



# ACTIVITY REPORT SRI LANKA

## CSO UPR strategy workshop

28 November – 1 December 2017

### Timeline for UPR engagement in the current cycle



## 1. Introduction

On 28 November – 1 December 2018, 52 civil society representatives from 37 organisations across Sri Lanka gathered for the national CSO UPR strategy workshop co-organised by the *Civil society collective in Sri Lanka* and *UPR Info*. Representatives from the Embassy of Switzerland and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka also participated in the event. The purpose of the workshop was to debrief on Sri Lanka's third Universal Periodic Review, develop CSO action strategies and a suggested implementation plan. The workshop built on [previous activities in Sri Lanka](#) and set the scene for strategic involvement of national human rights groups in the UPR follow-up phase. The workshop, facilitated by simultaneous translation, was conducted in three languages; Sinhala, Tamil and English.

## 2. Activity

### 2.1. Overview

In the morning session, *UPR Info* presented Sri Lanka's UPR timeline and shared good practices on how civil society groups can engage in the implementation process. Examples of commitments and recommendations made during the review were discussed as well as States inclination to note some recommendations depending on how they are phrased. For the vast majority, this was the moment when they first were made aware of the 230 recommendations that 88 states made to Sri Lanka at the review. It was further highlighted that 64% of the recommendations made to Sri Lanka reflected the CSO suggested recommendations contained in the thematic [factsheets](#) developed by the *Civil society collective in Sri Lanka* prior to the review. The *Collective* had used the window between the review and the workshop to translate the report, including all UPR recommendations, into Sinhala and Tamil which proved invaluable to actively involve all participants in the workshop.

Commissioner Ms. Ambika Satkunanathan, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), lead the next session on the role of the HRCSL the implementation process. She elaborated on how their regional offices engage with local Government officials and civil society groups and underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder consultations as a critical component in monitoring the Government's human rights obligations. Following Ms. Satkunanathan's introduction, participants were eager to ask questions, spanning from how the Commission addresses the backlog of complaints to its reporting procedures.

After lunch, *UPR Info* introduced the template that the thematic working groups would use to develop the CSO suggested implementation plan. Specific focus was given to explain the concept of indicators and why they are an indispensable part of monitoring change. The

SMART formula was presented as a methodology to construct indicators capable of identifying implementation gaps, and ways to overcome them.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: Freedom of assembly, expression

Rec #	RS	Recommendations	Response	Were the same recommendations made by other mechanisms?		Goal to be achieved	Expected action from government	Indicators/data to track progress of implementation	Government body responsible for recommendation
				National	International				
6.14.	Viet Nam	Continue the constitutional reform to create a more comprehensive framework for the promotion and protection of human rights	Supported						

As a result of consultations among civil society groups prior to the workshop, participants were divided into six six working groups: Rule of Law, Democracy & Governance; Transitional justice; Women and Children, Freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; Economic, social and cultural rights, and marginalised groups. Plenary presentations ensued in the afternoon during which Group Rapporteurs introduced segments from their respective implementation plans. At the feedback session *UPR Info* clarified the distinction between the overall *Goal to be achieved* and *Expected action from the government*. It was encouraging to witness the useful input offered by members from other groups, manifesting synergy effects of bringing together groups working on different rights. It is hoped that the CSO suggested implementation plan will be utilised as a baseline for discussions with the Government in the **Multi-stakeholder dialogue on UPR implementation** foreseen to take place in 2018.

The main objective of the action strategy is to map out activities to be undertaken by civil society which will complement implementation efforts by the Government until the next review. It is a useful tool to demonstrate how organisations benefit from working with each other to harness human and financial resources. Action strategies also display how CSOs, directly or indirectly, knowingly, or unknowingly, carry out actions which contribute to the implementation of UPR recommendations. In this light, action strategies assist CSOs to think about their UPR involvement as an integrated part of their daily work. During the second day, the thematic working groups engaged with their respective action strategy.

ACTION STRATEGY: Freedom of assembly, expression

Rec #	Recommendations	NGO action / activities contributing to implementation	Resources needed to accomplish this action	Potential partners	Timeframe	Risks	Risk response/mitigation
6.14.	Continue the constitutional reform to create a more comprehensive framework for the promotion and protection of human rights						

The discussion triggered by the plenary presentations of the thematic action strategies mainly evolved around the need to spread out activities throughout the five years between reviews and seek strategic partnership with other UPR stakeholders. As the State bears the primary responsibility for implementing recommendations, it was spotlighted that line-ministries constitute crucial partners in the follow-up process. Three main benefits of the action strategies were stressed:

- ❖ Allows CSOs to move beyond their traditional watchdog role to actively support implementation;
- ❖ Shows the added value of partnering with skilled grassroots CSOs;
- ❖ Links local human rights expertise with the international human rights machinery.

On the third and final day, an Outcome Declaration was adopted with consensus. It outlines common civil society priorities to be pursued in follow-up to Sri Lanka's third UPR.

## 2.2. Achievements

It is critical that CSOs at the national and local level in the State under review is made aware of the Government's performance during the review, recommendations made and how to get involved in the implementation phase. As such, the workshop proved a timely exercise to debrief on the third UPR of Sri Lanka which had taken place in Geneva two weeks earlier. The event was successful in gathering a cross-section of local civil society representatives from all parts of the island with representation from the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities. Whereas previous activities in Sri Lanka had been unsuccessful in involving CSOs working on disability rights, this theme was covered at the workshop by several organisations. The translation of the UPR report to Tamil and Sinhala was a major achievement, particularly considering the limited time between the review and the workshop. The increased participation of women compared to earlier activities was also noteworthy. At the workshop, women made up half of the participants.

The workshop succeeded in:

- ❖ Translating all third cycle UPR recommendations to Sinhala and Tamil;
- ❖ Bringing together the Human Rights Commission and CSOs to discuss UPR implementation;
- ❖ Identifying entry points for CSO involvement in the implementation process;
- ❖ Adopting an Outcome Declaration containing civil society priorities in the UPR.

## 2.3. Lessons learnt

The workshop took place in Kandy to make travel distances more equal for participants. A downside to this approach was that it proved difficult to attract media attention around the event. To boost awareness of the review and the workshop, the finalised version of the Outcome Declaration will be circulated to targeted journalists and media outlets. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs regretted that they had to cancel their participation last minute.



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### 3. Way forward

The Group Rapporteur of each thematic working group will finalise their respective implementation plan and action strategy and submit to *UPR Info*. CSOs that did not participate in the workshop will also be approached to provide input. The documents will then be collated into one action strategy and one implementation plan. Combined, these will be used as a backdrop for discussions with the Government and Human Rights Commission during the **Multi-stakeholder dialogue on UPR implementation** foreseen to take place in 2018.

## 4. Testimonies



To encourage engagement in the UPR we have translated the recommendations, into both national languages (Sinhala and Tamil). *UPR Info* will publish these online and we will share them with local CSOs to raise awareness about the recommendations Sri Lanka received in its third review. This will encourage them to use these recommendations (especially those accepted by Sri Lankan government) to compel the government to implement them. CSOs can also use these recommendations as helpful tools in various human rights activities.

After this workshop we plan to meet the Swiss Embassy officials, to brief them of the outcome of the workshop, as well as about our future activities. We are also eager to participate in the dialogue with Government stakeholders, which is foreseen to take place in April next year, with the support of *UPR info*.

**Priyalal Sirisena, National UPR Focal point**

We proudly say that this is an interesting and valuable workshop. We thank *UPR Info* for giving us the opportunity to represent the disabled community of Sri Lanka. This workshop has addressed the rights of persons with disabilities which are marginalised. More workshops and sessions are needed to address the issues faced by the disabled community to give them a platform from which to change the current situation.

The cluster working on rights of persons with disabilities will continue working together with *UPR Info* to ensure an inclusive process at mid-term and the next review in 2022.

**Nisha Sharif, V for Rights**  
**Kasun Satanarachi, The Disability Organisations Joint Front**



If we were to stay at home without coming to this *UPR Info* workshop we would never have read these recommendations, this gave us the opportunity to read the recommendations in our own languages and to work in the thematic groups to delve further into them.

Through this workshop we have come to know that a large number of countries in the world have focused on Sri Lanka and now I am very much convinced that we are a very good group to help with implementation and contact interested Recommending States during the process. When this workshop is over we have the possibility to extend our work by engaging with other groups and communities. We can use or social media platforms to raise awareness of our activities aimed at supporting implementation.

**Suba Shini, National Fisheries Solidarity Organisation**

## 5. Annexes

### 5.1. Participating organisations

1. National Fisheries Solidarity Organization
2. The Law and Society Trust
3. Naula Rural Development Federation
4. Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform Law and Society Trust (LST)
5. Uva Wellassa Women's Organisation
6. Jaffna District Fisheries Organisation
7. Rural Liberation Society
8. Lanka Farmer's Forum
9. District Fisheries Organisation Trinco
10. Farmers' Association of North Central Province
11. FIAN Sri Lanka
12. Sri Lanka Nature Group
13. Equal Ground
14. Disability Organisations Joint Front
15. V for Rights
16. Social Institute for Development of Plantation Sector
17. Welfare Organisation of Persons With Disabilities
18. Justice for All
19. Affected Women's Forum
20. Women's Action Network
21. Savisthri
22. Women's Centre
23. Rural Women's Forum
24. Mannar Women Development Front
25. Mothers and Daughters of Lanka
26. Sri Vimukthi Women's Organisation
27. Center for Human Rights and Development
28. Child Development Initiative
29. Mannar Social and Economic Development Organisation
30. Forum for Returnees
31. Centre for Policy Alternatives
32. Right to Life
33. Galle Human Rights Organisation
34. Rule of Law Forum
35. Jayawabodhay
36. Uva Shakthi Foundation
37. Fisheries Cooperative Federation, Kilinochchi

## 5.2. Agenda

### CSO UPR Strategy Workshop on implementation of UPR recommendations

29 November - 1 December 2017  
Kandy, Hill Top Hotel

Day 1 – 29 November 2017	
8 :30 – 9:00	<b>Registration</b>
9:00 – 9:30	<b>OPENING CEREMONY</b>
<b>Objective</b>	<i>To welcome participants, and to provide the rationale behind the workshop.</i>
Opening Remarks	<i>Speakers TBC [Potential speakers: UPR Info, National CSOs, diplomatic representative, Government]</i>
09:30 – 10:30	<b>Session 1: What is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process?</b>
<b>Objective</b>	<i>To provide a brief overview of the UPR process and Sri Lanka’s UPR timeline. To highlight UPR entry points post-review and to share good practices.</i>
<b>Facilitator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UPR Info Geneva Office</li> </ul>
<b>Q&amp;A</b>	Participants to ask as many questions as possible on the UPR process to ensure that all participants obtain a clear understanding of the mechanism before moving forward to next steps.
10:30 – 10 :45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
10:45 – 11:30	<b>Session 2: The role of the Human Rights Commission in the UPR implementation phase</b>
<b>Objective</b>	<i>To provide participants with an insight on the role of the Human Rights Commission in the UPR follow-up phase and how it liaises with other UPR stakeholders.</i>
<b>Facilitator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambika Satkunanathan, Commissioner, Human Rights Commission Sri Lanka</li> </ul>
11:30 – 12:45	<b>Session 3: The Next Opportunity in the UPR Framework “UPR Follow-Up Phase” Introduction to the UPR Implementation Plan</b>
<b>Objective</b>	<i>To provide detailed instructions for writing the UPR implementation plan, including SMART indicators. The goal is for participants to identify actions to be undertaken by the government to implement the UPR recommendations, as well as responsible lines ministries, clear indicators and timeframes. The facilitator will also provide examples of draft implementation plans.</i>



Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UPR Info Geneva Office</li> </ul>
12:45 – 13:45	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>
13:45 – 15:00	<b>Session 4: World Café: “Developing thematic UPR Implementation Plans”</b>
Objective	<p>Participants break into thematic working groups and;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chose a <b>Group Rapporteur</b> that will present the implementation plan (session 5) and action strategy (session 8) to the plenary and bear the overall responsibility for finalising the instruments.</li> <li>Start developing their <b>UPR implementation plans (the same groups work on their respective action strategies in sessions 7-8)</b>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Economic, Social &amp; Cultural Rights</b> (Environment, education, Health, Labour, Housing, Food, Minority Rights)</li> <li><b>At-risk groups</b> (The LGBTI Community, Refugees and Asylum seekers, Indigenous Peoples, Rights of the Child, Women’s Rights, Persons living with disabilities, Rights of the elderly)</li> <li><b>Civil &amp; Political Rights</b> (Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Freedom of Assembly and Association; Administration of Justice: arbitrary detentions, military courts, death penalty; Human Rights Defenders: arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances).</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>If deemed a more effective working methodology, sub-groups can be created.</p>
15:00 – 15:15	<b>COFFE BREAK</b>
15:15 – 17:00	<b>Session 4: Continued: World Café: “Developing thematic UPR Implementation Plans”</b>
Objective	Participants continue developing implementation plans.

Day 2 – 30 November 2017	
9:00 – 10:30	<b>Session 4 (continued): World Café “Developing UPR Implementation &amp; Monitoring Plans”</b>
Objective	Participants break into their thematic working groups and continue developing implementation plans.
10:30 – 10:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
10:45 – 12:30	<b>Session 5: Reporting Back in Plenary</b>
Objective	<p><i>Participants come back together; Group Rapporteurs present the implementation plans to allow discussion and feedback from all participants</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hans Fridlund, UPR Info Geneva Office</li> <li>• All participants</li> </ul>
12:30 – 13:30	<b>Lunch Break</b>
13:30 – 14:30	<b>Session 6: Introduction to the CSO Action Strategy</b>
Objective	<i>To provide detailed instructions for writing the CSO Actions Strategies. The goal is for participants to identify obstacles to implementation of UPR recommendations and to identify ways and actions to cooperate with the Government and complement their implementation efforts.</i>
Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPR Info Geneva Office</li> </ul>
14:30 – 14:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
14:45 – 17:00	<b>Session 7: World Café “Developing CSO Action Strategies”</b>
Objective	<i>Thematic working groups develop their CSO Action Strategy.</i>

Day 3 – 30 November 2017	
<b>9:00 – 9:30</b>	<b>Session 7 (continued): World Café “Developing CSO Action Strategies”</b>
Objective	<p><i>Answering questions and comments from thematic groups</i></p> <p><i>Recap of instructions for writing the CSO Actions Strategies</i></p> <p><i>Thematic working groups continue to develop their CSO Action Strategy.</i></p>
<b>10:30 – 10:45</b>	Coffee Break
<b>10:45 – 12:30</b>	<b>Session 7 (continued): World Café “Developing CSO Action Strategies”</b>
Objective	<i>Thematic working groups continue to develop their CSO Action Strategy.</i>
<b>12:30 – 13:30</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>
<b>13:30 – 15:00</b>	<b>Session 8: Reporting Back in Plenary</b>
Objective	<i>Participants come back together; Group Rapporteur presents their action strategies to allow discussion and feedback from all participants</i>
Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPR Info Geneva Office</li> <li>• <b>All participants</b></li> </ul>
<b>15:00 – 15:15</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>
<b>15:15 – 17 :00</b>	<b>Session 9: Adoption of the “CSO Outcome Charter” to Foster Solidarity during the UPR Follow-Up Phase</b>
Objective	<i>To adopt the CSO Outcome Charter to be utilised as an advocacy tool with Government and donors, demonstrating the constructive engagement of Sri Lankan civil society and the ways it wishes to engage in the UPR implementation process.</i>
Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPR Info Geneva Office</li> <li>• <b>All participants</b></li> </ul>



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