



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# **COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT**

OF AGRICULTURE AND  
THE RURAL SECTOR IN

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SRI LANKA



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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
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# Acronyms and abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBO	community-based organization
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DAD	Department of Agrarian Development
DOA	Department of Agriculture
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organization
MWCA	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
NGO	non-governmental organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WEOI	Women's Economic Opportunity Index
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organizations



# Executive summary

The *Country Gender Assessment of the Agriculture and Rural Sectors of Sri Lanka* has been commissioned by FAO Sri Lanka. The Assessment is a required contribution for the Organization's next long-term plan of assistance to Sri Lanka. It is also intended to influence agricultural and rural development policies and programmes in the country.

In FAO gender policy, a gender country assessment is one of the requirements for mainstreaming gender in national agricultural and rural development policy processes. This Assessment involved a comprehensive desk review and a gap analysis, and field work that included focus group discussions, key stakeholder interviews and observations. The lack of sex-disaggregated information to determine gender gaps in the agriculture and rural sectors represents the main limitation of the Assessment.

Sri Lanka offers women and girls good health care coverage. Health care services are available during pregnancy and for breast-feeding mothers. However, there is considerable room for improvement in the nutritional status of women. At least 31 percent of pregnant women are anaemic and over 35 percent of urban women of reproductive age are overweight.

Women have free access to pre-school, primary and secondary education. However, access to education has not led to improvements in gender equality in labour force participation and has not created a situation where women agricultural labourers receive equal pay for equal work. The participation of women in the labour force is low despite the high proportion of women enrolled in universities. Nearly 60 percent of the country's university students are women (UGC, 2016).

Of the total female population over 15 years, the labour force participation rate of women is 36.4 percent (Department of Census and Statistic, 2017c). In addition, of the total women employed in the country, 29.7% are working in the agriculture sector (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017c). The majority of these women practice subsistence agriculture, which is considered part of the 'small economy'. Men engage in paddy farming and produce larger volumes of fresh produce of higher value for sale at markets.

Local economists and policy makers have done little research to calculate at the national level the losses of productivity and reduced economic gains in agriculture due to gender inequality in the agricultural sectors and the added benefits that could be obtained if women were given the same opportunities as men to reach their full potential. There has been no quantification of the contribution made by women to agricultural value chains and subsistence agriculture. As a result, women's role in these processes and sectors has not been recognized.

There are large gender disparities in access to and control over resources (e.g. land, water and inputs), access to markets and access to skills training, all of which are critical for agricultural production and livelihoods. 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. Only 16 percent of all privately owned land in the country belongs to women (Agriculture and Environment Statistics Division, 2002). This lack of land ownership limits women's ability to obtain agricultural assets, services and benefits (e.g. subsidies, credit and irrigation water).

Irrigation organizations accept registration only from farmers who own land for growing paddy rice, which is the main irrigated crop in Sri Lanka. Consequently, women with no title to the land have no formal access to government provided water. Women are not familiar with the most basic agricultural machinery and technologies. They do not own agriculture machinery and are not engaged in working as independent contractors who can use agricultural machinery.

The findings of the Assessment indicate that gender mainstreaming policies, strategies and programmes are almost non-existent within the agriculture sectors. Female-targeted programmes have frequently supported women in activities connected with their basic means of livelihood. These programmes however, have not been designed to improve women's access to and control over resources. They have not promoted women as active participants in agricultural operations, enabled them to receive their fair share of agricultural assistance or participate equally in decision-making processes.

The lessons learned from female-targeted, small-scale models and pilot programmes supported by the international development agencies, and international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have not been used effectively to mainstream gender concerns in policies and programming decisions. These initiatives have not led to actions that could bring about gender equitable policies and build a critical mass of empowered women capable of demanding that progress be made toward bridging the gender gap.

This situation is unacceptable. Women make up a large part of the agricultural labour force both as paid labourers and unpaid family workers. They deserve greater attention in ensuring that they receive their fair share.

Women have more difficulties than men in obtaining subsidies from the government. These difficulties are due to lack of visibility in agriculture. As women are not land owners, they are not registered in agrarian service centres. Women do not have a voice and are not in a position to make decisions in rural organizations where their presence in decision making positions is very rare.

Women also work at the lower end of agricultural value chain as primary producers. They seldom take part in activities connected with trading and adding value to agricultural produce. When training is available to women engaged in agricultural production, it is mostly geared toward establishing micro-enterprises (e.g. making sweets and snacks). The training does not make women familiar with modern methods of growing paddy or other high-value field crops and handling machinery to participate in higher value and higher volume agriculture.

Discussions with key stakeholders who were decision-makers showed that they didn't know how to integrate gender concerns in the design of programmes, and develop programmes that could empower women to become decision-makers and give them opportunities to earn higher incomes.

Women have fewer connections to influential networks and markets, and have less access to substantial capital. As a result, women are much less involved in commercial agriculture and medium-scale industries.

## Recommendations

The recommendations proposed in this Assessment have been jointly formulated with stakeholders in government, development agencies and the private sector (see Annex 2). They are designed to support to the government and other partners that are directly engaged in agricultural and rural development. They can be applied at the policy, programme and institutional level.

- a) Development partners, together with the Department of National Planning and related ministries, should review all policies related to crop and livestock production, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and agricultural value chains, and mainstream gender into these policies. They need to ensure that adequate budgetary provisions and allocations are made to carry out this review and implement changes.
- b) Decision-makers at all levels of government and the private sector need to be sensitized on issues related to gender. Their capacities must be built

to enable them to incorporate gender in planning cycles and budget exercises and monitor and measure performance. This should be done through meaningful immersion training, so that the decision-makers become committed to making the required changes.

- c) It is critical to raise gender awareness among members of farmer organizations working with FAO to promote changes in the current norms and standards of these organizations. Reforms are needed to address gender inequality and realize the potential opportunities that exist to maximize incomes and productivity by empowering women and giving them equal consideration as men. Farmer organizations have influence over access to irrigation water and eligibility criteria for subsidies and training. Efforts should be made to enhance the potential of these organizations to increase women's participation in the labour force and ensure that women work under equal conditions and receive equitable wages.

- d) It is important to complete the proposed legal and regulatory reforms regarding land laws and customary laws that discriminate against women in areas related to land ownership and the inheritance of state or private lands.
- e) Women and men's empowerment should be a precursor to any kind of rural development. The women's empowerment process needs to be initiated before implementing and targeting specific programmes, including those designed to improve livelihoods.
- f) It is important to immediately determine the technical skills and knowledge that women working in the agricultural sectors need, and put in place processes to train women who require and demand these skills and know-how. In developing these training initiatives, women's practical needs and current constraints need to be taken into consideration.
- g) Gender empowerment units and gender focal points in key ministries and departments should be established to implement gender action plans.
- h) Practical training on gender should be provided to decision-makers and officers at the provincial and district levels, and be carried out in community settings using practical examples. The first phase of this training would involve awareness raising and gender sensitization. This would be followed by a second phase with more advanced training on gender analysis, gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming in programme formulation and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The second phase would also stress the importance of conducting gender audits.
- i) A working group should be convened to discuss the strategic needs of rural women. The working group can help improve the status of women in a number of areas related to economic opportunities, political participation, employment, and social protection, especially for the increasing numbers of elderly women.
- j) Government institutions together with state banks should undertake publicity campaigns that target rural women and promote services that can enable women to obtain credit at reasonable interest rates and gain access to insurance. These services should be able to offer higher-value loans to women who want to engage in larger businesses.
- k) All ministries and departments working in agricultural and rural development should begin as soon as possible to collect data that is disaggregated by sex and location. Current formats for data management should be revised to establish new user-friendly and gender-sensitive data collection and information systems.
- l) Gender needs to be mainstreamed into the institutional structure of agriculture extension services. Actions should be undertaken to create gender awareness among responsible officials and strengthen their capacities to address gender issues. The agriculture extension service system should determine how many women require technological support and training in different cultivation methods, and certification and classification systems; assess their level of competency; and design appropriate training programmes that ensure these women have the skills they need to produce agricultural goods that have a market demand.



# 1

## INTRODUCTION



FAO recognizes that gender equality is both a human right and an absolute necessity for achieving the Organization's mandate to eradicate hunger and poverty worldwide.

In 2013, FAO has articulated its policy on gender equality in the publication: *FAO Policy on Gender Equality. Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development*.<sup>1</sup> In this policy document, gender mainstreaming and women-targeted actions are considered as components of a two-pronged strategy for promoting gender equality in the agriculture and rural sectors. The set of minimum standards for gender mainstreaming laid out in the FAO policy document includes a requirement to undertake a country gender Assessment. This Assessment contributes to the formulation of the country programme that is established between FAO and member country governments and expressed in the Country Programming Framework. The Assessment also supports gender analysis at the identification and formulation stages of technical assistance projects. The 2012 FAO *Guide to the Project Cycle* states that a gender analysis is essential for the preparation of a concept note for programmes and projects<sup>2</sup> and it is recommended by FAO that a gender Assessment be carried out before any project is formulated.

The experience of the FAO Gender Team in Sri Lanka has shown that the absence of a national gender Assessment of the agriculture and rural sectors has hindered gender mainstreaming in technical projects and programmes. There is a general lack of baseline gender-related information on issues related to the FAO mandate.

The objective of the Assessment is to analyse the agriculture and rural sectors from a gender perspective at the macro level (policy), meso level (institutional) and micro level (community and household). The Assessment seeks to identify gender inequalities in access to critical productive resources, assets, services and opportunities. The assessment looks at the priorities, needs and constraints of both women and men in agricultural and rural communities, and the gaps that exist in responding to these issues. It also provides recommendations and guidance to promote gender sensitivity in future programmes and projects, and identifies possible partners for gender-related activities.

The publication of this Assessment comes at a good time. Sri Lanka is in the process of reviewing and finalizing a number of important policy instruments, including the National Agriculture Policy the National Nutrition Policy and the Multisectoral Action Plan for Nutrition. The findings from this Assessment should feed into these policies and plans.

This Assessment is also intended to raise awareness about gender issues among policy-makers, FAO officers, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) in Sri Lanka. It provides background and gender-related information, and can be used as a tool to mainstream gender perspectives in future policies, projects and programmes in ways that empower rural women.

## 1.1 Methodology

The Assessment is partly based on a comprehensive desk review. The publications reviewed included plans and reports of development agencies, NGOs and the government, as well as research studies, evaluations, case studies, surveys and databases on human development and gender. Over 250 publications were consulted, but only 50 have been referenced. In most of the documents produced in Sri Lanka, there was very limited or no information on gender mainstreaming and gender inequalities in the agriculture sectors.

An information gap analysis was also carried out. These gaps were filled to the extent possible by additional reading, field visits and meetings with key stakeholders in the country, and consulting the very limited secondary data that was available.

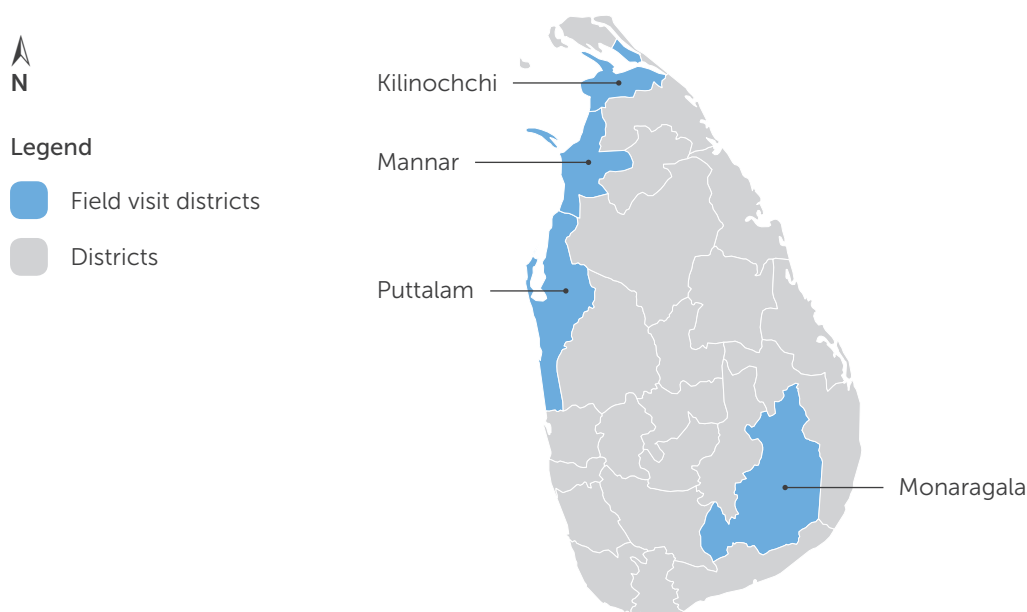
Information was also gathered during field visits undertaken in November 2017 and through focus group discussions held with different rural communities, especially communities that had benefited from the European Union-funded FAO initiative 'Poverty Reduction through Agricultural Development', which supported the Sri Lankan government's district development programmes.

<sup>1</sup> *FAO Policy on Gender Equality. Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development* is available at: [www.fao.org/policy-support/resources/resources-details/en/c/427024](http://www.fao.org/policy-support/resources/resources-details/en/c/427024)

<sup>2</sup> The *FAO Guide to the Project Cycle* is available at: [www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap105e/ap105e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap105e/ap105e.pdf)



Figure 1: Map of field locations visited during the Assessment



Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2012 (map elaborated by Visakha Tillekeratne)

The field visits were conducted over the course of a week in the districts of Puttalam, Mannar, Kilinochchi and Moneragala (see Annex 1 for focus group discussion participants and Annex 2 for key stakeholder interviews). These four districts have high poverty rates. The districts of Puttalam, Mannar and Kilinochchi in the northern dry zone of the country were affected by conflict. While Puttalam, Mannar and Kilinochchi have lately experienced severe impact from droughts and floods, Monaragala has been just partially affected over the years.

Included in the focus groups were vulnerable producers who are dependent on agriculture as their key source of income. These producers can be categorized as farmers cultivating both rainfed and irrigated lands; farmers dependent on livestock; and some fishers engaged in inland fishery production. The groups shared common constraints, including challenges in obtaining inputs, lack of technical know-how and technology, inaccessible land and irrigation, lack of financial capital, inadequate extension support, poor storage and processing operations and inefficient marketing.

An analysis was done of the findings from the desk review and field visits. The initial results of the analysis

were presented, discussed and validated at a meeting of core stakeholders. The list of stakeholders is included in Annex 2.

## 1.2 FAO presence in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka (then named Ceylon) became a FAO Member Nation in 1948. In 1979, a full FAO Representation was established within the United Nations compound in Colombo. In 1997, the FAO Representation in Sri Lanka was expanded to include the Maldives.

FAO technical assistance and funding support to the country focuses on addressing the government's needs and priorities within the agriculture sectors. FAO collaborates with all ministries whose work relates to the Organization's mandate, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry for Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment.

Over the past four decades, FAO has provided Sri Lanka with financial and technical assistance worth over USD 300 million.

<sup>3</sup>The FAO *Country Programming Framework For Sri Lanka 2018 to 2022* is available at: [www.fao.org/3/i8778en/i8778EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/i8778en/i8778EN.pdf)

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The three Country Outcomes expressed in the *FAO Country Programming Framework For Sri Lanka 2018 to 2022*<sup>3</sup> are:

1. The contribution of food systems to food and nutrition security and income generation is increased.
2. The environment, natural resources, forests and ecosystems are more sustainably managed taking account of climate change, and the resilience of the most vulnerable to shocks, natural disasters and climate variability is increased.
3. The capacity of concerned stakeholders to undertake policy formulation and collect, analyse and utilize data and information for evidence-based decision-making is increased..

### 1.3 Structure of the Assessment

The structure of the assessment, which follows the 2017 *FAO Guidelines for the assessment of gender mainstreaming*,<sup>4</sup> is composed of five sections.

The introduction presents a background to the study, the methodology and a description of the FAO presence in Sri Lanka.

The second section looks at the national context. It highlights Sri Lanka's position on global indexes for human development and gender inequality.

Section three deals with the national policy, legislative and institutional context. It considers the country's Constitution and Article 12 on Right to Equality, the progress Sri Lanka has made in meeting its obligations under the United Nations Convention on all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the mechanisms, policies and plans pertaining to women and gender that have been put in place.

Section four presents the Assessment's findings and gender analysis. It highlights trends in gender equality development and gender disparities in the country's agriculture and rural sectors.

Section five presents conclusions and recommendations.

<sup>3</sup>The *FAO Country Programming Framework For Sri Lanka 2018 to 2022* is available at: [www.fao.org/3/i8778en/I8778EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/i8778en/I8778EN.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>The *FAO Guidelines for the assessment of gender mainstreaming* are available at: [www.fao.org/3/a-bd714e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd714e.pdf)



# 2

## SRI LANKA COUNTRY CONTEXT





Gender issues in Sri Lanka are complex. Women are generally well served by the health care system. Services are available for the early detection of pregnancies, the systematic monitoring of expectant mothers and the provision of supplements during pregnancy. Almost all babies are delivered in hospitals. Health care services are provided for lactating mothers and adolescents. Health check-ups and medication are provided in schools. There is gender parity in education, with equal rates of enrolment and attendance for boys and girls. Girls remain in school for a longer period of time than boys.

However, gender inequality persists in decision-making, development planning and political participation. Women hold few management positions in the workplace, do not receive equal pay for similar work, and have higher rates of unemployment. There is also a notable gender gap in terms of access to and control over resources, such as land, credit and technology. A number of key stakeholders from different levels of government interviewed during the course of the Assessment stated that the efforts that have been undertaken to address the basic health and education needs of

women, have in some ways diverted attention away from the lack of measures taken to redress the gender imbalance in these areas. (See Annex 2 for a list of stakeholders).

Sri Lanka has received low scores in the global indexes measuring women's empowerment. The indicators used to determine women's empowerment on global gender indexes are not disaggregated by rural and urban areas. For Sri Lanka, interpreting the low scores in these indexes at the national level is made more complicated by the inter-regional disparities between the more the populous and more urbanized Western Province and the provinces with a larger percentage of rural population and plantations. However, it is clear that in Sri Lanka, as is the case in all developing countries, rural women are at a greater disadvantage than urban women.

## 2.1 Global development indexes

Sri Lanka, with a value of .766, ranks 73rd on the Human Development Index (HDI). It is grouped in a category of countries that are considered as having attained 'high human development' (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Sri Lanka's position in global human development and gender empowerment indexes**

Index	Value and rank
Human Development Index (HDI) 2016 (UNDP, 2016)	Value: 0.766 Ranking: 73rd out of 168 countries
Gender Development Index (GDI) 2016 (UNDP, 2016)	Value: 0.934 Ranking: Group 3, 'countries with medium equality in HDI achievements between women and men'.
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 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012)	Value: 47.6 Rank: 84th out of 128 countries

The HDI is calculated using a suite of indicators associated with basic elements of development (e.g. school attendance and access to health care, especially maternal and child care). In the Gender Development Index (GDI), Sri Lanka attained a value of 0.934, which puts it in a group of countries that have attained medium gender equality in HDI achievements.

The country has a slightly lower value (0.678) on the Inequality-adjusted HDI, in which the HDI value is adjusted based on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and several other indices of income inequality. GII measures inequality in three important aspects of development: reproductive health, which is measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent pregnancies; women's empowerment, which is measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, which is measured by the labour force participation rates of women and men 15 years old and older. The higher the GII value the more disparities between women and men and the more loss to human development. In Sri Lanka, there are on average 30 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births, and 14.8 births per 1 000 women ages 15 to 19. Women make up only 4.9 percent of the members of Parliament and 80.2 percent of women have completed some secondary education, the labour force participation rates for women is 30.2 percent, whereas for men it is 75.6 percent. Based on these figures, Sri Lanka was accorded a GII value of 0.386, ranking it 87th out of 159 countries (UNDP, 2016).

In 2017, Sri Lanka dropped nine places, from 100 to 109, in the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), which has been developed by the World Economic Forum. The country was ranked near the top in the subcategories of health and survival, but ranked 123rd in terms of the contribution towards economic participation and opportunity; 86th in educational attainment; and 65th in the political empowerment. Sri Lanka is one of 60 countries that widened its gender gap in the GGGI (World Economic Forum, 2017).

The Women's Economic Opportunity Index (WEOI) has been developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit using 29 indicators related to empowerment and opportunity. In the WEOI, the average of all indicators

are equated to a scale of 100. Sri Lanka received a value of 47.6 and ranked of 84th out of 122 countries. This value is mainly based on the country's success in meeting women's basic needs, such as health and education and the provision of health services that include delivering children in hospital, providing access to family planning and offering supplements and care during pregnancy. However, Sri Lanka scored low in equal pay for similar work and access to credit of higher value. The 2012, tertiary educational enrolment rates for women in Sri Lanka fell (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

If Sri Lanka is to improve its ranking in these gender and development indexes, progress will need to be made in women's political and labour force participation and incomes both in rural and urban areas.

## 2.2 Demography and population dynamics

According to World Bank estimates for 2016, which are based on the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects, 81 percent of the population of Sri Lanka lives in rural areas (See Table 2). All lands that are not administered under a municipal or urban council, as well as smaller estates (i.e. plantations with holdings of less than 20 acres) are defined as rural (Department of Census and Statistics, 2010).

Over the past 50 years, the ratio of rural population to total population has remained constant. The high percentage of rural population in the country has been linked to the impressive progress that the country has made in achieving equity between rural and urban areas in terms of the provision of basic public services and the maintenance of living standards (Ellis and Roberts, 2016).

However, migration from rural areas to cities, especially by youth and women is increasing because of the lack of economic and livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Internal migration tends to be higher in rural areas and districts that have larger concentrations of labour in agriculture and a larger share of population in the 19-34 age group (Weeraratne, 2015). It is projected that by 2050, more than 34.6 percent of the population will be urban (Worldometers, 2018).

Table 2: Population of Sri Lanka

Category	Numbers	Men	Women
Total Population	21 million	10 million (48%)	11 million (52%)
Total rural population	17 million (81% of total)	8.1 million	8.9 million
Households	5.2 million	Male-headed households 76.1%	Female-headed households 23.9%

Source: World Bank Open Data (<https://data.worldbank.org>); Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, Census of Population and Housing 2012 and Demographic and Health Survey 2016\_5Per\_Rpt 2017a, Chapter 2.

More than 25 percent of the population currently lives in the Western Province, which is the smallest province in terms of land area. A significant percentage (40 percent) of the population of the Western Province, where Colombo, the national capital, is situated, is urban. The demographic situation in the rest of the country is radically different, with only 15 percent of the population living in urban areas (FAO, 2016).

The fertility rate in Sri Lanka (measured by average number of children born alive to a woman) was 2.2 in 2016, with no significant change expected. In 2012, the age dependency ratio (i.e. the percentage of the population that was of working age) in Sri Lanka was 60.1 (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2017a, Chapter 4)

The age composition of the population has changed over time. The number of people over 65 has increased, and by 2025, the proportion of the population over 65 in Sri Lanka is expected to be one of the highest in Asia. There has been a corresponding decrease in the percentage of the population below 15 years.

After the age of 25, there is a significantly higher number of women than men. After the age of 55, there are a large number of widows. Between 87.7 percent of married people who have lost a spouse are women, and 81 percent of these widows live in rural areas (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012).

## 2.3 Poverty

According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, poverty in Sri Lanka steadily decreased between 2009 and 2013. The poverty head count ratio fell from 8.9 percent in 2009-2010 to 6.7 percent in 2012-2013. In 2016, the national poverty head count had declined to 4.1 percent. The official poverty line in 2016 was Rs. 4 166 per person per month (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017b). In 2016, the poverty head count was 1.9 percent in urban areas; 4.3 percent in rural areas; and 8.8 percent in the estate sector (i.e. large plantations growing tea, rubber and coconut). While the mean household income per month is lowest in the estate sector, the largest absolute numbers of poor people are found in rural areas (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017b).

Differences in the poverty situation for women and men are reflected in the indicators shown in Table 3. Gender inequality in wages for similar work, differences in the estimated earned income per capita for women versus men and the estimated female/male ratio in terms of earned income all indicate that women are poorer than men. Rural areas have higher numbers of female-headed households.

Table 3: Poverty indicators

Indicator	Value
Poverty head count ratio (Nanayakkara, 2017)	Income poverty: 7% with of the income poor living in rural areas Extreme poverty (<USD 1.90 per day): 2.2%; 89% the extremely poor live in rural areas
Wage equality for similar work (survey) <sup>5</sup> female/male ratio	0.69%
Estimated earned income per capita per month women	Rs 5 379
Estimated earned income per capita per month men	Rs 17 275
Estimated earned income female/male ratio	0.31%
Mean household income per month- urban <sup>6</sup>	Rs 88 692
Mean household income per month – rural	Rs 58 137
Mean household income per month – estate sector	Rs 34 804
Multidimensional poverty (Nanayakkara, 2017)	Total: 791 874 persons Percentage: 4% of the total population; 76.4% of this population live in rural areas

Multidimensional poverty is a measure of acute poverty and deprivations related to education, health and living conditions. Only a small segment of the population (4 percent) are considered to be facing multidimensional poverty, but more than three-quarters of them live in rural areas.

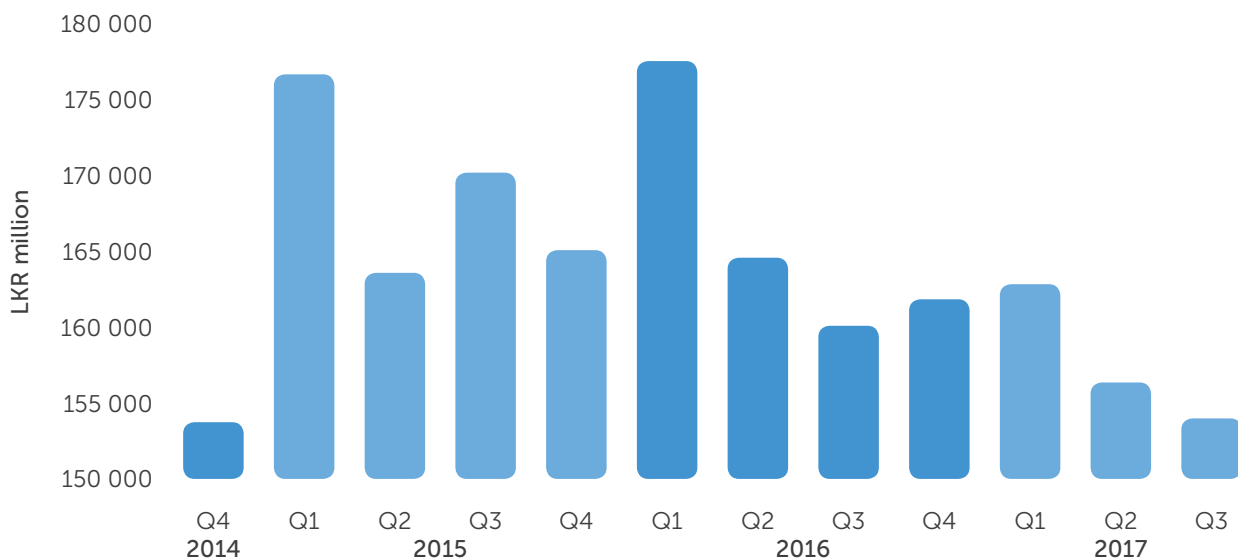
Eleven percent of the population is considered to be living 'near multidimensional poverty' and in danger of slipping back into poverty (Nanayakkara, 2017). Women are more likely than men to be facing multidimensional poverty and near multidimensional poverty.

<sup>5</sup> Estimates on wage equality and male and female incomes are from World Economic Forum, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Figures on mean household income are from Department of Census and Statistics, 2018.

Figure 2: Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

GDP in the agriculture sectors



Source: tradingeconomics.com, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

In 2017, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Sri Lanka reached a record high of USD 87.17 billion (Trading Economics, 2018). The past five decades have seen a decline in the contribution the agriculture sectors make to the GDP. In 1950, the contribution to GDP was 41 percent (Jayasinghe-Mudalige, 2006). In 2016, GDP from the agriculture sector only accounted for about 7.5 percent of the GDP. The agriculture sectors showed a negative growth rate of 4.2 in 2016 as a result of a combination of severe drought and heavy rains with flooding (Department of Census and Statistics, 2016).

Most of the contribution to the GDP from the agriculture sectors (5.3 percent) comes from agricultural crops, including paddy. The fisheries sector accounts for 1.4 percent of the GDP, and the livestock sector 0.8 percent (Export.gov, 2017).

The contribution by women to agriculture-related GDP is invisible. Most of the food production done by women is done at the homestead for domestic consumption.

## 2.4 Health, food security and nutrition

In Sri Lanka, the child mortality rate is extremely low. The maternal mortality rate is also low, but there has been little improvement over the past 4 years.

In both urban and rural areas of Sri Lanka, women register their pregnancy around 8 weeks after conception. This is significantly better than the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation that pregnancy registration should take place at a minimum before 12 weeks of gestation. Even though antenatal care is accessible to all, some women do not visit clinics.

For the WHO, the percentage of hospital deliveries is an indicator of the quality of care of a country's health system; the higher the percentage, better the system (Akachi and Kruk, 2016). In this regard, Sri Lanka is doing very well. Hospital deliveries are extremely high for a newly developed lower middle-income country in the region and there is no urban-rural bias. Compared to the other South Asian countries, Sri Lanka provides good coverage in providing mothers with at least one home visit within the ten days after delivery. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in rural areas the coverage is better than in urban areas. There is a very low rate of unmet needs of eligible families for family planning.



Table 4: Basic health and nutrition indicators

Indicator	Value
Child Mortality Rate	8/1000 live births
Maternal Mortality Rate	33/100 000 live births
Stunting, wasting and underweight among under 5 children	Stunting 17% (increase of 2%) Wasting 15% Underweight 21%
Anaemia in pregnant women	31.8%
Percentage of pregnant mothers registered before 8 weeks of gestation	78.47
Percentage of pregnant mothers with low BMI within first 12 weeks of gestation	18%
Access to antenatal care	100%
Hospital deliveries	99.9%
Percentage of postpartum mothers receiving at least one home visit within the 1st 10 postpartum days – national	92%
Cervical cancer screening of women in the 35-year age cohort screened – national	50.6%
Percentage eligible families with unmet need for family planning	6.22%
Access to water facilities (including safe drinking water) in rural areas	77.9%
Access to sanitation (toilet) facilities exclusively for household – rural	90.7%
Electricity supply and coverage in rural areas (households lit with electricity) – rural	88.8%

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2017a.; Family Health Bureau, 2018; Medical Research Institute, 2017

In rural areas, the percentage of homes that have access to water facilities, including safe drinking water, within the household premises (77.9 percent) is lower than it is for urban households (92.2 percent). The lack of access to water can increase rural women's workload as they are responsible for collecting water for household use. The high population density in the urban settings makes it difficult to provide toilets for all families. Consequently, rural homes had slightly better access to their own sanitation (toilet) facilities than urban ones. Almost all (98.8 percent) of urban areas have access to electricity, but the percentage is only 88.8 percent for rural areas.

The public health system is expanding its focus from pregnant and lactating mothers to providing services, (e.g. cervical screening for cancer) by establishing 'Well Women Clinics' for women of all ages. The country provides screening for cervical cancer for women 35 years old and older, regardless if they have had children or not. Most statistics show that there is no rural-urban bias in the delivery of health services within the public health system. However, the country needs to streamline and rationalize the provision of tertiary care in order to improve access to specialized health care facilities for rural communities. Because the life expectancy for women is longer than for men, there is a particular need to provide older women with social protection initiatives related to income, health, and care facilities (WFP, 2017). There has been a lack of health screening services targeted to men, which has hampered the prevention of early deaths from cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases. Occasional programmes, such as the 'Well Men Clinic' initiative that have aimed at addressing this gap has not been promoted effectively and relatively few men have attended them (de Silva *et al.*, 2008).

The Global Hunger Index (GHI)<sup>7</sup> and the Global Food Security Index (GFSI)<sup>8</sup> both rank Sri Lanka poorly in terms of food security. The GHI indicates that the average level of calorie deficit in Sri Lanka, (192 kilogram calories per capita per day) in 2014-2016, was the highest in South Asia. According to an unpublished FAO study on the prevalence of food insecurity in the national population of Sri Lanka, 2014-16, 22.7 percent of the population

in Sri Lanka was affected by moderate or severe food insecurity. The same FAO study found that prevalence of food insecurity is higher for adult women (22.8 percent) than for men (21. percent). A study done on energy and nutrient intakes among Sri Lankan adults (Jayawardena *et al.*, 2014) indicates that the total energy intake of men was approximately 500 calories higher than women. The most undernourished are women in the estate sector. One-quarter of the women over 18 working on plantations have low body mass index. In urban areas, more women are overweight and obese (Department of Census and Statistics, 2018).

Intake of protein and fat was almost the same for men and women (Jayawardena *et al.*, 2014). Discussions in the field indicate that the situation of women eating last and least in the household has changed over the years.

In 70 percent of the districts that are considered mostly rural, women have lower body mass index than the national average during their pregnancy. This is a reflection of rural women's generally poor nutrition status. Suboptimal nutritional status is generally noted among pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls. According to a nutrition survey carried out by the Medical Research Institute of the Ministry of Health, almost one in three (31.8 percent) pregnant women are anaemic. Stunting in children under five increased during the period 2007-2016 in seven districts, six of which are considered rural. Wasting in children under five has remained steady at 15 percent for the past 30 years, and the prevalence of underweight has not changed over the past 10 years. Poverty is a main reason for stunting. However, wasting, which has more to do with hygiene in care practices and resultant children's diseases, is not strictly related to wealth and income levels.

For the last decade, nutrition data has not been disaggregated by rural and urban areas. For children under five, ongoing nutrition status monitoring systems and data sheets (e.g. the 524 form filled by public health midwives and the 509 data sheet filled by the divisional medical officer of the health office) provide no sex-disaggregated data.

<sup>7</sup> The Global Hunger Index is available at: <http://www.globalhungerindex.org>

<sup>8</sup> The Global Food Security Index is available at: <https://foodsecurityindex.eiu.com>

### Box 1: Shortcomings in promoting public health

The public health system does not perform that well when it comes to promoting healthy diets, encourage exercise, and reduce alcohol consumption and smoking. Campaigns to encourage a shift to healthier lifestyle that have had the active participation and commitment of local communities have been very limited in Sri Lanka, and they have not been carried out in tandem with other health and nutrition initiatives.

In rural areas where patriarchy is more deeply ingrained, women cannot participate as actively as men in campaigns to improve family nutrition and are accorded fewer responsibilities in their implementation. The less than ideal achievement in nutrition targets is partly an indication that efforts to change behaviors related to diets have not succeeded. Large and consistent investments in terms of time, energy and staff are required to improve the diets and promote active lifestyles. Resources are required to encourage changes in food preparation and meal planning, guide healthy food purchases and increase exercise.

## 2.5 Education and literacy

According to the 2012 Population and Housing Census (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012), gender parity has been achieved in basic education. However, success in this area has not been matched by similar progress in skills development programmes. Because of the gender gap in skills development, many women are unable to gain access to the full spectrum of employment opportunities.

The 2016 Child Activity Survey 2016 (ILO and the Department of Census and Statistics, 2017) shows that 90.1 percent of children between 5 and 17 years are attending school. As the age of children increase, especially in the age group of 15 to 17, the incidence of school attendance declines to 60.3 percent. The proportion of girls attending school is marginally higher than that of boys. In rural areas, 357 000 children were not attending secondary school; 38 000 of these children had never attended school. The data on children not attending schools was not disaggregated by sex.

According to the same report, most children (97.7 percent) do not engage in economic activities. Of the relatively few children who work, one-thirds are girls. The majority of working children (i.e. working least one hour per day for the family) lived in rural areas. Nationally, of a total of 87 854 working children (mainly in the 15 to 17 age group) 84 percent were from rural areas. The majority of these children were not attending school.

In rural areas, 13.6 percent of the women in female-headed households and 14.6 percent in urban areas have obtained their Ordinary Level (O-level) certificate for secondary education. However, in the plantation sector only 2.1 percent of the women in female-headed households have passed the examination required to obtain the O-level certificate (Department of Census and Statistics, 2018). This situation has consequences on household health. In demographic and health surveys, lower levels of education for mothers are associated with poorer nutritional status for their children.

In 2013, 39.2 percent of the students admitted to vocational training courses were women. However, the participation of women in technical and technological courses was poor. Only 15.2 percent of those who entered technical colleges were women. The data was not disaggregated by rural and urban areas.

As shown in Table 5, in the 25-44 age group, the percentage of women obtaining a Bachelor's degree is higher than it is for men. Nearly twice as many urban women as men are awarded Bachelor's degrees as rural women and men. This is true for rural areas, where 8 percent of women in the 20 to 24-year age group obtain a degree compared to 4 percent of the men in the same age group (UNFPA, 2012). In urban areas, the percentage of women and men who obtain a degree is twice as high as in rural areas.

Table 5: Level of education

Education level	Urban		Rural		Comment
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Passing Grade 5 to 7					
5 to 14 years passed Grade 5 to 7	51.0	49.0	50.7	49.3	There does not seem to be a difference in urban and rural sectors. Also the younger the age group there is almost parity in passing Grade 5 to 7
15 to 24 years Passed Grade 5 to 7	56.4	43.6	61.0	39.0	The gap between rural men and women is very high
25 to 34 years Passed Grade 5 to 7	53.8	46.2	58.0	42.0	Fewer women have passed in both sectors, but the gap in the rural sector is much higher
35 to 44 years Passed Grade 5 to 7	49.1	50.1	54.0	46.0	Wide gap between rural men and women in this age group
Passing Grades 8 to 10					
5 to 14 years Passed Grade 8 to 10	49.9	50.1	49.3	50.7	There does not seem to be a difference in urban versus rural sectors. Also the younger the age group there is almost parity in passing Grade 8 to 10
15 to 24 years Passed Grade 8 to 10	53.1	46.9	52.5	47.5	Negligible difference between rural and urban women. But wider gap between men and women of both sectors
25 to 34 years Passed Grade 8 to 10	52.9	47.1	51.4	48.6	Fewer women have passed in both sectors, but the difference is not vast
35 to 44 years Passed Grade 8 to 10	51.0	49.0	49.8	50.2	There does not seem to be much difference between men and women in both sectors

Education level	Urban		Rural		Comment
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Passing O-level examination					
15 to 24 years Passed O-level examination	50.4	49.6	47.1	52.9	More women have passed the O-level exam in the rural sector. Whereas more men have passed in the urban sector. The % of rural women who have passed is higher than men in the urban sector
25 to 34 years passed O-level examination	51.0	49.0	47.2	52.8	Same
35 to 44 years Passed O-level examination	50.0	50.0	47.4	52.6	Same
15 to 24 years Bachelor's degree	45.5	55.5	36.2	63.8	Nearly two-thirds of the rural students obtaining a Bachelor's degree are women. In the urban sector there are 10% more women obtaining a Bachelor's degree
25 to 34 years Bachelor's Degree	44.9	55.1	36.2	63.8	The same as above
35 to 44 years Bachelor's degree	50.5	49.5	44.3	55.7	Though not as many rural women obtained a Bachelor's degree as in the two age groups there are 10% more women

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2012; UNFPA, 2012.

While there is a lack of research in this area, discussions in the field indicated that men prefer to opt out of education in favour of earning a living to support their families. Women are generally given more support to pursue their studies. A greater analysis of rural outmigration levels among educated women is warranted.

Despite higher levels of secondary and tertiary education, women in the rural sector are still disadvantaged in terms of access to and control over resources. This is partly explained by the fact that schools in rural areas and estates offer fewer opportunities for science education, in comparison with urban areas (ABD and GIZ, 2015).





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## Box 2: Gender in the school curricula

In general, school curricula are insensitive to critical gender issues. The curricula do not contest widely accepted unequal gender relations that contribute to the high incidence of gender-based violence and hinder the development of an autonomous personhood in women. The Life Competencies curriculum, which is introduced in Grade 7, has not promoted the reduction of gender stereotyping and does not purposefully work to empower girls and women to challenge negative gendered norms. In tertiary education, women's studies tend to be compartmentalized in special programmes in universities or in a few courses on gender issues in specific subjects.

According to the 2012 Population and Housing Census (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012), 95.7 percent of the population was literate. A slight gender gap persists: 96.9 percent of the men are literate as opposed to 94.6 percent of the women. Achievements in this area have closed the vast gender gap in literacy that existed in the 1940s and 1950s. This progress has been generally the same in most provinces. However, in the Central, Uva and Eastern provinces fairly significant gender gaps in literacy remain, with literacy rates for women 3 to 5 percent lower than men's. The available data on literacy is not disaggregated by rural, urban and estate areas.

## 2.6 Employment

According to the Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey for the fourth quarter of 2017 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017c), the estimated number of economically active people over 15 in Sri Lanka was about 8.6 million. Men accounted for 63.6 percent of this total; women 36.4 percent. The agriculture sectors accounted for 27 percent of the labour force; manufacturing 28.3 percent; and the service sector 44.7 percent.

The female unemployment rate stood at 5.6 percent, nearly double the male rate (3 percent). The unemployment rate was highest for youth (15-24 years) at 17.4 percent. For women in this age group, the unemployment rate was 22 percent, for men it was 14.7 percent.

Table 6: Labour force participation in 2017

	Men	Women
Economically active population	3 148 961	5 493 160
Percentage of employed population in agriculture (includes fisheries, aquaculture and forestry)	29.7	25.5
Percentage of employed population in agriculture (includes fisheries, aquaculture and forestry)	29.7	25.5
Percentage of employed population in services	42.9	45.8
Craft and related trade workers	486 024	913 727
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	115 356	648 856

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2017c.



Men made up 63.4 percent of the economically active population in the rural areas; women 36.6 percent. In numbers, 2.48 million women are economically active in the rural areas (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017c). The agriculture sectors account for 70 percent of the rural workforce; the services and manufacture sectors account for the other 30 percent.

Out of the total women employed in the country, 29.7 percent work in the agriculture sectors (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017c). These women tend to work in the informal sector where they are poorly paid and not protected by labour laws. In 2013, the contribution of informal sector employment to the total employment was about 60.8 percent, and the employment contribution of the agriculture sector to the informal sector was 86.8 percent (Department of Census and Statistics, 2013). As of the fourth quarter of 2017, 61.2 percent of unpaid family workers worked in the agricultural sector. Unpaid family workers represented 16.4 percent of the total employed female population; for men the percentage was just 2.5 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017c).

There is a substantial difference between women and men in remuneration in casual labour in agriculture. This labour involves temporary work and varies depending on the geographical area, the season and type of crop. In the districts visited during the Assessment, a casual male worker receives Rs 1 200 per day for agriculture labour work and female worker receive Rs 600 for the same type of work. These rates further fluctuate in between seasons, with women receiving even less when rates are low.

The participation rates of men and women in agriculture and industry are relatively close. However, the gap widens in more technical occupations of plant and machine operator and assemblers, where women constitute only 17 percent of the workforce.

The craft sector is important for rural livelihoods. Much of the needed raw materials (e.g. minerals, wood, clay, palmyra, dry leaves and seeds) are obtained in rural areas and it is often rural craftworkers who have the expertise and skills that have been passed down through generations who do the work. Women make a variety of crafts, such as reed ware, jaggery (brown palm sugar) and lace. However, crafts of higher value (e.g. brass work,

jewellery, carpentry or wood carving) are traditionally done by men. Few women engage in marketing their crafts outside their home due to their household chores and responsibilities, safety concerns and lack of mobility. Women's activities in this area are also hampered by gender stereotyping that assigns activities related to the marketing of crafts to men. The National Crafts Council from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce has registered 25 000 Sri Lankan craftworkers, 90 percent of whom are women.

According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka's 2016 Annual Report, the main reasons for the gender disparity in labour force participation are inadequate provisions for flexible working hours and a lack of proper child care facilities. The gender gap in this area is also a consequence of the greater responsibilities women have in terms of household tasks and mobility constraints associated with inadequacies in public transport (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2016). The report does not disaggregate its findings by rural and urban areas. Nevertheless, all the constraints mentioned are more pronounced in rural areas. It is clear that social, cultural and economic barriers faced by rural women are greater than those faced by women in urban areas. A principle cause is the way education is delivered. As already noted, certain elements of the school curriculum, especially technical subjects, are segregated by sex due to gender norms.

### 2.6.1 Migrant workers

Although there has been a decline in the recent years due to various government restrictions imposed on female-migration, a large number of Sri Lankan women — over 100 000 every year — have been going abroad for the past three decades in search of employment (Sri Lankan Labour Migration, 2016). These migrant women workers mainly work as domestic helpers in the Middle East and most are from rural areas. Many of them go to earn money that may be small in real terms but is much more than they can earn in Sri Lanka. The money remitted to their families represents a key source of household income. Without these remittances, household earnings, including the income earned by men, would be inadequate. There are visible improvements in the overall standard of living of these households, although there is no evidence to demonstrate an increase in food and nutrition security. For many rural women who are unpaid family



### Box 3: Family Background Report

In 2013, the social impacts of female migration prompted the government to establish a requirement that a mandatory Family Background Report had to be completed by all women seeking overseas employment in the domestic sector. The Family Background Report is intended to ensure that women seeking domestic work abroad made informed decisions about their work, particularly regarding the care and protection of their children. Foreign Employment Development Officers are responsible for the administration of the Family Background Reports, which are approved at the district level. However, women's rights activists and NGOs have viewed the Family Background Report as an infringement on a women's right to choose a livelihood.

workers, have very little control over the limited income they earn from small-scale marketing of produce, and do not have access to the same resources as men to improve their livelihoods, the promise of steady formal employment can be an appealing option. The Kurunegala District, a highly agricultural area with the most amount of land under cultivation, also has the highest number of women migrating as housemaids. In 2016, 7 162 female workers left the district to work as housemaids abroad (Sri Lankan Labour Migration, 2016). The Kurunegala District, like Colombo, hosts a high number of foreign employment agencies. These agencies are located in at least three of the District's predominantly agricultural divisional secretariats that have high rates of female labour migration. Many women and women's support groups have also cited the high number of incidents of domestic violence as a reason women want to escape from home and migrate as workers. This situation clearly begs the question: why are agricultural and rural livelihoods failing these women?

## 2.7 Civil and political rights

Sri Lankan women have had the right to vote since 1931. In 2018, Sri Lanka ranked 180th out of 190 countries in the Women in National Parliament Score of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Currently only 13 of 225 (5.8 percent) members of Parliament are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018). As of 2012, the percentage of women members in Provincial Councils is 4.1 percent and in Local Councils, 1.9 percent (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). However, in a victory for the Sri Lankan NGOs that had been lobbying for women's empowerment, the Local Authorities Elections Act was amended in 2016 to ensure a 25 percent quota for women.

The 2014 National Human Development Report (UNDP Sri Lanka, 2014) notes that the limited representation of women in politics is largely due to the fact that the men in leadership positions in political parties have little confidence that women can win elections and even if they did win, that the only ministerial portfolios that they could handle would be related to women affairs.

### Box 4: Citizenship rights for women

The right of a Sri Lankan woman to retain their Sri Lankan nationality is enshrined in the Women's Charter. However, there are many problems and gaps in laws and regulations related with rights to citizenship for people married to foreign nationals. There is a general lack of acceptance that a man married to a Sri Lankan woman should have the same right to citizenship as the woman. It is much more accepted that a woman from another country who marries to a Sri Lankan man can have citizenship rights.

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## 2.8 Marriage and family relations

The Sri Lankan family now largely consists of the conjugal or nuclear family unit of husband, wife and children. In rural areas, a few extended family members (aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents) may reside with the nuclear family of mother, father and children, but the head of the household is the husband of the nuclear family. The Department of Census and Statistics defines a female-headed household as a household in which a female adult member is the one who is responsible for the care and organization of the household or she is selected as the head of the household by the other members of the household.

The value given to meeting the family social responsibilities is very high, and it is women who perform the majority of duties in this connection. Social obligations at funerals, weddings and religious alms giving are carried out by women and these are performed at home in rural areas, rather than in hotels and funeral parlours.

## 2.9 Violence against women

As there is no national database on violence against women, data is limited to small-scale studies and the women and children's desks of the Sri Lanka Police. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women at the United Nations Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993 and recent advances in communication technologies has brought violence against women in general and domestic violence in particular into the open over the past two decades. In Sri Lanka, 17 percent of women age 15-49 who have been married have suffered from domestic violence. Violence against women appears to be more pronounced in urban areas (20 percent) in comparison with rural areas (16 percent) and on estates (17 percent) (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017a). This violence is rooted in the unequal power relations that consign women to lower economic status. These relations are deeply embedded in patriarchal structures that shape both men and women's perceptions of how women should be treated. Alcoholism is also viewed as contributing to violence against women, but the evidence linking alcoholism to violence against women is extremely weak. Women on estates and in rural communities have less access to social protection than urban women. Consequently, these women are more vulnerable, as they have no entity they can turn to for support. Facilities for vulnerable women, such as safe houses, are few, particularly in rural areas.



# 3

## LEGISLATIVE, POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT





### 3.1 Constitution

The current Constitution of Sri Lanka is the third in the history of the country. The first was the Constitution of the Dominion of Ceylon, which was written before the country gained independence from Britain in 1948. The current constitution is the second Republican constitution and has been amended 19 times. There are ongoing efforts at constitutional reform.

Article 12 of Chapter III of the Constitution articulates the 'Right to equality'. Women and men are accorded the same rights. This is clearly mentioned in the four clauses of Article 12.

- (1) All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law.
- (2) No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds:
- (3) No person shall, on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex or any one such grounds, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, places of public entertainment and places of public worship of his own religion.
- (4) Nothing in this Article shall prevent special provision being made, by law, subordinate legislation or executive action, for the advancement of women, children or disabled persons.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

In 1981, the Government of Sri Lanka ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, several government commitments related to

the most important instruments of CEDAW have not been implemented. For example, there is no Women's Rights Bill, and the Women's Charter, which was adopted as a policy document in 1993, has yet to be incorporated into legislation.

Article 14 of CEDAW specifically addresses rural women and securing their right to quality of life. However, there is no reference to Article 14 in the programmes and activities implemented by the key ministries dealing with crop and livestock production, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and natural resource management. Article 14 should be implemented together with Article 11 on employment, Article 13 on access to financial credit and Article 15 on right to property. FAO has published guidance tool on the national implementation of Article 14 of CEDAW. The tool provides a number of indicators for gender mainstreaming in agriculture policies and programmes.<sup>10</sup> It appears however, that most of these indicators have not been put in place by Sri Lanka.

The government report to the 66th Session of the CEDAW Committee in 2017<sup>11</sup> and the Shadow Report<sup>12</sup> prepared by civil society groups only contained short cursory paragraphs on implementing Article 14. The key stakeholders who should be formulating policies and programmes in line with Article 14 have not participated in the reporting progress. This lack of attention comes despite the list of issues that CEDAW presented to the Sri Lanka Government at the 66th session of the Convention in 2016. Issue 10 on this list requests an update on the status of setting up of the national commission on women on measures taken to appoint gender focal points in each line ministry of the government.

Sri Lanka is also a signatory to several international conventions and instruments, including the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Nationally, the Sri Lanka Women's Charter is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination towards women. The Charter has three main objectives eradicating sex-based

<sup>9</sup> The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and 19 amendments as of 2016 is available at: <http://www.parliament.lk/files/pdf/constitution.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> *A Tool for Gender-Sensitive Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Programme Formulation. Guidelines for Ministries of Agriculture and FAO. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* is available at <http://www.fao.org/policy-support/resources/resources-details/en/c/427019>

<sup>11</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2017. CEDAW report on Sri Lanka is available at [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1071&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1071&Lang=en)

<sup>12</sup> Sri Lanka Shadow Report to CEDAW is available at [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/LKA/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_LKA\\_26306\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/LKA/INT_CEDAW_NGO_LKA_26306_E.pdf)

discrimination; fostering gender equality; and formulating standards to ensure women's rights are protected.

### 3.3 Land rights and inheritance

There are three modes of gaining access to land in Sri Lanka: inheritance of private land, or grants and permits to use state land; the purchase of private land; and the acquisition of a grant or permit to use state land. The state owns about 80 percent of the lands in Sri Lanka. Obtaining permits and grants to use state lands is the prime means of gaining access to land in rural areas. Insecure land tenure limits farmers' ability to invest in and efficiently manage agriculture activities.

The Matrimonial Rights and Inheritance Ordinance, 1876, which was amended in 1922, provides for equal rights to inheritance for male and female spouses. Upon the death of either spouse, the surviving spouse inherits half of the deceased spouse's property. The Land Development Ordinance, 1934, which was amended in 1983 and 1996, entitles the surviving spouse of a deceased person who holds a permit or grant to use state land to take possession of the land under the terms and conditions of the permit or grant without any gender discrimination. However, gender discrimination persists in several articles of this law. For example, the third schedule of the ordinance, which lists the order of inheritance, gives precedence to the male heir over the corresponding female heir.<sup>13</sup>

Inheritance does not prevent women from owning land. However according to cultural practices, the youngest male very often receives the inheritance. Male succession is a huge barrier to land security of rural women. This has a particularly negative impact on widows and their households who can become highly vulnerable after the death of the husband.

### 3.4 Traditional and customary laws

Apart from the general law, there are three 'personal laws' that operate in the country: the Kandyan law, which originated from the Kingdom of Kandy in the central region of Sri Lanka and applies to Kandyan Sinhalese; Thesawalami law, which applies in the

Sri Lankan Tamil community in the Northern province; and Muslim law. Several aspects of traditional and customary laws and practices favour men and limit women's access and control over land and reduce women's opportunities to engage in and benefit from agriculture production.

In Kandyan Law, two traditional family arrangements exist: the deega family arrangement in which the woman reside with the husband's family; and the binna family arrangement in which the husband resided with the wife's family (binna). The head of the household in a binna family arrangement is the father-in-law or if deceased, the mother-in-law. Under the Kandyan Law Declaration and Amendment Ordinance, 1938, amended in 1944, sons and daughters inherit their parents' property in equal shares. However, a daughter who marries into a deega family arrangement after the death of her father must transfer any immovable property she inherited from him to her brothers or unmarried sisters or sisters who have married into a binna family arrangement, upon their request for such property. For this reason, there may be more women owning land due to the binna form of marriage.

In Thesawalami law, women's guardianship passes from father to husband. Women have to obtain permission from the husband to dispose of any land of they own even when the property has been brought into the marriage by the woman.

Under Muslim law governing marriage, girls 12 years of age are eligible to marry, and girls younger than 12 can be married if they are given permission by a religious official (quazi). In Muslim law, even though the woman owns property, the man may use this property to earn an income without sharing any part of these earnings with his spouse. The Muslim Intestate Succession Ordinance, 1931, recognizes three types of heirs: sharers, residuaries and distant kindred. Among the sharers are the deceased's spouse, daughter and son's daughter who receive a definite fraction of the estate. In the presence of a son, the daughter who is a sharer becomes a residuary with a lesser share than that of the son. A widow inherits half the portion that a widower would inherit, and the mother of the deceased is entitled to half of the share of the father of the deceased.

<sup>13</sup> More information on women's property and use rights in personal laws in Sri Lanka can be found on the FAO Gender and Land Rights Database at: [www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/national-legal-framework/womens-property-and-use-rights-in-personal-laws/en/?country\\_iso3=LKA](http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/national-legal-framework/womens-property-and-use-rights-in-personal-laws/en/?country_iso3=LKA)





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In both Thesawalami and Muslim laws the concept of 'guardianship' of the woman by the man, which is taken very seriously in the rural areas, is a stumbling block to women's empowerment.

There have been efforts made to amend some elements of these personal laws, especially those that are not in line with CEDAW. In 2018, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka made a proposal to change Article 16 of the Constitution, which states that all written and unwritten laws that existed prior to the 1978 Constitution are 'valid and operative' even if they are 'inconsistent' with fundamental rights granted to all citizens. The Commission has appealed to the Prime Minister, members of the Steering Committee on Constitutional Reform and the elected leaders of Sri Lanka, to ensure that constitutional reforms will guarantee that fundamental rights are available to all people of Sri Lanka unconditionally.

### 3.5 Laws pertaining to violence

The penal code was amended in 1996 to make incest, sexual abuse and harassment criminal offences. As mentioned earlier, the Domestic Violence Act of 2005 was also a step in the right direction. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) convention on the prevention of trafficking of children and women has been accepted by the Sri Lankan government. Legislation making 18 years the minimum age of marriage has been enacted. There is a grey area in the law where statutory rape is set at 16 years, but the age of marriage is 18. This gap needs to be addressed. Despite progress at the legal level, women continue to experience violence in the home and elsewhere.

### 3.6 Government mechanisms addressing gender

The Sri Lankan Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MWCA) was established to respond to the needs of women and children and work for their betterment.<sup>14</sup> MWCA, which is at the centre of the government's gender mechanisms, has been operating under its current name since 2015. However, MWCA and its departments and statutory institutions have

been in existence for thirty years under a variety of different names. The main departments and statutory institutions under MWCA are the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau, the National Committee on Women, the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, the National Child Protection Authority and the Children's Secretariat. The National Committee on Women formulates policies to protect women engaged in jobs in the informal sector.

The major responsibilities of MWCA include:

- the adoption of measures that can empower women, with special focus on groups affected by conflict and poverty, and ensure gender equality and equity;
- the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes for empowerment of female-headed households; and
- the implementation of the Women's Charter.

Some gender mainstreaming initiatives being implemented at the ministerial level are:

- promoting gender mainstreaming policies and practices to eliminate discrimination against women and girls;
- creating and maintaining projects and programmes to encourage men to adopt gender-equal practices;
- maintaining gender balance and implementation of gender budgeting; and
- formulating programmes, systems and measures to minimize the occurrence of gender-based violence.

The MWCA has stipulated the following key indicators in achieving their plans:

- establishing a national centre to provide support services to widows and female-headed households in the north;
- establishing a female-headed household database;
- making progress to reaching Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;

<sup>14</sup> The web site of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs is available at: [www.childwomenmin.gov.lk/en/home](http://www.childwomenmin.gov.lk/en/home)



- increasing the number of female entrepreneurs in sustainable businesses that make use of small and medium enterprise loans and subsidies;
- increasing the percentage of women participation in labour force;
- increasing the number of female-headed households that have been built houses through financial assistance programmes; and
- increasing the number of public institutions that maintain sex-disaggregated data systems.

The Women’s Bureau of Sri Lanka, an implementation unit within MWCA, conducts programmes in the key areas to empower female-headed families economically and socially, prevent gender-based violence and foster gender equality. The Women’s Bureau’s work includes:

- home gardening programmes;
- livestock development programme (e.g. providing poultry on loan basis, offering training);
- entrepreneur development and market promotion. (e.g. revolving credit scheme, trade fairs, business training);

- alternative income generating projects for migrant women; and
- the empowerment of women in the fisheries sector (e.g. self-employment through the production of items related to the fishing industry using local raw materials).

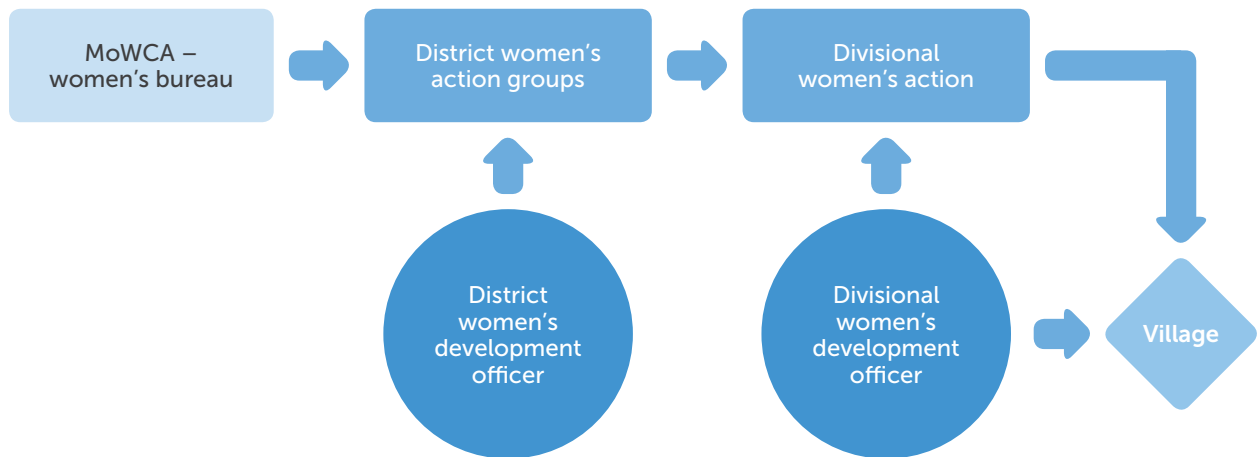
The Women’s Bureau has a subnational organizational network to implement field programmes. There are 24 Women’s Federations active at the district level, and 310 at the divisional level. There are 11 959 women’s action societies operating at *Grama Niladhari* division level. A *Grama Niladhari* division is a subunit of a divisional secretariat. The duties of a *Grama Niladhari* include the reporting of issuing of permits, gathering statistics, maintaining the voter registry and keeping the peace by settlement of personal disputes. These officials are responsible for keeping track of criminal activity in their area and issuing character certificates on behalf of residents when requested by them.

Table 7: Women’s development activities of the MWCA

Type of activity	Division/statutory body
Providing services to strengthen women’s societies and Women’s Action Groups ( <i>Bala Mandala</i> ) by preparing standard constitutions, applications for membership, credit applications, business plans to support income generation activities of women	Women’s Bureau
Providing information for Women Development Officers, as well as duty lists, progress report forms	Women’s Bureau
Providing services for victims of violence, counselling centres, officers at police desks, hospitals	Women’s Bureau
Formulating and coordinating policies and plans, laws and regulations; liaising with donor agencies; managing the National Committee on Women	The Additional Secretary and Secretary of the Ministry
Implementing women’s development programmes; supporting micro credit schemes and other services to support livelihood development, including training and awareness raising, market promotion and trade exhibitions	Women’s Bureau



Figure 3: Service delivery to women in villages



The activities of the district and divisional Women's Development Officers are guided by the MWCA through the Women's Bureau. Their salaries are paid by the provincial councils. Women's Development Officers operating at the divisional level primarily conduct awareness-raising campaigns for women on a range of topics (e.g. livelihood improvement, violence prevention, laws) and provide some amount of credit for self-employment. The Women's Development Officers often lack resources (e.g. fuel) to carry out its regular supervisory activities and make visits to women's societies in the *Grama Niladhari* divisions.

Another proposed government platform intended to support the empowerment of women is the Independent Commission for Women. It is not yet operational but is expected to be established soon through the Constitutional Council.

The gender mechanisms within the Sri Lankan government constitute a system for providing support to women. They are not designed to establish a conversation among men and women about gender.

### 3.7 Policies and plans related to women and gender

A chapter on women's rights has been included in the National Human Rights Action Plan (2017-2021). This chapter addressed issues such as, law reforms, war-affected women, employment and the enhancement of institutional mechanisms. MWCA, with the support of United Nations agencies and partners, including civil society organizations,

local NGOs and government ministries (Ministry of National Policy and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Animal Production and Health of the Ministry of Livestock and Rural Community Development, Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources) have formulated the National Action Plan on Women-Headed Households (NAPWHH), which addresses the livelihood and food security needs of this vulnerable population group.

In 2016, a 'Gap Analysis of Immediate Needs and Existing Services for Female-Headed Households', carried out by one UNFPA Programme in collaboration with the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, found that barely 10 percent of women in need receive assistance. Some of the recommendations that were made based on this analysis have been included in NAPWHH. The 2015 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publication, *Mapping of Socio-Economic Support Services to female-headed households in the Northern Province* provided additional insight for the action plan. The NAPWHH addresses the multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities of female-headed households. It does this within the framework of the national mechanisms that have been put in place by the Ministry of Social Services, the Samurdhi Authority, and the Department of Pensions to develop sustainable livelihoods, long-term employment and social protection and the capacity building activities of MWCA. The ultimate goal of the NAPWHH is to improve the national policy and legislative framework for addressing the issues that female-headed households are facing.



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With the support of the UNDP, MWCA has developed the National Action Plan to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Support from the UNDP also included the development of a district-level referral system, capacity building to implement the plan, the sensitization of magistrates on the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and on matters pertaining to sexual and gender-based violence, and the publication of the training manual (e.g. response, prevention and sensitization) for police. There is also an active National Forum Against Gender-Based Violence that shares annual work plans and updates on the implementation of these plans on gender and gender-based violence by each agency.

The Government of Sri Lanka focuses its gender-related work on distinct activities to support women's welfare and interventions specifically targeted to women rather than mainstreaming gender into all its policies and programmes. In fact, if the government committed itself to mainstreaming gender in all its activities, the name of the 'Ministry of Women and Child Affairs' would need to be changed. The current initiatives implemented by the MWCA, the Ministry of Social Welfare, poverty alleviation schemes and provincial councils remain inadequate to address in a holistic manner the challenges women are facing. These initiatives have a limited impact on gender equity and equality.



# 4

## ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AND GENDER ANALYSIS





## 4.1 Agriculture value chains

The agriculture sectors, which produce food for both the domestic and international markets, continue to be an important source of revenue for the country and rural communities. Of a total land area of 6.55 million hectares, 2 million ha are agricultural land, of which 650 000 ha are irrigated. The total cultivated area, including home gardens and plantations, is estimated at 2.86 million ha.

The domestic food sector is dominated by the production of paddy rice. Other commercial field crops include chili, onion, vegetables, pulses, tuber crops, maize and other cereals. Farms in the central hills also produce 'up-country vegetables', such as carrots, leeks, cabbage and potato. Fruits, vegetables, spices and seafood are produced for mainly domestic consumption, although some are grown for export. Tea, rubber and coconut are the major agricultural commodities for export.

Although agriculture is the main occupation in rural areas, yields have been stagnating for decades. The agriculture sectors have not advanced at the required speed, magnitude and value to fulfil the aspirations and needs of producers.

Women are heavily engaged in agriculture, but their contribution is not recognized, and they are not empowered to improve their situation. The women interviewed during the course of this Assessment reported that their main activities were household chores and work related to agriculture production

(see Annex 4). The focus group discussions confirmed widespread gender stereotypes about women's and men's roles. Most men in the focus group discussions said that a woman's role is to look after the family. When younger men engage in household chores it is considered exceptional. This was stated clearly by the older members in the group, especially the women. Domestic violence is considered to have declined. However, in at least 3 out of 10 households in the areas visited domestic violence was occurring.

Day care services are not common in rural areas. The responsibility of child care is shouldered entirely by women. Consequently, women typically work several more hours per day as compared to men.

Both men and women participate in field production. Women do the most tedious and time-consuming tasks involved in crop production (e.g. weeding). Men are dominant in the later stages of the value chain where commodities are converted into cash. These later stages of the value chain require technology, skills and experience with trading and marketing. There are however, cases of the effective involvement of women in the agricultural value chain when levels of production are lower.

Table 9 below summarizes the different stages of the value chain for paddy rice and upland crop production (e.g. chilies, soybean, vegetables and other cash crops) and the participation rate of men and women in the different stages of the chain.

**Table 8: Areas and types of cultivation for key crops in Sri Lanka**

Crop	Area	Type of Irrigation and zone
Paddy (rice)	900 000 ha	45% major, 25% minor, 30% rainfed, mainly in dry zones
Other field crops	150 000	Mainly rainfed, dry zone and lesser quantities in the central hills
Plantation crops (mainly for export)	750 000 ha	Both rainfed and irrigated
Home gardens	1 million ha (estimated as scant data is available)	Mainly rain fed

Source: IPS, 2015.

Table 9: Women's and men's involvement in the crop value chain

Tasks – Production	Men	Women
Preparing the land – paddy	10	90
Preparing the land – upland	40	60
Ploughing	50	50
Planting	80	20
Fetching water for fertilizer dilution and fertilizer application	20	80
Weeding	90	10
Tasks – harvesting and marketing	Men	Women
Grading/husking – paddy	75%	25%
Transportation from farm to place of sale – paddy	10%	90%
Marketing – paddy	20%	80%
Marketing upland	50%	50%
Processing/value addition	70% in small-scale production	90% in large-scale production
Maintaining machinery		100%
Record keeping	40%	60%
Managing sales	30%	70%
Logistics	20%	80%

Women work at the production stages of the value chain largely because this work can be done close to home, and this gives women the flexibility they need to carry out household chores. Most women have very limited or no experience at all selling their farm products, especially when this involves traveling from their home. Women's mobility is severely hindered by a number of factors (e.g. household chores, safety issues, lack of driving skills and access to vehicles other than bicycles). Men are far more familiar with production technologies and have information about markets. Consequently negotiating prices and marketing produce are tasks mostly performed by men. As a result, women have fewer connections to influential networks and markets, and have less access to substantial capital. The fact that men play a dominant role in the value chain perpetuates women's dependence. In large commercial agricultural enterprises, men are more involved in record keeping (60 percent). However, women are entirely responsible for keeping records when they are self-employed in a rural micro-enterprise (e.g. making of sweets and snacks) or small-scale commercial agriculture (e.g. home-based mushroom cultivation). Women have little capacity to take on the logistics related larger commercial operations. The transport sector is entirely in the hands of men.

When women were asked why they had such limited engagement in the later stages of agricultural value chains, they gave as their main reasons: their household responsibilities, lack of mobility, lack of skills in negotiation and lack of enthusiasm. If women are to increase their engagement in the later stages of the agricultural value chain and increase their earnings, these types of barriers need to be overcome. Access to market information, networking systems and training, are also much more limited for women, and this too restricts their ability to participate in the later stages of the value chains and develop their own small or medium enterprises that can generate income by adding value to production. In some cases, inherent legalities in accessing land and credit, also limit women's ability to expand their engagement in agricultural value chains. In addition, there is a general norm and a common understanding among men and women that women are supposed to be 'looked after' by men, and as a result women themselves are often unaware of their own disadvantaged situation.

In discussions during the field visits, it was found that the lack of child care facilities was also hampering the progress of women in participating in the agricultural value chain and other areas of employment. One potential employment option that was discussed was that some women could become day care operators who could earn an income by looking after a small number of children (2 to 3). This could allow other women to engage more fully in agricultural production and other value chain activities.

#### 4.1.1 Paddy rice

Sri Lanka is almost self sufficient in paddy rice. Production of has increased from 2.9 million metric tonnes in 2002 to 4.8 million in 2015. This is a result of a number of policy changes that expanded agricultural production into uncultivated lands, increased the use of high yielding varieties, improved irrigation capacities, and subsidized fertilizer use. Although rice production has increased, prices remain low. Agricultural production and processing activities that add value to the production need to be modernized with a focus on developing higher-value goods mainly for the export market.

Women have very little access and control over paddy production. Table 9 indicates that grading and husking of paddy, which is semi-skilled work, is done mostly by women. The largely unskilled women are unable to transport paddy from farm to the place of sale because of issues related to mobility and their household responsibilities. Women have little engagement in the marketing of paddy, but are somewhat more involved in selling produce to commercial intermediaries. The sale of paddy and large-scale processing is controlled by men. The farmers who sell paddy at the end of the production chain, the buyers and the millers are all men. Hired machinery is owned and/or operated by men. Women may engage in some rice processing at the local level using minimal basic technologies. Some tasks (e.g. watching fields and handling water rotations at night, canal cleaning and fencing and working on the threshing floor) are considered taboo for women and are carried out by relatives or hired labour (Ratnayake, 2009).



#### 4.1.2 Other crops

Fresh fruit and vegetable value chains are also important. Two-thirds of Sri Lanka's fruits and vegetable are produced under rainfed conditions in the drier parts of the country, mostly the North and Eastern provinces. In addition, a wider range of fruit and vegetables known as 'upland' vegetables, are cultivated throughout the year on the central hills of the country in the southern and central provinces.

The emergence of supermarkets, which has profoundly influenced Sri Lanka's fresh fruit and vegetable marketing system, has had negative impacts on individual small farmers who are unable to compete (Abeysekera and Abeysekera, n.d.). More research is needed on the linkages between gender and these value chains and markets.

Women have a greater role and some amount of control over the production of these crops as they are homestead based and can be grown in home gardens. Women have the largest role in the cultivation of home gardens, which provide food for domestic consumption and for sale, including fruits, vegetables and many spices (e.g. cloves, cardamom, pepper and cinnamon).

In Sri Lanka, spice-based industries have high rates of female participation. Cinnamon and pepper are two of the most important products in the country's spice sector. Cinnamon is a labour-intensive crop. Both men and women are involved in preparing the land, weeding, rubbing, scraping, peeling, quill-making and drying. Peeling, which is important for determining the final quality of the product, is traditionally done in working shifts that last more than 12 hours a day. Although wages are high, the job carries with it a certain degree of social stigma, and as a result large numbers of people, especially young people, leave the industry (IPS, 2017).

In recent years, a new cinnamon peeling system has been put in place. Men cut fresh cinnamon wood in the estate early in the morning and deliver it to a factory where women peel the cinnamon in teams. Some recent studies have noted that this system eliminates the social stigma of cinnamon peeling, as workers perceive the job as similar to any other type of factory job. The system makes it easier for women to participate because the facilities are located in their villages and the work is done at fixed times. However, women tend to leave the job once they get married and have children. (Samarawickrema, 2015).

The jobs associated with commercialization stages of the cinnamon value chain are mostly done by men.

In the pepper value chain, women are primarily involved in the production stage as small-scale cultivators. Women also separate the berries from clusters and dry the pepper grains. Women do not participate in later stage of the value chain, where the pepper is processed and marketed for export (UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, 2016).

#### 4.1.3 Plantations

In Sri Lanka, the main contribution to the economy from the plantation sector comes from the processing of tea, rubber and coconut. Due to outbreaks of pests and diseases and shortages of labour on plantations, there are periodic production shortages that affect both domestic and export markets and cause prices to increase.

Women play an important role in the production of the tea and rubber crops. However, they have little capacity to replant tea plants on old lands or sustain themselves in between harvests. The initial cost of clearing and preparing the land makes it very difficult to invest in new rubber cultivation (IFAD, 2015). Lack of land ownership by women is also an important constraint for them.

In the case of small-scale tea farms, some recent studies on the different roles that men and women play in production indicate that men are mostly responsible for planting and pruning the tea bushes, while women are in charge of plucking, which is closely associated with the final quality of the product. However, training and upgrading programmes in the sector have neglected women. This has prevented information on field techniques from reaching the workers who could use it most (Mohan, 2018).

Coconut coir is the fibrous outer cover of the coconut. Processing coir is a cottage industry that is mainly done by women. The coir can be made into everything from string and rope to fishing nets, brushes and mattresses. The coir pith, which has a cork-like texture, is used as compost. The manual extraction, spinning, and weaving of coir twine is an important source for the livelihoods of many Sri Lankan women living in coastal areas, especially in the south and west of the country. Women are mostly in charge of collecting or purchasing coconut



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husk and taking them to the mills to have the fiber extracted for a fee. They earn their daily wages by selling products at the village shops or to the fiber mills. The coir industry (mills and factories) employs both men and women. Women however, do not receive equal pay for similar work. The wage disparity is supposedly due to women worker's lower productivity (OXFAM and NIBM, 2006).

On cashew plantations, women make up over 90 percent of the work force (Ministry of Plantations Industries, 2006). This highly labour-intensive industry, has excellent potential for becoming a key source for livelihoods for rural people, especially in the drier zone (Eastern province). However, no significant investment programmes have been implemented to develop this industry. Its two main by-products, cashew apple and shell, are not being utilized commercially (Ministry of Plantations Industries, 2006).

#### 4.1.4 Livestock

Livestock production is a substantial component of many smallholder farming systems in Sri Lanka. The animals that are raised are chicken, cattle, buffaloes, pigs, goats, sheep and ducks.

Over the past three decades, Sri Lanka's poultry industry has grown from the level of backyard system into well-established commercial subsector. The prominent growth is due to the significant engagement and investments from the private sector (Alahakoon, Jo, and Jayasena, 2016). According to national livestock statistics, the poultry population has increased by approximately 20 percent in the last three years (Department of Census and Statistics, 2018). From 2015 to 2014, chicken meat production increased by 9 percent (Department of Animal Production and Health, 2015).

Because poultry production can be done within the household premises and managed in conjunction with women's traditional responsibilities in the home, there are significant numbers of women engaged in small-scale backyard poultry production. After the poultry enclosure has been built on the same premises as the household, the raising of birds is done by a number of women based on buy-back agreements with poultry companies (i.e. the company guarantees purchase after providing inputs to the producer). The traders, either commercial

intermediaries or companies who offer buy-back arrangements, are men. Many projects have been implemented to provide assistance to small-scale, self-employed poultry producers, particularly women. During the course of the field visits, it was found that women participating in different development programmes very often did not receive the total support package of training, chicks, cages and other inputs that are needed to start commercial production and overcome current limitations. This is the reason many efforts by women to start poultry businesses often do not succeed. There has however, been some limited successes, especially in cases where a buy-back agreement with a company was put in place.

The raising of cattle is mainly done by men. This situation can be attributed to a number of underlying causes related to the cultural aspects of the pastoral community, which is by nature patriarchal. In traditional extensive grazing systems, men typically accompany the herd of cattle when taking them to different grazing lands. Women are responsible for animal care and milking. However, due to pressure on the land, production has changed to more intensive management systems and stall feeding. This has given rural women more opportunities to engage in cattle and goat production programmes and earn additional income (Ratnayake, 2009).

There are a number of factors however, that hinder women's participation in the later stages of the livestock value chain. Among them are the male domination of the trading and buy-back sector, women's lack of mobility, and gender norms around women and slaughtering activities.

Women in Sri Lanka (excluding Muslim ones) do not engage in the beef and mutton trade. The dairy sector has become the domain of men who own bigger herds, have access to networks for collecting milk, and have connections with private sector buyers. Dairy producer organizations also play a dominant role in the sector. Women's lack of capital to develop their own herds perpetuates the male control in the dairy industry. Women's lack of mobility also limits their ability to take cattle to different grazing lands. Methods, such as zero grazing, which would allow women to take care of the cattle and earn an income closer to their homes, have been slow to catch on.

The dairy value chain in Sri Lanka, which has high degree of participation from small producers, is fairly well researched and documented. During this assessment discussions were carried out with a number of key informants, including members of dairy organizations and small-scale dairy farmers (women and men), public servants and private sector representatives. It was found that the participation of women at different stages is inversely correlated to the value added during a given stage and the technology involved (see Table 10). Women’s participation decreases along the value chain. Women are seldom involved in managing chilling centres or milk processing.

Different studies suggest that limitations in transport (e.g. availability, affordability and security for women) and a lack of access to training, market knowledge, opportunities for networking, loans and markets, are preventing South Asian women from moving up the value chain (UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, 2016).

#### 4.1.5 Fisheries

In Sri Lanka, fisheries have been a male-dominated sector for centuries. Women in Sri Lanka rarely go out to fish except for short distances in small boats with seines in the Western coast and inland fishing reservoirs. There are a number of reason for this, including the lack technologically advanced vessels that can be handled by both men and women; lack of skills in swimming and deep-sea diving; a lack of protection from gender-based violence at sea; the lack of acceptance of women going out to sea; and lack of child care. There is some engagement by women in lagoon fisheries, especially for crab and prawn.

A study conducted in Trincomalee district (Lokuge and Hilhorst 2017), in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka, suggests that even though male fisheries officials, male community leaders and fishermen consider women’s participation in fisheries as quite minimal, women do play a key, but invisible, role in fishing activities. Women’s important contribution the fisheries sector (especially in post-harvest and marketing) is frequently unrecognized (FAO, 2013). As a result, women do not receive institutional recognition and are excluded from decision-making processes at both the household and community level. Women have a deeply subordinate role in fisheries organizations in Sri Lanka.

Women are mainly involved in small volume retail marketing of fish and seafood, and activities that add value to the fish that remains unsold after wholesale trading (which is done by men) is completed for the day. However, even though women contribute more than men in cutting, salting and drying the fish, the marketing of dry fish in larger volumes is done by men. Woman also work in the repair of nets. In addition to this work and their household chores, women are also responsible for obtaining credit and loans when their husbands are away fishing for extended periods. Regional studies carried out have highlighted the fact that women participating in the seafood export processing industry work under poorer conditions than men and receive lower wages, and frequently do not have access to measures and benefits that can safeguard their health and safety, and provide other forms of social protection (FAO, 2016).

Figure 4: Participation of women and men in the fisheries value chain

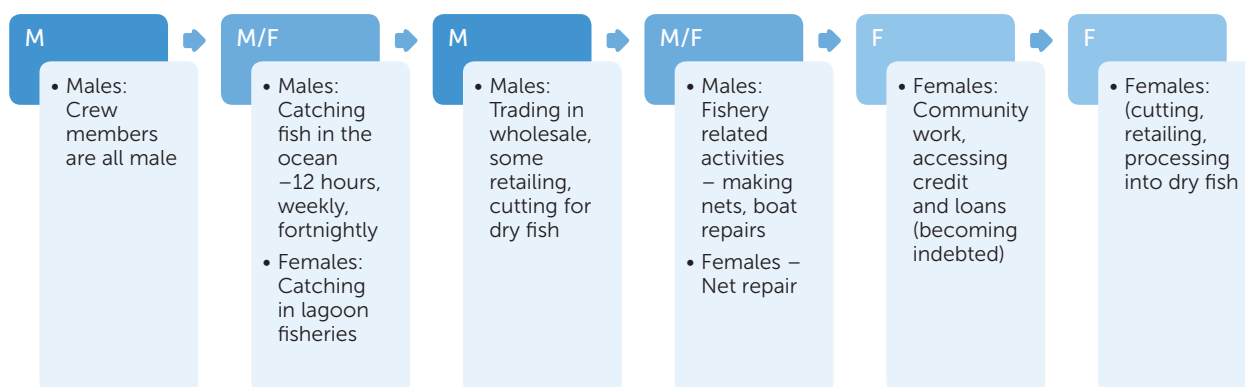


Table 10: Dairy value chain

Stages of Value Chain	Participants number and type	Involvement of women	Constraints
1. Inputs	Veterinary Services – Department of Animal Production and Health – 331 offices	Some veterinarians are women	High price of inputs, lack of coordination among suppliers
	Animal feed purchased from private sellers	Very few	Constant price increases
	Breeding material: National Livestock Development Board and the private sector	Very few	Transport and prices; availability of breeding stock
2. Production	Farm total – approximately 217 000		Lack of proper training to all dairy farmers
	Small scale: 1 to 5 litres – 132 000 farmers	40% women	Low productivity
	Medium scale: 5 to 20 litres	8.1 million	Lack of capital, lack of good animals, lack of space
	– 70 000 farmers	30% women	Lack of land ownership as a result lack of access to credit
3. Collection Centres	2 999 – Less than 120 litres – More than 120 litres  Nestle and Milco collect from small farmers; Fonterra, Cargills and K Co-op from medium- and large-scale farms	40% women in charge of centres collecting less than 120 litres. They are generally run by dairy societies. Men are in charge of over 89% of centres collecting more than 120 litres	Lack of capital (e.g. for chillers, transportation) Few firms are involved. No flexibility in incentives – meaning the ability to choose one element of an incentive scheme
4. Chilling Centres	188 are managed by Nestle and Milco – small farmers.  Larger volume chilling centres are managed by Cargills, Fonterra and K Co-op	10% of women managed chilling centres. These can be company owned or community operated centres	High operating costs; lack of knowledge on good housekeeping practices
5. Processors	27 main processors	10% of decision-makers are women in the management of dairy processing companies	Few products; little diversity; few players; low production

Source: Hirimuthugodage, 2016

#### 4.1.6 Land, water and rural infrastructure

In Sri Lanka, non-plantation agriculture is characterized by small farms mainly cultivating paddy. About 1.65 million smallholder farmers operate on average less than 2 ha and contribute 80 percent of the total annual food production (World Bank, 2016). Data from the 2002 Agricultural Census, show that only 16 percent of all owned land in the country belonged to women (Agriculture and Environment Statistics Division, 2002). According to the 2002 Census, the majority of farmers in Sri Lanka cultivate farms of around 2 ha in size and depend largely on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. Excess production, when available, is sold to local markets and to spot buyers due to limited accessibility of well-structured markets.

Six percent of agricultural households are classified as landless (Agriculture and Environment Statistics Division, 2002). These landless farming households, whose income is derived for poorly paid agricultural labour, are trapped in a vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. Unless significant measures are taken, the wages paid to women agricultural labourers will remain very low. However, many women contacted during the Assessment indicated that a lack of title to land does not necessarily prevent them from going into larger-scale commercial agriculture, such as paddy rice or high-value horticulture crops. If they have received adequate technical training and have access to capital and marketing networks, they can produce crops either on their husband's land, or as a share cropper on someone else's land (in the case of paddy rice) or on rented land.

Lack of access to land limits women's access to different essential agricultural assets and benefits (e.g. subsidies, credit and irrigation water). According to the ADB (2017), data show that women's control of land and property can deliver benefits to society as a whole (ADB, 2017). However, it is difficult to find data on land and water entitlements for women, and more sex-disaggregated data is needed in this area. Although gender issues in water supply, sanitation and hygiene are well researched and implemented, good practices in connection with water and land rights, and resource management and conservation have not been widely adopted (van der Molen, 2001).

Despite participatory development methods being introduced in various projects and programmes, irrigation water management is mostly implemented

using traditional techniques. There are two principle factors involved in gaining access and control of water for agricultural purposes: title to land title and registration in a farmer organization. Because female land ownership is low, fewer women can register for membership in the farmer organizations that regulate access to both minor and major irrigation schemes. As women have less ownership of land and their membership in farmer organizations is smaller than men's, their access to water for paddy is also much less. Farmer organizations, together with the relevant government officers, deliberate on allocation of water, and this is a male dominated exercise. This situation was confirmed during field visits. (Annex 1, included details of land ownership of the farmers who were met.)

Not having access to land has far reaching consequences for women. Being landless clearly affects the production of food for home consumption and cash crops for income. It also makes it difficult to get loans to improve production or invest in a business, as land cannot be used as collateral. Not having a title to the land also makes it harder to obtain agriculture support services, especially for fertilizer subsidies. Paddy farmers are eligible to apply for the fertilizer subsidy if they have legal title to their paddy lands. Tenants who do not own land are also entitled to the subsidy, but they need to produce documentary evidence showing their cultivation rights (Weerahewa, Kodithuwakku and Ariyawardana, 2010).

In some areas, poor access to irrigation, has pushed women to cultivate field crops in highlands or practice chena cultivation (shifting slash-and-burn farming in the dry areas). It has also led women to engage in organic agriculture, grow home gardens and cultivate spices, as these types of cultivation are mainly rainfed.

Although it is a very important factor, land ownership alone does not determine the number of male and female members that participate in a farmer organization meetings. There are other reasons why women (even those registered in farmer organizations) do not attend farmer organization water allocation meetings. These reasons are connected to women household's responsibilities, their assigned roles in the community, and security issues related to travel. It has been found through interviews on the field visits that women with higher levels of education have higher rates of attendance



### Box 5: Social community-based organizations

The most significant CBO in the social sphere is the death donation society, which plays a major role in funeral rituals. Death donation societies manage a community fund established through the contributions of the village households to pay for funeral expenses. They provide substantial benefits and social support to bereaved families. In these societies, women are prohibited from holding high office. Very few women have any leadership roles in these societies, even though most of the day-to-day work is done by women. The temple patron's committee, a religious community-based social activity, is also an essential point in village life.

at these meetings. In many farmer organizations, women are not recognized as members who can and should be voicing their concerns.

Very little has been reported about the differential manner in which women and men use irrigated water, and the times that are convenient for women to use the water, given their reproductive role and household chores. The few women who do deliberate on agricultural water-related matters tend to prefer to take their turn in maintaining the lower part of the canals that are closer to home rather than the upper parts located farther away (Zwarteveen, 1995). This preference is attributed to mobility and safety issues.

Access to water also includes 'agro-wells' and tube wells for home gardening and the cultivation of crops close to home. These wells are mainly provided through development projects and programmes that often take into consideration women's access to water when positioning these wells. Typically, an agro-well costs between Rs 250 000 and Rs 300 000, which is beyond the purchasing power of a single woman. However, for women acting together as a group to obtain credit, this investment becomes possible.

Rural infrastructure includes roads, community buildings, produce storage units and market-related structures. There is no data on gender considerations in the construction of these assets. However, some descriptions of the selection process, locations and position of these assets is available in donor reports and in social impact assessments. In the township development processes of agencies, such as the ADB and UN Habitat, community consultations, especially with women, are done in a proactive manner.

Sri Lanka is the country with the highest density of roads in South Asia. Consequently, rural women may have somewhat better access to services and

markets. However, if women's mobility is restricted due to issues related to household tasks and unsafe and inadequate public transport, this infrastructure may be of little use to women (ADB, 2015).

## 4.2 Rural institutions

The findings of the Outcome Evaluation of the Country Programme (2013-2017) of UNDP Sri Lanka (Multi Sector Development Solutions, 2017). showed that large numbers of CBOs have spread in the rural areas. Some of these CBOs are traditional in nature and play a significant role in the cultural fabric of rural communities. Field visits undertaken during this Assessment confirmed the importance of CBOs in rural areas. These organizations can be categorized into three types: social organizations, savings and credit organizations, and producer organizations.

In one village there may be up to 13 CBOs. The women interviewed during the field visits said they attend most of these CBO meetings and perform duties that are labour-intensive. The average duration of each of the meetings was two hours. A woman may attend up to eight CBO meetings each month. Women attend nearly 90 percent of the village meetings held in villages; men only attend about 30 percent.

Savings and credit societies include groups that are operated under the poverty alleviation scheme, Samurdhi. The Sri Lankan government launched the Samurdhi (or Prosperity) Programme in 1995 with the main goal of reducing poverty in the country. It has a wide network of national and local level officials administering its activities, and is led by its own Ministry and the Samurdhi Authority. Women's savings and credit organizations are also facilitated by the Women's Bureau through subregional women's action apex bodies.

Producer groups vary according to the different types of agricultural or craft production. Farmer, fisheries and dairy organizations have been around for a long time. These organizations are asked to participate whenever community involvement in planning platforms is considered necessary. In rural areas, men control these societies to a great extent. Deliberations on agricultural decisions within farmer organizations are dominated by men. In some organizations, women are not even recognized as members. Discussions with rural development officers and planning officers revealed that only 20 percent of any of the top three positions in mixed rural development societies are held by women. The situation is worse in farmer organizations, where female presidencies are extremely rare. Because of deeply rooted gender biases, women are seldom elected to top positions, even when there is constitutional provision in the organization mandating a certain degree of gender balance. When women do hold office, they tend to be in positions that do not influence decision-making, such as secretary or treasurer. As in many other countries, women hold no positions of authority in most fishery organizations, and the membership of these organizations is predominantly male (World Fish, 2010). The focus group discussions held with women farmer groups confirmed this situation.

Craft organizations have mainly female membership and are managed by women when the crafts produced are of low value and produced in low quantities. For example, the Kayts Palmyrah Self Help Groups in Mannar, which have less than 25 women, are managed by the women themselves. However, the larger Kayts Palmyrah Development Cooperative is largely male dominated. In fact, according to customary practices related to caste, a woman can never become the president of such a cooperative.

This is also the situation for other craftworkers, for example, weavers and reed basket makers in the Dumbara valley in Kandy; producers and merchants of coir rugs in the south; and brass manufacturers in Naththarampotha in Kandy. Caste-based practices also stigmatize women and consider them as unclean. The women in these communities are an especially vulnerable group with ethnic, caste, class and gender discriminations affecting them simultaneously (Silva, Sivapragasam and Thanges, 2009).

Participatory methods have been introduced to change the gender dynamics in CBOs. However the traditions and patriarchal systems of CBOs, especially the constitutions of farmer organizations, have remained substantially the same. The state entities that have a role in supervising CBOs do not have gender-sensitive officials who would try to change the status quo. A large number of officials and community members consulted during field visits indicated that the officers, even female officers, who guide rural organizations were not sensitive to gender issues. The rural women themselves lack awareness and insight into their situation, their rights and the potential they have to move forward. The lack of effective programmes to cultivate awareness of gender inequality is one of the key reasons for this situation. Most awareness-raising initiatives are conducted during a single day and do not go on through a sustained processes of asking questions of women and men, probing their responses, and reinforcing and reiteration key concepts. Programmes are sometimes held at times that are inconvenient to women. Gender concepts are not understood even by decision-makers (e.g. government officials and politicians) who mistake programmes targeting women for gender-equitable ones.

#### Box 6: Administrative boundaries

Administrative boundaries, which play a major role in the demarcation of the delivery of public services, are important to rural people. The main coordinating administrative officer at the smallest unit level, the *Grama Niladhari* (Village Administrative Officer), is required to place his or her signature on a number of important documents. In urban areas, there are alternative ways of obtaining services even without the endorsement of the *Grama Niladhari*. Rural people, on the other hand, are very dependent on the local bureaucracy and are at the mercy of the arbitrary will of these officials.





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#### 4.2.1 Rural finance

Over the past five years, women have become more empowered financially and have many options for obtaining credit, insurance and savings. Many women, especially heads of households, borrow from finance companies at high interest rates — over 20 percent per year. Some have obtained multiple loans that account for 10 times the volume of their income. It was evident that female heads of household in particular are unaware of the range of financial options open to them, as the promotional activities of banks are inadequate. Mobility issues for women also limit their ability to learn about the credit schemes available to them. Although many schemes offer small loans on affordable terms, higher value loans (Rs 500 000 and above) require guarantors who are state sector employees and own land as collateral, and are beyond the reach of many women.

Both men and women can get Govi Navoda and Ran Aswenna loans for agricultural production at 3 to 4 percent interest without guarantors or security. Half of the interest of 12 to 14 percent, is subsidized by the government. There are other credit schemes to for poultry producers (Diri Saviya) and small- and medium-scale entrepreneurs (Jaya Isura). All these schemes are provided by the major state and commercial banks. The Regional Development Bank provides low-interest loans specifically for small groups of women who are below the national poverty line. Loans can be obtained under the Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme. However, some weaknesses have been identified with regards to delays in releasing the loans, the subsidy allowance, the maximum amount of the loan and the quality of the service provided by some of the officers (Damayanthi and Champika, 2014).

The 2018 budget mentions Enterprise Sri Lanka, a government programme designed to support entrepreneurs by providing credit and interest subsidies. The credit plan, which has been allocated Rs 1 500 million, will specifically support small- and medium-scale enterprises owned by women. The language in the budget suggests the assistance will be mainly directed to rural women and youth. The approach is female-targeted rather than gender equitable.

Some producer organizations also make credit schemes credit schemes available to small groups. For example, fisheries organizations provide some loans, although they are seldom

accessible to women. Some NGOs also provide microfinance services.

Eighty-three percent of women use an account in a bank (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey, 2017). During field visits it was found that 95 percent of the focus group participants, both men and women, had bank accounts, mainly at state banks. All the women who had benefited from FAO projects had their own separate bank accounts, and a few couples had a joint account in addition to their own. Each of the accounts had between Rs 25 000 to 50 000 (approximately USD 312). In Moneragala, women appreciated the Samurdhi Savings and Credit Programme, which has enabled them to save enough to open accounts in Sri Lankan commercial banks. Over 80 percent of those met had multiple bank accounts with the Bank of Ceylon, People's Bank and the Regional Development Bank. The government-owned Bank of Ceylon, which has a strong presence in the country and specific credit schemes for rural areas, is the most used by the rural population. Of the 11 million bank accounts of Bank of Ceylon, over 6 million are held by women and over 80 percent of these women are rural.

#### 4.2.2 Social protection

Most of the social protection schemes in Sri Lanka are targeted to workers in the formal sector, for example, the government workers' pension scheme, the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and Employee Trust Fund (ETF) for private and semi-government employees. Private pension schemes are available through a number of providers, but these are seldom affordable for men and women earning less than Rs 35 000 per month. Formal sector workers are entitled to leave with pay, maternity benefits, job security, and compensation for work-related disabilities. The private and semi-government sectors also have substantial coverage from private health care. Plantation workers are now considered to be in the formal sector.

Those employed in the informal agriculture sector have access to the Farmer and Fisheries Pension Schemes administered by the Agriculture and Agrarian Insurance Board. Approximately half of farmers and fishers are covered. There is no sex-disaggregated data available on for these schemes, but officials estimated that around 20 percent of the contributors are women. However, the structuring of these schemes makes the pension



Table 11: Insurance coverage

Category	Coverage
Sri Lankan population	15%
Small medium enterprise sector	2%
Farmers (approximately 2 million)	Almost non-existent
Women in rural areas	Not known

insufficient to live on beyond age 60 (Secretariat for Senior Ministers, 2012; Eriyagama and Rannan-Eliya, 2003).

Men and women in the informal sector, including farmers, fishers, dairy producers and farm labourers do not have access to the same benefits as workers in the formal sector. For example, women in the informal agriculture sectors do not receive maternity benefits.

A Self-Employed Women's Pension Scheme has been proposed in the National Human Resources and Employment Policy, but it is not operational. NGOs and CBOs provide most of the social protection that is available to workers in the agricultural sectors.

The poverty alleviation scheme, Samurdhi, provides social protection by offering food stamps and other benefits to over one and a half million people. Discussions with beneficiaries and public officials, confirmed the general assessment that the programme suffers from poor targeting and shortfalls in implementation. Men and women working in agriculture are covered by the scheme, but receive few benefits other than credit. Men who own or have legal entitlement to agricultural land have better access to the agriculture protection assistance systems, even though food for household consumption is produced by women. Also, as women are not recognized as registered farmers or agricultural producers, they seldom qualify for subsidies. In food for assets programmes, unless women are specifically targeted, the farmer organizations, which are controlled by men, gain ownership of assets (e.g. community buildings) or control the use of irrigation systems.

Sri Lankans have not internalized the idea of insurance, and it has not generally been well explained to the general public. Existing schemes are largely for life and property insurance. In the small and medium enterprise sector, coverage is low primarily due to a lack of affordability, but also to limited familiarity with insurance.

Insurance is extremely important in rural areas, due to natural hazards, the severity of income loss in cases of death and disability, and economic shocks (e.g. inflation, market fluctuations and theft). However, very few farmers have insurance. Some farmers hold policies with the Agriculture and Agrarian Insurance Board; the weather-indexed insurance scheme that has been initiated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF); or the Federation of Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies of Sri Lanka (SANASA), an umbrella organization with over 8 000 primary societies offering microfinance. SANASA operates throughout the country, but predominantly in areas with Tamil speaking people in the North and East provinces. It has a reach of 1 million people mainly in rural areas. It provides micro-insurance to around 250 000 policy-holders, but many of these are not farmers. During the course of field visits, few farmers had opened an insurance policy through SANASA.

Due to male ownership of lands and crops (mainly paddy) only men tend to hold insurance policies. Only one woman met in the course of the field visits had insurance. Less than 20 percent of the policy-holders registered for insurance at the Agriculture and Agrarian Insurance Board are women.

### 4.2.3 Agriculture extension and technology

During discussions in the field, it was confirmed that there was significant knowledge gap between men and women with regard to technology. Most women questioned did not have any access to technology. It is largely men who have technical knowledge and competencies and who use technology. It is men who are contracted for services requiring technical skills and equipment (e.g. mechanical hoeing and combined harvesting).

In Sri Lanka the main advisory and support systems for agriculture are implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture through two departments: the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and the Department of Agrarian Development (DAD). The provision of technical advice is the responsibility of 'agriculture instructors' who are part of the extension system and have offices in Agrarian Services Centres. These centres, which are located at subdistrict levels and service an area that approximately matches that of the Divisional Secretariat, also provide farmer subsidies, strengthen farmer organizations and manage the Farmers Bank.

Agrarian Service Centres are managed centrally from the DAD, while the DOA management has been devolved through the provincial agriculture system. The fact that the two departments have a different management approach has led to suboptimal outcomes for agricultural development. Coverage of extension services is not sufficient, as the range instructors must cover has become too large. In the areas visited, half of the posts for agricultural instructors were not filled, which also undermines the delivery of services and clearly is not conducive to mainstreaming gender. Women are very seldom registered for various forms of assistance with Agrarian Service Centres.

The responses of the agricultural instructors in Annex 3 indicate that both the DAD and DOA do not have the required knowledge on gender mainstreaming in policies, programmes and plans. Until recently, the Farmers Bank, which is run by the DAD, was accessed mainly by male farmers. The bank has some programmes that target women to increase boost their involvement, but these programmes do not ensure equitable access to technical knowledge, capital, and subsidies, all of which are provided through the extension system.

A number of development officers have been recruited to the DOA. However, this recruitment can be seen more as a means to provide state employment rather than as a strategic move to improve services, as these officers often have do not have degrees in agriculture.

Another programme that serves to 'prop up' rural women is the long-standing Women Farmer Extension programme, which is managed by the provincial agriculture departments and implemented by 'subject matter officers' at the district level. The functions of the subject matter officers generally include training women in agricultural processing and entrepreneurship. As a result of this training, some women have succeeded in starting their own small businesses.

A key informant interview with staff at the Institute of Post-Harvest Technology revealed that a large number of women came for training in small-scale food processing primarily to establish a small business. Men were trained in macro-processing, mainly milling of paddy, as this sector is controlled by them. Often the DOA officials sent women for training to the Institute, as gap fillers, as men could not attend training due to work commitments during the week. When the women who had been trained wanted to apply their training, they received no support from the men in the family.

During the field visit to the Farm Mechanization Training Centre in Anuradhapura, it was noted that four-wheel tractors are hardly ever used by women. Combine harvesters are exclusively used by men. Neither men nor women use weeding and transplanting machines. It is evident from discussions at the Farm Mechanization Training Centre and the Institute of Post Harvest Technology of the Ministry of Agriculture, and field visits to several districts that very few women (less 10 percent of total trained each year for the past 3 years) are provided with training on the use of farm machinery and planting methods. The responses of women during field visits reinforced this view.



### 4.3 Government commitment, investment plans and policies

During the later stages of preparing this Assessment, MWCA made it known that gender focal points have been appointed in all ministries, and that training in gender mainstreaming had been provided for these focal points. However, conversations with the staff in the different ministries and departments during the Assessment indicate that none of the senior officials knew the name of their focal point. Table 13 indicates the degree to which gender focal points and gender units were found to be lacking in the government ministries and departments that were consulted during the preparation of this Assessment.

As of May 2018, the Sri Lankan government has 43 ministries. Of these at least 11 play a direct role in agriculture:

- Ministry of Agriculture,
- Ministry of Social Services,
- Ministry of Plantation Industries,
- Ministry of Land and Land Development,
- Ministry of Lands and Parliamentary Reforms,
- Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources,
- Ministry of Economic Development,
- Ministry of Rural Economy,
- Ministry of Hill Country New Villages, Infrastructure and Community Development,
- Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources Management and Disaster Management and
- Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment.

This leads to a fragmented approach in policy making and implementation, and makes gender mainstreaming in agriculture policy very difficult.

A large number of stakeholders and policy-makers need to be sensitized to change their behaviour and bring about changes in plans and programmes, and especially the allocation of resources.

There is inadequate coordination among the large number of institutions dealing with food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. There is an overall lack of mechanisms and capacities for inter-institutional communication, and even less for joint implementation. This results in large areas of overlap and suboptimal performance. Significant gaps exist in terms of knowledge and capacities between the national and the provincial and district levels, which creates a disconnect between the policy directions at the national level and the implementation of actions in the field.

The UNDP Strengthening Enforcement of Law, Access to Justice and Social Integration in Sri Lanka (SELAJSI) Programme,<sup>15</sup> which focused on ensuring that improvements in the justice sector are institutionalized, systematized and scaled-up, showed that there is a need to involve local women in the elaboration and implementation of district development plans. However, in Sri Lanka, administration and planning officials at all levels of government have generally not considered the importance of involving both men and women equally in planning the development. At the subregional level, planning is done mostly by male officials from the Provincial, District and Divisional Planning Secretariats, and by men in farmer organizations at the community level. The percentages of male and female officials is indicated Table 10. Discussions with a number of these officials revealed that they had not been exposed to any in-depth gender sensitization programmes. They had heard the word 'gender' at various fora and may have included the word 'gender' in some project documents simply to satisfy donor requirements.

<sup>15</sup> The web site of the SELAJSI Programme is available at: [www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/operations/projects/democratic\\_governance/strengthening-enforcement-of-law--access-to-justice-and-social-i.html](http://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/strengthening-enforcement-of-law--access-to-justice-and-social-i.html)

Table 12: Gender units and focal points

Ministries/Departments	Presence of a Gender Unit/Focal Point
Ministry of Agriculture	Neither a gender unit nor a focal point have been established, as required by the National Women's Action Plan formulated two decades ago. Mainstreaming gender has not been integrated into policies
Department of Agriculture	Neither a gender unit nor a focal point have been established. The Department has set up a farm women's extension service, which implements activities through subject matter officers in all districts. This is a female-targeted programme rather than a gender mainstreaming exercise
All other entities managed by the Ministry of Agriculture. These are Department of Agrarian Development, Agricultural and Agrarian Insurance Board, Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI), Sri Lanka Council for Agricultural Research Policy (CARP), Institute of Post-Harvest Technology (IPHT), National Food Promotion Board	Neither a gender unit nor a focal point have been established. Gender disaggregated data is also not readily available. HARTI has one officer who is working on gender and agriculture research out of personal interest. There is no position dedicated to gender mainstreaming and there is no sex-disaggregated data readily available.
Ministry of Social Empowerment	It is unclear if they have a gender focal point nor gender unit as no information was given when inquired. Sex-disaggregated data is not readily available
Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations	Neither a gender unit nor a focal point have been established. Sex-disaggregated data is not readily available
Department of Labour	The Department has a well-established Women and Children's Division to regulate the employment of women, young persons and children, which is the main function of the division. Mandated activities within this Department do not demonstrate gender mainstreaming in all aspects of labour management and productivity, but a focus on traditional approaches that address women's issues in employment and child labour <sup>16</sup>
The Department of National Planning	There is a gender focal point but not a gender unit

<sup>16</sup> The web site of the Women's and Children's Affairs Division of the Department of Labour is available at: [http://www.labourdept.gov.lk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=57&Itemid=80&lang=en](http://www.labourdept.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=57&Itemid=80&lang=en)



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**Table 13: Men and women holding positions in the Administrative and Planning Service of Sri Lanka**

Category	Women	Men	% Women
Secretaries of Ministries appointed from the Sri Lanka Administrative Service	11	58	16%
District Secretaries (Chief District Administrator)	2	23	9%
Directors of Planning who are appointed from the Sri Lanka Planning Service	5	20	20%
Assistant Directors of Planning (Divisional Level, Sri Lanka Planning Service)	6	9	35%
Divisional Secretaries (Sri Lanka Administrative Service)	67	127	34%
Women and men holding high posts	91	237	28%

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Management. Planning Service Division.

Women make up only 28 percent of the decision-makers in the Administrative and Planning Service. This is an extremely low proportion in a country that has achieved gender parity in access to education. What is more, neither male nor female decision-makers are sensitive to gender issues. Very few decision-makers consider women's empowerment to be an important issue. Most assume that allocating some resources for initiatives targeting women is gender mainstreaming.

Based on meeting with officers and the data from the Planning Service Division of the Ministry of Public Administration, neither male nor female officers working at all levels, from the national level to village, seem to be aware of the nuances of gender mainstreaming. The numbers of male and female officers had to be counted as they did not have sex-disaggregated information. As this ministry is responsible for all human resource allocations and officer's budgets, this lack of gender mainstreaming and sensitization is clearly inadequate.

#### 4.3.1 National agriculture investment plans

The Public Investment Programme 2017-2020 is a national medium-term development strategy.<sup>17</sup> Its purpose is to estimate the amounts of investible resources that are available to the government during a given period and indicate how these resources are to be allocated to different sectors and various government agencies. This policy document, which is the only one that integrates all ministries whose work is connected to agriculture (Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and Rural Economy, Plantations Industries, Primary Industries and Lands and Parliamentary Reforms) has two main objectives: supporting food security by finding potential substitutes for imports; and promoting the export of agricultural products and increasing the country's competitiveness in international markets. There are no references to women or gender in the chapter dedicated to agriculture and no sex-disaggregated data is presented.

<sup>17</sup> The Public Investment Programme 2017-2020 is available at: [www.mnpea.gov.lk/web/index.php/en/news-events/2-uncategorised/181-public-investment-programme.html](http://www.mnpea.gov.lk/web/index.php/en/news-events/2-uncategorised/181-public-investment-programme.html).



No national agriculture investment plan exists as such. However the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Primary Industries and National Policies and Economic Affairs and provincial councils, are involved in implementing the Agriculture Sector Modernization Project, an initiative supported by the World Bank and the European Union.<sup>18</sup> The Project, which has a budget of more than 150 million USD, has three main components: 1) agriculture value chain development to promote commercial and export-oriented agriculture; 2) productivity enhancement and diversification demonstrations to support smallholder farmers in their efforts to produce competitive and marketable commodities, improve their ability to respond to market requirements, and move towards increased commercialization and 3) project management, monitoring and evaluation to support project coordination, technical supervision, financial management, procurement, social and environmental safeguards.

The project specifically targets selected districts in the areas in the Northern, Eastern, North-Central, Central, and Uva Provinces where poverty is high. Some measures to benefit women are included within the project's matching grants programme. The evaluation criteria for the approval of matching grant support give preference to women-led farmer producer groups. The Project promotes women's representation in productive and value-added activities in partnership arrangements between producer organizations and agribusinesses. It is expected that approximately 30 percent of the farmer producer organizations benefitting from the project's small matching grants window will be women-led farmer producer organizations (World Bank, 2016).

It may be assumed that women will benefit substantially through these interventions. However, there is no specific mention of the gender gaps that need to be addressed or equitable approaches to create a level playing field for men and women. Women are generally included in the 'vulnerable' category for targeted assistance.

### 4.3.2 National agricultural policies

There are several existing policies and programmes at different levels of development and implementation within the agriculture sectors. However, an overarching sectoral policy does not exist yet. The agriculture sectors and different subsectors are addressed through a number of ministries and policies within a highly fragmented institutional landscape that includes Ministries of Agriculture, Social Welfare and Primary Industries, Plantations Industries, Irrigation and Water Resources Management and Disaster Management, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and Rural Economy, Lands and Parliamentary Reforms. Constant changes in the structure and personnel of the different ministries also make it difficult to complete tasks and allocate responsibilities to a particular ministry.

Many challenges facing in the agricultural sectors today are related to past policies and regulations that have been adapted to current conditions. Wanasundera (2006) highlighted the fact that the government's ad hoc tariff policies have had an adverse impact on producers and consumers and reduced tax revenues. These tariff structures of some food items have been modified to protect the farmer but they are lower than the level permitted by the World Trade Organization. Nevertheless, government attempts at price stabilisation often fail for lack of financial resources. This failure forces farmers to sell their produce to private traders at lower prices. Paddy farming has become unprofitable despite government subsidies on credit, fertilizer, water and prices. Consequently, many farmers, especially in the wet zone, move from full-time farming to non-farm employment. Constraints on the crop sector include low productivity, lack of diversification to high-value crops, stagnation in land use, low growth in irrigated area and fragmentation of land (Wanasundera, 2006).

The Food Production National Programme 2016-2018<sup>19</sup> of the Ministry of Agriculture is designed to reduce the country's food imports bill, which has been calculated at Rs 200 billion. The Programme was also established to promote the consumption

<sup>18</sup> Information on the Sri Lanka Agriculture Sector Modernization Project is available at: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P156019?lang=en>

<sup>19</sup> The Food Production National Programme 2016-2018 is available at: [www.agrimin.gov.lk/web/images/pdf/FoodProductionBook-English.pdf](http://www.agrimin.gov.lk/web/images/pdf/FoodProductionBook-English.pdf)

of fresh food purchased from local farmers. It contains very clear food production targets for a diverse diet, including current production volumes, requirements based on population figures and amounts to be produced to fill the gaps. The cost of implementing the programme is estimated as Rs 16 billion, and its main focus is on crop production and home gardening. The Programme will cover 15 thematic areas, including input management, crop enhancement, marketing and improved access to technology. However, gender has not been mainstreamed into the plan. Only one section of the Programme deals with increasing participation of youth and women, mainly in the area of small-scale entrepreneurship and home gardening. Women are not viewed as major players in food production.

A new policy draft for the Ministry of Agriculture has been developed with the technical assistance of FAO. The officers in the Ministry did not consider gender mainstreaming a priority. The policy, which acknowledges the positive role that youth and women bring to agriculture, is intended to empower youth and women, strengthen their capacities and facilitate their access to production factors. The policy will also promote women's participation in other activities related to food production (e.g. home gardening) as a means to increase domestic productivity, improve family health, deliver economic benefits to families and build women's skills. It also seeks to promote employment opportunities for women in agriculture-based industries and product diversification in collaboration with the private sector. A key step in enhancing the role of youth and women in agriculture is developing their entry-level entrepreneurial skills through the production and the sales and marketing of agricultural goods to domestic and local markets.

The Ministry of Agriculture has initiated a programme to promote the establishment of the Sithamu Women Farmers' Societies. This initiative, which targets 625 000 women in 25 000 Sithamu societies, is intended to ensure the family health and nutrition, and promote the participation of women farmers in other ministry initiatives. Operated by the DAD, the programme does not address gender relations within mixed farmer organizations. Women are kept separate and assisted, but do not learn how to negotiate to get their fair share in farmer organizations with mixed membership.

The 2010 National Livestock Breeding Policy for Sri Lanka<sup>20</sup> outlines the national breeding policy guidelines for cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep and pigs both on private and the state farms. Despite multiple experiences showing that there is a great potential to involve women in the livestock sector, the policy makes no reference to gender mainstreaming and does not include any actions that specifically target women.

The objectives of the current policy of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development includes increasing fleets with long vessels for catching of underutilized species; enhancing technology, improving aquaculture and inland fisheries; enhancing fish processing capability; and building infrastructure (e.g. harbours, ice plants, cold rooms and piers). There does not appear to be any consideration given to gender mainstreaming. The fisheries policy is gender-blind even though women play a large role in adding value to fishery and aquaculture production, specifically in processing dry and smoked fish and other products. However, a new fisheries policy focused on the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture with equitable distribution of benefits is currently being formulated with the technical assistance of the government of Norway.

FAO has provided technical support in policy development to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Primary Industries. The policy has been finished and submitted by the minister to the cabinet of ministers in July 2018. The policy recognizes that to develop efficient and effective supply and value chains in the country, there is a need to attract youth and women into the sector through skills training. The policy is also intended to strengthen farmer organizations and emphasize the participation of women farmers. The importance of enhancing women's entrepreneurial capacities is also acknowledged and promoted through home gardening and marketing schemes that prioritize high-value crops, such as mango. These activities target one million women entrepreneurs.

The policy on forestry and natural resource management only mentions that women will be assisted to cultivate tree crops in home gardens. There is no sign of gender mainstreaming in forestry and natural resources management despite

<sup>20</sup>The National Livestock Breeding Policy for Sri Lanka is available at: [www.fao.org/3/a-bc260e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-bc260e.pdf)

women's heavy involvement in reforestation and their use of forest products. The Forestry Master Plan 1995-2020 does not mention gender even under the section on community forestry, home gardens and wood lots. These are the areas where long-term access to forest land is important to women if they are to conserve forests and make a viable living through forest products. The UN REDD+ programme<sup>21</sup> has recommended that gender mainstreaming be implemented without delay, as this is associated with the effective and sustainable use of forests (WOCAN, UN-REDD and LEAP, 2013).

The traditional approaches for tackling nutrition in Sri Lanka are based on a health-driven approach. There is an overall lack of knowledge on the relationship of nutrition to other sectors and how to incorporate nutrition interventions into food systems. The main goal of Sri Lanka's 2010 National Nutrition Policy<sup>22</sup> is to achieve and maintain the nutritional well-being of all Sri Lankans and enable them to contribute effectively towards national socio-economic growth and development. Women are mainly addressed in strategic objectives related to reproductive health, including: ensuring optimal nutrition throughout the life cycle; ensuring appropriate and adequate nutrition and related services for all pregnant women throughout the pregnancy and enabling a delivery of a healthy baby with an adequate birth weight; ensuring a supportive family environment, services and regulatory safety nets to allow mothers to provide optimal care, including exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continuation of breast feeding for two years and beyond. Later stages of a woman's life cycle are not mentioned. Other strategic objectives deal with partnerships, capacity building, community involvement, behaviour change communication and food security.

The Multisector Action Plan on Nutrition 2013-2016 integrates the work being done by 17 ministries to improve nutrition. It is managed by the National Nutrition Secretariat within the Presidential Secretariat. Nutritional needs related to women's reproductive health is the only reference to women.

The rest of the plan is gender neutral. The next plan is currently under formulation. To improve nutrition in rural areas, FAO recommends empowering women by ensuring access to productive resources, income opportunities, extension services and information, credit, labour and time-saving technologies; and supporting their voice in household and farming decisions. However, there is no evidence that these issues have been addressed in Sri Lankan nutrition policies.

Issues related to non-communicable diseases and healthy lifestyles, including activities connected to the United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases are at the top on the health agenda. However this is a gender-neutral discourse.

MWCA has developed a menu of key performance indicators that were proposed to the Ministry of Finance and were attached to the budget call in a separate letter in 2018. The indicators were primarily related to the promotion of a higher percentage of women participating in different programmes and institutions that address gender concerns. This document also dealt with amendments to discriminatory laws and procedures. Relevant ministries were also encouraged to use the indicators set out in SDG5 in their annual plans when preparing the budget for 2018.

There is an overall lack of political discourse on the need for gender mainstreaming in national policies. This is partly due to the fact that 95 percent of the members of Parliament are men for whom gender sensitivity is not a priority. Gender dynamics have not been addressed in any of the rural and agriculture sector policies or nutrition policies in the health sector. Sex-disaggregated data are not available in policy documents. These documents are not based on gender gap analyses and do not consider gender needs and inequalities. Most policies and strategies at best follow a 'female-targeted' approach rather than a course that is gender equitable.

<sup>21</sup> REDD+ stands for countries' efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

<sup>22</sup> The National Nutrition Policy of Sri Lanka is available at: [https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/sites/default/files/LKA%202010%20Sri%20Lanka%20National%20Nutrition%20Policy-English\\_0.pdf](https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/sites/default/files/LKA%202010%20Sri%20Lanka%20National%20Nutrition%20Policy-English_0.pdf)





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### Box 7: Uva Wellassa Women's Farmer Organization

A few district-based NGOs with reasonable coverage at the district level, have been successful in empowering women economically, socially and culturally. For example, the Uva Wellassa Women's Farmer Organization in Wellawaya provides an effective savings and credit structure for its members and offers them opportunities to engage in production of high-value crops and market their produce. The Organization has built a large storage facility for member's produce and is completing a retail marketing facility to sell their produce directly, which eliminates the need for commercial intermediaries. For a number of years, the Organization has been buying back members' produce at reasonable prices and selling in the open market. The Organization's per person credit volume is also high. Through the work and enhanced economic strength of the group, women's mobility has increased, as the women have been able to purchase bicycles and scooters. Their husbands have increasingly recognized the contribution the women are making and have provided support. The quality of housing has also improved because incomes have increased.

## 4.4 National non-governmental organizations

Early in the 20th century, some pioneering organizations began to build the capacities of women to engage in processes that could lead to the greater empowerment of women. Some of these organizations, such as the Lanka Mahila Samithiya,<sup>23</sup> which was established in 1930 and is a member of the Associated Country Women of the World, and the Sri Lanka Women's Conference have declined in strength and numbers. This is due to the fact that they have not undertaken a restructuring process or enacted policies and strategies to attract younger women. The increased number of new organizations has also reduced their influence. Some rural development organizations that have been established within the last decade have concentrated on raising the status of women through assistance with self-employment rather than making a case for gender mainstreaming and male accountability to assure gender equality. These NGOs place the focus on the economic and social empowerment of women, concentrating on small agriculture-based self-employment initiatives (e.g. mushroom cultivation, bee keeping, the processing of spices, dairy farming) rather than redressing the underlying gender imbalances in rural agriculture and trade. This type of intervention follows a female-targeted approach without undertaking broader gender mainstreaming.

A number of local NGOs working on improving women's participation in both rural and urban settings have focused on sexual and gender-based

violence and land rights. Their work contributed to the government amending the Penal Code and passing the prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 2005. They have also formulated proposals for amendments to the gender-biased elements in the customary laws. These organizations, which are active in local and international fora, have prepared reports to international human rights bodies, particularly the United Nations Committee on the Status of Women. Many international NGOs support and work closely with these organizations.

## 4.5 The international community

United Nation agencies, bilateral and multilateral partners and international NGOs have addressed a broad range of gender-related issues including: the political participation of women; the prevention and reduction of sexual and gender-based violence; improvements in reproductive health and nutritional status; and women's economic empowerment. Their activities have contributed primarily to reducing maternal and infant mortality and achieving gender parity in education. There are a number of networks and thematic groups that work to support gender equality (e.g. the Women Parliamentarian's Caucus and the Development Partners Gender Working Group). The United Nations Gender Thematic Group has carried out a number of key gender initiatives, the latest of which was a campaign and advocacy work carried out in November 2017 before the local elections to address violence against women (Colombo Gazette, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Lanka Mahila Samithiya web site is available at : [www.lankamahilasamiti.com/about.php](http://www.lankamahilasamiti.com/about.php)

Table 14 lists some of the interventions carried out by international organizations that have

specifically focused on gender equality in agriculture and rural development.

#### Box 8: Development Partner Gender Working Group

The Development Partner Gender Working Group has mapped the work of different agencies and identified important gender gaps in key sectors. The Group has articulated a two-year (2017-2019) engagement strategy based on three priority areas: women's economic empowerment, women's political participation and gender-based violence. The joint engagement strategy is intended to provide a framework for Development Partners to maximize its impact in these three areas by working together and building on each organization's comparative advantage. It looks at national laws and policies; the major gaps to be addressed; key indicators, including SDG indicators; priority advocacy messages; relevant NGOs, CSOs and private sector companies; and possible joint activities. The Development Partner Gender Working Group has also presented to MWCA the linkages and alignment of donors, government institutions and development partners working on key gender-specific areas.

**Table 14: International agencies working to reduce gender gaps in agriculture and rural development**

Asian Development Bank (ADB)	Most of ADB's resources have been dedicated to infrastructure. ADB evaluations show that investments in total transport reduced the women time of travel. The second integrated road investment programme is a good example (IED, 2015). Since 1998, ADB internal policies have concentrated on the mainstreaming gender in ADB projects. In all project profiles, gender equity and mainstreaming are considered as drivers of change.
ChildFund	Child Fund continues to build the capacities of families who have sponsored children to engage in self-employment activities. They provide knowledge and support for diversifying paddy farming and adding value to farm production. Seeds and tools are provided to families. Support had been granted to obtain water supply. Although they do not advocate for address gendering gaps in agriculture, they do speak out on behalf of child related issues, which has a gender aspect. <sup>24</sup>
Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE)	CARE has provided capacity building, especially for women. Material support has been specifically delivered to them. Credits and grants have been made available for water supply requirements, but with no specific focus on gender. Substantial investment in resources have been specifically directed to women. Recently, CARE has been involved in violence prevention and advocacy, although this is no longer being done regularly in Sri Lanka.

<sup>24</sup> Lanka The Child Fund Sri Lanka web site is available at: <https://www.childfund.org/Sri-Lanka/>

European Union (EU)	<p>The EU Support to District Development Programme (SDDP) supports agricultural development through United Nations agencies, such as FAO and UNDP. The EU is also collaborating with the World Bank on a modernization of agriculture project. EU resources have also been invested in strengthening producer organizations through the UNDP Governance for Empowerment and Social Inclusion (GESI) Programme. Previous assistance under the European Union, Support to Socio Economic Measures (EU SEM), also targeted the North and East of Sri Lanka in rehabilitating irrigation tanks and abandoned lands. The targeting of women in these projects has been a noteworthy feature. EU's humanitarian aid and civil protection department (ECHO) and EU Assistance for Conflict-Affected Communities (EU-ACAP) have focused on the basic needs of people in conflict affected areas. It is unclear how women have benefitted in terms of numbers and how the skills and capacities of women have been strengthened (European Commission, 2017).</p>
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	<p>FAO has been the key United Nations agency working in the agriculture sectors and providing support to all levels of government and rural communities. Gender mainstreaming has been a concern of FAO for the past 40 years. The Organization's gender equality policy is articulated in the 2013 publication <i>FAO Policy on Gender Equality. Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development</i>. FAO interventions have mainly followed a female-targeted approach. A number of pilots have been carried out targeting women or having an equal number of women and men. They have offered training in agricultural techniques, provided inputs and established links to markets. Recently a gender and livestock training workshop was carried out in Sri Lanka with the Department of Animal Production and Health. The DOA has shown a great degree of interest in mainstreaming gender in their activities after the training, and it will be worthwhile to note the impact of this work.</p>
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	<p>JICA is implementing six major agriculture projects in Sri Lanka. All projects are underpinned by the JICA Guidelines on Gender (JICA, 2009), especially in farming and fishing villages. However, it is unclear how women are being affected by these projects. The assistance provided is connected with seed production, livestock raising and managing cascade water systems. The major focus is placed on diversifying crop production, enhancing productivity and improving value chains. Interventions are concentrated in the dry zone.</p>
Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM)	<p>OXFAM has traditionally been involved in all of these aspects of gender equality. Recently it has implemented a series of activities in evidence-based advocacy to close the gender gap in agriculture. The global GROW campaign was initiated in Sri Lanka, after investigating the situation of women in different settings. The main thrust areas were to change policies and legal frameworks in land titles, and access to water and leadership in agricultural organizations.</p>
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	<p>The Country Programme 2013-2017 provides clear wording on gender as a cross-cutting issue. However, the achievement of gender objectives cannot be seen in the evaluation of the programme. Under the GESI Programme the Youth Enterprise Development (YED) Programme and Youth Leadership Development (YLD) Programme, which have encouraged entrepreneurship and leadership, nearly half of the people who have benefitted have been women. Another output has been the strengthening of producer organizations. In mixed producer organizations, women have not assumed positions of authority because the project has been unable to break deep-seated cultural barriers. A valuable exercise under the SELAJSI project has been the connecting of women to District Development Plans. This has seen some degree of success in a few districts, where women have been consulted and their views have been taken as main themes in district development plans.</p>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	Some gender-responsive budgeting initiatives took place over 10 years ago. More recently capacity building support for officials at the provincial and district levels has been provided. UN Women commissioned a scoping study on gender-responsive budgeting in February 2017, which has yet to be released. The USAID Parliament project provided training for staff of Parliamentary sectoral committees. A wider focus and on economic empowerment of women is being considered for future initiatives.
World Bank/ International Finance Corporation (IFC)	The World Bank and IFC offer capacity building in leadership for producer's organizations, and training in technology and self-employment. Limited support is provided to women, mostly in small grants for inputs. Gender was a major consideration in selecting rural access roads for improvement and constructing new facilities.
World Food Programme (WFP)	WFP has been supporting women in its emergency assistance programmes. As part of general food distribution, women are usually the 'collectors' of food in camps for internally displaced persons (IDP), as the Ration Card bears their details. Under food for growth plan, pregnant and lactating women and children under five are the main beneficiaries. These are all 'women in development' approaches. WFP has insisted that women be part of IDP camp management committees and also advocated for women to have 40 percent representation in farmer organization committees in food for work projects. Food for Education targets both genders equally as Sri Lanka is at parity in school attendance. Last year, a gender assessment was conducted by WFP of its projects with the intent of improving mainstreaming gender in programmes and advocating for gender equality at a higher level.
World Vision	Criteria for family support in capacity building actions is done through the selection of the child for sponsorship. These forms of assistance are provided to families in area development programmes. Credit and grants are targeted to women and child focused. Capacity building of mothers is a common intervention in World Vision programmes

Many other organizations have also been doing important work at the divisional and community level.

However, despite all the work done to elevate the status of women, policies that are critical for closing the gender gap in agriculture and rural development have not been carried out. Often successful pilots

have not been selected for scaling up by the government or international NGOs. The 'project focus' of many NGOs does not allow enough time to resolve long-term development issues and show solid evidence of the value of gender mainstreaming initiatives that can be used to inform policy and programming.



# 5

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS





## 5.1 Conclusions

**Lack of gender sensitivity and knowledge:** Based on the desk review and confirmed by the field visits and interviews with government officers and different stakeholders, it was apparent that basic knowledge on gender-related issues is limited. At the institutional level, there is a need to increase the capacity of government officials in line ministries to address gender issues and improve their understanding of gender concepts and analysis. Issues related to gender are understood by few NGOs visited during the Assessment. These NGOs specifically focused on changing the mindset for women empowerment before embarking on livelihood development activities.

**Gender-blindness of sectoral policies:** Gender has not been integrated into national agricultural and natural resource policies. The 'women targeting' approach is the preferred approach, as it is the only one policy-makers are familiar with. There is a lack of initiatives geared to ensuring equality of opportunity for women and men, and equality in access to agricultural credit and capacity building. Women are not accorded sufficient places in technical training programmes on the production and marketing of high-value crops and paddy farming. Other options for empowering women, such as positive discrimination measures, can be found to a certain extent in some national actions plans. However, impact evaluations have yet to be conducted.

For example, the Food Production National Programme does not seem to show any gender considerations or mainstreaming, except for targeting women in woman farmer organizations. Also, the new policy draft for the Ministry of Agriculture highlights the positive role that youth and women play in the agriculture sectors and promotes women's participation in specific programmes, but it does not follow a gender mainstreaming approach. Lessons learned through the work done by international agencies to reduce gender gaps in agriculture and rural development have not been incorporated into policy processes and have not been scaled up into national policies. The World Bank Modernization of Agriculture project also appears to be gender-neutral.

**Lack of gender-sensitive budgeting and information on resource allocation:** There is no information on the level of resources allocated to gender in national plans for agriculture. Despite the recommendation from MCWA, key performance indicators related to gender have not been included by the relevant ministries in the

last budget exercise. There is also no single national investment plan that covers all aspects of agricultural development. Consequently determining the proper measurement for resource allocation for gender is challenging. Overcoming this challenge will involve strengthening and developing new skills and capacities.

**Lack of sex-disaggregated data:** There is a near total lack of sex-disaggregated data. This is a significant obstacle when formulating results-based, gender-responsive plans. During the assessment, to obtain sex-disaggregated information about staffing, senior officials asked the consultant to count the number of women from name lists of officers involved in planning at the various levels. This shows there is no disaggregation of data by sex and that scant attention is paid to gender equitable processes. There is a need to raise awareness and build the capacities of national statisticians in the agriculture sectors.

**Status of women:** Women have adequate access to health facilities and are at parity in access to education. As a result, Sri Lanka has a relatively high ranking in the Human Development Index. However, the country ranking for different types of indexes that measure gender empowerment is much lower. Sri Lanka ranks low in women's participation in the labour force, equal pay for similar work, women's political participation, women's share of income, the number of women in management positions and technical education. Women are poorly represented in management, even though more women than men have a university education. This discrepancy is due in part to a lack of child care facilities and stereotyping of women as the caretakers for the family. The increase in the number of elderly women and widows is of concern as they have less access to social protection.

**Feminization of poverty:** All data show that poverty, measured in terms of absolute income, wages for labour and ownership of productive assets, has a greater impact on women than men. This is one of the reasons women tend to be segregated, along with the poor and youth, as a marginalized population group. Impoverished female-headed household are particularly affected by food insecurity and malnutrition.

**Extension and training:** Extension services are delivered to women in the agriculture sectors in ways that keeps them in traditional low-income activities, such as home gardening or the production of low-volume cut flowers and mushrooms. Extension services offer women minimal and very basic technical

know-how that does not support or empower them to engage in more profitable commercial livelihoods. Technical knowledge and machinery are mostly provided to men. In rural areas, deep-rooted patriarchal structures in all facets of life manifests themselves in the ways women participate in the different stages of the value chain.

**Women and technology:** Women are not familiar with using agricultural technology. Many women do not use even relatively simple tools and machinery for weeding and transplanting. In the areas that were visited, no women had ever driven a combined harvester. Women spend much of their time engaged in unskilled labour. Women are much more involved than men in small-volume organic farming. However, they are not aware of the latest methods of cultivation, and seed and plant material classification systems. Women seldom have access to systems for certification and connections to niche markets. This is especially true for women who do not have access to technical training and whose perceptions of gender roles prevent them from engaging in 'male' tasks.

**Gender and rural development planning:** The involvement of women in planning at the provincial, district, division and village levels is not adequate. There is an absence of female decision-making officials in the Administrative and Planning Service, and women have little representation in CBOs.

**Women in the labour force:** The total share of women engaged in employment is 37 percent. However, the work of many of these women is neither registered nor recognized. As stated during interviews carried out in field visits, female paid agriculture labourers get paid substantially less than men. The justification given for this discrepancy is that women are unskilled. Much has been discussed and written about this gender imbalance in pay, but the situation remains unchanged.

**Lack of women's land ownership:** Women's limited ownership of land is a major issue for women's access to and control over resources. Gender inequality in land ownership is due to laws that are outdated, patriarchal and gender-biased. If customary law is followed in marriages and family life, the situation of the woman in family relations and her access and control over property is weakened. This can lead to restriction in women's access to irrigation water, as allocations are frequently tied to ownership of land and membership in farmer organizations. If women have the support of male family members

who own land, their lack of land ownership may not be a barrier to high-value, commercial agriculture. However, women's opportunities cannot be left to informal arrangements. The system of registration at government Agrarian Service Centres is linked to membership in farmer organizations and land titles. This situation prevents women from receiving subsidies and training from DAD.

**Women in farmer organizations:** Sri Lanka has a history of segregated male and female farmer organizations. As a result, men and women do not have an equal and common platform for dialogue and decision-making. Women have not learnt to work and negotiate with men. Women's lack of membership and voice in farmer organizations has important consequences for women's access to government-provided water and training and social recognition.

**Rural finance and social protection:** Savings and access to credit by women have improved over the last decades. Local NGOs and the Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme have contributed to supporting the conversion of savings and credit schemes operated by informal CBOs into formal bank accounts. A number of state banks offer government subsidized credit schemes to men and women food producers.

However, women still face difficulties in obtaining higher-value loans. These difficulties can be attributed to the lack of a sustainable income source and the absence of collateral. Many women in rural areas are unaware of the financial options open to them. As a result, women, especially women who are the heads of households, become indebted to private finance companies. The Farmers Bank administered by the DAD can now be accessed through Sithamu Women Farmer Societies.

**Trading and value chains:** The participation of women in occupations at the later stages of the agricultural value chains where incomes are higher remains limited. Except in certain contexts where women have been supported in a specific value chain, women's labour remains mainly concentrated on primary production. There are a number of factors that hamper women's participation in trade and commerce, including mobility constraints, household chores and family responsibilities, and gender stereotyping.

Some value chains related to livestock may provide better opportunities for women. For, example, there may be potential for women to work at later stages of

the dairy value chain. Currently women's participation does not extend to larger volume milk collection, the management of chilling centres and processing facilities, and few women have any significant position in large dairy farmer societies. Nevertheless, the dairy value chain seems to be one of the most appropriate value chains for women to engage in, as it can be combined easily with household chores. However, women are not familiar with dairy technologies and production systems that can deliver optimal yields.

In the fisheries value chain, women are only engaged in value-addition activities connected to the processing of dried fish. There are no facilities or space allocated for fish drying, and women receive no training in modern technologies that could enable them to produce new types of products (e.g. fish skin accessories).

## 5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations presented here target the major impediments to redressing gender inequality in Sri Lanka's agriculture sectors. They are intended to prompt action that will maximize the contribution of women to agricultural productivity, rural development and social harmony, and improve the quality of life of women, their families and their communities.

### 5.2.1 Policies and regulations

1. Efforts should be made to mainstream gender into policies related to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, primary industries, land, irrigation and forestry. This includes commitments connected to a number of issues: adequate resources for sectoral budgets for gender mainstreaming; equal access for women and men to training in agricultural production and value addition; equal access for women and men to technology and machinery, credit, subsidies; gender equality in accessing state land and holding land titles; and an increase in the number of women holding office in producer organizations. Tracking the progress being made in implementing gender-mainstreamed policies in strategies and action plans, and monitoring them from a gender perspective will be essential to ensure positive results.
2. Activities should be carried out as soon as possible to raise the awareness of policy-makers about the importance of gender mainstreaming, and build their capacities to incorporate gender in planning

cycles and budget exercises, and monitor and measure performance. **(Development Partners together with Department of National Planning and related ministries)**

3. The constitutions of farmer, fisheries and dairy organizations should be amended to integrate provisions for in-depth training on gender dynamics, and conduct activities to take advantage of potential opportunities to maximize incomes and productivity by empowering women and giving equal consideration to men's and women's needs and priorities.
4. The influence that farmer organizations have over access to irrigation water and eligibility to receive subsidies and training should be harnessed to increase women's participation in agricultural labour under equal conditions. Further analysis is required to determine the best approach for involving women in farmer organizations. This analysis would need to be based on an assessment of the local context to identify the options that are best suited for women in terms of access to production factors.
5. Farmer organization should be encouraged to consult with their membership about changing the pay rates for women so that they are equal with men's rates. **(Concerned ministries, facilitated by FAO and ILO)**
6. Complete the proposed legal and regulatory reforms regarding land laws and customary laws that discriminate against women in areas related to the ownership and the inheritance of state or private lands. **(MWCA to coordinate with Ministry of Justice, facilitated by FAO)**

### 5.2.2 Strategies and programme design

7. Actions to empower women and men should be precursors to any kind of rural development programmes. Initiatives in this area should include income-generating activities implemented through the Ministry of the Agriculture and through social protection schemes (e.g. Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme or the Assistance to Widows Programme) implemented by Provincial Councils and the Ministry of Social Empowerment. Lessons in how to proceed in this area can be obtained from many NGOs that have run successful income-generating and empowerment programmes. **(NGOs can provide insights into this training. District Coordinating Committees, District Secretariats, DOA and DAD to monitor;**



- rural and woman development officers, agriculture instructors and agriculture research and programming assistants to implement)
8. There should be a gender component in governmental livestock strategies. This component should place special focus on upgrading the technical skills of women, and providing loans to improve stock and maintain breeds. Efforts should be made to facilitate the participation of women in the fish value chain by granting loans, technology and space for drying fish. **(Department of Animal Production and Health, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and key private sector companies)**
  9. To achieve gender parity in each stage of agricultural value chains, both women and men require equitable access to programmes for upgrading skills related to technology, management, marketing, transport and developing networks. If the capacities of the women are not developed to allow them to earn a viable agricultural livelihood, especially in areas with little or no social protection, their lives will remain dire. The programmes must provide user-friendly technology. **(Ministry of Agriculture, DOA)**
  10. Training programmes for women who are willing to handle machinery should be implemented. These programmes, which should be capable of issuing competency certificates, can be part of vocational training offered to both men and women. CBOs that can employ qualified women and offer contracts to women to operate machinery should be given greater access to credit to purchase equipment **(CBOs with the Farm Mechanization Training Centre; facilitated by FAO and DOA)**
- ### 5.2.3 Institutions
11. As has been advocated in the Beijing Platform, gender empowerment units and gender focal points should be established in key ministries and departments to implement gender action plans. For example, the Gender Empowerment Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture should include gender budgeting in their submissions to the Ministry of Finance, and plan and monitor the delivery of services and resources to both men and women. These units should also design gender training programmes, which would be implemented at the district and divisional level by agriculture officers. These units should be allocated sufficient funding and facilities. **(Department of National Planning and MWCA)**
  12. Training on gender dynamics should be provided to decision-makers and officers at the provincial and district levels in community settings using practical examples. Gender sensitization of officials should include theoretical aspects, such as definitions, gender roles, basic and strategic gender needs, myths and stereotypes. The advanced phase of training would focus on gender analysis, gender budgeting, and gender mainstreaming in programme formulation and implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The advanced phase would also stress the importance of conducting gender audits. **(FAO, UNDP, WFP and ILO to formulate training; Government of Sri Lanka to implement with leadership from MWCA)**
  13. Immediately convene a working group to discuss strategic needs of rural women and improve their status. The working group would need to address a number of concerns, including economic opportunities, political participation, employment, the feminization of the elderly and social protection. Local communities and private sector must participate in the group's activities. The private sector should be particularly involved in any proposed actions related to social protection, such as insurance schemes. **(Ministry of Agriculture, MWCA, DOA, DAD, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, Department of Animal Production and Health)**
  14. Government officers working in the District Secretariats and at the divisional level should collaborate with state banks to carry out broad publicity campaigns targeted to rural women to promote services that can support them in obtaining credit at reasonable interest rates and acquiring insurance. This would complement other benefits that women could gain by working in higher-value and higher-volume activities at later stages of the agricultural value chain. These services would offer higher-value loans to women who want to engage in larger businesses. **(Development Units of the Central Bank and State Banks upon request of the Ministry of Finance and National Planning Department)**
  15. All ministries and departments should begin as soon as possible to collect data that is disaggregated by sex and location. Current methods should be revised to establish user-friendly data collection and information systems. Questions should be added about men and women farmer registration; their water allocation; their membership in organizations; the subsidies, assistance, and

training they have received; their social protection premiums and pensions; and the extent of their land ownership. **(MWCA and Ministry of Agriculture to take the lead; assisted by the Department of Census and Statistics, and other concerned ministries)**

16. A National Survey on Gender and Agriculture should be commissioned to gather data on all aspects of gender in agricultural and rural development **(Ministry of Agriculture, FAO, ILO, World Bank, ADB)**
17. A review should be undertaken of the agriculture extension system and the capacities of its officers to address critical aspects of gender in the delivery of services. The Agriculture Extension Service system should look at the numbers of women who require technology and training in different cultivation methods, and certification and classification systems; assess their level of

competency; and design appropriate training programmes to develop the skills women need to produce goods that meet market demands. Training should include measures that empower women and increase their self-confidence, so that women can make valuable contributions to the agriculture sectors. When designing these programmes, it is important to consider the time that women can dedicate for training, the availability of child care and the proximity of the training venues **(DOA and DAD Extension Divisions, Farm Mechanization Training Centres and Capacity Building Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture)**

18. At the divisional level, gender-sensitive mapping should be done of the types of land access and ownership (e.g. government granted, inherited, leased, rented, jointly ownership) **(Ministry of Lands and Parliamentary Reforms and land officers at Divisional Secretariats)**

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# ANNEXES

## Annex 1: Details of focus group discussion participants

Farmers FAO assisted and not assisted – total 69 – 50 women and 19 men

District	Puttalam	Mannar	Kilinochchi	Moneragala
No of women/ Average age/ (Produce)	<b>FAO</b> 6/30 yrs/ (Ground nuts) <b>Non FAO</b> 7/45 yrs/ (Vegetables and ground. nuts)	<b>FAO</b> 8/40 yrs/ (I.Fisheries) <b>Non FAO</b> 5/45 yrs/ (Inland Fisheries)	<b>FAO</b> 7/45 yrs/ (Ground nuts) <b>Non FAO</b> 6/ (Ground nuts)	<b>FAO</b> 5/40 yrs/ (Mushrooms) <b>Non FAO</b> 6/ (vegetables)
Husbands' occupations	Farmers	Fisheries and farming	Farmers	Masons
No of Men/ Average age	<b>FAO</b> 3/50 yrs	<b>FAO</b> 3/41 yrs <b>Non FAO</b> 3/45 yrs	<b>FAO</b> 3/40 yrs <b>Non FAO</b> 7/45yrs	None met
Average Family size	<b>FAO</b> 5 (3 children) <b>Non FAO</b> 4 (2 children)	<b>FAO</b> 5 (3 children) <b>Non FAO</b> 5 (3 children)	<b>FAO</b> 6 (4 children) <b>Non FAO</b> 6 (4 children)	<b>FAO</b> 4 (2 children) <b>Non FAO</b> 5 (3 children)
Average size of landholding	Paddy: 1 acre Upland: 1 acre inherited	20 perches home plot Few owned average 0.5 acre 20 perches given by state	Upland: 1 acre Inherited or bought	Upland: 1 acre inherited
Land ownership	80% male-owned	20 perches 50% male 50% female	70% male-owned	No data

Note: 40 perches are equivalent to 0.25 acres or 0.1 ha

All farmers were participants from the EU Support to District Development (EU-SDDP) implemented by the FAO, which finished in June 2018.



## Annex 2: List of key stakeholders interviewed

Designation	Name	Institution and location
Chairman	Dr Gerry Jayawardane	Council for Agriculture Research Policy
Director	R.S. Hapugaswatte	Planning Services Division, Ministry of Public Administration and Management, Colombo
Research Officer	Susila Lurdu	Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI), Ministry of Agriculture
Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	Prishantha Welathanthri	UNDP
Director	J.P. Sumanaratne	DOA, Moneragala
Subject Matter Officer (SMO) Women Farmers retired, Consultant	Sunethra Yapa	DOA, North Central Province, Anuradhapura
Manager Credit	T. Ekanayake	Bank of Ceylon, Medagama, Moneragala
Agriculture Instructor	Rohitha Sanjeeva Pradeep Kumara Pathirana	DOA, Office in Thabbowa ASC, Puttalam
Agriculture Instructor	Pararajasingham Sureshkumar	DOA, Office Vennerikulam ASC, Kilinochchi
Chief Executive Officer	HM Vasantha Pushpakumara	VOICE, Puttalam
Area Manager	Lasantha Alagiyawanna	MILCO, Puttalam
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	Harithas Aruchchunan	ZOA, Kilinochchi
Project officer	Dharshan Thanuja	ZOA, Kilinochchi
Project Officer	S Krishna	Federation of Social Development Organizations, Kilinochchi

## Annex 3: Male and female roles in crop value chains

### Male/Female roles in stages of crop production

Tasks – Production	Women	Men	Reasons
Preparing the land – Paddy Upland	10% 40%	90% 60%	Strength and technological knowhow with men. Mostly hired
Ploughing	50%	50%	
Planting			Manual in the case of females Do not know how to use transplanter
Fetching water for fertilizer dilution			Long distances to carry heavy loads
Fertilizer application	20%	80%	Heavy spray can, husbands or hired help. The constrains FHH and increases dependency on men
Weeding	90%	10%	Unskilled work and women do not know how to use a weeding machine. Time consuming and increases burdens

### Male/Female roles – Harvesting

Tasks – harvesting	Women	Men	Reasons
Grading/husking	75%	25%	Semi-skilled So mostly women's work
Transportation from farm to place of sale	10%	90%	Not skilled or empowered to handle this. Mobility issues because of reproductive role
Marketing	20%	80%	Women not empowered to do this
Processing/value addition	70% in small scale	90% in large scale	Most large paddy mills are male owned. But there are examples of effective involvement of women in the value chain at a small scale – eg: Rice Processing Villages
Maintaining machinery		100%	Women not connecting with basic technology

## Male/Female roles in the sale of produce

Sales	Women	Men	
Record keeping	40%	60%	In major agriculture men are more involved in record keeping. This could change to 30/70. Women can be 100% involved in record keeping in self employment, micro enterprises or small scale agriculture
Managing sales	30%	70%	Most men in agriculture sector are involved in sales
Logistics	20%	80%	Women don't have the capacity to take this on. This is where produce is sold and converted to cash. Also, the transport sector is in the hands of men – Reproductive role deep rooted control of men, lack of skills building in driving, negotiation etc. issues with safety







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