

G2G Pre-Brief

UNFPA Inter-generational Policy Dialogues

Bringing generations together for our Sri Lanka

“Investing in women as game changers for Sri Lanka’s future development: what does it take for women to fulfill their potential as leaders?”

Colombo, Sri Lanka
29 March



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Rationale: Why inter-generational policy dialogues?

Sri Lanka has heard the voice of the experienced; the older generation. We have learnt from their wisdom. Sri Lanka recognises the energy of young people; the energy for innovation and social change. Generations have been appreciated and recognised for their unique strengths. But has Sri Lanka been able to harness the collective potential of its entire population, capturing all generations together?

The United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka is facilitating a series of inter-generational policy dialogues to bring generations together; bringing wisdom together with the energy for social change, to collectively voice the opinions of three generations towards Sri Lanka's socio-economic development.

Why “Inter-generational” dialogues?

The second dialogue of this series, **“Investing in women as game changers for Sri Lanka's future development: what does it take for women to fulfil their potential as leaders?”** aims to create an inclusive platform for both young and old, from different walks of life and expertise, to contribute towards creating policy solutions.

These inter-generational policy dialogues however are not self-standing, but constitute the cornerstone of UNFPA Sri Lanka's Policy Engagement Framework. The evidence and insights gathered through the dialogues will support policy makers and decision-making processes with an in-depth analysis of population dynamics beyond data.

“Gender equality is also a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty: Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities, and they improve prospects for the next generation.”

- United Nations Population Fund

Kick Start

Through UNFPA's second inter-generational dialogue "*Investing in women as game changers for Sri Lanka's future development: what does it take for women to fulfil their potential as leaders?*", the United Nations Population Fund hopes to facilitate a discussion on identifying the impediments holding women back, and what kind of investments are needed to allow Sri Lankan women to fulfil their potential as dynamic leaders. Discussions from the dialogue will be made public and developed into a policy brief that can be used by different stakeholders as a tool for change.

UNFPA launched its first inter-generational dialogue on the shifting population dimension in Sri Lanka on the 16th of December 2015 in Colombo. The dialogue was open to the public and the audience consisted of both young and elderly. The focus of the discussion was on youth as a driving force in maintaining Sri Lanka's middle income status, taking into consideration the demographic bonus, increased dependency and an ageing population.

With Sri Lanka emerging as a middle-income country, UNFPA Sri Lanka focuses on assisting the government develop evidence based policies in the areas of women, youth, ageing, fertility and migration, to advance equity, accountability and quality in all spheres of decision making in the country, by providing evidence based policy recommendations.

By using and analysing data from Sri Lanka's Population and Housing census of 2012, various surveys, research studies and administrative records and, through recommendations from a series of intergenerational policy dialogues, UNFPA hopes to build a body of evidence that documents shifting population dimensions, and identify policy needs.

Inter-generational Policy Points:

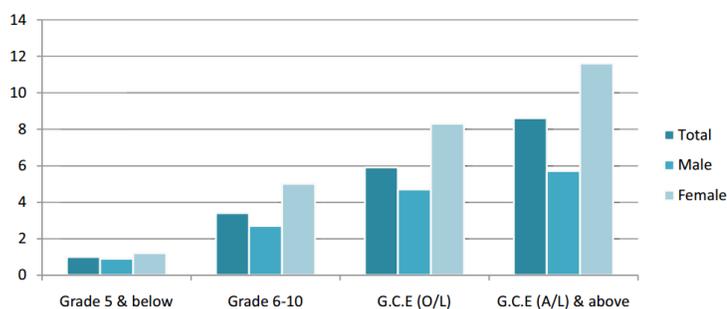
The following **three key policy points** will be discussed among participants from three generations on Investing in women as game changers for Sri Lanka's future development.

“Despite Sri Lanka faring well in several aspects of gender equality compared to its South Asian counterparts; it's still lagging behind in terms of female labour force participation”.

Source: 20.4 Million – Sri Lanka's population at a glance (2015)

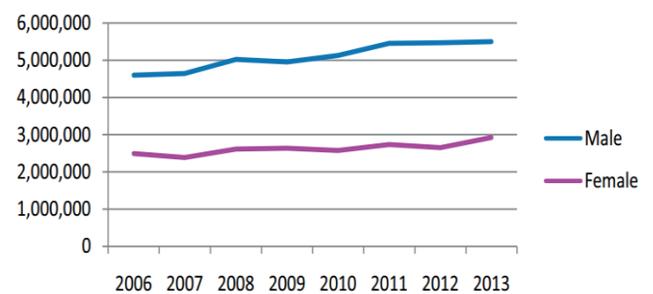
1. Investing in Potential Women Leaders for the Job Market

Currently, Sri Lankan women account for 59.7% of students enrolled in universities, however, the female unemployment rate for women is 67.71% - more than double that of men. Total labour force participation has remained relatively unchanged over the past three decades, with the men's participation in the workforce exceeding women's labour force participation by 2.6 million. Additionally, the proportion of women at higher who are employers is only 10.3%. Therefore, the trend in women taking the lead in education is not translated into actual labour force participation.



Unemployment by Education Level

Source: 20.4 Million – Sri Lanka's population at a glance (2015)



Employed population by gender

Source: 20.4 Million – Sri Lanka's population at a glance (2015)

Key factors that affect the leadership potential of Sri Lankan women in the labour force:

- **Gender stereotyping of education options:** Highest female enrollment in education is seen in streams such as arts, paramedical studies, and indigenous medicine, males enroll in streams such as engineering, architecture and ICT where there are more jobs available.
- **Lack of flexi-work conditions:** 62% of economically inactive women of working age are actively engaged in housework.
- **Minimal child care options:** Lack of high quality, cost effective, accessible childcare has prevented women from reentering the labour force after child birth.
- **Male bias in the private sector:** In 2012 the private sector shed over 10,000 female workers while adding over 45,000 male workers.

Source: 20.4 Million – Sri Lanka's population at a glance

Policy discussion points on investing in potential women leaders for the job market:

- What policies support women's entrepreneurship? And, the development of soft skills such as leadership skills, conflict resolution skills and negotiation skills?
- What policies currently make accommodations for a work life balance for women? (For example: flexi-work options, tele-commuting, child care, etc.)

2. Investing in the Security of Women in the Labour Force

“Street harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, non-discriminatory payment structures, and promotions should become key areas of policy intervention to increase female labour force participation”

Source: 20.4 Million – Sri Lanka’s population at a glance (2015)

In most institutions/workplaces, there is - minimal awareness of sexual harassment or mechanisms to address sexual harassment. Therefore, employees complaining of sexual harassment or seeking redress could be unfairly further penalized; transferred to other departments or forced to resign or unfairly dismissed, thereby compounding the injustice. In addition, it has negative impacts on women’s livelihood strategies and their bargaining position. In addition to the workplace women face widespread harassment in public transportation to and from the workplace.

Statistics that provide a snapshot of sexual harassment faced by women who are or who have potential to be part of the labour force:

- Almost 29% of Sri Lankan female journalists have experienced sexual harassment in the work place (Survey conducted by the International Federation of Journalists) (2015)
- 94% of 200 women reported being sexually harassed in a survey done at the Maradana railway station in 2004 (Amarasinghe et al)
- 51.2% of respondents indicated the presence of domestic violence in their lives. (4004 households in 11 Districts) UNOPS (2011)
- 44% of undergraduates have faced sexual abuse; and 36% of undergraduates have faced physical abuse. (Out of 1322 undergraduates from all over Sri Lanka) Fernando & Karunasekera (2009)
- 18.3% of pregnant women have faced physical abuse in Badulla District (Study done with 1200 pregnant women) Moonesinghe (2002).

Policy discussion points on Investing in the security of women in the workforce:

- What measures can be taken at a national level to address harassment in public transportation?
- What measures can national policies take to ensure safe and secure work environments for women, to and at the work place? (This includes different forms of sexual harassment in different sectors e.g. public sector, private sector, estate sector, etc.)

3. Tapping into the Potential Of Female Headed Households to Contribute to the Economy

“Out of 5.3 million households in Sri Lanka, 1.3 million households are female headed households.”

20.4 Million – Sri Lanka’s population at a glance (2015)

Among the total female heads of households, 34.6 percent are widows, while 53.3 percent are married and 7.4 percent have been reported as never married. Thus, more than one third of women who head households are widows who are a vulnerable group. The highest proportion of FHHs is found to be in urban areas¹. The proportions of FHHs are increasing in all three sectors – urban, rural and estate –

with the highest increase recorded for the estate sector. The large number of female headed households highlights the need for policy and legal reforms to address discriminatory laws and practices in land inheritance that both disadvantage women and hinder economic productivity.

A Snapshot of the characteristics of female headed households:

Age

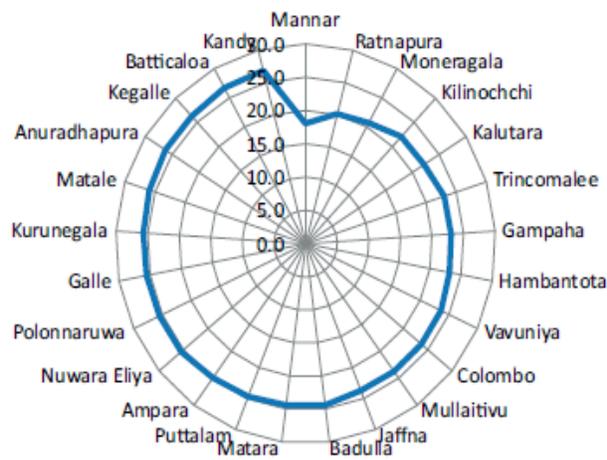
- Over 60% of female heads are under 60
- The highest concentration is within the age group 40-59
- 20% of women heading households are below 40

Education

- 7% have no schooling (this figure is twice the national figure)
- 27% have only primary education

Employment

- Employment of female heads is below 35%
- In the estate sector 52% are employed, but in precarious employment
- 22% indicated that they are unable or too old to work



Percentage of female headed households by district – 2012
Source: Department of Census and Statistics

Policy discussion Point on how to support Female Headed Households

- What type of multi-faceted coordination mechanism is needed to address the challenges faced by female headed households throughout the country?

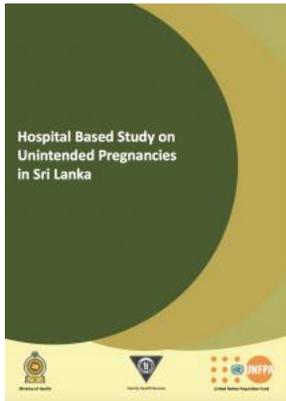
¹ Department of Statistics, Household Income and Expenditure Surveys, 2002, 2005, 2006/7, 2009/10, 2012/13.

Conclusion: Connecting the dots



The inter-generational policy dialogues will be an integral part of the United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka's national policy engagement framework to advance policies on women and youth, rights and health. The dialogues will not only capture voices of three generations, but also take into account the opinions, critiques and recommendations of both young and old in the areas of women, youth, ageing, fertility and migration. Future policy dialogues will continue to highlight these areas, supporting national decision making with evidence beyond data. G2G dialogues will also be taken to the outskirts of the country, to ensure every voice is counted towards Sri Lanka's decision making process.

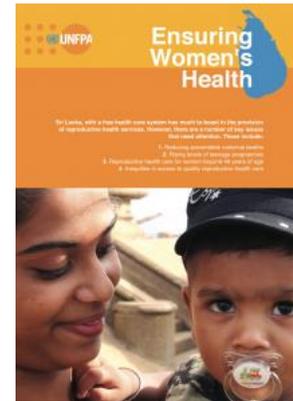
Publications on women's rights and health



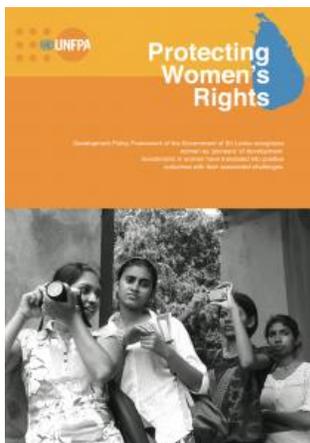
Hospital Based Study on Unintended Pregnancies in Sri Lanka 2011



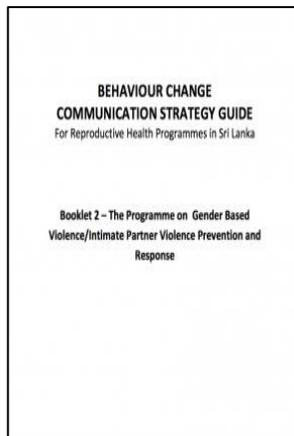
Extent, Trends and Determinants of Teenage Pregnancies in Three Districts of Sri Lanka 2011



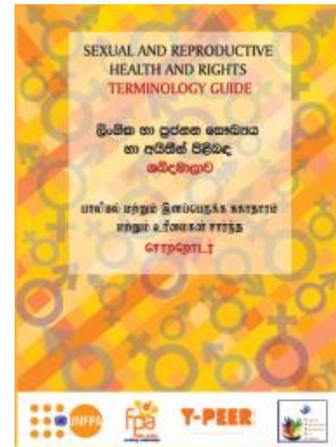
Ensuring Women's Health – Factsheet (2013)



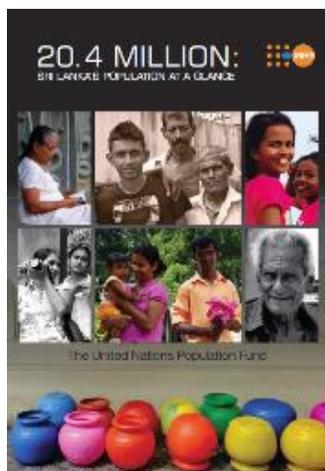
Protecting Women's Rights – Factsheet (2013)



Behavior change communication strategy guide for reproductive health programmes in Sri Lanka 2014



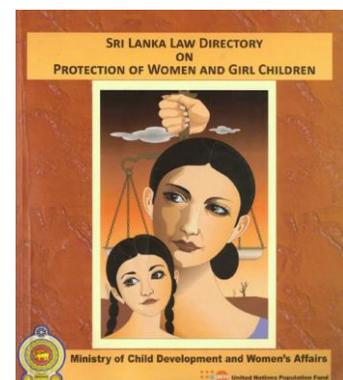
Sexual and reproductive health and rights terminology guide (2015)



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



100 Voices Leading for Change (2015)



Sri Lanka Law Directory on Protection of Women and Girl Children (2012)

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