving gender diversity and help them create a pipeline of female workers by building relationships with universities and CSOs working to empower women.
- Offer incentives for the private sector to increase recruitment of female graduates and placement of more women in training programs that will later feed into leadership positions.
- Work with private companies to get more women on boards (30 percent quota) so they can push to prioritize recruitment of additional women throughout the organization and make the workplaces more friendly to women.

Partner with the EFC to improve benefits and increase hiring and retention of employees from marginalized groups:

- Partner with local organizations and women entrepreneurs to set up subsidized childcare facilities that will increase women's participation in the workforce and create more jobs for women who take on these paid care roles.
- Support more flexible work options, including telework, part-time work, and IT-based work (data entry, call centers).
- Support women's organizations to advocate for legislation that prohibits gender pay gaps and subsidizes the payment of maternity leave so companies do not incur higher costs for hiring women. Extend paid paternity leave for men to encourage men to share in childcare responsibilities and to eliminate the "extra expense" of maternity leave for women.

Prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the workplace:

- Encourage more businesses to establish their sexual harassment policies and complaint mechanisms in accordance with the guidelines the ILO has established.
- Create a case study of organizations that have implemented sexual harassment policies to hold up as a model for other organizations.
- Raise awareness about the MOWCA complaint center/hotline where people can report sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Build capacity of MOWCA to act on registered complaints.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND TRADE

Develop skills of female entrepreneurs:

- Support women to develop an entrepreneurial mindset by partnering with NGOs to provide ongoing coaching programs and female mentorship.
- Provide training to increase computer and digital literacy to connect with markets and advertise on social media.

Increase access to markets:

- Fund women's entrepreneur networks and provide training to women and women entrepreneurs on good business practices, facilitate linkages to markets, and promote inclusion of women throughout the value chain.

Work with local CSOs to educate women about financial literacy:

- Prevent predatory microcredit lending by increasing awareness of how to access financial services and obtain seed money for entrepreneurial ventures.
- Foster use of mobile technology to increase access to formal banking and subsidized financial services.

GOVERNANCE

Support women to get elected:

- Advocate to increase the quota to 30 percent for women at the national level in parliament.

- Raise awareness about the importance of having women involved in politics and build support for the quota.
- Conduct advocacy campaigns for voters to use one of three preferential votes for a woman.
- Support women to run for office, raise campaign finances, and use new technologies to increase their visibility and recognition.
- Encourage political parties to support and nominate women candidates.

Enhance women’s effectiveness in governance once in office:

- Build women councilors’ capacity about subjects such as women’s rights, language training, proposal writing, and coalition building.
- Work with central and local CSOs to advocate for women councilors to receive a comparable allocation of funds as their male counterparts.
- Include male colleagues as supporters and advocate together with party leaders to change patriarchal attitudes.
- Support programs that enhance the civic skills of women by providing assistance and training for women’s engagement in civic spaces, village associations, and religious organizations.

Improve and increase gender-sensitive responses to GBV by the police force:

- Reinforce training of police GBV training programs with ongoing activities and community mobilization.
- Support outreach campaigns emphasizing the availability of positions in the police for women and the importance of policewomen to the community.

RECONCILIATION

Incorporate psycho-social components into programs to help beneficiaries process the varying sources of trauma

Work with religious and community leaders to promote social cohesion across ethnic and religious groups:

- Conduct gender equality training with religious leaders who often perpetuate customary law systems in Kandyan Sinhalese, Jaffna Tamil, and Muslim communities.
- Support the training of national integration officers to do reconciliation work.
- Foster inter-religious education to promote awareness and combat extremism through school curricula as well as religious schools such as Sunday school, daham pasal, and madrassas.

Raise awareness among WHHs about their rights, especially regarding property and social protection benefits:

- Enhance social benefits targeted at WHHs as a means of protection against harassment.
- Standardize the definition of WHH to ensure that all types are covered, including war widows, single women, and women whose husbands died of natural causes.

Engage youth in peacebuilding efforts to limit the influence of extremism.

Establish youth groups with diverse membership to advocate for peace. These groups should work as interrupters of violence and bring about change through storytelling that decreases stigma.

MEDIA

Expand capacity building interventions for media organizations on gender sensitive reporting and representation:

- Highlight examples of women in media coverage and entertainment programs that go beyond traditional stereotypes.
- Encourage the media to increase coverage of women parliamentarians to help promote more women in legislatures and politics.
- Promote the inclusion of gender and diversity sensitization in media programs as a means of public education.

Support media organizations in promoting gender equality in the workplace:

- Support more organizations to adopt the Gender Charter developed by the Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum.

Address racially motivated bias in mainstream media:

- Amplify campaigns to counter racist content in all languages.
- Promote peace-focused messaging (particularly on social media) to counterbalance negative racist messaging and shift the discourse.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Specific gender equity entry points in planning, response, and recovery efforts.
- Mainstream gender in energy sector policies and establish gender-sensitive targets and indicators.
- Develop a biomass fuel strategy that will increase women's access to clean and energy-efficient modern fuels and cookstoves.
- Support women's organizations and local NGOs to involve more women in the consultative and decisionmaking processes, as well as in project management related to natural resources.
- Expand community-based programs that invest in rainwater harvesting systems for drinking and household water and micro-irrigation systems for home gardens to support women and increase good sanitation and hygiene.
- Address conflicts over natural resources to increase access for marginalized groups. Implement community-based approaches for open resource management and use.

ANNEX A: LEGISLATION AND POLICIES ON GENDER EQUALITY

TABLE 3: LEGISLATION AND POLICIES ON GENDER EQUALITY

Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka – 1978	Guarantees fundamental rights and nondiscrimination on grounds of sex (Chapter 3, Art. 12).
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – 1981	Ratified in 1981 but not incorporated into national legislation.
Women’s Charter & National Committee on Women – 1993	Established as the local equivalent of CEDAW. Has been approved but not integrated into national policy and legislation. The National Committee on Women’s (NCW’s) mandate is to monitor and ensure the implementation of provisions as stated in the Women’s Charter. The NCW accomplishes this through its powers of policy formulation, awareness raising, and advocacy. A Gender Complaints Unit has also been established to receive complaints on gender-based discrimination.
National Plan of Action for Women – Draft, 1996	In late 1995 and early 1996, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the NCW formulated the National Plan of Action for Women in Sri Lanka. The National Plan of Action reflects the critical areas of concern set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action. The plan was revised in 1998 and 2000.
Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to Address Sexual and Gender -Based Violence - 2016	Takes a rights-based approach to addressing GBV to promote “violence free life for women and children.” The framework adopts a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention, and advocacy. It also identifies the various ministries and sectoral technical committees that are tasked with developing sector-specific plans for addressing GBV in the National Action Plan (Child Protection, Disaster Management, Economic Development and Employment, Education, and Health).
Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 – 2005	A law to gain interim protection from domestic violence that addresses physical, verbal, sexual, and psychological abuse. Economic deprivation and damage to property can also be applied. The person affected by the violence can obtain a Protection Order. ¹⁷¹
National Policy on Disability & National Action Plan for Disability	Includes seven thematic areas: empowerment, health and rehabilitation, education, work and employment, mainstreaming and enabling environment, data and research, and social institutional cohesion. ¹⁷²
Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 28 of 1996, amended by Act No. 33 of 2003.	The rights of persons with disabilities is limited to accessibility and opportunities in education and employment.
Draft National Policy on Women – Sri Lanka 2019	The purpose of the National Women’s Policy is to establish a framework to guide and standardize the development of laws, policies, programs, and mechanisms. Furthermore, the policy aims to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in all spheres and structures of government as well as in the public and private workplace, community, family, and civic space.
National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, 2017-2022	This National Action Plan reiterates the need to achieve substantial equality, particularly in the economic, political, and cultural spheres.
The National Framework for Women-headed Households (2017–2019)	The framework was introduced especially to improve the socioeconomic situation of women affected by conflict.

ANNEX B: DETAILS ON SAMPLE

TABLE 4: KII LIST OF LOCATIONS AND INFORMANTS

	COLOMBO	PRESENTATIONS AT EVENTS	CENTRAL PROVINCE (KANDY)	EASTERN PROVINCE (BATTICALOA, AMPARA)	UVA (MONAR AGALA)	SOUTHERN PROVINCE (HAMBANTOTA, DIKWELLA)	WESTERN PROVINCE (NUGEGODA)	TOTAL
Government Representative	2	5	2	1	1	–	1	12
Donors	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
USAID Staff	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	9
USAID Development Partners	10	4	6	2	1	–	–	23
Civil Society	23	11	2	3	–	3	–	42
Private Sector	1	–	–	–	–	1	–	2
Total	49	20	10	6	2	4	1	92
Total Female	37	15	3	3	0	3	1	62
Total Male	12	5	7	3	2	1	0	30

TABLE 5: FGD PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION	PARTICIPANTS
Organization 1	5 (1 female, 4 males)
Organization 2	5 (1 female, 4 males)
Total	10 (2 females, 8 males)

TABLE 6: PRIORITY THEMES ADDRESSED IN KIIS AND FGDS

PRIORITY THEMES	ADDRESSED IN # MEETINGS
Public Finance Management	12
Trade	8
Entrepreneurship	39
Youth Employability	37
Private Sector	21
Justice	37
Reconciliation	42
Media	15
Natural Resource Management	11

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ANNEX D: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is _____ and I am working with Social Impact, a US-based research organization working for the USAID/Sri Lanka to conduct research for a gender and social inclusion analysis. The gender analysis will inform USAID/Sri Lanka's 2021-2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy. The strategy outlines the USAID mission's priority actions across 9 thematic areas. These thematic areas include: trade, public finance management, entrepreneurship, youth employability, private sector, justice, reconciliation, media, and natural resource management. You were selected to participate in this research because you are a member of an organization that addresses issues related to gender or social inclusion.

The discussion will last about one hour and your participation is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate. We will ask questions about:

- Recent advances and challenges in gender equality and female empowerment in Sri Lanka
- Collaboration with USAID/Sri Lanka (if applicable)
- How are these gender gaps and constraints being addressed in current programming in Sri Lanka?
- Opportunities for USAID/Sri Lanka to collaborate with other organizations to advance gender equality and female empowerment and reflect that within its strategic planning and program implementation plans

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in the interview, and there are no direct benefits, though your participation may benefit girls and women who participate in future programs. The final report will be made available to the public. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to and please ask for clarification if there is any question that you do not understand. You can also choose to end the interview at any time you wish to, without any consequences to you or anyone else involved in the project.

If you start the interview and wish to stop at any time for any reason, or if you don't want to answer any questions, you may do so without penalty. No action is required to withdraw from or refuse to participate in the study, other than to inform the interviewer of your decision.

Only the research team will know your identity and we will not share any identifiable information to USAID or anyone else. Your answers will be combined with others' responses and reported in the aggregate in the final report with general identifiers like respondent group and sex. Any information you provide that might identify you, will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

Do you have any questions about this interview?

Are you willing to participate in this interview? Yes _____ No _____

Signature of notetaker: _____

If you have any concerns, you may contact Alana Kolundzija with the Social Impact research team at +1 347 925 6812 or akolundzija@socialimpact.com or the Social Impact Institutional Review Board at

irb@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884 with questions about the study or results. I will leave a hard copy of this information with you.

Part 1: Recent advances and challenges in gender equality and female empowerment in Sri Lanka

1. Can you give us a brief summary about the focus and objectives of your office? What kind of projects do you manage?
2. Is there a gender equality law or policy related/applied to what your office does? How do you implement it?
3. Do you have an organization/project gender strategy? Are there any good practices that you want to cite in the strategy? What were some of the challenges in preparing the strategy?
4. In your experience, what are the main gender gaps and constraints that women and men face in your sector?
5. What are the gaps that specifically affect youth, urban and rural inhabitants, victims of the conflict/ex-combatants, religious/ethnic minorities, and LGBTI persons?
6. What are some of the cultural expectations that contribute to these gender gaps? Are there places within the country where the expectations are different?”?
7. Do girls and women have the same access to and control over resources as men? If not, how is it different?
8. How are women involved in making decisions in their households? What are some of the differences between how men and women use their time?
9. Do women and men have access to the same opportunities? If not, how is their levels of access different?
10. Are women and men able to participate equally in community and public life? If not, why not?
11. Do stigma and discrimination play a role in restricting access to social and political participation for any of these groups: youth, urban and rural inhabitants, victims of the conflict/ex-combatants, religious/ethnic/racial minorities, and LGBTI persons? What mechanisms for lodging complaints exist? Are they being used? Are the complaints resolved?
12. Is there anything that limits women’s access to your program activities/services? What are the key strategies/actions (specific and non-specific) that the program puts in place to overcome potential constraints for ensuring active participation and empowerment of women?
13. Can you think of any national or subnational statistics relevant to these questions that you could direct us to? Specific examples of documents, studies?
14. What has your team done to address the gender constraints to promote more equal relationships between women and men and the empowerment of women and girls? Can you list three main results?
15. Does the project disaggregate its indicator data by gender?
16. Does the project include specific gender indicators? If so, which?
17. Could you share your project’s gender strategy, gender assessment, and/or MELS plan?
18. Are you aware of the existence of gender-based violence in the context of where your programs take place/services are offered? How does it manifest? How does it relate to other expressions of social violence (illicit trafficking, exploitation of workers tea plantations, and indigenous women, at both rural and urban level, etc.)? According to your experience, does it affect program participation and access to services for women/girls and men/boys in any way?

Part 2: Collaboration with USAID/Sri Lanka (if applicable)

19. Which kind of support do you receive from USAID to integrate or monitor gender equality and female empowerment in your program? How does USAID provide this support? Do you think these mechanisms are effective?
20. Is there additional support that you would recommend USAID/Sri Lanka provide?

Part 3: How are these gender gaps and constraints being addressed in current programming in Sri Lanka?

21. According to your knowledge, what are the main advantages/challenges in terms of gender policy framework and legal/institutional capacities in the public sector institutions (in general and those this office supports through the programs)? Is your office developing any activities to strengthen them?
22. Are there organizations, ministries or projects working to address the obstacles to gender equality and female empowerment in social and political participation? What kinds of activities are the focus of programs in this area?
23. Are you coordinating/working with other organizations/donors to generate synergies for achieving greater gender impact in your sector?

Part 4: What are the opportunities for USAID/Sri Lanka to collaborate with CSOs, NGOs, the private sector, and other donors to advance gender equality and female empowerment and fully reflect that within its strategic planning and program implementation plans?

24. Are there specific gender-related challenges in your sector that USAID/Sri Lanka possesses a comparative advantage to address? Answers to this question will help the USAID Mission to prioritize resources and maximize its impact.
25. Are there lessons to be learned from USAID's and others' investments in this sector?

Concluding Question

25. Do you have any recommendations for how to address gender inequality that you would like to make to USAID as it plans its next Country Development Cooperation Strategy?

Note to interviewer:

- Could this informant provide any help organizing focus group discussions with key groups?
- Do they suggest any program reports or docs we should be reviewing?
- Is there someone they believe we must speak to, to gain a complete sense of the challenges?

FOCUS GROUPS PROTOCOL (WOMEN AND MEN PROJECT/PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS)

Good morning/afternoon. We appreciate your availability to participate in this research for a gender and social inclusion analysis for USAID/Sri Lanka. My name is _____ and I am working with Social Impact, a US-based research organization working for the USAID/Sri Lanka to conduct research for a gender and social inclusion assessment. The gender analysis will inform USAID/Sri Lanka's 2021-2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy. The strategy outlines the USAID mission's priority actions across 9 thematic areas. These thematic areas include: trade, public finance management, entrepreneurship, youth employability, private sector, justice, reconciliation, media, and natural resource management. You were selected to participate in this research because you are a member of an organization that addresses issues related to gender or social inclusion.

The discussion will last about 1-2 hours and your participation is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate. We will ask questions about:

- Specific needs of women and men (youth, urban and rural inhabitants, victims of the conflict/ex-combatants, religious/ethnic minorities, and LGBTI persons)
- Main problems that women (youth, urban and rural inhabitants, victims of the conflict/ex-combatants, religious/ethnic minorities, and LGBTI persons) face in order to move forward
- Ideas about how to improve the program

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study, and there are no direct benefits, though your participation may benefit girls and women who participate in future programs. The final report will be made available to the public. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to and please ask for clarification if there is any question that you do not understand. You can also choose to end the interview at any time you wish to, without any consequences to you or anyone else involved in the project. If you start the discussion and wish to stop at any time for any reason, or if you don't want to answer any questions, you may do so without penalty. No action is required to withdraw from or refuse to participate in the study, other than to inform the interviewer of your decision.

Only the research team and other participants in this focus group discussion will know your identity and we will not share any identifiable information to USAID or anyone else. Your answers will be combined with others' responses and reported in the aggregate in the final report with general identifiers like respondent group and sex. Any information you provide that might identify you, will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

All FGD participants should not attribute anything that was said to any one individual participating. As a participant in a related program, we are very interested in hearing about your experience. We thank you in advance for your participation and encourage you to express your opinion freely.

Do you have any questions about this group discussion?

Are you willing to participate in this interview? Yes _____ No _____

Signature of notetaker: _____

If you have any concerns, you may contact Alana Kolundzija with the Social Impact research team at +1 347 925 6812 or akolundzija@socialimpact.com or the Social Impact Institutional Review Board at irb@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884 with questions about the study or results. I will leave a hard copy of this information with you.

1. We would appreciate it if you could briefly introduce yourself and tell us about your relationship with the program.
2. From your point of view, do you think the project takes the specific needs of women and men (youth, urban and rural inhabitants, victims of the conflict/ex-combatants, religious/ethnic minorities, and LGBTI persons) in this area into account? What more could be done?
3. In general, what are the main problems that women and girls (youth, urban and rural inhabitants, victims of the conflict/ex-combatants, religious/ethnic minorities, and LGBTI persons) face in order to move forward? What support do they have?
4. In general, what are the main problems that men and boys (youth, urban and rural inhabitants, victims of the conflict/ex-combatants, religious/ethnic minorities, and LGBTI persons) face in order to move forward? What support do they have?
5. Thinking back to before you started participating in this program compared to where you are now - has anything changed in how you think or relate to other people? Has anything changed in your families, in your relationship with your spouses / partners and children, or your participation in the community?
6. Do you have any ideas about how to improve the program so that more diverse groups of women and men could actively participate to improve their self-esteem and develop collectively?

Thank you for your participation

ANNEX E: SCOPE OF WORK

Statement of Work for USAID Gender and Social Inclusion Analysis

1. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this task is to conduct a mandatory Gender and Social Inclusion Analysis (GESI) to inform USAID/Sri Lanka Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2021-2024. This analysis will respond to the requirements of Automated Directives System (ADS) 201.3.2.9: (<https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201>) regarding gender analysis as part of the CDCS development process.

Promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls around the world is vital to achieving U.S. foreign policy and development objectives. Therefore, integrating GESI findings and recommendations into the CDCS is a must. The analysis must also include consideration of different social groups, and social inclusion issues of men, women and youth of different social groups (i.e. ethnic, religious, youth, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTIQ)).

USAID/Sri Lanka recognizes that advancing socio-economic development requires that every project and activity explicitly address disparities in opportunity between males and females, and among marginalized communities or groups within a society, and include actions to reduce the gaps and inequalities. The findings of the GESI analysis will be used to inform the development of Development Objectives and full Results Framework.

2. GENDER IN SRI LANKA

The Sri Lankan Constitution guarantees the fundamental right to equality before the law and a right to freedom from discrimination. Sri Lanka has also ratified most of the international treaties including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, however, some such treaties are not adopted or enacted in national legislation.

Sri Lanka is also lauded for its achievements in free health and education, universal franchise in 1931, and the distribution of food stamps without discrimination on gender grounds. These advances have benefitted both men and women. Coupled with a sex ratio favorable to women (51.4%), these advances have particularly fostered the empowerment of women. While progress has been made, much remains to be done. Every year since 2006, the gender gap has been widening and currently it stands at 0.68 with Sri Lanka ranked 102 out of 153 countries¹⁷³. Low levels of political representation, inequalities and barriers in the labor market, imbalances in skills development, and the impact of gendered social norms and practices have disadvantaged women and girls in the development of their potential in Sri Lanka. Sexual violence,

feminization of poverty, large numbers of female-headed households and regional disparities are serious issues with enormous implications for society and future generations in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's poverty level has declined to 4.1 percent in recent times. However, this decline is uneven across economic sectors and geographical locations. Studies have shown that besides the unemployed, new vulnerable groups have emerged and women are the majority in virtually all these groups. Men and women across the country were economically, socially and psychologically victimized and traumatized by the 26-year conflict. Women were identified as a vulnerable group, be it as perpetrators, victims, or survivors.

Gender based violence is on the increase. Twenty six years of conflict followed by displacement; loss of assets; livelihoods and incomes; breakdown of the social fabric and militarization have exacerbated the situation. Female children, people with disabilities, war widows and LGBTI members are especially vulnerable to discrimination, harassment and violence.

For decades, Sri Lankan women in politics have remained below six percent and women from the minority communities have been further marginalized from these bodies. Several socio-cultural, economic and psychological barriers prevent women from actively participating in politics.

Sri Lankan men and women have benefited from free healthcare for decades. However, today a public health service that cannot meet the growing demands, lack of adequate and qualified staff and equipment, and the poor quality of services offered in these institutions (especially outside major cities) have led to patients seeking treatment in private hospitals resulting in inconvenience and high costs. These factors, coupled with regional disparities, have negatively impacted the health status of low-income families and the elderly population in underserved rural areas and in estates. Malnutrition (micronutrient deficiencies, particularly iron deficiency) among women and girls and adolescent sexual and reproductive health stand out as concerns.

The percentage of literate women was 91 percent while male literacy rate was 93 percent. Gender parity has been achieved at primary and secondary levels in terms of enrollment and attendance, however, at the tertiary level far fewer men are enrolled (15.8 percent vs. 23.4 percent). There is also a gender division visible when selecting courses. Education in Sri Lanka has also promoted girls and boys to conform to gender stereotypes. "No schooling" and "school dropouts" are high among the destitute, street children and children with disabilities. Women still suffer from widespread gender discrimination in employment with male participation at 74.9 percent and female participation at 35.6 percent. Most women have limited incomes and upward occupational mobility, while women in professional jobs continue to face a "glass ceiling."

Twenty-six years of conflict, the tsunami and frequent floods and droughts have caused untold environmental damage. Poor men, women and children bore the brunt of the damage to natural

resources. Today, women are suffering from environmental impacts of development projects and climate change.

3. GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ANALYSIS

GESI analysis is a subset of socio-economic analysis. It involves examining differences in the status of females and males and their differential access to assets, resources, opportunities, and services; the influence of gender roles and norms on the division of time in paid and unpaid work; the influence of gender roles and norms on leadership roles and decision making; constraints, opportunities, and entry points for narrowing gender gaps and empowering females; and potential differential impacts of development policies and programs on males and females, including unintended or negative consequences. The analysis should also look at other social groups such as ethnic, racial and/or religious minorities, people with disabilities, and people with diverse sexual and gender identities

4. PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this GESI analysis is to identify significant macro and sectoral level barriers and gaps to gender equality and female empowerment and prioritize, and justify which of these barriers should be addressed in each section of the CDCS: Goal, Development Hypotheses and Results Framework, DO and Intermediate Result (IR) narratives. The analysis will provide a discussion of how closing those gaps will be achieved.¹⁷⁴

5. METHODOLOGY

The analysis will utilize a mixed method. The contractor will follow the USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy¹⁷⁵ and Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Equality (WEEE) Act of 2018¹⁷⁶ when conducting GESI analysis. The assessment will adhere to relevant USAID quality standards and other international standards such as "Do No Harm" principles which safeguard personally identifiable information. The contractor is also required to follow USAID and host country protocols.

The data will be collected, organized and analyzed using USAID's five domains:

1. **Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices that influence the context in which men and women act and make decisions.** The gender analysis should identify the extent to which laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practices contain explicit gender biases (e.g., explicit provisions that treat males and females differently; laws and regulations that criminalize and/or restrict individuals on the basis of their gender identity or expression) or implicit gender biases (e.g., the different impacts of laws, policies, regulations, and practices on men and women because of different social arrangements and economic behavior). The analysis should also identify when key gender-related legislation (e.g., laws on nondiscrimination, gender equality, gender-based violence, sexual harassment) is absent.

2. **Cultural Norms and Beliefs:** Every society has cultural norms and beliefs (often expressed as gender stereotypes) about what are appropriate qualities, life goals, and aspirations for males and females. Gender norms and beliefs are influenced by perceptions of gender identity and expression and are often supported by and embedded in laws, policies, and institutional practices. They influence how females and males behave in different domains and should be explicitly identified in the gender analysis at the country level.
3. **Gender Roles, Responsibilities, and Time Use:** The most fundamental division of labor within all societies is between productive (market) economic activity and reproductive (non-market) activity. This is the central social structure that characterizes male and female activity. Gender analysis should examine what males and females do in these spheres, including roles, responsibilities, and time use during paid work, unpaid work (including care and other work in the home), and community service to get an accurate portrait of how people lead their lives and to anticipate potential constraints to participation in development projects. How do gender roles and time use affect leadership and participation in social, economic and political activities?
4. **Access to and Control over Assets and Resources:** A key component of gender analysis is an examination of whether females and males own and/or have access to and the capacity to use productive resources – assets (land, housing), income, social benefits (social insurance, pensions), public services (health, water), technology – and information necessary to be a fully active and productive participant in society. Analysis of this domain may also include an examination of how a society’s acceptance (or lack thereof) of individuals’ gender identity and/or expression may influence their ability to access and control resources. While gender gaps in access to resources can be identified at the country level, they are especially important at the project and activity levels.
5. **Patterns of Power and Decision-making:** This domain of gender analysis examines the ability of women and men to decide, influence, and exercise control over material, human, intellectual, and financial resources, in the family, community, and country. It also includes the capacity to vote and run for office at all levels of government. Analyses should examine to what extent males and females are represented in senior level decision-making positions and exercise voice in decisions made by public, private, and civil society organizations. Issues of power often cross-cut the other domains of gender analysis as well.

The analysis should mainly focus on sectors such as trade, public finance management, entrepreneurship, youth employability, elections, justice sector, media, reconciliation, and disaster risk reduction.

The GESI Analysis should include government sector, private sector, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), development partners, USAID technical staff, USAID key implementing partners, and gender and social inclusion activists and experts. Under the government sector, at

minimum the analysis should include the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance and Planning, National Languages and Social Integration, Ministry of Women & Child Affairs, and Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training. The final list of institutions to include in the GESI analysis should be prepared in consultation with USAID Sri Lanka.

The GESI analysis field work can take place mainly in Colombo and suburbs. However, the contractor must visit locations outside the Western Province to learn about gender dynamics across the five dimensions mentioned above.

This analysis will have three phases.

In **phase one**, the analysis team will conduct a desk review of applicable policies and laws, gender and social inclusion study reports, qualitative and quantitative data related to gender and social inclusion in Sri Lanka. As a part of this phase, the analysis team will finalize the work plan and the methodology in consultation with USAID/Sri Lanka. USAID/Sri Lanka will share a list of available bibliography with the assessment team before the desk review.

In **phase two**, the assessment team will collect primary data, such as semi-structured and focus group interviews as necessary and agreed by USAID/Sri Lanka, and present initial findings with USAID/Sri Lanka for CDCS results framework development workshop.

In **phase three**, the assessment team will prepare and submit a final report, “Sri Lanka Gender and Social Inclusion Assessment Report”.

6. DELIVERABLES

The contractor must deliver a minimum of the following deliverables.

A. Initial Work Plan

As the first deliverable, the contractor must prepare an initial work plan including the following

- a. Time frame for desk review.
- b. Approach outline
- c. Draft timeline

B. Draft Desk Review Report

The contractor must analyze and prepare a desk review report from the related literature. USAID/Sri Lanka will provide an initial bibliography and some reports. However, the contractor is also responsible to identify, collect, and analyze relevant public and gray literature in English and local languages. The report must contain synthesized findings, conclusions, draft recommendations, and remaining information/data gaps. It must not be more than 15 pages and should follow USAID Style Guide¹⁷⁷. The findings should be disaggregated by sex and by

gender if the data are available, ethnicity, age (youth who are below 35 years) and any other sub set as appropriate. It must have, at a minimum, a summary of quantitative and qualitative findings, organized by questions; and conclusions to inform the CDCS.

C. Final Work Plan

Based on the desk review findings, the contractor must finalize the work plan including the following:

- a. Work schedule which includes deliverables and milestones
- b. Data collection methods against assessment domains.
- c. Draft data collection instruments.
- d. Field data collection plan.

The field plan should include, at a minimum, the name, designation and organization of the informants/respondents, detail field data collection schedule, a backup plan if respondents are not available, etc.

The USAID/Sri Lanka must approve this work plan in order to start the field work. The Contractor is responsible for making all travel, transportation and lodging arrangements as per the work plan. Logistical support in-country will be the responsibility of the Contractor.

D. Initial Findings

After the desk review and field data collection, the contractor should conduct a thorough analysis, synthesize/triangulate the data from different sources/data collection methods, and provide a list of findings and conclusions that can be used for the CDCS result framework workshop.

E. Mission outbrief

The initial findings should be presented by the assessment team to USAID/Sri Lanka at the Mission Office. The contractor should also handover an initial findings short document to the Mission.

F. Final Report

The contractor must prepare the final assessment report, after providing initial findings. The report must not be more than 25 pages excluding annexes. The report must follow USAID Style Guide¹⁷⁸ and must include the following sections. The final report must consider presenting findings based on different social groups (i.e. ethnic, religious, youth, LGBTIQ).

- Executive summary
- Table of contents
- Acronyms and abbreviations
- Methodology

- Findings organized by Gender Domains
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Annexes: List of literature, list of informants/respondents with redacted personally identifiable information, final scope of work, final data collection instruments

G. Raw Data

As per the ADS 579 the contractor must submit quantitative raw data to the Development Data Library (DDL).

7. TIMELINE

The GESI analysis will take three months to complete. Below is the suggested timeline.

#	Description	Deadline
	Kick-off meeting (over the phone) with COR and USAID Sri Lanka	Second day after agreeing on the team composition and the estimated cost
	Work Plan	Within 7 working days of the kick-off call
	Draft desk review report	Within 20 days of the kick-off call
	In-country kick-off meeting with USAID Sri Lanka	21st day after the kick-off call (Team Leader’s first/second day in Colombo)
	Final work plan	Within 2 days from the in-country kick-off.
	Field Data Collection	30 days of field work from in-country kick-off
	Initial findings report	Within 5 working days after the field work.
	Out-brief presentation to USAID/Sri Lanka	Within 7 days after the fieldwork (approx. 40th day from the in-country kick-off). Before Team Leader leaves.
	First draft report	Within 50 days after the in-country kick-off
	Final Report	Before the agreed end date

8. TEAM COMPOSITION

Suggested team should include persons with the following experience and qualifications.

Team Lead (Local or International):

An experienced senior level gender analysis technical specialist, with 8-10 years of experience as the lead of gender reviews and assessments. He/she should hold a graduate degree from an accredited university in Social Sciences or related fields. Experience with gender assessments for USAID, especially at the national, strategic level, is beneficial. The **Team Lead (Lead Researcher)** should have qualitative and quantitative research skills, as well as strong analytical and writing skills. In addition, the Team Lead should have experience in conducting gender and social inclusion analysis as it pertains to international development, governance, human rights, resilience, and economic growth. The Team Lead will manage the entire process, including drafting the analytical design and analysis plan, and will lead presentations and discussions with the Mission. The Team Lead will be responsible for the development and presentation of the initial report, which will include a review of existing literature and resources, a detailed methodology, work plan, table of contents, and data collection instruments. He/she will deliver preliminary findings and conclusions to USAID/Sri Lanka at the end of the field work, and subsequently lead in the development and delivery of the draft and final report.

Senior Expert (Local) - gender and social inclusion:

The Senior Expert, must have a minimum of eight years of experience in the areas of gender and/or social inclusion studies. He/she should hold a graduate degree from an accredited university in Social Sciences or related fields. The Senior Expert must have an in depth knowledge on gender and social inclusion in Sri Lanka. He/she also should have experience in strategy and policy analysis. The Senior Expert should support the Team Lead with analysis design, data collection, analysis and finalizing of the report. The Local Senior Expert is also responsible to provide relevant stakeholder contacts, regions, background, gender dynamics etc for this assessment. He/she must be fluent in English and must be able to conduct desk review and field data collection in Sinhala and Tamil.

Research Assistant:

The local Research Assistant will help the team in collecting and analyzing data. He/she should have a Social Sciences or a related education background. He/she must be fluent in Sinhala and Tamil and should have a good working knowledge of English. Experience conducting research will be an added advantage.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ USAID, ADS Chapter 201. December 23, 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201>.
- ² USAID, Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy. March 2012. Accessed at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/GenderEqualityPolicy_0.pdf.
- ³ US Department of State, U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally (GBV Strategy). March 11, 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-strategy-to-prevent-and-respond-to-gender-based-violence-globally-gbv-strategy/>.
- ⁴ USAID, ADS 205.3.3. April 27, 2017.
- ⁵ USAID, Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy. March 2012. Accessed at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/GenderEqualityPolicy_0.pdf.
- ⁶ Rep. Royce, Edward R, H.R.5480 – Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018. Introduced April 12, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5480>.
- ⁷ Global Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2020.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs – Sri Lanka. 2016. Poverty Indicators Department of Census and Statistics Household Income and Expenditure Survey.
- ¹⁰ https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/profiles/lka.pdf?ua=1.
- ¹¹ https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/18/Suppl_1/A183.2.
- ¹² <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/sri-lanka/#stats-references>.
- ¹³ <https://atlascorps.org/child-marriages-srilanka/>.
- ¹⁴ <http://www.iccwtnispncanarc.org/upload/pdf/2501970655EMERGING%20CONCERNS%20AND%20CASE%20STUDIES%20ON%20CHILD%20MARRIAGE%20IN%20SRI%20ANKA%20%20.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ <http://www.iccwtnispncanarc.org/upload/pdf/2501970655EMERGING%20CONCERNS%20AND%20CASE%20STUDIES%20ON%20CHILD%20MARRIAGE%20IN%20SRI%20ANKA%20%20.pdf>.
- ¹⁶ FOKUS Women, Post war trends in child marriage, Sri Lanka, 2015.
- ¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39898589>.
- ¹⁸ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2018. Does she travel safe? Report on sexual harassment in public transportation in Sri Lanka.
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