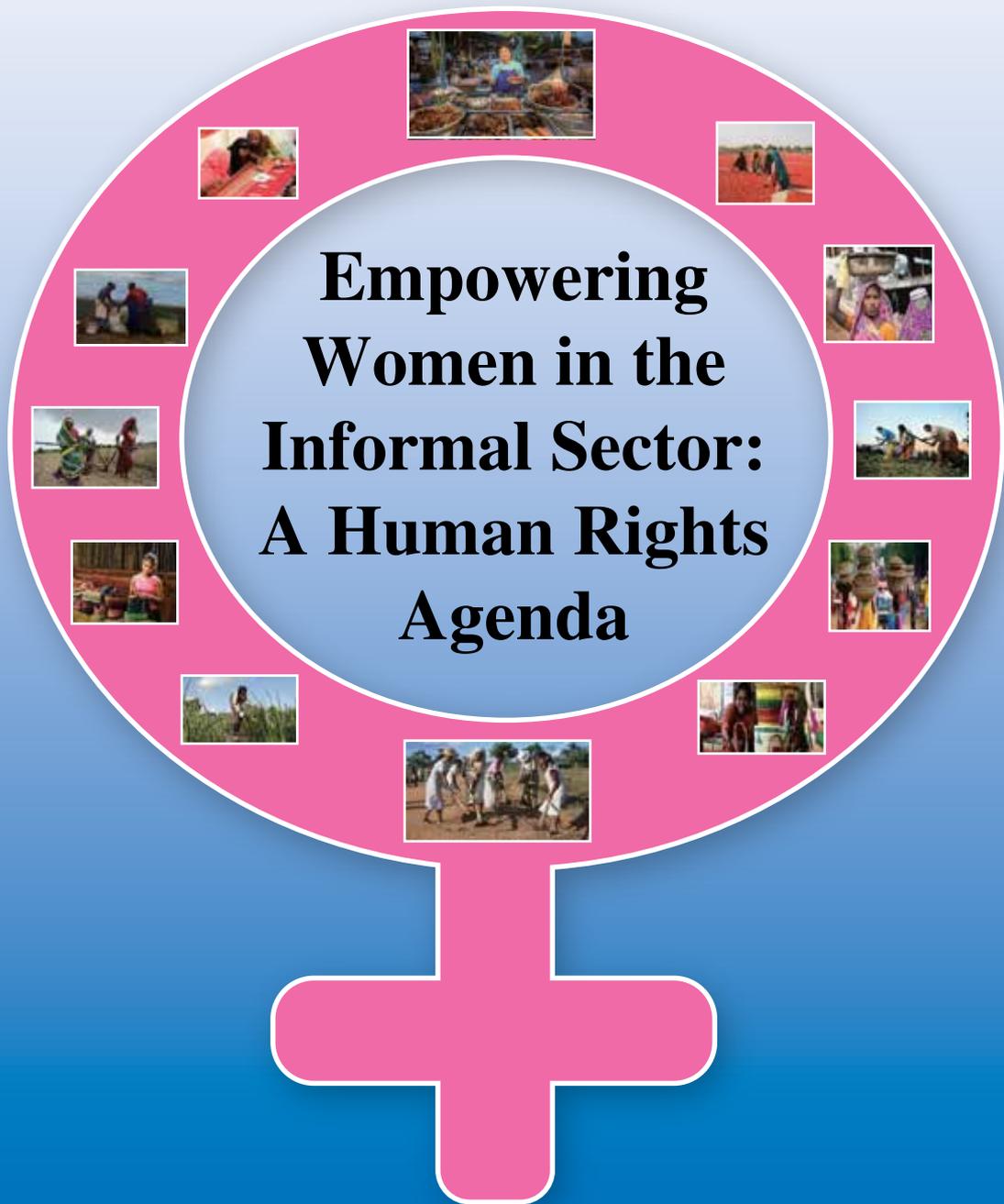


A World without Her ?



**Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
International Women's Day 2018**

**Empowering Women in the Informal Sector:
A Human Rights Agenda**

**Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
International Women's Day 2018**

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION HELD IN THE HEAD OFFICE - INCEPTIVE VIEWS.....	3
2.1. REGIONAL OFFICES.....	13
2.1.1. Anuradhapura Regional Office.....	13
2.1.2. Badulla Regional Office.....	15
2.1.3. Batticaloa Regional Office.....	17
2.1.4. Ampara Regional Office.....	19
2.1.5. Trincomalee Regional Office.....	20
2.1.6. Kalmunai Regional Office.....	21
2.1.7. Matara Regional Office.....	22
2.1.8. Jaffna Regional Office.....	23
2.1.9. Kandy Regional Office.....	24
3. COMMON CONSTRAINTS/CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN ENGAGED IN INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT SECTOR – GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	26
4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SRI LANKA.....	30
ANNEXURE I - Women’s Labour Contribution in Sri Lanka.....	32
ANNEXURE II - Participants at the Round Table Discussion on International Women’s Day.....	38

REPORT ON THE COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

1. INTRODUCTION

The International Women's day – 2016 was commemorated by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka under the theme "World Without Her" and experiences and views of 8 regional women leaders who are appearing for problems faced by rural women were subjected to discussion while evaluating their contribution at national level.

As an extension of this programme, a round table conference was organized under the same theme parallel to the International Women's Day, in order to discuss the constraints and challenges faced by the women's population engaged in informal economic field and initiate action to make the relevant officials aware of such hindrances, thereby compelling the Government to make policy decisions in this regard.

Accordingly, the Head Office and 10 Regional Offices of the Human Rights Commission acting under the theme of "World Without Her", arranged for obtaining views on challenges and constraints faced and achievements realized by women who are engaged in informal economic fields such as Agriculture and various cottage industries. Even though the primary attention was referred to informal economic fields, our attention was focused on the constantly rising problems related to the rights of those who are engaged in employment in Free Trade Zones, Estates and Transitional labour activities since infirm regulatory systems have emerged in these field as a result of these problems. State officials and representatives of Civil Organizations were invited by us for these round table discussions and their views were aired at these discussions.

This report contains the views and proposals put forward by the women in informal economic fields and the other representatives of public and civil organizations who took part in the said round table discussion and the round table discussions organized by the Regional Offices as well as recommendations made by virtue of Sections 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act No. 21 of 1996 and presented to the relevant state organizations with regard to the progression to be achieved through protection of rights of those women who are engaged in informal economic fields.

Here, the primary objective of the Commission is to achieve improvement of the women who are engaged in informal economic fields, through persuasion of state institutions to act taking into consideration the recommendations made herein when policies are framed and implemented by them.

2. ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION HELD IN THE HEAD OFFICE - INCEPTIVE VIEWS

The main programme pertaining to International Women's Day was organized by the Head Office the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and held in the Bandaranayaka International Studies Centre in the premises of Bandaranayaka Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo 07 with **Hon.Chandrika Bandaranayaka Kumarathunga**, the ex. President of Sri Lanka as the Chief Guest. A wide women's participation representing various vocations was witnessed on this occasion. Participation of women who are engaged in informal economic fields and those who are engaged in similar vocations was ensured and discussions were held on constraints and challenges faced by them.

This Round Table Conference was held with the participation of various state institutions such as Ministries, Departments and Corporations and Representatives of state and private sector banks, academics, ambassadors and Embassy representatives, representatives of United Nations Agencies and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Dr.Mrs. Deepika Udagama, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka welcoming the participants at the International Women's Day Programme, presented the introduction of the Programme.

It was emphasized by her in her speech that everybody's right to a dignified life as shareholders of the humanity should be protected and preserved. Today, we come across in the society a majority of women who are providing labour outside their homes. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka which shared views of rural women leaders on the previous occasion of International Women's Day, has arranged on this occasion to share the views of pertaining to day to day constraints, challenges as well as achievements of those who represent the informal economic fields which immensely contribute towards the economy of the country. It was emphasized that primary objective of this exercise is to divert the attention of the policy makers towards these factors. She said that present day Sri Lankan women are living between two worlds. Some women who make great achievements in some sectors continue to live in other sectors beleaguered by various traditions.

Extra-ordinary achievements in educational sector have been realized by women. Similarly, Sri Lanka is in the fore-front where the maternity health is concerned. However, the woman who accomplishes higher-education seems to be vanishing from the general life, especially from the labour force.

Even though the women's contribution towards labour force is around 35%, according to the Statistics-2012, around 60% of University students are women. Therefore, since their contribution towards economy and the Development process of the country is ambiguous, they have been subjected to under-estimation.

Greater women contribution is evident in the informal economic fields. There, the status pertaining to labour rights is not in a satisfactory level. Similarly, these women who are the back-bone of the economy seem to be toiling as estate workers and factory workers, providing labour for a pittance.

Further, sexual harassment against women is prominently evident in Sri Lanka. These incidents are generally seen in public transport systems as well as in working places and social concepts against women is mostly displayed in labour fields. As an example, it is difficult for woman entrepreneurs to obtain credit facilities than their male counterparts.

The Chairperson went on to explain that the woman, in spite of her education, has been forced to live beleaguered in traditional frames and are unable to enjoy the benefits of their education. She stated that in this context, certain laws and land regulations such as Land Development Ordinance should be subjected to revision.

The ex.President, Hon.Chandrika Bandaranayaka Kumarathunge who was the chief guest of the Women's Day Programme lamented that the recognition extended to the woman in the society is questionable, even though the women make a heavy and significant contribution towards economy as labourers in the fields of apparel production and tea industry as well as foreign employment which earns highest amount of foreign exchange for the country.

She further stated that steps have to be taken to increase women's contribution in the political field which is a social responsibility.

She added that security of women who face sexual harassment is a matter of significant importance and a host of policies and legislation should be enacted for the purpose.

She further stated that if proper training is afforded to them in the tourist industry, there is a galore of employment opportunities. Further, if they are trained as nurses or care takers of children, the disabled and the aged, it will provide convenient employment opportunities for those who can afford to spend only a few hours of the day, away from the family.

Further, she also focused on the social problem of dismantled families of those who are engaged in transitional employment. The government has compiled a National Policy and Action Plan 2016-2020 against harassment based on gender and action is being taken to implement them. Further, provision has been made by the Parliament in 2016 for 25% women's representations in all local government bodies and this has to be practically implemented.

She is of the opinion that reconciliation process can be more fully successful if women are made to participate in the process. Empowerment of women in the North as well as in the South who were affected due to the war is of paramount importance and National Reconciliation Bureau is in the process of compiling a wide programme in this regard.

A great volume of work such as creation of self-employment and granting credit facilities etc. is being contemplated. She said that sexual harassment and other forms of harassments are meted out to the women even while delivering services by the state officials in these areas.

Further, she explained that a programme to uplift the mental health of the women and children affected by the war has been initiated by the National Reconciliation Bureau.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

The Round Table discussion-2017 was initiated and conducted by **Dr. Harini Amarasuriya** and following ladies presented their achievements, challenges and problems pertaining to their respective fields which were taken up for discussion.

1. Ms.Roshini Weerasinghe – Apparel Sector (Katunayaka)
2. Ms.K.T.Somalatha - Uva Wellasa Women’s Organization – Agricultural Sector (Monaragala)
3. Ms.Maria Jeyadas Lakshmi- Palmirah and Coir related productions (Batticaloa)
4. Ms.M.P.Chandrani- representing Hambantota Kantha Maha Sangamaya – Implementing procedure of micro- finance system.
5. Ms.Ananthi Devendra Kumari - representing estate sector and house-maids- (Nuwara Eliya)

1. Ms.K.T.Somalatha –(Agricultural Sector)

She was the first to air her views initiating the round table discussion. She stated that Wellasa Women’s Organization was formed, parallel to the problems of Wellasa Sugar cane cultivators, for the purpose of educating the women in the area on legal, economic and political rights and make them active in this exercise. She is functioning as an active member of this Organization. She stated that those women who are engaged in farming activities are side-lined within the current social system. For example, women engaged in farming activities receive step-motherly treatment in government offices, police stations and even when seeking school- admissions for their children.

However, over 75% of contribution towards agricultural sector is made by these parties in their capacity as informal small-scale food producers. Women are side-lined when awards are made in the agricultural sector and their labour contribution is not appreciated.

A large quantum of work is performed daily by them and she emphasized that economic contribution of such women is not taken into consideration at any moment when relevant statistics are compiled.

She further stated women have to compete with males in procuring plot of lands for trade-stalls in the agricultural sector and more opportunities exist for the males in this exercise. Further, women are deprived of the chance of bidding and bargaining by the males and

once women are organized, certain recognition and ability to bid and bargain will be forthcoming.

She stressed the fact that majority of children less than 18 years of age are living together without being legally married. This is a problem which causes difficulties for female children. Further, early marriages and early divorces too, are abundant in agricultural areas. More and more divorce cases and maintenance/alimony cases are commonly witnessed in these areas.

As indicated by her, ownership of lands in Uva Province including Monaragala which is an agricultural area are not held by women. They do not have the right to decide upon the crop variety to be cultivated since the land ownership always go to the males in keeping with the provisions set out in the Land Development Ordinance. Therefore, a woman has to give in and always has to cultivate the crop variety decided by the male.

She insists that men and women should always have equal rights.

Further, in spite of allocating a quota of 25% for women's representations in local government institutions, women's representations are at a minimum in the Provincial Council or the Parliament and those who are present in these institutions too do not focus on problems faced by the women in agricultural sector.

Further, she says that opportunities for women in agriculture to come into politics is very rare and this cannot be changed by a system dominated by a minority of women. They have to be well organized in large numbers in order to effect these changes. Most of the programmes are stalled due to scarcity of current financial provisions. Further, there are irregularities in the process of distributing resources to rural areas and necessary policies in this regard should be compiled to overcome these difficulties. Since agriculture has been placed in a category of a lower standard, requisite resources are not made available in adequate quantities and policy makers should be made aware of this situation.

She added that more and more multinational companies are engaged in major scale agricultural activities in the Monaragala area and they use chemical fertilizer for production of food items which is found to be a health hazard. Therefore, attention of the policy makers has to be drawn to the safety of food items. She emphasized that the Government should also take steps to ensure the rights of common people when their agricultural lands are transferred to multi-national companies.

She further stated that large number of lending institutions are entering these agricultural areas and almost forcibly grant loans to the farming community, but it is the woman who has been adversely affected. People obtain loans in an irresponsible and hazardous manner and fall into difficulties when the repayment process begins. She lamented that Swashakti national loan scheme introduced by the Central Bank has not reached these agricultural areas and access to this scheme is found to be problematic. Instant

connectivity with these institutions is difficult through the telephone numbers indicated in their advertisements. People are unable to communicate through e-mail due to their lack of knowledge in the mechanism. Therefore, a simple system capable of reaching the village has to be introduced.

When a rural woman approaches the bank to obtain a loan, this becomes impossible due to the fact that the title deed of the land is in the name of her husband. Loans granted by the Samurdhi Bank are normally given on political influence. In some cases, husbands have obtained the loan of Rs. 50,000.00 from Samurdhi banks in their wives' name without her knowledge. These loans are not duly used by the husbands with proper management.

2. Ms. Ananthi Devendra Kumari (representing estate sector and house maids)

Ms. Ananthi Devendra Kumari was the next to make submissions at the Round Table Discussion. She has worked as an estate employee as well as a house-maid and is a Trade Union leader too. She is of the opinion that estate workers are not in receipt of adequate facilities and decent salaries even though they contribute heavily towards economy of the country. This pittance is not sufficient for them to maintain their families.

She stated that these people undergo untold hardships in obtaining aids and benefits granted by the government. Most of the estate workers, especially the female workers have not gone out of their estates and find it extremely difficult reach government offices located in Colombo. These workers are compelled to stage demonstrations or go on strikes to win salary increases. They have no opportunities to air their views or make submissions on their problems and state provisions do not seem to be available to improve the living conditions of these estate workers. Large number of estate women are employed as house-maids, but no proper legal system is in place to ensure their safety.

Most of tea pluckers are deployed on other errands during tea plucking sessions and they are deprived of their exact daily pay since they fail to pluck the targeted quantity of tea leaves.

Following proposals were discussed at the meeting;

- Necessity of a system with regard to the initial salary in estate sector.
- Implementation of all relevant rules and regulations regarding estate workers.
- Necessary changes in rules and regulations of the Labour Department.
- Officials should understand the plight of the estate workers and be sensitive.
- Employees' Trade Unions should keep away from politics.
- Women have no opportunity to participate at Janatha Consultative Committees.
- Law maker should concentrate not only on Colombo, but rural areas as well.
- Compilation of new laws for estate sector.

She cited estate privatization as one of the reasons for problems faced by the estate women in the economic sectors.

Further, malnutrition is in vogue in the Nuwaraeliya district in addition to overwhelming child abuses.

Language issues are another problem faced by the estate labourers. She stressed the fact that it is the responsibility of the state officials to treat all estate workers on equal terms when implementing rules and procedures, irrespective of various differences of the persons.

3. Ms.Roshini Weerasinghe (apparel industry)

Ms.Roshini Weerainghe took part in the Round Table discussion, representing the women engaged in apparel industry. She works in an apparel factory and has joined a non-government organization to work for the welfare of the employees in apparel sector. She stated that women working in free trade zones are being treated in a degrading manner and are being subjected to various harassments on the way, in hostels as well as work stations.

Further, there is a trend that women who are working for a long time in some factories where chemicals are being used have become infertile. While 62% of women who are working in free trade zones are suffering from anaemia and there are cases of malnutrition as well. She added that the factory workers living in hostels are not receiving government relief when the areas they are living in are affected by the natural calamities. She also drew the attention to the difficulties experienced by them in obtaining the concessionary 'lactation hour' allocated to them to feed their infants.

Before concluding her submissions, she stated that necessary steps should be taken to ensure job security of the Manpower employees and woman workers employed in free trade who make the biggest contribution to the economy of the country should be entitled to proper recognition. She also stated that since woman workers employed in free trade zones find it difficult to obtain leave to go to their villages to cast their votes, their right to franchise too is being violated. She inquired as to why polling stations could not be established within the free trade zones where they are employed.

4. Ms.M.Laxmi Mariyadas (Palmirah and coir related productions)

Ms.M.Laxmi Mriyadas who is engaged in Palmyra and coir related production was next to air her views at the discussion.

She drew the attention to the women affected by the war. She says that women should be encouraged to engage in self-employment. Most of the migratory workers are returning home without due wages and in mental agonies.

She is of the opinion that when implementing policies, laws and regulations, attention should be drawn to the fact there are women engaged in different types of employment and they should be treated with relevance to their individual job status.

5. Ms.M.P.Chandrani (representing Hambantota Kantha Maha Sangamaya – Implementing procedure of micro- finance system.)

Ms. M.P.Chandrani who works as an Assistant in the Training and Animation Division, of the Hambantota Kantha Maha Sangamaya, stated that socio-animation programmes and Financial Aid Programmes are conducted under the aegis of Gemi Shakthi Banking Programme for the benefit of rural women and her organization endeavours to make conceptual changes in women and their families through socio-animation. She believes that such conceptual changes will improve the empowerment skills in the economic field. Most of the women seeking bank loans are facing various difficulties and will require security deposits etc.

Her organization releases micro-finance facilities through small groups and large number of people have been empowered in economic and socio terms using these facilities.

Requisite back ground is also being provided through this programme to create recognition in the society as well as in the family for the women concerned.

OBSERVATIONS PUT FORWARD BY THE INVITEES

1. Ms. Bhoomi Harendran : she put forward three problems.

1. Is a special day necessary for women?
2. Do we take action to obtain the services of the state officials who are appointed to serve the people?
3. Is there a classification for women?

She said that all are acting in a manner as if they have forgotten everything after the discussions held on the Women's Day.

2. Ms. Vijitha Alles – Asst. Director General, Department of External Resources

She stated that nutrition level of most of the women engaged in estate related employment is at a lower level and they are mostly suffering with malnutrition. This situation is evident in most rural areas as well.

A programme to improve nutrition level of women and children is being prepared by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. A programme for releasing micro-finance facilities is being implemented by the Central Bank using state funds and foreign aid. Rural women have to be made aware of this facility, where market assistance and technical assistance also will be available.

3. Ms. Chandra Pathmini - Sri Lanka Technical Research Policy Council

Women abandon their employment after the marriage and some of them are engaged in self-employment. Most of them leave their jobs to look after their children. Since no policies have been compiled in the country with regard to pre - childhood development, such policies should be compiled.

4. Mr.Thenu Rankoth

70% of educated women are not engaged in employment, thereby they are beleaguered in traditional, cultural and ethical surroundings. The problem exists whether we should continue to take these manacles from generation to generation?

5. Ms. Sriyah Dayawansa – Director, Regional Dev. Dept., Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Around 85% of women have been granted with loans under PAMP loan scheme introduced to alleviate poverty. Further, the Central Bank, in collaboration with various other special institutions, conducts Island wide programmes pertaining to statutory Training, financial transactions and skill development. The Swashakthi National Loan Scheme, a novel scheme introduced by the Government is being presently implemented in a grand scale. Loans subject to a maximum of Rs. 250,000.00 are being granted with an annual interest rate of 5%. Here, a grant subject to a maximum of Rs. 50,000.00 is offered on non-refundable basis. Instructions have been issued to give special attention to women under his loan scheme. Wide publicity is being given in the press and a sum of Rs. 1000 million has been set apart by the government and it is expected to raise it to Rs. 4,000 Million. Loans could be obtained through 17 banks in the Island. Instructions with regard to the loan scheme could be obtained over the phone as well through email. Further details could be obtained from the Regional Dev. Dept., Central Bank of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Affairs.

Ms.K.T.Somalatha who aired her views regarding the said Swashakthi Loan Scheme, stated that there is a problem with regard to the flowing of this scheme to rural areas and there are difficulties in accessing for these facilities. There are problems with regard to the telephone numbers given in the advertisements. There is no instant response to the telephone calls. Rural folks have no knowledge in dealing with e-mail. Therefore, a simple system has to be introduced in order for this scheme to reach village level.

6. Ms.Chamila Thusari - Da Bindu Ekathuwa, Free Trade Zone

She stated that even though the GSP+ concession has been made available for the apparel sector, derived benefits have not been accrued to the workers.

Further, woman workers engaged in employment at apparel factories in the North and the East are being subjected to various types of harassment and violation of labour laws in an increased manner.

Similarly, Tamil woman workers who have migrated to Free Trade Zones in Biyagama, Katunayaka are subjected to various difficulties due to the absence of Tamil name boards in buses. Further, the salary card also is not prepared in Tamil and the language has become a barricade when dealing with bank transactions. There are no places of worship in the Free Trade Zone and Tamil workers are faced with problems with regard to the observance of their religious rites.

7. Mr.Chaminda - Helpage Sri Lanka

Adult woman population is rapidly increasing at present and there is a trend where most of the women are displaced from their families when they become old. He further stressed the need to focus attention on adult woman population when compiling policies with regard to the women.

Adult women find it extremely difficult to raise the requisite capital even though they have the will and the skill to engage in self-employment, because no lending agency is prepared to grant loans to people over 60 years of age. This is another area which demands the attention of policy makers.

8. Ms. Apsara Weerasekara - Ministry of Housing and Construction

Most of the women are compelled to vacate their employment in order to look after their children. In Sri Lanka, there is no system of looking after the children after school. If such a system is introduced and necessary policies, rules and regulations are imposed, working mothers will find it very convenient in their day to day duties. Further, this has been one of the reasons for birth control.

At the end of the discussion, **Dr. Harini Amarasuriya** who conducted the discussion stated that in the context of women's strategic requirements and cultural variations, Sri Lanka has been subjected to a retrogression which demands our compulsory attention.

At this juncture, **Dr.Mrs.Deepika Udagama**, *Chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka* stated that necessary action has to be taken for practical implementation of all the ideas expressed at the discussion. At the same time, policy makers should focus on the aspects of diversity when taking policy decisions. She said that there is space for conflicts in the traditional education system. The society has created an idea in the minds of women that they should work within the traditional framework when entering the world as a new professional.

The chairperson drew attention to the fact that while finding solutions for the problems prevailing in the education system, a change in concepts too should be considered. At the same time, we should be vigilant to ensure that policy makers are compiling their policies to the extent where those policies will embrace the lives of the masses.

However, she stated that there is a decline in the number of complaints lodged with the Commission with regard to policy constraints such as the ownership of lands and applications for loans. Further, the loan scheme introduced by the Central Bank is unapproachable to the general public and expressed her views as to how this problem can be solved through Grama Nilaharis. She also stated that views expressed with regard to the children who need care and protection should receive due attention since most of the educated women are compelled to stay at home to look after their children. It will also be appropriate if amenable office hours are maintained and problems pertaining to the productivity in Sri Lanka also demand careful consideration.

The Chairperson stated that a report containing all these views and proposals expressed at the discussion will be prepared and action will be taken to transmit it to the relevant authorities for taking necessary action.

The Chairperson while expressing her thanks to the speakers and the participants at the discussion did not forget to point out the necessity to form a strong women's movement in Sri Lanka.

2.1. REGIONAL OFFICES

2.1.1. Anuradhapura Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Anuradhapura Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 at the Creston Park Hall in Anuradhapura with the objective of appreciating the activities of women who are engaged in informal economic field and exchanging their experiences, challenges and achievements.

Participants

Ms. Leelawathie Gunawardena (handicrafts), Ms.A.Kusumawathie(Enterprise), N.G.Kamalawathie (representing disabled, working women), and Ms. Jeewanthi Liyanage, representing Haritha Sangamaya – agricultural products) took part in the Round Table Discussion and exchanged their experiences. Representatives of state and non-governmental organizations, civil society activists and members of women's organizations including Hon. H.B. Semasinghe, Minister of Lands, Rural Development and Irrigation of the Central Province representing the Policy Making bodies, Mr.P.B.Gunawardena, Deputy Secretary of the Provincial Planning and Operations Department, Mr.R.P.S.Gunawardena, Asst. Director/ Ministry of Industrial Development and Mr.P.B.D.Gunawardeena, Executive Director/ District Chamber of Commerce were present at the discussions.

Challenges and Constraints

- **Ms.N.G.Kamalawathie**

She is representing disabled women who are working. She stated that around 200 disabled women are working with her and they are handicapped due to absence of a sign convertor during training sessions. Therefore, correct information is not transmitted to them. Most of the training programmes are held in the auditorium on the upper floor of the District Secretariat which causes a hindrance to the disabled persons. She said that not only the Social Service Department, but all other institutions, Ministries and departments should look into the grievances of the disabled persons. They find it difficult to market their products due to transport difficulties and says that it is more appropriate to have a suitable market place for marketing their products. It will be more productive if the government makes arrangements to purchase their projects at the gate and requested that attention be focused on these constraints.

- **Ms.Harshini Dayananda**

She stated that women with disabled children are compelled to remain at home to look after their sick children and it will be more productive if they are encouraged to engage in self-employment while being at home and added that these facilities should be equally made available to those who are not engaged in government jobs and those who are government servants. There is no such policy in the North Central Province. It will be more appropriate if custodians too are afforded a training during training sessions for disabled.

- **Ms. A.Kusumawathie**

She explained the various difficulties faced by them when seeking loans from government lending institutions. There is no mechanism whatsoever to assist them in maintaining their trade- stalls and the government should make arrangements to introduce a suitable mechanism to guide such entrepreneurs and create a suitable programme enabling them to obtain their loans in a convenient manner.

- **Ms.Leelawathie Gunawardena** (self-employed)

She pointed out the non-availability of a suitable market place for their products. They have no space to market their products in places which are heavily frequented by the purchasers. Trade stall are divided among the major scale entrepreneurs side -lining the micro entrepreneurs. The taxes to be paid by those engaged in self-employment is also a heavy burden on them. She acknowledged with thanks the assistance rendered by non-governmental organizations and remarked that it will be more appropriate if the Government intervenes in this process because of the exorbitant prices of the implements being used for self-employment and various problems are created when they use public transport for marketing their products.

- **Ms.Jeewanthi Liyanage** (representing Haritha Sangamaya)

Stated that it will be productive for those women who are engaged in the cultivation of ornamental flowers, if a suitable marketing place for their products, i.e. flower plants, in the city of Anuradhapura. She suggested that It will be helpful if they are exposed to international standards in addition to providing local training on floriculture. Ministry of Industrial Development is presently engaged in distributing flower plants and pots, but the supply is inadequate to cater to the full requirements of the floriculturists.

- Distribution of resources and providing finance assistance are done on political influence and intervention.
- Programmes propagating products of rural women has to be developed.
- Laws and policies presently in force are inaccessible to the woman entrepreneurs.
- Government institutions should take necessary steps to improve the requirements prevailing in rural areas without political interference and also in the proper manner on the basis of correct data.

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations.

- **Hon. Minister H.B. Semasinghe**

He promised to provide a Sign convertor through the Department of Social Services and stated that the government has imposed regulations to provide access facilities for government buildings and action can be taken to issue instructions to the officials concerned to conduct relevant training programmes.

- **Mr. P.B.Gunawardana**, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Provincial Planning and Operations stated that he will allocate requisite financial provisions for education and health through his Department. However, he admitted that informal employment sector had been neglected.

- According to **Ms.S.P.N.Gunawardena**, Asst. Director/Provincial Industrial Development Department, training courses are being conducted for all those who are registered with the department and batik and handlooms are included. She requested those interested to follow these courses. She added that requisite space has been provided to market their products.

- Chamber of Commerce, Anuradhapura pointed out that steps have been taken to guide the entrepreneurs though training programmes conducted free of charge and if requested, these training programmes could be arranged for groups of 30 persons.

2.1.2. Badulla Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Badulla Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 in the Auditorium of District Secretariat, Badulla.

The Discussion was conducted by **Ms.Nishadini Pieris**, Lecturer, Uva Wellassa University. The welcome speech was followed by the speech of Badulla District Secretary who was the Invited Guest. There was a video screening as well.

Participants

State sector representatives such as Officers of Badulla Divisional Secretariat, Director/ Provincial Health Ministry, Deputy Secretary (Women's Affairs) Uva Provincial Council, Deputy Director, Provincial Road Development Ministry, Police Officers and representatives of non-governmental organizations along with women representing various fields.

Challenges and constraints

- **Ms.Mallawaarhchi** from Medagama complained that certain persons received aid on political influence, subsequent to the training programme conducted by the government.
- **Ms.T.Manohari**, an entrepreneur stated that certain problems are encountered in the process of registering self-employments. On some occasions, they were threatened to close down their business and she personally received various kinds of threats.
- **Mr.Prabath Kumara**, representing the women in estate sector stated that language is a barrier which prevents estate workers from attending meetings and airing their views. Further, they have a negative attitude towards government officers.
- Difficulties encountered in the process of obtaining loan facilities for women in self-employment.
- Conditions imposed by state banks are incompatible with the requirements of those engaged in self-employment
- During training programmes conducted by the government, participants are side-lined while non-participating outsiders are given various kinds of implements.
- Political interference in the distribution system of financial aid and essential materials should be eradicated.
- Lack of government assistance in certain distant remote areas.
- Scarcity of knowledge in modern technology
- Production and transport problems with regard to raw materials
- Lack of suitable marketing facilities
- Right of woman estate workers to participate in decision making process
- Problems encountered by women engaged in foreign domestic services
- Problems encountered in the process of granting concessions by Divineguma Department

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations

- Bank Manager of Divinguma Department stated that opportunity exists for group of 04 persons to obtain loans. These groups should maintain themselves in an active manner. Initial capital and financial aid are provided by the state.
- Any person adversely affected by a misdeed of a state officer could lodge a complaint with the relevant institution. If not satisfied with the outcome, he can lodge a complaint with the Human Rights Commission.
- Local Government Officers were of the opinion that state officers cannot be perpetually blamed and a mechanism to distribute resources is in place.

- Officers stated that estate workers are in the habit of seeking services of translators whenever they have to communicate with the officers. These officers added that needy persons should communicate with them.

2.1.3. Batticaloa Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Batticaloa Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 in the Auditorium of the Town Council of Batticaloa and a special lecture on the Women's Day was delivered by **Mr. A.C.A.Azeez**, Regional Co-ordinating Officer. Women's representatives had the opportunity to exchange their experiences while discussing various problems encountered by them in their day to day life at this discussion which was conducted by **Ms.Aneesha Fardas**, Chairperson of the IWARE women's organization.

Participants

Mr.Giridharan, Addl. District Secretary was the Invited Guest at this programme which was attended by women engaged in informal economic sector along with the state and non-governmental organizations, civil society activists and members of various women's organizations.

Challenges and Constraints

- **Ms.N.F.Ferwin** aired her views as a woman engaged in the cashew business. She has a work force of 80 in her enterprise who are not in receipt of decent wages. Due to exorbitant local prices,cashew nuts have to be imported from India, that too with various difficulties. A politician is suspected to be involved in this process where he is supposed to be making heavy profits. Therefore, she suggested that relevant permits should be issued, affording them the opportunity to import cashew nuts at a reasonable price.
- General consensus was that the assistance of a politician is needed, but should be properly regulated.
- **Ms. V.Bhvani** who took part in the discussion is engaged in palmirah industry. She stated that a large number of women in her area are engaged in this industry as part time employment, encountering various problems. Industry is badly affected during the rainy season. Palmirah trees are adversely affected due to deforestation, creating scarcity in palmirah leaves. Large number of palmirah trees are felled to make way for

electricity transmission lines and trees were destroyed by Tsunami as well. Intermediaries' involvement in the Industry, especially in marketing, also creates certain problems.

- **Ms. V.Shanthi, Ms.R.Gnaneswari and Ms. P.Krishnvainai** are engaged in pottery. There is a difficulty in procuring raw materials of good quality and damages caused in transport have paved way for various problems which in turn affect marketing process.
- General consensus was that the government which is of the opinion that pottery is a profitable business, does not wish to provide any concessions for the industry. Involvement of intermediaries in selling clay is yet another problem in the industry.
- **Ms.P.Sharmila** who is engaged in joss-sticks production complains about the difficulty in procuring raw materials in Batticaloa area. Prices in Colombo are unbearable. Even if the products are ready, high cost of packaging and printing poses problems in marketing and there is a severe competition in the area.
- **Ms.A.F.Shihana** is engaged in an industry which produces handicrafts using sea shells. Here too, there are transport difficulties. Whole process, from production to marketing, is a long chain of constraints.

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations.

- According to the Town Commissioner, approval for collecting clay has to be obtained from the District Secretariat. There is no problem in obtaining clay on this permit which is a legal document.
- According to the District Social Service Officer, a sum of Rs. 25,000.00 is made available at the commencement of the micro-enterprise without any legal binding on the industry. There is no problem whatsoever if the requisite permits are obtained.
- Asst. Director/ Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources stated that several awareness programmes are underway to educate on the problem of finding raw materials for sea shells industry. Working women are targeted by this programme. Required raw materials are available in the village called Thambiluvil in Ampara District and necessary assistance can be extended.
- District Manager/Palmirah Development Board stated that there are around 2500 palmirah producers and the opportunity exists to start enterprises at rural level. It is possible to find a market among the foreign tourists too. In case of any problem they should contact the Board.

2.1.4. Ampara Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Ampara Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 in the auditorium of the Regional Office. A video on the history of commemorating International Women's Day was screened and another presentation was made on the theme and targets 4 and 5 of the Sustainable Development targets.

Participants

Those women engaged in informal economic sector took part in this programme. Director of Agriculture, Divisional Secretaries, Vocational Training Officers, Rural Development Officers, Women Development Officer, Police officers of the Child and Women Bureau also were present representing the state sector along with a host of members of civil organizations.

Challenges and Constraints

- Inability to provide proper training in the relevant fields.
- Non-availability of an initial capital for investing and difficulties encountered in obtaining loans for industries.
- Deficiencies in marketing process.
- Ignorance of EPF and ETF.
- Lack of interest of women over 40 years of age to register for jobs in the informal economic sector.
- Non-availability of a suitable communication system.

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations.

- Various training programmes are conducted by the Vocational Training Centre of the Agriculture Department for the benefit of rural women.
- Representative of the Women Development Division of the Divineguma Project stated that certain concessions have been arranged by the Divisional Secretariat through state banks and these loans are available for those interested without any discrimination.
- According to the Women Development Officers of the Divineguma Development Project, most of the women engaged in informal employment sector do not take part in training programmes if transport and other expenses are not settled. It was further pointed out that most of the women who are engaged in self-employment are used to open up various types of businesses without proper planning.
- Officers of the Child and Women Bureau discussed the subject of protecting women who are engaged in informal economic sector.
- State representatives are of the opinion that a suitable network should be arranged covering all the women engaged in this sector.

2.1.5. Trincomalee Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Trincomalee Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 at the Kulakkottam Cultural Hall of the Town Council of Trincomalee.

Participants

Mr. Bandaranayake, Deputy Commissioner/ Labour Department, Mr. M. M. Nawfis, Deputy Director/ Eastern Provincial Council- Rural Industries, Rev. Father Yogeswaran, Director/ Centre for promoting and protecting human rights, Ms. Laxmi, attorney at law of the Legal Aid Commission of Trincomalee and representatives of state institutions as well as non-governmental organizations including women's organizations, civil society members, members of women's organizations, human right activists and those engaged in micro-industries in the district of Trincomalee were present on this occasion.

Among the woman participants, there were those who are engaged in enterprises related to Palmyra Products, Handlooms, handicrafts, coconut oil, milk related products and leather products.

Challenges and Constraints

- Difficulties in marketing their products since major scale entrepreneurs are selling merchandise similar to micro industrial products, but at a lower price.
- Difficulties in marketing their products in the absence of a proper and permanent market.

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations.

- Chamber of Commerce stated that plans have been already prepared to establish a Marketing Centre in the Trincomalee District. A project proposal has been submitted by the Chamber of Commerce and if approved, it will serve as a good source for the women engaged in small scale enterprises of this nature.
- **Mr. Bandaranayake**, Deputy Commissioner of Labour explained the facilities and services available in the Labour Department.
- **Mr. M. M. Nawfees**, Deputy Director/ Rural Industries in the Eastern Provincial Council too explained about the projects and activities enforced by his department and stated that anyone interested could call over at his department for details and also take part in suitable training courses conducted by the department.

- **Rev.Fr. Yogeswaran**, Director/ Centre for promotion and protection of human rights and Ms. Laxmi, Attorney at law of the Legal Aid Commission explained about the legal status.

2.1.6. Kalmunai Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Kalmunai Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 in Kristallam.

Regional Co-ordinating Officer and Ms.S.Sivapriya/Director, Department of Cultural Affairs and Invited Guest delivered lectures. Programme was conducted by **Ms.Nishanthani** of AHAW Organization.

Participants

Around 194 persons consisting of women employees who are engaged in agriculture, fisheries, cottage industries, self-employment, pottery and house-maids, women's organizations, civil society activists, co-ordinators of Child Protection Authority, officers of Social Service Department, Police Officers, Pre-School teachers and school children took part at this programme.

Challenges and Constraints

- Family responsibilities and cultural constraints
- Limited access to financial capital
- Higher labour charges and financial disputes
- Costly raw materials
- Lack of proper marketing facilities
- Severe competition
- Products purchased by intermediaries at their own prices
- Inaccessibility to new technologies
- Necessity for an enterprise network
- Higher transport charges
- Encountering various problems due to conditions imposed at the time of obtaining loans for business activities
- Lack of assistance from the State

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations

- Attention has to be focused on the national level empowerment of women who are engaged in informal economic sector.
- Commerce policy in Sri Lanka should be prepared in a sensitive manner and should suit the requirements of the women who are engaged in industries.
- Exhibitions, awareness programmes etc. should be organized at regional, district and national level in order to encourage women engaged in informal economic sector.
- Ensure women's participation at policy making for commerce affairs, at the time of obtaining raw materials, national trade policy compilation, trade agreement compilation and evaluation of industry- related constraint.
- Special allocations in the National Budget
- Establishment of co-operative societies for women in informal economic sector

2.1.7. Matara Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Matara Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 14 March 2017 at Sarvodaya Auditorium. **Mr. D.M.R. Dissanayake**, Matara Regional Co-ordinator delivering the welcome speech explained the objectives of the programme. Discussion was conducted by Ms. Amali Jayaweera, Journalist.

Participants

Around 50 participants consisting of women engaged in informal economic sector, Deputy Director of Divineguma and Samurdhi Department, Deputy Manager of Central Bank, Co-ordinator of Legal Aid omission, Manager (Matara Youth Service Council), Media, Police Officers of Child and Women Bureau, Regional Office representatives and trainees in Vocational Training Centre.

Challenges and Constraints

- Ms. Chamika de Silva stated that her business is to prepare and deliver apparels to various state organizations. She insisted on suitable marketing arrangements.
- Ms.Mangala Hewamaddumage is engaged in manufacturing ladies hand bags and school bags. She lacks modern technology and modern equipments and she is therefore not in a position to cover orders expeditiously.

- Ms.D.B.Chandralatha, engaged in floriculture has accrued her knowledge from the Department of Agriculture. However, she had to face various obstacles in acquiring a land and obtaining loans for the purpose. Once she was taken into police custody too.
- Ms.H.M.Gnanawathie explained the problems she is encountering as a woman engaged in apparels industry as a self-employment. Her biggest problem is her inability to obtain loans due to her age.

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations.

- **Ms.Rajika** of Legal Aid Commission while acclaiming the efforts of these women explained legal framework. She is of the opinion that women engaged in business should be thoroughly aware of the processes relating to loans, laws and insurance.
- **Mr.M.P.Aruna**, Bank Manager, Central Bank stated that loan facilities could be obtained in consultation with banks.
- Deputy Director, Divineguma Department stated that Samurdhi bank loans are awarded to entrepreneurs over 18-19 years of age. Most of the entrepreneurs do not care to update their knowledge on modern technology and their own enterprise as well.
- **Mr.W.J.Vidanapathirana**, of Matara Youth Service Council stated the youth can obtain loans after obtaining the membership.
- **Ms.S.A.C.Dilhani** (Dickwella Police Station) disclosed that numerous complaints are received in her Police Station with regard to illegal activities, matters connected with loan and Pavement hawking.

2.1.8. Jaffna Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women’s Day organized by the Jaffna Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 at the Thoderpalm Hall in Jaffna.

All those women who are engaged in various small-scale enterprises such as dress-making, dry food production, dry sea food production, leather products, making pillows and carpets etc. with discarded materials, palmirah productions, animal husbandry etc. were cordially invited for discussions and they exchanged their views related their experiences, challenges, constraints and of course their achievements.

Participants

For the Round Table discussion - Miss. Harmila Chndrathan (copper products), Ms.Anthony Benasha Subajini (rearing animals for food), Ms. Aitharaj Shaila (dry sea food), Ms. Jeganathan Sathyeswari (animal husbandry), Ms. Charles Wijayaratnam Thavachchari

(Leather products and making pillows and carpets with discarded materials), Ms. Jeyaselvam Rajakala (Dry foods), Ms. Ketheeswaran Sudarshini (Food production) and Ms. Thrmaratnam Mankaiyatkarai (dressmaking and animal husbandry) were among the participants along with the representatives of state institutions, non-governmental organization and civil society activists including Ms. S. Thevendram, Additional District Secretary of Jaffna, Mr. M. Jegatheeswaran, Addl. Labour Commissioner, Mr. K. Gopalakrishnan, Co-ordinating Manager of Palmirah Development Board, Dr. (Ms) Kosalai, Attorney at Law and lecturer in the Law Faculty of Jaffna University and around 90 ladies who are the heads of various women organizations were present at the discussions.

Challenges and Constraints

- Some among these women were widows who function as chief occupants in their families. It was stated that some of these women were contemplating suicide at the time of their husbands' demise.
- Under such circumstances, they had doubts about being successful in their lives. However, they were able to stand on their own by engaging in vocations they are familiar with, but it still poses a challenge.
- They are experiencing difficulties in taking their produces to the market since they have been compelled to attend to their day to day activities without any assistance and purchasers are reluctant to purchase locally produced good.

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations.

- Civil Organizations indicated their ability to provide opportunities and financial aid to the needy women.

2.1.9. Kandy Regional Office

Introduction

The commemoration of International Women's Day organized by the Kandy Regional Office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was held on 08 March 2017 in Keppetipola Auditorium in Kandy.

Participants

Women engaged in informal economic sector, state and non-governmental organization, civil society activists and members of women's organizations

Challenges and Constraints

- Women's representation in the Parliament should be increased. Existence of the negative attitude that a woman should not cast her vote for another woman.
- Minimum infrastructures and sexual harassments in the estate sector
- Empowerment of women who are disabled, who were affected by the war and are widowed.
- Change in the legal position with regard to female children of 16 – 18 yrs. of age.

Views /response of state officials and representatives of civil organizations

- **Ms. Devika Kodituwakku**, Chairperson of Govt. Family Health Officers Union stated that there should no discrimination whatsoever against women.
- Divisional Secretary, Kandy was of opinion that factors like gender, culture etc. prevent women's progression
- Deputy Commissioner of Labour insisted on a proper mechanism to establish Day Care Centres.
- Everyone has the responsibility of providing women with a life with dignity, freedom and protection.

3. COMMON CONSTRAINTS/CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN ENGAGED IN INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT SECTOR – GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Women engaged in informal economic sector had the opportunity to air their views on problems and challenges encountered by them and their achievements at the Round Table Discussions organized by the Head Office and Regional Offices of Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, parallel to the International Women's Day -2017. It is observed that following conclusions could be made after reviewing all those presentations made at the discussions.

- a) A severe problem encountered by women in every field and very province is the non-availability of marketing facilities. It was emphasized that gender has been a factor in minimizing marketing opportunities and facing difficulties in bargaining for prices. Further, importation of goods similar in nature to those produced in informal economic sector has become a barrier in maintaining the local market.
- b) Problems encountered by the women in obtaining loan facilities from banks and various other financial institutions has also curtailed the improvement of production. Even though numerous credit schemes have been introduced by the state, women are deprived of benefits due to non-compilation of these schemes in an easily accessible manner as far as women are concerned.
Conditions imposed in the process do not seem to be compatible with the living realities of women. In the agricultural sector, land entitlement documentation is considered by the banks as one of the prime security deposits, yet these loans are not granted to women in most cases since the lands offered as security is in their husbands' name. In various other informal economic fields, most of the women are not in possession of properties to be offered as security deposits to obtain loans. Elderly women are unable to obtain loans due to their old age. Ignorance in proper credit management systems is commonly evident among the women. Further, adhoc micro finance companies, operating in rural areas have mercilessly and severely trapped the women in need of financial assistance.
- c) Another problem faced by women entrepreneurs is the non-distribution of resources in the rural areas in a proper manner. Further, due to political interference, in most cases, most - deserving persons have not been given resources and concessionary grants.
- d) According to the views expressed at most of the regional offices, women in self-employment have to bear heavy expenses to acquire raw materials required for

their respective industries. Cost of transport of raw materials and the scarcity of raw materials also have become severe constraints.

- e) Malnutrition surfaces as yet another constraint common among the women. It was stressed that this is severely common in agricultural areas, plantation areas as well as investment promotion zones.
- f) The fact that women engaged in informal employment are ignored and facilities required by them are not supplied by the state officials who are responsible for supplying them deserves attention. The husband is considered by the state officials as the chief occupant and there are instances where aids accordingly made available to the husband are misappropriated.
- g) Problems encountered in using modern technology were brought to the notice at the discussions. It was identified that technical methods were not made use of in the process of improving manufacturing activities in order to develop the production field and adequate knowledge on technologies is not available among the women.
- h) A problem which is seen as very common for every woman is the practice of ignoring them when taking policy decisions relevant to them and non-availability of opportunities for them to take part in such exercises.
- i) In the context of problems prevailing in special fields, there are problems caused by language barriers and living standards in estates and sexual abuses and discriminations are taking place in free trade zones as well as in estates.
- j) Further, when disabled women are engaged in economic sector, they face problems relating to communication, transport and inaccessibility to facilities.
- k) Revision of Land Development Ordinance which side-lines the women and revision of legislature pertaining to estate workers are yet to be done and this is a severe constraint.
- l) The society as well as the Government cannot afford to ignore the women in the North as well as in the South affected due to the war and their empowerment is a dire necessity.
- m) The problem of looking after the children while mothers are away engaged in economic affairs surfaced at this programme as a severe constraint encountered by the women. Policies with regard to pre-childhood development are yet to be

introduced in the country and a system has to be prepared for looking after the children after school.

When the whole set of opinions expressed at the Round Table Discussions is taken into consideration and reviewed, it is seen that following common problems and challenges are encountered by women in all fields.

- a) Anomalies in the system of distributing resources made available by the Government for rural and self-employment fields and political interference in between.
- b) Lack of specific and proper markets for marketing their products.
- c) Exorbitant prices of raw materials and their scarcity
- d) Difficulties faced in obtaining loans for informal economic field, difficulties in accessing credit facilities introduced by the government, ignorance in credit management and lack of a state mechanism to regulate the micro-lending institutions.
- e) Heavy expenses involved in transporting raw materials and products
- f) Minimum level of networking and organizing ability among the women in informal economic sector.

Eg. Non-establishment of co-operative societies

- g) Inadequate knowledge on the usage of modern technology, scarcity of awareness programmes and training programmes for skill development, scarcity of exhibitions at regional, district and national level in order to encourage woman entrepreneurs.
- h) Lower level of women's participation in decision making process pertaining to commercial affairs, obtaining raw materials, national trade policy control, preparation of trade agreements and trouble shooting.
- i) Non-allocation of specific provisions in the national budget for the informal economic sector
- j) Failure to create Sri Lanka's trade policies with compatibility to the requirements of women engaged in informal economic sector.
- k) Non-focusing on the empowerment of women engaged in informal economic sector at national level.
- l) Non-availability of adequate and proper day care centres to look after the children in mother's absence
- m) Inadequate market for products produced in the informal economic sectors and difficulties in marketing them due to glut of cheap imported goods.
- n) Ignoring the participation of women engaged in rural or informal economic sectors in policy making processes.
- o) Provisions set out in the Land Development Ordinance allowing discrimination against women.

- p) Ignoring the participation of women engaged in agriculture in cultivation and obtaining relief due to the fact that the husband is considered as the chief occupant by the government officials.
- q) Discrimination in payment of initial salaries and wages of women in the estate Sector.
- r) Non-implementation of related rules and regulations in the estate sector.
- s) Labour Department's failure to focus due attention on the plantation sector.
- t) Employees' trade unions' allegiance to politics.
- u) Non-compilation of employee-friendly new rule and regulations in the estate Sector.

Since it is expected through this programme to make recommendations to the relevant state officials to sort out these problems in order to further improve the contribution made by them towards the economy of the country by engaging in informal economic sectors, it will be appropriate to focus attention on these recommendations.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SRI LANKA

Following primary recommendations are issued by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka by virtue of the powers vested as per Section 10 and 11 of Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act No. 21 of 1996.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka shall monitor the implementation of these recommendations and in case of any infringement of these recommendations, the aggrieved parties may lodge complaints with regard to such infringement and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has the authority, as per Section 14 of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act, to investigate on its own into the complaints lodged with regard to such infringements.

Following recommendations are made taking into consideration the discriminations committed against the women, in order to eradicate them. These recommendations are based on Article 12(2)¹ of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Article I² of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW).

1. Steps taken at every time to ensure the participation of women representing specific fields when making policy decisions and when compiling policies relevant to women. Supervision to ensure that these steps are taken by the relevant state institution should be carried out by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. Provincial Ministries of Women's Affairs should monitor whether these recommendations are implemented by the local government institutions.
2. Taking policy decisions to grant credit facilities without any discrimination to agricultural areas and women who are engaged in informal economic sectors. Here, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and Financial Institutions including Lending State Banks and Private Sector Banks should take action to compile a National Credit Policy to grant loans to women without any discrimination; ensure participation of women's representation in the process of compiling a National Credit Policy; creation of awareness on the proper credit management; and regulation of micro credit schemes and such lending institutions.

¹ No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any one of such grounds

² For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

3. Compilation of a strategy to establish a network of proper day care centres for the purpose of looking after the children of women who are engaged in informal as well as formal economic sectors. Steps should be taken by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, the Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage, the Ministry of Labour and all Provincial Ministries to establish day care centres.
4. Ministry of Skill Development and Vocational Training, Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry Rural Economic Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and all Provincial Ministries of Rural Development, Technology, Economic Development and Women's Affairs should take steps to compile a methodical training programme for skill development pertaining to informal economic sectors and to disseminate modern technical know-how. Here, the attention should be focused on marketing, trade propagation and market hunting.
5. Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry of Rural Economic Affairs and all Provincial Ministries of Rural Development, Economic Development and Women's Affairs should take steps, under the supervision of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, to compile new policies and procedures to continue to deliver the accepted services to women in the informal economic sectors without any changes; and to identify the current requirements of woman workers in the informal economic sector and provide requisite facilities.
6. Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry of Rural Economy, and all Provincial Ministries of Rural Development, Economic Development, Co-operatives and Women's Affairs should take action to arrange networking of women in Informal economic sectors and organize them through organizations such as co-operative societies.
7. Revision of laws and policies which allow discrimination against women. Here, addition of woman-friendly amendments to the Land Development Ordinance is recommended to the Ministries of Justice and Lands; and removal of anomalies presently existing in payment of wages and allowance of estate related women is recommended to the Ministries of Labour and Estate Infrastructure Facilities.
8. Inclusion of strong provision against discrimination against women in the Constitution through new constitution reforms process and approval of Women Rights Bill which has been subjected to discussion for several decades, on the basis of framework included in the CEDAW. In this regard, necessary action should be taken by the Constitution Council, the Ministry of Child and Women Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

ANNEXURE I - Women's Labour Contribution in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka as a South Asian Country at present has succeeded in developing the past economic status to a certain extent. Accordingly, by the year 2017, Sri Lanka has been successful in achieving a rapid development of its economy which had been hindered due to war situation running into long thirty years. Tourism, Tea exportation, finished apparels, Rice production and Agriculture are the main economic sectors in Sri Lanka.

Ratio of population contributing towards labour force in Sri Lanka during the first quarter of 2011 to 2017 can be categorized, gender wise as follows:

Gender wise Ratio contributing towards Labour Force in Sri Lanka

Year	Labour Force as a percentage of total population	Male (%)	Female (%)
2011	52.9	74.0	34.3
2012	52.5	74.9	32.9
2013	53.7	74.9	35.4
2014	53.2	74.6	34.6
2015	53.8	74.7	35.9
2016	54.1	75.1	36.0
2014 Q1	53.4	74.4	35.3
2015 Q1	53.5	73.8	36.3
2016 Q1	54.1	75.5	36.3
2017 Q1	54.7	75.1	37.6

Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- First Quarter Report of 2017

(Department of Census and Statistics)

In the context of the above Table, it is seen that nearly half of the total Sri Lankan population in each year has been contributing towards the labour force. Gender wise

percentage within this labour force has been indicated thereafter. As a whole, the male participation accounts to a double of female percentage contributing towards the labour force in each year. However, a continuous increase is seen in the female contribution since 2014.

The Gross Domestic Production of Sri Lanka, according to the data in 2009, can be categorized as follows:

Agriculture	-	32/7%
Industries	-	26.3%
Other services	-	58%

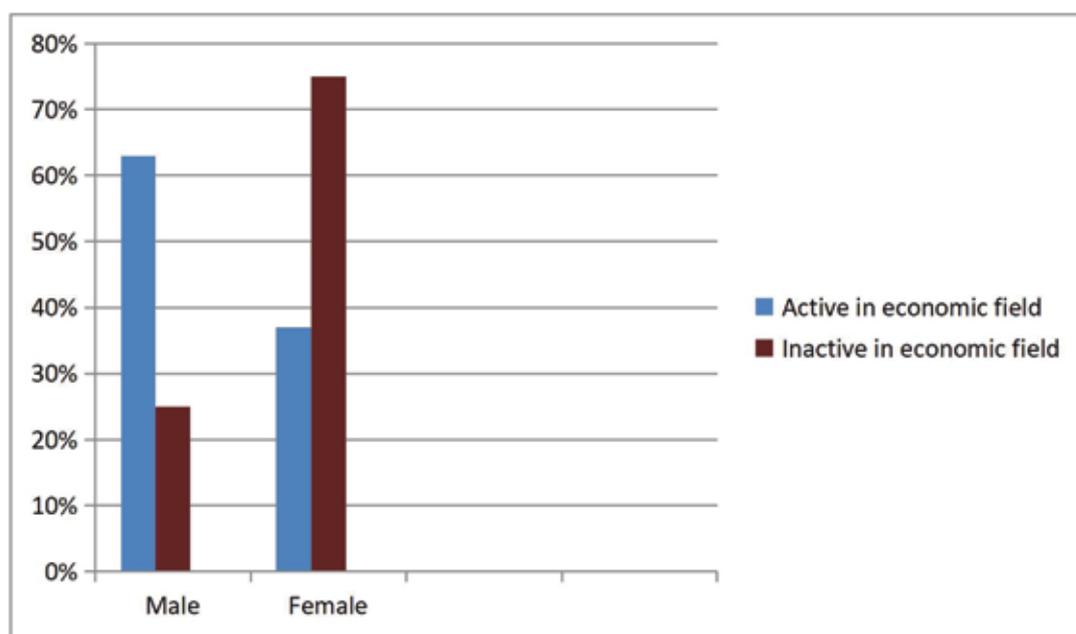
According to estimation in 2015, Sri Lanka has achieved an increase of 4.79 in Gross Domestic Production.

Sri Lanka, as a member country of United Nations, mainly endeavors to create a sustainable development in the country. Accordingly, Sri Lankan labour contribution is of special significance in realizing the ambition of sustainable development. Here, a comparative study of labour contribution in Sri Lanka shows a quantitative as well as qualitative growth therein. Accordingly, Sri Lankan labour contribution in the first quarter of the year 2017 amounts to 54.7%. According to relevant computations, number of persons above 15 years employed in domestic chores in Sri Lanka is computed as 15.7 Million as at the first quarter of 2017 and shows an increase by 0.3 Million in comparison to the year 2016. According to the studies carried out in the first quarter of 2017, number of persons actively engaged in economic activities amounts to 8.6 Million, which includes 62.7 % as males and 37.3% as females. Number of persons actively engaged in economic activities in urban, rural and estate sectors can be categorized as follows:

Sector	Population actively engaged in economic activities					
	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Sri Lanka	8,583,082	100.0	5,381,244	62.7	3,201,838	37.3
Urban	1,417,031	100.0	914,609	64.5	502,423	35.5
Rural	6,732,711	100.0	4,241,120	63.0	2,491,591	37.0
Estates	433,340	100.0	225,516	52.0	207,824	48.0

Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- First Quarter Report of 2017

(Department of Census and Statistics)



Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- First Quarter Report of 2017

(Department of Census and Statistics)

Number engaged in Agricultural, industrial and service sectors, according to the study of Sri Lankan Labour contribution in different sectors in the second quarter of the year 2017, is indicated in the table below. First and second quarters of 2017 are analyzed. Number of persons engaged in employment during the second quarter of 2017 is around 8.1 Million out of which 45.7% are in various services sectors, 28.3% in various industrial sectors and 26.0% are in agricultural sectors.

Quarter	Sri Lanka	Main service sectors		
		Agriculture	Services	Industries
2017 Q1	8,230,207	2,221,761	2,306,398	3,702,049
2017 Q2	8,138,728	2,114,336	2,301,377	3,723,015

Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- First and Second Quarter Reports of 2017

(Department of Census and Statistics)

In the context of gender wise population engaged in Agricultural, industrial and service sectors, it is obvious that the majority is engaged in service sectors. Accordingly, women's labour contribution in agriculture amounts to 27.4% while women's labour contribution in

various industrial sectors amounts to 27.4%. Further, women’s labour contribution in the other services amounts to 43.9%.

Main industrial sectors	Sri Lanka	Gender	
		Male	Female
Sri Lanka	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	26.0	24.5	28.8
Industries	28.3	28.7	27.4
Other services	45.7	46.7	43.9

Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- First Quarter -2017 Report
(Department of Census and Statistics)

In the context of gender wise population in Sri Lanka, number of employees engaged in various employments as per 2015 data, can be categorized as follows: 34.9 % of employees engaged in unofficial employments, viz. handicrafts and other industries are females. Female contribution in Managements services and legal drafting sectors is 25.9% while female contribution in various categories of employment is 65.8%. Women’s contribution in employment in instant services amounts to 32.2% while females engaged in clerical duties amounts to 51.8%. Contribution of female Sales Assistants amounts to 31.3 % while female contribution in agricultural and fishery related employment amounts to 33.8%. Further, women’s contribution in the employment in related handicrafts amounts to 34.2% while female labour contribution in the estate sectors’ employment is 14.3%. Female labour contribution in initial employment is 37.7% while their contribution in Forces is 12.6%.

Employment	Total	Gender		Total female contribution (%)
		Male	Female	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	34.9
Management services, legal drafting	6.1	7.0	4.6	25.9
Various employments	6.5	3.4	12.3	65.8
Technical services	6.0	6.3	5.6	32.3
Clerical	4.0	2.9	5.9	51.8
Sale Assistants	10.9	11.5	9.8	31.3
Agriculture and fishery related employments	18.6	18.9	18.0	33.8
Handicrafts	16.2	16.3	15.8	34.2
Estates	8.6	11.3	3.5	14.3
Initial employment	22.6	21.6	24.3	37.7
Forces	0.5	0.7	0.2	12.6

Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- Annual Report -2015
(Department of Census and Statistics)

In the context of un-employment level as at Second Quarter -2017, it amounts to 380,594 on the whole. According to computed data, unemployment in the first quarter of 2017 amounts to 4.5%. In the context of unemployment populace in the second quarter of 2017, females amount to 7.1 % while males are at 3.0%. Unemployed younger population as at second quarter-2017 is 20.0%. According to available data, unemployed female population is comparatively larger than the unemployed male population. As such, following data indicate the fact that younger unemployed female population accounts for a lion's share in the unemployed female population.

Age level(yrs)	Sri Lanka	Unemployment Ratio		
	Number	sri Lanka	Gender	
		Unemployment Ratio	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	380,594	4.5	3.0	7.1
15 – 24	190,685	20.0	14.8	29.1
25 - 29	96,763	11.3	7.7	17.0
Over 30	93,146	1.4	0.8	2.4

Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- Second Quarter-2017 Report

(Department of Census and Statistics)

According to educational qualifications, 8.2% of the G.C.E/A.L. qualified population accounts for highest unemployed total in the context of unemployment in Sri Lanka, out of which 5.0% relates to males while 11.8% relates to females.

Level of education	Sri Lanka	Unemployment Ratio		
	Number	Sri Lanka	Gender	
		Unemployment Ratio	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	380,594	4.5	3.0	7.1
Lower than GCE/OL	144,924	2.7	2.0	4.3
GCE/OL passed	87,161	6.0	4.9	8.3
GCE/AL and above	148,509	8.2	5.0	11.8

Source: Labour Force Survey in Sri Lanka- Second Quarter-2017 Report

(Department of Census and Statistics)

Accordingly, it can be construed that female labour contribution is at a lower level than the male labour contribution in Sri Lanka. Similarly, this trend is not at all appropriate in the context of Sri Lanka's trajectory towards sustainable development.

ANNEXURE II - Participants at the Round Table Discussion on International Women's Day

Name	Post & Organization
S.R.Niluka Perera	Good Shepherd's Convent
Noor Rizna Aneez	Department of External Resources
P.K.Thishari	Dabindu Collective
Roshini Weerasinghe	Dabindu Collective
Bimshani Arachchi	Police Department
R.P.N.N . Wijedoru	Sri Lanka Navy
A.K.Gunasekara	Department of National Planning
A.N.R.Weerasekara	Acting. Director, M/Housing & Construction
Surekha Dias	Director (Legal), Sri Lanka Air Force
L.K.L.Y.Lekamwasam	Sri Lanka Air Force
R.M.I.Ratnayaka	Addl. Secretary, M/ Public Administration
S.H.A.N.D.Ariyaratna	M/Post, Postal Services and Islamic Affairs
D.T.N.Munasinghe	Sri Lanka Army
W.A.P.Wellappuli	Director, M/Parliamentary Reforms and Media
Sajeewani Abeykone	Legal Officer, Legal Aid Commission
S.P.Nawaratna	Asst. Commissioner, Labour Department
Heinz Walker Nederkoorn	Ambassador, Swiss Embassy
Priyanthi Perera	Commercial Bank
S.M.P.K.Weerasekara	Asst. Commissioner, Dept. of Agrarian Services
Samanthi Bandara	Institute of Police Studies
R.P.Kasthuriarachchi	Asst. Director (Agri), Agriculture Dept., University of Peradeniya
Y.M.Gunasinghe	Asst. Director (Education), M/Education
Hashini Rajaratna	Co-ordinator, Institute of Human Rights
D.V.S.Dayawansa	Director, Regional Development Division, Central Bank of Sri Lanka
K.D.S.P.Perera	Asst. Director, M/Health
Manomi De Silva	Project Asst. Officer (Voluntary), United Nations
Wijitha Seneviratna	Addl. Secretary, M/Law & Order and Southern Development
Damith Chandimal	Consultant, Inform Human Right Documentation Centre
W.M.A.P.B.Wanninayaka	Addl. Secretary
Kuniyoshi	Japanese Embassy
Ishani Mahesha Samaratunga	SAARC Cultural Centre
V.Wanigasekara	Asst. Director, M/Sustainable Dev. and Wild Life
H.C.Kannangara	Vet. Surgeon, M/Rural Economy
Y.Ellepola	Institute of Policy Studies
D.L.Deepani Priyanka	Asst. Director, M/Prisons Reforms, Rehabilitation and Re-settlement
N.A.R.Neththasingha	Principal, Nurses Training College, Colombo
N.Hapuhinna	Asst. Commissioner, Dept. of Commissioner General of Lands

Shelly Whiting	High Commissioner, Canadian High Commission
Kumuduni Samuel	Women & Media Forum, Colombo
Ishani Abeyratna	Director(Commercial), M/Industries and Commerce
Tissa Jayasinghe	Commissioner of Prisons
Priyantha Jayakody	Addl. Inspector General, Sri Lanka Police
Roshan de Silva	LGBTI Activist
H.C.D.de Soyza	Legal Officer, M/ Women and Children
S.Subramaniam	Addl. Secretary, M/ Social Empowerment & Welfare
R.A.Perera	Director, M/General Industrial Development
K.Gunawardana	M/Lands
S.Wanniarachchi	Family Planning Association
Chamara Sampath	Equal Ground, Colombo
Piyani Kumari	Legal Aid Commission
Nadee Dharmasiri	Sampath Bank
M.P.Randeniya	Asst. Gen. Manager, Foreign Employment Bureau
Shelomy Gunawardana	Director, (Communication), Central Bank of Sri Lanka
Dr.S.M.P.Chandra Pathmini	Senior Officer, Sri Lanka Council of Agricultural Research Policies
S.Chamara	Asst.Project Officer, Equal Ground
K.Kumarasinghe	Asst. Commissioner, Excise Department
Amalka Edirisinghe	Director(Programmes), Family Rehabilitation Centre
Chandramali Liyanage	Director, National Art Council
Rajmi Manatunga	Asst. Director, M/Foreign Affairs
Kumudini Sriyani Wedisinghe	Training Officer, National Institute of Social Development
M.S.Chamindu de Silva	Helpage Sri Lanka
R.M.P.Jayatissa	Asst. Gen. Manager, Sri Lanka Cashew Corporation
N.A.P.Nissanka	Addl. Director, M/ Social Empowerment & Welfare
A.R.M.Ferson	Project Assistant, Labour Organization
Sunimalee Madurawla	Project Officer, Institute of Police Training
Menaka Shanmugalingam	Manager, Institute of Human Rights
Auli de Silva	Addl. Director General, Project Monitoring Department
Thenu Ranketh	Chairman, Wenasa Organization, Colombo
Dr.J.Vidanapathirana	M/Health
Sanjeewa Gamage	Standup Movement, Colombo
Bhoomi Harendran	Young Out Hear, Colombo
B.A.Damayanthi	Asst. Supdt. of Administration, Dept. of Immigration & Emigration
B.M.Weerasuriya	Director of Education
N.Fernando	Sampath Bank
Dr.Mallikanthi	D.A.TT.C.D.
G.A.Rasika Perera	M/ Labour and Trade Union Relations
Sulochana Wijayasinghe	(Volunteer) United Nations

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