



Youth Policy Programme

**Stakeholder Consultation
Northern Province
Sri Lanka**

Pre-Brief

**Jaffna
19 September 2016**

UNFPA SRI LANKA

Over the last four decades the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Sri Lanka has been working with the Government of Sri Lanka on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and young people. With Sri Lanka recently emerging as a middle income country, UNFPA is shifting its focus from capacity building and service delivery to addressing the four key youth issues in



Sri Lanka through policy dialogue, policy advice and policy advocacy. There are a number of challenges that hinder young people in grabbing the opportunities that they need. These include:

- 1. Cultural and social barriers**
- 2. Limitations in access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education**
- 3. Limitations in accessing Reproductive Health Services for young people**
- 4. Lack of an enabling environment to recognize the youth potential**

Why invest in youth?

A safe and successful passage from adolescence into adulthood is the right of every person. This right can only be fulfilled if families and societies make focused investments and provide opportunities to ensure that adolescents and youth progressively develop the knowledge, skills and resilience needed for a healthy, productive and fulfilling life. This is more relevant to Sri Lanka now than ever before.

UNFPA Sri Lanka Youth Programme

UNFPA Sri Lanka's Youth Programme is a holistic programme, which looks at youth at the center of development through a national and provincial lens; in the areas of youth-led policy making, policy implementation, youth leadership and Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education (CRHE).

Youth Policy Programme: Provincial-level youth policies

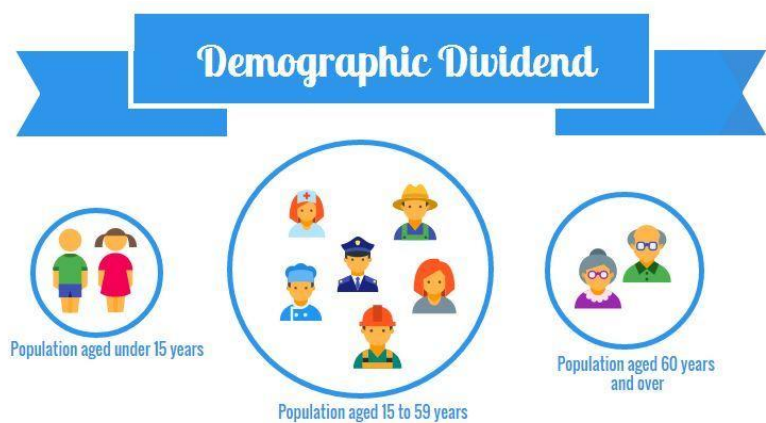
UNFPA Sri Lanka is convinced that with almost a quarter of the population being young, strong youth policies should be in place both at the national and provincial level. There are certain challenges common to youth at the national level and those which are specific for each of the provinces. It is important to identify such challenges and ensure that a holistic approach is taken while investing in youth. Through this project, UNFPA Sri Lanka engages with all Provinces with technical support and advocacy for the formulation of holistic youth policies.

Currently, through the Youth Policy Programme, UNFPA has worked with the **Southern Provincial Council and Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council** to develop draft youth policy documents.

Reaping the Benefits of the Demographic Dividend

Over time, Sri Lanka has continued to invest in youth through provision of free education, as well as free health services. Nonetheless, a continuing disconnect between youth aspirations and the state has manifested in three violent insurrections that racked the country over the last four decades. Subsequently, efforts have been directed at trying to explain what caused such a reaction by young people. It has been increasingly acknowledged that elements related to poverty, unemployment, and marginalizations were crucial. It is within this context that UNFPA is placing young people at the heart of development and positioning itself to allow young people to reach their full potential.

Currently, 4.4 million out of a population of 20.4 million constitute youth (15-29) in Sri Lanka. In order for Sri Lanka to reap the benefits of this demographic dividend*, UNFPA Sri Lanka is supporting national, sub-national institutions and other partners to take an integrated, evidence-based approach for the



From 1992, Sri Lanka's working population outnumber the dependent populations

Created by kiyanna.lk

delivery of youth and adolescents friendly reproductive health services and ensure fulfillment of their associated rights. Further, through creating supportive policy environments and practices, UNFPA Sri Lanka is enabling youth to take leadership and contribute toward the country's transition toward peace and sustainable development.

Why Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education (CRHE) in a Youth Policy?

Investing in young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights is crucial in order for young people to live lives of equality and wellbeing, reach their full potential, and contribute to the sustainable development of their communities. Young people need to know the basic anatomy and physiology related to sexual and reproductive systems, which will enable them to take informed decisions at the correct time in their lives. Inaccurate beliefs and poor knowledge and skills can prevent young people from realizing their fullest potential.

CRHE helps empower young people to protect their health and well-being as they grow and take on family responsibilities

*Sri Lanka 25 million people and implications population and housing projections 2012-2062 by De Silva, W. Indralal, De Silva, Ranjith (UNFPA, 2015)

TOWARDS A NORTHERN PROVINCIAL YOUTH POLICY

UNFPA Sri Lanka has had a long standing relationship with the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, during the war and the immediate aftermath including the resettlement period providing and ensuring reproductive health care services, distribution of maternity kits among pregnant women and hygiene/dignity kits amongst women and girls of reproductive age. It is with this background that UNFPA Sri Lanka is now engaging with the Northern Provincial Council Ministry of Youth Affairs to develop a Provincial Youth Policy. For this purpose all relevant stakeholders from Government, corporate and civil society and youth leaders will be brought together to contribute toward this effort. The objective is to identify specific needs of youth in the Northern Province and then begin a process of advocating and supporting the Provincial Council to formulate a youth centered policy.

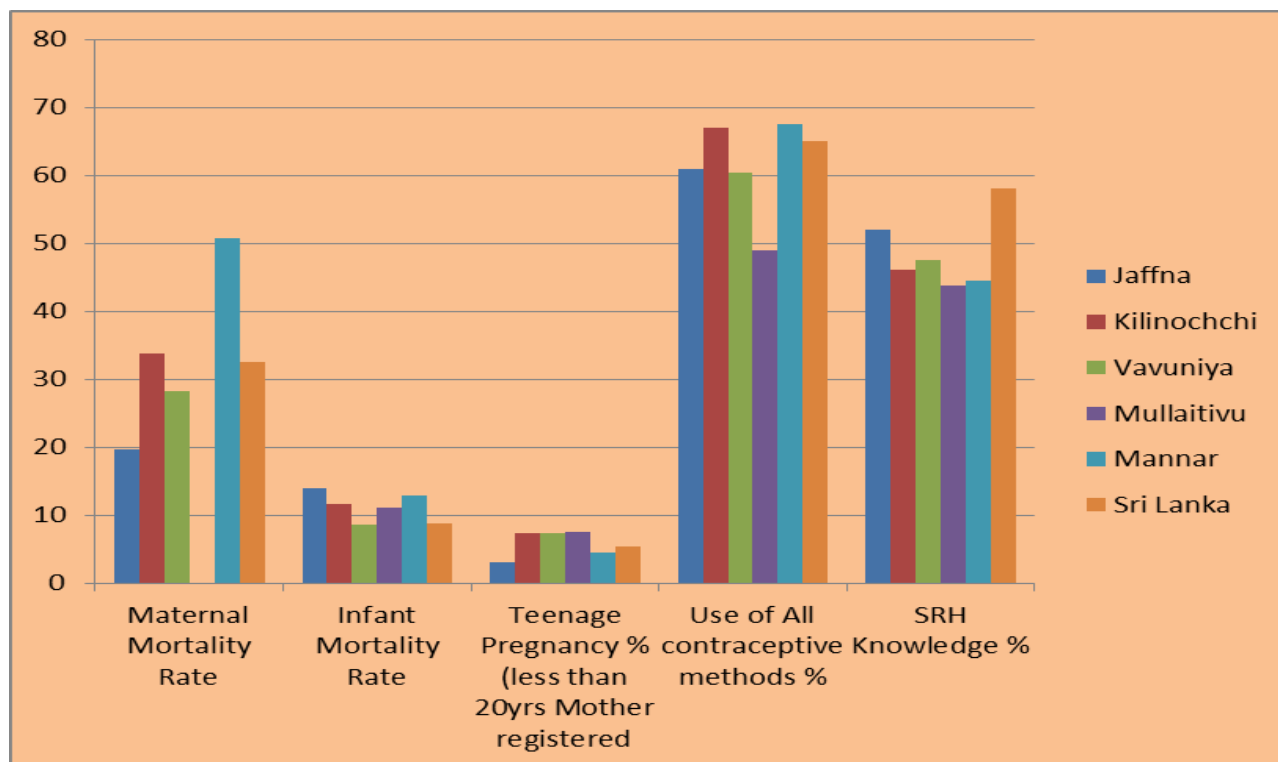
- **Create an enabling environment for young people to participate in decision making and to take a leading role in contributing toward Sustainable Development**
- **Empower young people through Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education and associated rights**

District Level disparities on youth health in the Northern Province

- **Teenage pregnancies** are relatively higher in **three districts of the Northern Province - Mullaitivu (7.6%), Killinochchi (7.4%) and Vavuniya (7.3%)** compared to **Kurunegala District (4.1%) Kegalle District (4.5%)**
- **Infant mortality** rate is high in **Jaffna (13.9), Mannar (12.8), Killinochchi (11.7), Mullaitivu (11.1)** when compared to national level (8.8).
- **Maternal mortality** rate is high in **Mannar (50.7) and Killinochchi (33.8)**
- **Mullaitivu(49%), Jaffna(60%) and Vavuniya (60%)** recorded a low use of contraceptive methods
- Only **40 - 50%** of young people (13 – 29 years) in Northern Province have overall knowledge about **sexual and reproductive health and STD & HIV/AIDS**.
- In the Northern Province less than **15% of adolescents** knew about high risk behaviors.

Youth Education dynamics in the Northern Province compared to other provinces

- **Northern Province (97.8%)** has the second highest literacy rate, next to the Western Province.
- Secondary Education is higher compared to national average (40.7%) in Northern Province (45.5%), but GEC O/L (13.5%) A/L (7.6%) and higher education (1.9%) levels are much less in all Northern Provinces than national Level (17%, 12.3% and 2.7%, respectively).
- Only 17% of the total population in Northern Province has knowledge to use computer (National Level - 25.1%).



*District Level disparities on youth health in the Northern Province compared to National level

Youth Unemployment data for the Northern Province

- **Unemployment is higher** compared to national average (3.8%) in Northern Province (**4.9%**).
- Government employees and private sector employees in Northern Province (14.3% and 30.9%) are less compared to national average (15.2% and 40.2%) but entrepreneurs are high in Northern Province (45.1%) compared to national average (33%).

Process Followed in Getting to a Youth Policy

Focal Point – A focal point is appointed by the respective Provincial Minister for Youth Affairs within the Province to coordinate the planning stages – the leadership is taken either by the Provincial Minister, the Secretary or their appointed official within the Provincial Ministry.

Stakeholder Consultation

As a first step a high level multi stakeholder consultation is planned to bring together individuals from the public sector, private sector, civil society, religious leaders, as well as youth leaders. They will contribute with their expertise and insights to recognize the current trends and gaps in youth engagement in policy making and will also broadly discuss areas related to youth in terms of employment, education, reproductive health, social and civic participation. The outcome of the consultation will be a list of recommendations from the stakeholders to be used as a guide in the process of **formulating a policy document** for the youth of the North.

Draft Policy Document

Subsequent to obtaining feedback on the draft by all stakeholders including youth, it is presented by the Provincial Ministry to the Council for adoption.

Thereafter activities are identified under priority areas of the policy implementation, including timelines and indicators. UNFPA Sri Lanka will continue to assist with technical advice on the implementation of the policy to ensure that it is delivered to the highest International standards.

Conclusion: Connecting the dots



UNFPA Youth Program Publication



20.4 Million: Sri Lanka's Population at a glance (2015)



100 Voices Campaign Leading for Change (2015)



National Youth Health Survey 2012/2013 (2016)



Generation to Generation Dialogue Available in Sinhala and Tamil (2015)



Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for Reproductive Health Programmes in Sri Lanka (2014)



Delivering for Women and Young People (2014)

For further information:

Contact: Neshan Gunasekera - Consultant, Policy Analyst – Youth and Young People
United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka, 202, Baudhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 07
Email: ngunasekera@unfpa.org | Tel: + 94 (011) 2580840



www.srilanka.unfpa.org



www.facebook.com/unfpa.srilanka



www.twitter.com/UNFPASriLanka