



Youth Policy Programme

Sabaragamuwa Province
Stakeholder Consultation
Sri Lanka

Post-Brief

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

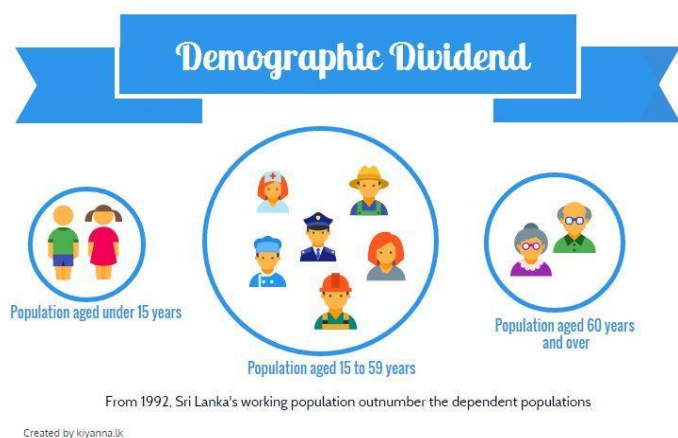
UNFPA Sri Lanka is convinced that with almost a quarter of the population being young, strong youth policies should be in place both at the national and provincial level. There are certain challenges common to youth at the national level and those which are specific for each of the provinces. It is important to identify such challenges and ensure that a holistic approach is taken while investing in youth. Through this project, UNFPA Sri Lanka aims to engage 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, Sabaragamuwa, Northern and Eastern Provincial Councils to develop recommendations for a youth policy.

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 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)

UNFPA Sri Lanka in 2016 engaged with the Sabaragamuwa 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 were brought together to contribute toward this effort.



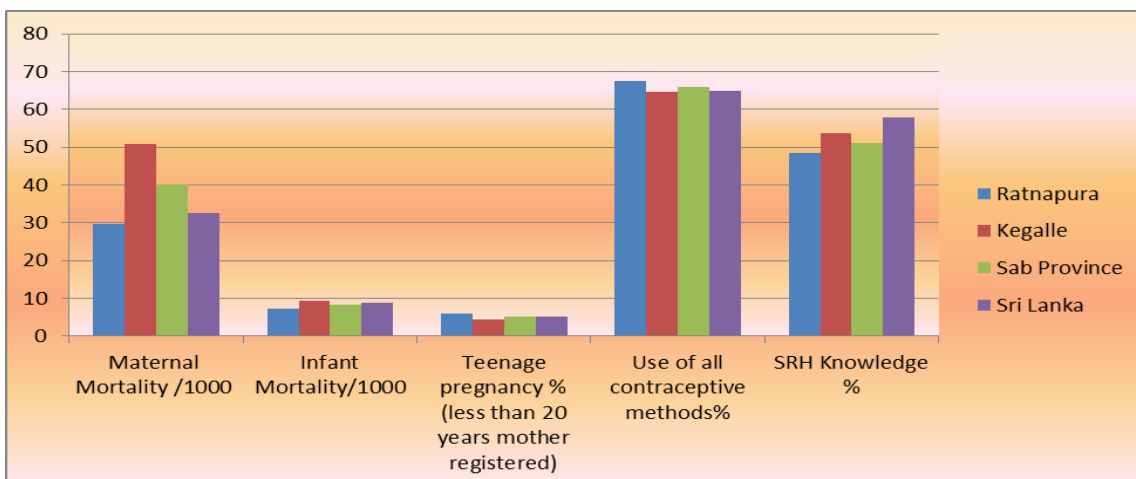
The objective was to identify specific needs of youth in the Province and then begin a process of advocating and supporting the Provincial Council to formulate a youth centered policy.

- **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 Sabaragamuwa Province

- **Teenage pregnancies** are relatively higher in **Ratnapura (6.1%)** of the **Sabaragamuwa Province** compared to **Kurunegala District (4.1%)**, **Matara District (4.6%)** and the **National level (5.3%)**.
- **Infant mortality** rate is high in **Kegalle (9.4/1000 deaths)**, when compared to **national level (8.8/1000 deaths)**.
- **Maternal mortality** rate (per 100,000 deaths) is high in **Kegalle (50.9)** when compared to **National level (32.5 per 100000 deaths)** while **Ratnapura** recorded a low rate (**29**)

*Annual Report on Family Health Sri Lanka 2013, Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka



Youth

Education dynamics in the Sabaragamuwa Province compared to other provinces

- Secondary Education is higher compared to national average (40.7%) in the **Sabaragamuwa Province (41.7%)**, while GEC O/L (15.7%) A/L (11.2%) and higher education (1.9%) levels are lower in the province than national Level (17%, 12.3% and 2.7%, respectively).
- **Sabaragamuwa province (21.8%)** has a lower Computer literacy rate compared to the national level (25.1%).

*Department of Census and Statistics Ministry of Policy Planning Economic Affairs, Child Youth and Cultural Affairs, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report – 2014 and Sri Lankas Socio-Economic Data – Central Bank June 2015

Youth Unemployment data for the Sabaragamuwa Province

- **Unemployment is higher** compared to national average (4.3%) in the Sabaragamuwa Province (**5.5%**)
- **Private Sector employees and entrepreneurs in the Sabaragamuwa Province (44.2% and 36%)** are high compared to the national average (40.5% and 33%) however the number of **Government sector employees** is lower in the Sabaragamuwa Province (12.3%) compared to national average (15.2%).

*Department of Census and Statistics Ministry of Finance and Planning, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report - 2013

PROCESS FOLLOWED IN GETTING TO A YOUTH POLICY

Focal Point – A focal point was 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 was convened to bring together individuals from the public sector, private sector, civil society, religious leaders, as well as youth leaders. They contributed their expertise and insights to recognize the current trends and gaps in youth engagement in policy making and broadly discussed areas related to youth in terms of employment, education, reproductive health, social and civic participation. A draft list of recommendations for policy resulted from this consultation and is set out below. A Steering Committee was appointed to take steps toward finalizing these recommendations into a **draft policy document**. This Committee is chaired by the Secretary of the Sabaragamuwa Provincial Ministry of Education and includes selected experts and young leaders from the two districts of the Sabaragamuwa Province. 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.

This consultation was supported by the Honourable Provincial Minister, Secretary and the Provincial Director of Health and senior officials of the respective ministries. Further, the following key officials participated and contributed toward developing the draft recommendations on youth for the Province; Vice Chancellor of the Sabaragamuwa University, Provincial Health Director and officials, Police Public Relations Officer, National Youth Services Council Sabaragamuwa Provincial Director, Former Chief Secretary of the Province and youth leaders from both districts including civil society organizations.



Group picture taken at the consultation 15 – 16 July 2016, Embilipitya

"Entrepreneurship is viewed as something negative in the Sabaragamuwa province; so much so that most young people steer clear of entrepreneurship opportunities"

- Ajith Ranasinghe, Sabaragamuwa Head of Department -Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ratnapura

"There are on average 14 cases of abuse and 800 illegal abortions taking place within a day in Sri Lanka. Ratnapura is the third highest area in Sri Lanka for child abuse"

- Dr. Azmi Thaibudeen, Advisor on HIV AIDS and doctor - Rathnapura General Hospital

Whilst the International Youth Skills Day was also celebrated at the beginning of this consultation (15th July), participants also interacted on several pressing issues faced by young people. These included lack of access to information including comprehensive reproductive health information, career guidance and employment opportunities. A full list of recommendations which resulted from this consultation is provided below.



SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS*

The Provincial Ministry of Education with the technical support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has drafted the following recommendations which resulted from a multi-stakeholder discussion held on 14 -15th July in Embilipitiya. These recommendations are to consider developments at the international, national and provincial level including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Young people's participation and contribution toward each of the following recommendations and at each level of implementation is of importance. Youth are considered as those within the age group 15-29. (*National Youth Policy Sri Lanka 2014*)

- To provide holistic and comprehensive reproductive health education and rights to adolescents and Youth
- Increase awareness and create access to youth-friendly health services through the use of ICT (Information Communication Technologies) and other innovative approaches
- Importance of understanding conservation of natural resources and waste management
- Develop more opportunities and freedom for young people to select their subjects based on their areas of interest.
- To create activity based education and upgrading to latest technological and other teaching methodologies
- Provide early school leavers with opportunities to follow vocational training while creating access to career guidance and counseling accordingly for all
- To facilitate the acquisition and adoption of state-of-the-art modern and appropriate clean technologies for Youth Entrepreneurs to increase quality, innovative, productive and competitive products.
- To promote, facilitate and support entrepreneurship development and build capacity at schools, universities, technical and vocational training institutions.
- To promote research and development as a powerful process to develop cost effective modern technologies, innovations and market oriented new designs with a view to improve product development, process development, productivity improvement and to increase the market competitiveness.
- Civil Society Organizations and Community Based Organizations to provide a significant and active contribution towards Youth development including through volunteerism among youth leaders
- To create access of young leaders to university through the introduction of diplomas on Youth Empowerment in collaboration with the Sabaragamuwa University and all programs and activities to be carried out in both Sinhala and Tamil languages.
- Including young leaders in decision making processes, ensuring their ethnic and gender representation

*These are the summary recommendations from the post-consultation report. Further details on this report could be obtained by contacting the Sabaragamuwa Provincial Ministry of Education or UNFPA Sri Lanka.

UNFPA YOUTH PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS



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:

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