Gender-based Violence (GBV) is widespread in Sri Lanka and is not categorized by any particular economic class or ethnic group. GBV exists in both urban and rural settings. GBV is based on unequal power relations between men and women. Existing social, cultural and customary practices reinforce unequal power relations that undermine the reporting of GBV and limit survivors’ access to services.

The consequences of lack of comprehensive evidence-based data, results in policies and systems that don’t target the root causes of GBV and results in survivors not getting the right health, legal and psychosocial support services that they need. This leads to an increased risk of complications such as STIs, HIV, unwanted pregnancy, trauma and repeat offences from perpetrators.

Women and adolescent girls are at high risk of GBV

One out of four females are sexually abused by the time they reach 18 years of age

36% of undergraduates have faced physical abuse
44% of undergraduates have faced sexual abuse.

Source: Prohibiting Women's Rights 2013, United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka
KEEPING THE PROMISE TO WOMEN
We at the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA Sri Lanka, are a diverse, dynamic and talented workforce accompanying Sri Lanka in its socio-economic development.

Our overall commitment is to advance equity, accountability and quality in all spheres of decision making, affecting the lives and potential of the Sri Lankan population, with women and youth as our main actors and beneficiaries of our interventions.

CHAMPIONING WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND HEALTH

We work to ensure that women are able to exercise their rights to health through research, policy advise and advocacy.

BRINGING GENERATIONS TOGETHER TO ADVANCE POLICIES FOR WOMEN

We are the population data agency that convenes inter-generational decision makers and actors through evidence-based data and policy related advocacy around women’s health and rights.
Leading with Data

As a centre for data excellence, UNFPA works closely with partners to establish a baseline to analyze GBV trends and patterns within Sri Lanka. We do this by:

- Supporting the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs to collect data from multiple stakeholders on GBV at the Divisional, District, Provincial and National levels to create a centralized database, which can monitor data linked from multiple data sources

- Conducting a nationwide research project on Sexual Harassment in public transportation and creating campaigns on security of women in transportation. The evidence collected will provide an understanding of the prevalence of GBV and be used to advocate for policy changes

- Analysing gender data of the Census of Population and Housing 2012, to understand gender and development trends in Sri Lanka and implications for policy and action

- Capacity building of community based service providers, including local NGO’s and women’s shelters, to collect data and to mainstream them into the national database

- Provide hardware support via the provision of tablets for Women Development Officers to collect data on GBV

- Conducting and disseminating information of a forensic pathology study on sexual violence in Sri Lanka

FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE
UNFPA’s interventions target both the root causes and the symptoms of GBV.

Supporting Data
- National GBV database streamlining the process of recording GBV incidents and referrals
Pioneering a Holistic Referral System

- Creation of a National GBV referral system with the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs to support the development of a governmental case referral system to assist survivors of GBV to get support from service providers.

- Piloting the GBV incident recording and referral system in the following three districts: Monaragala (district with one of the highest poverty rates in the country), Polonnaruwa (a border district during Sri Lanka’s civil war) and Mullaitivu district (a high conflict district during Sri Lanka’s civil war).

- Development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Women Development Officers (WDO’s) on the referral system by publishing, distributing and conducting capacity development trainings in the three pilot districts.

- Development of SOPs for Safe Houses - Publishing, distributing and conducting capacity development trainings in the three pilot districts on the procedures to assist government run women’s safe houses to operate efficiently and collect data systematically.

- Development of an Emergency App which is a trilingual mobile application to assist women on ‘next steps for help’ when faced with GBV.

Advancing Policy

- Inter-generational Policy Dialogue Series

- UNFPA chairs the:
  - National Forum Against Gender-based Violence
  - United Nations Gender Theme Group
Peacebuilding at the Grassroots

UNFPA is working to establish a coordination mechanism for GBV campaigns and peacebuilding at the grassroots level by targeting communities in nine districts that have high numbers of female headed households and war widows by:

- Strengthening women’s committees at district and divisional secretariat levels to improve multi-sectoral coordination to collectively address GBV
- Implementing GBV Campaigns at a community level via women’s committee by distributing trilingual GBV ‘100 Voices’ handbooks developed by UNFPA
- Conducting peacebuilding programmes to improve social harmony in local communities through inter-communal activities and social change campaigns via women’s committees (with an emphasis on war widows)
- Developing two publications
  - Compendium of Law: Gender-based Violence and Reproductive Rights

Building Capacity

- Psychosocial support
- SOPs for Mithuru Piyasa
- SOPs for Women Development Officers
- AbleApp—Sexual and Reproductive Health information for the visually impaired
Key Partners

Government
- Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation
- Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs
- Department of Census and Statistics
- Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
- Department of National Planning
- National Youth Services Council
- National Transport Commission

Non-governmental Organisations
- Women Development Centre
- Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum
- Women in Need

Academia
- Sri Lanka Law College
- University of Colombo
- College of Forensic Pathologists

Strengthening Advocacy
- Social Change Campaigns:
  - 100Voices
  - #OTW
  - Art for Advocacy
  - Corporate Collective