**Submission by the Government of Sri Lanka on supporting the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates under the UNFCCC process**

Sri Lanka welcomes the request to submit views on the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates under the UNFCCC process, and would like to make this submission by the national focal point to the UNFCCC, the Climate Change Secretariat of Sri Lanka, as an overview of input received by relevant ministries and stakeholders focusing on gender and climate change in Sri Lanka as part of the issues to be considered at the in-session workshop to be held in May 2017.

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**1. Country Context**

Sri Lanka has a long history of women’s leadership of ~~to~~ electing the world’s first woman Prime Minister in 1960, and women play a key role in many key sectors and are key contributors to Sri Lanka’s economy. The country is rich in cultural heritage which is of ethnic and religious diversity. Sri Lanka’s population according to the island wide 2011/12 National Census reported is 20,271,464 of whom 51.5% were women, with the sex ratio favoring women, with 106 women to 100 men.

Sri Lanka’s law provides that women are equal to men under the general law, including in inheritance rights, and the 1978 Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and nondiscrimination on grounds of sex (Art. 12[1] and 12[2]). Further, Article 12[4] states ‘Nothing in this Article shall prevent special provisions made, by law, by subordinate legislation or executing action, for the advancement of women, children and disabled persons’. There is also provision for special measures to ensure women’s right to equality and there are no legal barriers to women working outside the home, engaging in financial transactions, or obtaining credit.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Further, Sri Lanka has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, under which many initiatives have been taken including and not limited to Women’s Charter, based on CEDAW provisions, was developed in 1993 and accepted by the government as a policy document, but has not been incorporated into legislation.[[2]](#footnote-2) The National Committee on Women, appointed to implement the Charter, formulated a Women’s Rights Bill and a National Plan of Action for Women in 1996, as a follow-up to the UN Beijing Conference and the Beijing Platform of Action, under which the National Committee on Women was established, and a Women Caucus has been created in the Parliament to focus on women, and gender sensitive policies and actions, and includes a parliamentary sectoral oversight committee for women.

Women in Sri Lanka have been participating fully in exercising their voting rights since universal franchise was introduced in 1931 which paved the way for Sri Lanka to elect the world’s first female prime minister in 1960. Furthermore, the country had an elected woman Executive President from 1994 to 2004. The Sri Lankan government has taken initiatives to promote women’s participation in governance through a recent Cabinet approval which caters to 25% of local authorities to represent women, as well as providing free practical and theoretical training for women through diplomas for capacity building of women to engage in political activities.

The government in its initiatives has taken gender mainstreaming as a key component with Cabinet approval being granted to create gender mainstreaming units in every government ministry to ensure that national planning is gender sensitive, and policies are gender mainstreamed. Actions relevant to this is being implemented at present, with capacity to be developed in relevant ministries on how gender mainstreaming, and gender budgeting needs to be incorporated in actions that are being implemented under different themes of action.

In the health sector women and men have equal access to state health services. Utilization rate of services such as antenatal and postnatal care are high, as reflected in over 95% institutional births and immunization rates. Universal access to free state health services, and the availability of a network of teaching, provincial, base hospitals, district hospitals and peripheral units, maternity homes, maternity and child health care clinics and central dispensaries, and a package of family health care services at the community level established over 7 decades have had a positive impact on the health status of women.[[3]](#footnote-3) Mortality rates per thousand population declined sharply from the 1960s to the estimated death rate of 6.0 in 2012, infant mortality rate was 9.7 per 1,000 live births in 2012, under-5 mortality rate was 12.1 per 1,000 live births, and maternal mortality ratio was 22.3 per 100,000 live births. Consequently, average life expectancy is relatively high at 76 years for the total population - 79 years for women and 72 years for men.

Sri Lanka has made provisions by government circular to grant maternity leave of 84 working days with full pay and an additional 84 days with half pay for employees of the government sector. Further, paternity leave of three days is granted for the father in the well being of child and family.

Sri Lanka is proud of its free education policy, and women in Sri Lanka have benefited from the implementation of nearly 8 decades of free, state education irrespective of sex and socioeconomic circumstances. This also includes numerous incentives over the years to facilitate their participation in education as free textbooks and uniforms, scholarships at the end of primary education, subsidized transport for all children, as well as free midday meals for the most economically disadvantaged primary school children from the most economically disadvantaged strata reduced the economic burdens of families with minimal resources.[[4]](#footnote-4) Sri Lanka has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and has endorsement the UN Declaration of Education for All in 1990, and introduced compulsory education regulations for the 5–14 age group in 1998, and their extension to 16 years in 2013.[[5]](#footnote-5) The 2012 School Census also indicates, that as in earlier years, there is gender equality in access to education since the percentage of girls of the total enrolled in primary and secondary grades was 49.2% in grades 1–5, 49.6% in grades 6–9, 50.6% in grades 10–11, and 56.6% in grades 12–13, and overall, 50.4 % in grades 1–13.In the 2012 academic year, of the total 27,529 students admitted to university, 62.2% were women.[[6]](#footnote-6) At the 2011/12 national census, the literacy rates of the total population was 95.6%, with a male literacy rate of 96.8% and a female literacy rate of 94.6%.

Initiatives have been taken to increase the number of women in the labour force, and also the development of investment to be gender sensitive. The Cabinet of Ministers in Sri Lanka has approved 25% of investment to rural development to focus on gender inclusion and gender empowerment. Labor legislation entitles employees in the public and private sector to equal remuneration, maternity benefits, and conditions of services, around two-thirds of the female labor force are in the informal sector.[[7]](#footnote-7) They play a key role in the agriculture sector and policies on agriculture have taken this into consideration, and initiatives have been created to focus on women and gender in the agriculture, and informal sectors of employment. With the collaboration of ILO, the Ministry of Labour has established a ‘World of Work’ for the plantation sector. The programme includes the publication of a gender glossary, training of trainers, awareness creation etc.

**2. Gender and Climate Change in Sri Lanka**

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. In many developing contexts, women’s livelihoods are dependent on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, forestry and water and, at the same time, women and girls who experience the consequences of climate change are often leaders in developing effective coping strategies and building resilience, for example by adapting their farming practices. This highlights the need for women to be part of the policy processes, to ensure that they are participatory and inclusive, as well as gender sensitive.

The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change cites robust evidence for “increased or heightened [gender inequality] as a result of weather events and climate-related disasters intertwined with socioeconomic, institutional, cultural and political drivers that perpetuate differential vulnerabilities” and in a context such as this, the need for integration of gender considerations throughout climate change related actions becomes vital in order to ensure that climate actions are sustainable, effective and inclusive. Further inclusive policy processes will allow women to become agents of change, which will benefit climate actions. In order to ensure that climate actions are gender sensitive, and equitable, there is also need for climate finance to be focusing on climate change in a gender sensitive manner, promoting gender balance, and gender budgeting.

In Sri Lanka the National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2011–2016 has eight sections of which one section spells out the rights of women as the government’s “commitment to ensuring gender equality.” These rights aim to ensure among others economic empowerment; elimination of discriminatory laws, policies, and practices. In addition, the National Plan of Action to Implement the Recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission proposes a mechanism to address, among others, the needs of women.[[8]](#footnote-8)This relates to many women impacted from multiple socio economic vulnerabilities, on whom the impacts of climate change would be harsher due to their increased vulnerabilities.

Among key areas related to climate change which Sri Lanka has taken gender sensitive approach includes the disaster management and reduction sector. This includes focusing on gender in the development of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies, including awareness creation on the issues related to gender in disasters. These activities focus on different levels, national as well as sub-national and local level. The Sri Lanka Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for the recent floods and landslides was initiated under the leadership of the Ministry of Disaster Management and the Ministry of Policy Planning and Economic Affairs, with the engagement of multiple stakeholders.[[9]](#footnote-9)The section on gender and social inclusion highlights that women, especially the Female Headed Households, of which 33.6% were elderly widows were the most significantly affected population of the disaster in the six most affected districts during the aftermath of the floods.

Other initiatives taken related to climate change include the Country Gender Assessment of Sri Lanka (2015,) Gender Review of National Energy Policies and Programmes of Sri Lanka, under the UNREDD programme Sri Lanka has incorporated gender as a component in the project activities, and also has gender mainstreaming as part of its actions. The Food Production National Programme (2016-2018) highlights the establishment of 25,000 female headed farming societies with the objective of making households self sufficient. In addition to this, actions such as “Appropriate Mitigation Actions in the Energy Generation and End-Use Sectors in Sri Lanka,” seeks to establish a robust and transparent NAMA framework for the successful planning, designing, approving, financing, implementation and evaluation of NAMAs in driving towards a low emission, climate resilient, gender-sensitive and green and inclusive economy whilst aspiring to reduce the national poverty and carbon emissions in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has also initiated actions to ensure that the National Adaptation Plan and the implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions of Sri Lanka will be implemented in a gender sensitive manner as well as mainstreaming gender in national adaptation planning process.

**3. Input on the Gender Action Plan and Its Elements**

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) could be developed via a set of workshops and/or standalone expert meetings in 2017, and proposed for approval at COP23. The comprehensive plan, similar to the work plan of the Executive Committee for the Warsaw International Mechanism, could include a series of action areas, from activities to enhance and build capacity to understand the links between gender and climate change, recommendations to specific Boards and Bodies of the UNFCCC, to actions that enhance the quality and availability of scientific research and sex, and gender disaggregated data and analysis at global, national as well as at regional level. Under the GAP, each activity could include an indicative timeline, expected results and define who is responsible for implementation.

Review of progress under the GAP could take place at each subsequent COPs, with a timeframe for a broad overview, and could be equipped with a set of guiding principles which could be included in the framing of the GAP.

**3.1 Principles for framing of the Gender Action Plan**

These principles could include among others:

* Achieve institutional coherence on gender-mainstreaming efforts.
* Ensure dedicated resources for the effective implementation of actions and activities outlined under the GAP.
* Ensure a participatory and inclusive gender represented decision making process with the UNFCCC process.
* Recognize the local and traditional knowledge of grassroots women’s groups and indigenous women.
* Ensure their effective participation in enhancing gender sensitive climate change policy as well as implementation.
* Enhance the quality and availability of quantitative and qualitative sex and gender disaggregated data and analysis with appropriate funding resources allocation.

**3.2 Possible Action Areas and Elements**

**Action area 1: Knowledge and Capacity Building**

● Technical support and capacity building on gender-sensitive climate change policy, and ensuring the full and effective participation of women in these processes; including Gender-Sensitive Budgeting and monitoring the impact and utilization of funds allocated to gender-sensitive climate change actions;

● Training for all Parties on gender-sensitive national communications, gender-sensitive technology development and transfer as well as development of guidelines

● Ensure space and financial support for participation of gender experts in the organization of upcoming Technical Expert Meetings (TEMs);

* Grass root level capacity building on micro financing and household budget management
* Ensure adequate training provided for women to adapt to disaster conditions during and after a disaster in terms of life skills, first aid, sanitation, nutrition.

**Action area 2: Monitoring and Tracking Coherence**

* Involving women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, integrating gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development and strengthening or establishing mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.
* Targeted in-session workshops, specific to reviewing implementation of mandates under UNFCCC boards, mechanisms, operating entities and bodies and producing a set of outcomes, which may cover the following in consecutive years
* Request the Secretariat, when organizing workshops, preparing technical/guidance papers etc., in any area under the Convention/KP/PA, to consider, incorporate, and highlight linkages between gender and climate change, and other areas under the Convention/KP/PA,
* Develop a mechanism to measure gender development for all development programmes.

**Action area 3: Data, Research and Tools**

● Develop analysis, studies, toolkits and reports for tracking progress on implementing gender-sensitive climate policies;

● Conduct gender impact assessments of new provisions and mechanisms developed under the UNFCCC;

● Recognize the importance of including women-led, community-led participatory action research in enhancing the data and analysis and such research and information to be provided space for sharing.

* In data collection, ensure that data is comprehensive in including gender when quantifying adults and children
* Encourage research on demography, health, environment, etc. related to climate change
* Identify gaps in existing policies and action plans and take action to amend them
* Identify existing issues such as ownership of land, provision of equal opportunities and benefits for Female Headed Households.
* Labour force- understand that some job opportunities are gender neutral and based on competence, while others are task specific, while taking into account cultural background of communities

**Action area 4: Gender Balance**

* Training and technical capacity building for female delegates
* Targeted resources to support the participation of women on national delegations from developing countries;
* Targets for gender balance on Boards and Bodies of the UNFCCC;
* Provision for gender balance in legislation and policy preparation committees.

**Action area 5: Means of Implementation**

* Guidance to the GEF/GCF to specifically address and highlight gender-sensitive policy and project/programme implementation in their annual reporting to the COP and work with recipient countries in readiness and technical support to increase national climate and gender capacity;
* Work together with climate funds and other funding agencies to allow and support small, local women’s movements and projects to access funds.
* Implementation of already existing government legislation while including gender aspects in policies, action plans and programmes
* Support for developing national climate change National Gender Action Plans
* Formulation of mechanisms to provide access to direct financial support to women who are most vulnerable to extreme weather event

**Action area 6: Stakeholder Engagement**

* Engagement of multiple stakeholders in policy making, implementation and monitoring at national and local level, with inputs of impacted groups and gender balance maintained in the process for decision making.
* Work with stakeholders focusing on gender as part of the climate change related work, and inclusion of them and experts on gender to the preparation of plans and policies at national level, as well as the GAP.

1. S. Goonesekere. 2010. Sri Lankan Women’s Right to Housing and Land: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Reality of State Inaction. In Charting Pathways to Gender Equality. Reflections and Challenges. Colombo: Center for Women’s Research. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. National Committee on Women. 1993. Women’s Charter. Colombo: Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Social Welfare [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. H. Wijemanne. 2011. Health. In CEDAW Commitments: A Progress Review-Sri Lanka. Colombo: CENWOR [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. S. Jayaweera. 2010. Dilemmas in Education in Sri Lanka: A Gender and Human Development Perspective. In Charting Pathways to Gender Equality. Reflections and Challenges. Colombo: VijithaYapa. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. S. Jayaweera. 2011. Education and Training. In CEDAW Commitments: A Progress Review – Sri Lanka. Colombo: CENWOR. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. S. Goonesekere. 2010. Sri Lankan Women’s Right to Housing and Land: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Reality of State Inaction. In Charting Pathways to Gender Equality. Reflections and Challenges. Colombo: Center for Women’s Research [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Government of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Transport, Environment and Women’s Affairs. n.d. National Plan of Action for Women in Sri Lanka. Colombo. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/172710/sri-lanka-country-gender-assessment-update.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-9)