

EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS



The Director-General

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



Secretary General

## Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025

### Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) - Sri Lanka

#### 1. Context for EU action gender equality and women's empowerment in the country

Sri Lanka has a relatively high HDI value of 0.782 ranking 72 in 2019 compared to its South Asian counterparts and the GDI was 0.955 in 2019. The gender equality is assured through Constitutional and legal provisions in Sri Lanka and the country has a comprehensive set of policies to ensure GEWE. Sri Lanka is signatory to key UN and ILO conventions. Despite such provisions, and largely due to the ineffective enforcement the legal and policy provisions, there are significant gender discriminations and persistent inequalities in Sri Lanka heightened by the patriarchal norms and structural controls. Legal system in Sri Lanka assumes that the gender identity of a person is to be subservient to her cultural identity and the personal laws are based on religion and ethnicity or residency.

There is gender parity in education in Sri Lanka and increasingly Sri Lankan girls are outpacing boys in terms of educational access and achievements. However, this status is not reflected in the labour force where female participation is 35.4% (2019) with a marked difference in per capita income between women (7433 PPP \$) and men (18,423 PPP \$) by 2019. At a time that Sri Lankan economy is struggling to recover after experiencing its worst-ever recession in 2020 following the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic, such income disparities will widen due to discriminatory impact of Covid 19 towards women. The opportunities to engage in economic development is not equal for women and men, especially in profit making ventures that draw men easily.

Women representation in the Parliament (5.3%) and in other local governance structures is low despite high educational attainment. A transformatory women leadership is necessary in Sri Lanka to facilitate breaking through the glass ceiling and challenging power play.

In Sri Lanka, one in five (20.4%) ever-partnered women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner and control of women was 19% according to a recent study done.

<sup>1</sup> There are extreme issues of SGBV such as criminalizing abortion, FGM, criminalizing homosexuality, marital rape, early marriages and teen pregnancies. Sri Lanka is also a deeply divided country, ethnicity and religion being main divisions. The civil disturbances have affected women and men differently and transitional justice is a slow process. Provisions of UN SCR 1325

<sup>1</sup> "Women Wellbeing National Study" of Dept. of Census and Statistics 2019

is not included in national action plans adequately and mainstream development benefits are slow to reach the conflict-affected communities.

EU delegation commissioned a Country Gender Analysis that has well informed the MIP development process. The MIP has focused on women economic participation within the area of Green Recovery, Digitalization, and Women led SME promotion, Climate Adaptation, and Food Security. MIP also has prioritized issues of women, peace and security, SGBV and promotion of political participation of women. The consultations with CSOs, specifically with women's rights organization, the programmatic experiences shared by EU project partners and briefings by Member States were also useful gender specific analysis and input in the preparation of MIP and CLIP. Moreover, gender equality will be mainstreamed more prominently in the future CSOs and EIDHR projects.

## **2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives**

This section will link the objectives of the EU on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) with the priority areas of the MIP for Sri Lanka. The EU will pursue these objectives through dialogues, activities and programmes in the next 5 years.

Gender equality is a core value of the EU and the overall objective of the EU is, through external actions, to confirm its role as a global front-runner in promoting gender equality. With that background, overall gender equality and women empowerment objective for Sri Lanka is **“To ensure gender equitable economic opportunities within the green economy and the circular economy, and promote gender inclusive ethnic and religious harmony and transitional justice”**.

### **Specific Thematic areas of Engagement:**

#### **a. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation**

In all EU supported green innovation projects affirmative quota may be guaranteed for women entrepreneurs and pilot projects can be implemented in collaboration with women farmer organizations. To support reducing digital gender gap among disadvantaged women, smart agriculture and agro based MSME can be introduced. EU will support the provision of green infrastructure to the women led sustainable agro based enterprises and other SMEs and make available financial assistance to start up MSMEs. Under green market initiatives, women led organic product certification and demand and trust building process may be facilitated. Such products can be linked with global markets assisted by EU-Sri Lanka trade links.

Interventions to mainstream gender equality in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) adopted by Sri Lanka in 2016. Engage in a policy dialogue to mainstream gender equality in MSME national policy, national budget allocations and ensure mainstream benefits to women entrepreneurs.

### GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives:

#### Thematic Area of Engagement: Climate change and environment

- **Objective 02:** Strategies and agreements on climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity are more gender-responsive, at local, national, and regional and international level.
- **Objective 04:** Women in all their diversity increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities in the green economy and the circular economy

#### Thematic Area of Engagement: Digitalization

- **Objective 04:** Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity participate fully and equally in the digital economy

#### **b. Peaceful and inclusive society: In line with its values and commitments to peace, development, good governance and human rights, the EU intends to contribute to a more inclusive and peaceful society in Sri Lanka.**

Within the broader thematic area of peaceful and inclusive society, a number of gender equitable outcomes are expected in reducing Sexual & Gender Based Violence (SGBV), securing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), promoting transformatory women leadership and political representation, inclusive and gender responsive conflict resolution, peace building and minimizing drivers of disharmony and social divisions and intervention to secure economic rights of disadvantaged women along the ethno -religious fault lines.

**I. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence:** Interventions to address gender based violence within extremisms, ethnic & religious disharmony and conflicts, pandemics and disasters and in situations of unequal power play that discriminate and subordinate girls and women.

### GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives:

#### Thematic Area of Engagement: Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence

- **Objective 02:** Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are agents of change regarding discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, and gender-drivers of conflict
- **Objective 03:** Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity, who experience sexual and gender-based violence have increased access to essential services and protection
- **Objective 06:** Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and humanitarian crisis situations.

#### **II. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women:**

Increase economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs in green and circular economy, ensure gender equitable financial assistance and business development services, value chain development and facilitate market access for women led businesses. Support reduce gender digital gap through training and through innovative measures. Specific support for women in SMEs to sustain in pandemic situations and promote alternative means of income.

### GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives:

#### **Thematic Area of Engagement: Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women**

- **Objective 03:** Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources
- **Objective 04:** Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, and alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy
- **Objective 05:** Improved access for women in all their diversity to managerial and leadership roles in social and economic sectors and fora
- **Objective 07:** Improved regulatory framework for ensuring equal access to universal and public quality preventive, curative and rehabilitative physical and mental health care services for women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity, including in fragile and humanitarian crisis affected contexts
- **Objective 08:** Improved access to safe water and sanitation facilities, disaggregated at least by sex.

### **III. Advancing Equal Participation and leadership:**

Support women leaders who will contest in the forthcoming Provincial election and in view of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Focused intervention/action and support for the existing advocacy for affirmative quotas for women political engagement will be carried out.

### GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives:

#### **Thematic Area of Engagement: Promoting equal participation and leadership**

- **Objective 01:** Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making
- **Objective 04:** Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviors promoting equal participation and leadership by women and men fostered at community and individual levels – through education, media, culture and sports

### **IV. Integrating the women peace and security agenda**

Facilitate women led dialogues to claim transitional justice, right to information and break through language barriers (including through digitalized platforms). Facilitate transformative women leadership in building trust and social harmony among diverse ethnic and religious communities and to be messengers of peace. Address conflict transformation and healing through psychosocial support to conflict affected girls and women with a focus on marginalized groups: widows, single, deserted and disabled women.

**Thematic Area of Engagement: Integrating the women, peace and security agenda**

- **Objective 01: Participation-** Structural obstacles to women's meaningful and equitable participation and to their contributions to all actions related to prevention and resolution of conflicts and in post-conflict public life are addressed.
- **Objective 05: Protection-** Institutional mechanisms are established to protect and safeguard women's and girls' rights in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

**Civil Society Engagement in the above EU Action:**

**Green Recovery:** Relevant EU partner organizations and like-minded alliances can be brought into policy advocacy platforms to negotiate to engender Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) adopted by Sri Lanka under the Paris Agreement of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**Peaceful and inclusive society:** CSOs, specifically women's rights organizations will lead the dialogues and digital platforms on ethno-religious harmony and lobby for eradicating GBV and gender stereotyping during religious conflicts and ethnic disturbances. CSO alliances will be active partners in monitoring these social disturbances and act as vigilant groups.

**Gender mainstreaming of all EU actions.**

In addition to the specific thematic areas of engagement described above, the EU will secure the mainstreaming of GEWE under projects and actions benefitting from blending or EFSD+ schemes, and other actions financed under the MIP or RIP in Sri Lanka.

**3. Targeted Actions supporting gender equality and women empowerment (G2 Action)**

**Women Specific Entrepreneurship Promotion in circular and green economies.**

**Thematic Areas:** Green transition and the digital transformation; strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women.

**Rationale:** Economic empowerment and labour force participation (35.4% female labour force participation) is a concerned area in Sri Lanka. The national unemployment rate was estimated to be 5.4% in 2020 which is 6.7% for women and 3.4% for men. Women comprised of 28.4% in the Agricultural sector but are mainly in small hold agriculture or provide unpaid family labour. Annual Labour Force Survey 2019 entails that, of the total female employment 51% are working in the informal sector. There is a market disparity in income between males and females in Sri Lanka. Women are at lower levels of value chains.

**Expected Results:**

High rate of females engaged in the green technologies and circular economy and with increased income.

Increased percentage of women benefiting from smart agriculture using digital technologies.

### **GAP III Indicators:**

- Number of women beneficiaries of business development services who registered their own business, including social enterprises, in general, in the green economy sector and in the circular economy sector.
- Percentage of women and men workers in each stage of the value chain of a product related to green technologies or the circular economy, disaggregated at least by sex
- Number of women benefiting from incentives used to encourage women's entry into the green economy and the circular economy

### **4. Engage in Dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment**

The COVID-19 crisis has showed that the pandemic and containment measures do not affect everyone in the same way. Among the private sector, Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), especially those led by women, youth, ethnic minorities and migrants, suffered the most. Therefore, CSOs can be facilitated to engage in a policy dialogue to mainstream gender equality in MSME national policy, national budget allocations and ensure mainstream benefits to women entrepreneurs. EU project partners have done initial discussions with the relevant Government agencies and have brought together women producers and entrepreneurs at provincial, district and national levels. A symposium was supported by EU on gender and MSME and this work will be taken forward in collaboration with CSOs and EU Member States.

### **5. Outreach and other communication/public diplomacy activities:**

MSME Day: celebrate the international MSME day through collaborative ideas that facilitate business push for women entrepreneurs with a focus on reducing the negative impacts of Covid 19 on women led MSMEs.

### **6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation**

Some funding will be made available from the allocation of cooperation facility to support the implementation of GAP III at country level. In particular, the facility will support the gender aspects on political and policy dialogues, public diplomacy in Sri Lanka also will provide technical assistance.

*Date:* .....

*Signature by Head of Delegation:* .....