



International Women's Day 2021

IMPACT OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY



The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka organized a seminar on 8th March 2021 to mark International Women's Day, the theme for this year was 'Impact of COVID 19 pandemic on women and gender equality. It was held at the Lavender Hall, BMICH. The event was graced by over 70 participants from different Ministries, Government Institutions, Civil Societies, Academics, UN Agencies, Banks, and other related organizations.



The chief guest for the event Her Excellency Trine Joranli Eskedal, Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian delivered the keynote speech. Dr. Jagath Balasuriya, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka presented the opening remark of the seminar. The panel discussion was led by Mr. Thorsten Bargfrede, Deputy Head of Mission/Head of Political, Trade and Communications Section of the European Union to Sri Lanka. The presenters of the seminar were Dr. Janaka Fernando from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Dr. M.T.M. Mahees from the University of Colombo, Dr. Chathuri Suraweera from the University of Colombo, Prof. Chandani Liyanage from the University of Colombo, and Prof. Wasantha Senavirathne from the University of Colombo.

The seminar was inaugurated with the lighting of the oil lamp by dignitaries, speakers, and invitees. The welcome address was presented by Mrs. Menaka Herath, Director of Education of Special Programmes, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. The opening remark was delivered by Dr. Jagath Balasuriya, Chairman of the Human Right Commission of Sri Lanka. He remarked on the theme of COVID 19 and how it has impacted the lives of women. The keynote speech was delivered by Her Excellency Trine Joranli Eskedal, Ambassador of Royal Norwegian. She addressed how pandemic has impacted and reversed the progress of women's rights in the world.

- The first discussion hosted by Dr. Janaka Fernando from the Department of Business Economics, University of Sri Jayewardenepura was held under the topic 'COVID -19 impact on employment of women. He emphasized the contribution of women in foreign exchange and its impact on the economy of Sri Lanka while further discussing the disparity between the education of women and the female employment rate.
- The second discussion hosted by Dr. M.T.M. Mahees from the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo was held under the topic 'COVID - 19 impact on Education of Women'. He elaborated that the participation of women in university education is higher than men, therefore the impact of the pandemic is much larger for women.
- The third discussion hosted by Dr. Chathuri Suraweera from the Department of Psychiatry, University of Colombo was held under the topic 'COVID -19 impact on



Health care of Women'. She presented her views with consideration to health aspects related to physical, mental and social well-being mainly impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic.

- The fourth discussion hosted by Prof. Chandani Liyanage from the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo was held under the topic 'COVID -19 impact on family affairs and wellbeing of Women'. She shared her message through zoom about the role of women within the family while further discussing the inequality and discrimination posed by society towards women.
- The fifth discussion hosted Prof. Wasantha Senavirathne from the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo was held under the topic 'COVID -19 impact on vulnerable Women (women with Disabilities, FTZ workers, elderly women, women in prison, transgender MTF)'. She emphasized how the law of Sri Lanka impacted vulnerable women and recommended that the law should utilize a gender-neutral language to avoid discrimination against women.



The panel discussion was led by Mr. Thorsten Bargfrede the Deputy Head of Mission/Head of Political, Trade, and Communications Section of the European Union to Sri Lanka. Dr. Janaka

Fernando, Dr. Chathuri Suraweera, Prof. Chandani Liyanage, and Prof. Wasantha Senavirathne joined the session to discuss and formulate policy guidelines that empower women during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Many individuals joined the discussion to represent their perspective regarding the role of women during the pandemic. A vote of thanks was delivered by Mr. Kapilan Vilavarajan, Legal Officer of Education & Special Programmes Division, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka.

