

WOMEN'S MANIFESTO – 2010

In the last decades important changes have occurred in the lives of Sri Lankan women, and progress was made in reforming laws, improving women's economic and social status, and increasing gender awareness among many sectors of the population. Women are nearly 90% literate and more visible than ever before in the public domain. Sri Lanka had the world's first woman Prime Minister, as well as a woman President, and more recently the country had its first woman Vice-Chancellor, Supreme Court Judge, Secretary General of Parliament, Secretary to a Ministry, Governor of the Southern Province, General Manager of the Bank of Ceylon and Registrar, Colombo University.

Women also play an important part in the state bureaucracies, in diplomacy, the private sector, medical, legal and teaching professions, the arts, and in many other areas. The proportion of female workers in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs has also increased. In addition to bearing the burden of poverty, women, still face many types of economic exploitation, political exclusion, legal discrimination and social oppression. Moreover, violence against women, patriarchal practices and harmful traditional attitudes towards women still prevail.

Women also are confronted during elections with violence and intimidation, often preventing free and full participation. In a period of ethnic conflict, women and children not only lose male relatives in combat, but also form 80% of the displaced. They are frequently victims of violence and harassment. Despite the fact that women form half the population and were granted the vote as far back as 1931, representation of women in the institutions of governance at all levels has been deplorably low. In Parliament, there has been a decline from 4.8% in 1994 to 4% in 2000, and a small rise to 4.1% in 2001, and to 4.8% in 2004.

Although many have campaigned for a 30% quota for women, successive governments have ignored this demand. At the Parliamentary Select Committee set up in 2003 to make recommendations for electoral reform, representatives from women's groups and the Ministry of Women's Affairs urged a quota for women. At election time, there is an increasing awareness of the voting power of women, who form half the electorate and are recognized as key factors to win elections. Even at the basic level of women as electors, consciousness needs to be raised during election campaigns in order to make the candidates and the general public aware of women's demands. Another injustice at the level of voting is the disfranchisement of migrant workers, most of whom are women.

More women are needed in parliament and local bodies, especially at decision-making levels not only because it is their right, but also to put forward issues affecting women, and to take gender-sensitive positions on matters of national and international interest, including the peace process, and tsunami rehabilitation.

For this purpose several women's organizations have prepared the following Women's Manifesto, which we dedicate to the memory of Kamalini Wijetilake who helped in drafting the

original version. Thanks to Chulani Kodikara for updating the Manifesto, to others who made suggestions and to May Yee for editing the document.

The *Women's Manifesto* is available in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Write to the SSA, No. 12, Sulaiman Terrace, Colombo 5. Tel: 2501339 or 2504623, 2586400.

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Today Sri Lanka is at a decisive cross road in relation to achieving a lasting and sustainable peace in which all ethnic and religious groups in this country can live in harmony and dignity. Although the government has declared a military victory over the LTTE, we believe that a lasting and sustainable peace will remain elusive due to the continuing impact of the conflict on civilians and until the root causes of the conflict are systematically addressed. This requires that:

- All persons displaced over the last 30 years of conflict including those recently displaced, Muslim IDPs as well as those displaced from High Security Zones in Jaffna are allowed to speedily return to their original homes, or resettled in accordance with international human rights norms such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons and the Pinheiro Principles.
- All past and continuing human rights violations are addressed and there is an end to impunity.
- All paramilitaries are disarmed and militarization including militarization of the civil administration in North and East is checked.
- The root causes of the conflict are seriously addressed.
- The special needs and concerns of the population affected by the war, particularly women, are addressed.

Women have been both disproportionately and differently affected by the 30 year conflict, but are invariably excluded from decision making processes in relation to peace building. As recommended in UNSC resolution 1325, a gendered approach to peace-building, conflict transformation and reconstruction is essential in contexts of transition. Such an approach works on many levels to support and develop local capacities of women and men, while working to transform structures of power previously dominated by violence and militarization into ones that promote a just and sustainable peace protective of all the rights of all people irrespective of ethnic, gender, class or religious identities. Such an approach recognizes the power disparities built into and reinscribed through official processes of reconstruction, development and peace-building.

We make the following recommendations under the themes of return/ relocation of all IDPs, protecting and promoting human rights and ending impunity, addressing the root causes of the conflict and addressing the special needs of women and including women in decision making processes.

PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENDING IMPUNITY

Human rights violations including abductions, disappearances, torture and gender-based violence against women remains a critical concern. Failure to bring perpetrators of these human rights violations to justice constitutes a further denial of the victims' right to justice and redress. Ultimately the failure to bring perpetrators of human rights abuses including VAW sets up conditions for the future in which such abuses are continued and perhaps even privatized leading to further cycles of violence. We believe that protecting and promoting human rights is integral to the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka and recommend that:

- Human rights violations committed by the LTTE as well as the state be thoroughly investigated and duly prosecuted, and
- Human rights mechanisms in the country be strengthened in a way that restores the confidence of all communities in due process and the rule of law.



ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Women's groups in Sri Lanka have been amongst the strongest and most consistent advocates for peace in Sri Lanka. We strongly believe that a sustainable peace can only be achieved if the root causes of the conflict and long-standing grievances of the minorities are adequately addressed. These include:

- Speedy and proper implementation of the language law and recruitment of adequate numbers of Tamil and Muslim public servants to the public service.
- Speedy implementation of 17th amendment.

- Disarmament and demilitarization as a precondition for reconciliation and peace building. We are extremely concerned about the continuing militarization of the North and East including the militarization of the civil administration as well as the fact that paramilitary groups continue to function in these areas. This has direct impact on returning to normalcy in these areas, and furthermore has direct impact on women running for public office and controls their willingness to visibly participate in any decision making.

There is a need to move beyond mere rhetorical pronouncement relating to majority and minority status to ensure substantial equality for all ethnic communities in Sri Lanka. There is also a need to rebuild and repair ethnic relations on the basis of mutual understanding and tolerance of diversity.



SPECIAL NEEDS OF WOMEN AND WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING

Given our understanding that women are impacted disproportionately and differently by the conflict, we urge a gendered approach to peace-building, conflict transformation and reconstruction. Issues impacting on women include livelihood needs of female-headed households, re-intergration of female ex-combatants, as well as special needs of physically challenged, older and single women. Existing processes and structures have had inadequate or no participation of women. Sri Lanka. In order to achieve this goal we urge that women are including in decision-making processes in relation to the humanitarian situation of the displaced as well as reconstruction, resettlement, and in accountability processes as well as discussions on human rights and power-sharing arrangements.

We recommend that:

- Gender-sensitive women should be brought into policy-making and implementing mechanisms.
- All statistics compiled in relation to peace and reconstruction should be disaggregated according to gender.
- Better access for physically challenged and conflict-affected women and girls to employment and education, and protection from all forms of harassment.
- Implementation of welfare schemes, as well as employment and skills-training for women affected by conflict, including war widows.
- Trauma counseling for women and girls from war-torn areas.

- Health services including reproductive health care for women affected by conflict.
- A women-friendly accountability and compensation mechanism for women who have been sexually abused due to the war.



POLITICS

After more than 70 years of universal adult franchise and more than 60 years of independence, women's political representation in Sri Lanka remains abysmally low. Currently women account for only 5.8% of members in Parliament, 5% of members in Provincial Councils and 1.8% of members in local government comprising Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas. Women's representation at local government is among the lowest in the world and the lowest in the entire South Asian region.

Given these dismal statistics, women's groups as well as the National Committee for Women made written and oral submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform (PSCER) set up in 2003 and reconstituted in 2006, urging that any reform of the electoral system must make provision for a 33% a legal quota or reservation for women in nominations lists. As a result of these submissions the Interim Report of the Select Committee, dated 5 June 2007, recognized (albeit in a weak recommendation) the need to increase women's representation in politics, providing that

(1) political parties should include provisions in their policies to ensure nominations of women candidates in order to guarantee better representation of women in Parliament, Provincial Councils, and Local government bodies, and

(2) that the necessary legal provisions be formulated to make it mandatory that every third candidate nominated by a party secretary from the national list shall be a woman candidate.

We however note with disappointment that the two bills which were subsequently drafted to give effect to the recommendations of the PSCER and presented in Parliament on 7 December 2008 made no mention of a quota for women or any other mechanism to increase women's representation. In a global context, more than 80 countries have implemented quotas/reservations for women mainly at local level. A reservation of seats for women in some form prevails in all the other countries of South Asia. In India, the new UPA government elected to power in 2009, apart from putting the Women's Reservation in Parliament Bill on its 100 days agenda, have also promised to increase the reservation for women at the *panchayat* level to 50%. Despite the appalling statistics in Sri Lanka, policy makers continue to insist that there is a level playing field and equal access to elected political bodies. In our analysis this is yet another manifestation of a refusal to recognize discrimination in its multiple dimensions

whether on the basis of sex, ethnicity, sexuality, etc, in Sri Lanka and the refusal to fulfil the state's obligation to address such discrimination.

In this context we recommend the following:

1. a) A minimum 25% nominations for women in respect of 70% of seats elected on the basis of the First Past the Post system from single member constituencies;
b) A minimum 30% nominations for women at Provincial Councils elections;
c) A minimum 30% quota of women in Parliament and 50% of those appointed to the National List should be women.
2. Political parties should nominate a minimum of 30% women candidates at all levels in political structures.
3. More women Ministers, Junior Ministers, and Cabinet Ministers, as well as Secretaries to Ministries, heads of institutions, and in the judiciary.
4. Adequate training and other support for women candidates.
5. Voting rights for Sri Lankan migrant workers abroad (about one million people) - the great majority of whom are women.
6. Gender-disaggregated data on nominations for elections.
7. Give women public servants the right to vote for the election of the *Diyawadana Nilame* and similar posts - now restricted to male officers.

WOMEN are over 50% of the POPULATION

WOMEN are over 50% of the ELECTORATE

but there are only

5.8% women members in Parliament

5% women members in Provincial Councils

1.8% in local government

VIOLENCE

It is well known that many women and girls in all parts of Sri Lanka are subject to all types of physical and verbal abuse at home, in the workplace, and in the public sphere. The types of violence range from harassment, assault, rape and incest, to torture, 'disappearance' and murder. Women also bear the consequences of social problems like alcoholism and drug addiction among males. Violence seems to have increased with the general militarization and brutalization of society caused by war, political thuggery, and criminal activity.

Although the 1995 penal code reforms and the passing of a new domestic violence law in 2005 were groundbreaking, the impact of these laws have remained minimal due to lack of corresponding changes in other laws such as the Evidence Ordinance and the Criminal Procedure Code, lack of sensitivity among actors within the justice system including judicial officers, law enforcement officers, judicial medical officers, medical professionals and lawyers, lack of support services for women which can ensure the proper implementation of these laws (shelters, counsellors), the lack of awareness among women themselves of their rights under these laws, and continuing negative social attitudes and prejudice against women victims of violence.

We note that although 'The Plan of Action for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005' adopted by the National Committee of Women has a comprehensive set of strategies and activities to ensure the implementation of the DV Act, it has not yet been implemented. We recommend:

1. More resources and publicity by the media for campaigns to reduce all forms of violence against women.
2. Legal and other deterrents - e.g., refusal of recruitment into police or armed forces - as well as counselling and rehabilitation, for those convicted of assaults on women and girls.
3. Increased free legal-aid facilities for women affected by violence. Publicize the numbers of hotline telephones for complaints.
4. State-sponsored shelters and other facilities island-wide for battered women, and women subject to sexual violence.
5. Partnership between state agencies and women's groups providing shelters as well as legal and psychological counselling.
6. Police training to include section on domestic violence, including violence against children, rape investigation, sexual harassment, and other gender-based violence; and

provision of women's desks open 24 hours with trained women personnel and adequate infrastructure.

7. Increase in sensitizing courses for magistrates and prosecutors on issues of gender, especially on violence against women.

8. Methods to ensure that drivers and conductors of buses are trained and equipped to deal with those who harass women.

9. Clear recognition in the Constitution of the right of women to be free from all forms of violence. A woman should be able to petition a court for a breach of fundamental rights when she has been subject to violence, private or public.

10. Implementation of the Plan of Action for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005 adopted by the National Committee on Women.

11. Highlighting the prevalence of domestic violence all over the island and popularization of the provisions of the Act, and also the penal code provisions on sexual harassment and incest.

12. Raising awareness about the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act among medical personnel and making it mandatory for medical personnel and others with a duty of care to report cases of violence.

ECONOMY

Sri Lanka has a range of progressive labour laws that give women and men equal rights. However, women still suffer from weak and inconsistent monitoring and enforcement of laws concerning wage equality, occupational health and labour standards. Especially in rural, unregulated or non-unionized sectors, women receive very low wages and are considered less skilled, yet women's labour in plantations, factories and foreign employment accounts for the bulk of the country's foreign exchange earnings and it plays a pivotal role in the economy. While particular attention has to be paid to working women's wages, hours of work, and work and living conditions - their right to organize, their right to health facilities, creches and other benefits must also be addressed by politicians and employers.

Women also form the majority of the unemployed and underemployed. In 2009 (first quarter) the unemployment rate for women was 7.9 compared to 4.1 for men. Hence while the comparative difference has reduced marginally, women's unemployment remains nearly double that of men. Women are also engaged in a wide spectrum of economic activities, not reflected in national level statistics due to lack of sex-disaggregated data on rural production. The impact of new technology may also be pushing women out from their traditional agricultural activities.

The wage disparities between women and men in the informal sector remains significant. In the agricultural sector, for example, women are paid on average Rs. 200 per day while men are paid Rs. 350-400 per day.

The Labour Force Participation Survey in 2007 shows that, out of the unpaid family workers, females comprised 71.6%. The contributions made to the total employment by unpaid family workers were comparatively higher in the districts of Anuradhapura, Monaragala and Badulla where agricultural employment is concentrated. The exploitation and harsh treatment of migrant women workers, mainly in the Middle East, has been exposed, but more needs to be done. Domestic servants and women in the informal sector have no organizations or laws to protect them.

Women's wide range of unpaid work in the home has also been ignored. Ad hoc regulations on maternity leave which sought to extend maternity leave have also resulted in a backlash which is affecting women's recruitment to jobs particularly in the private sector. Given that women form the bulk of the labour force in the plantation, garment and foreign employment sectors, women workers have also been the hardest hit by the current global economic crisis. We recommend:

1. A nationally enforced minimum wage.
2. Equal Pay for work of equal value for women, including women working in agriculture, the informal and non-unionized sectors.
3. Strengthening of the rights women workers to unionize and bargain collectively, especially in sectors where organizing is discouraged.
4. Acceptance that the principle of parental leave includes paternal leave and the rigorous application of this principle in diverse work environments.
5. Provision in work places - especially plantations, factories and offices - of adequate creche, child-minding and carework facilities.
6. Improved conditions in the Export Processing Zones, and other such factories, including their living environments in respect of work and pay, recognition of trade unions and collective bargaining, voluntary overtime, good lodging and regulation of private sector housing, and proper street lighting.
7. Migrant Women Workers: bilateral agreements between the State and recipient countries for enforcement of standardized contracts with minimum standards for recruitment, working conditions, and repatriation; more Labour and Welfare Offices, as well as free legal assistance and counselling for migrant workers in recipient countries, and a system of social security for migrant workers.

8. Registration of domestic servants and improved conditions and protection for them. Regulated working hours; minimum and equal wages for work of equal value; monthly and annual holidays; health-care provisions; maternity leave and employees provident funds (EPF).
9. Extension of labour legislation, and ratification of ILO Convention, to protect the rights of women working in home- based industries and self-employment.
10. Increase of compulsory retirement age for women from 55 to 65.
11. Extension of "Widows and Orphans" pension fund to *all* female dependants.
12. Special provisions and skills training for single and elderly women who are needy, unemployed and without family support.
13. Recognition of female-headed households, and the formulation of appropriate policies to deal with their specific concerns. Priority for more state homes for elders, the majority of whom are women.
14. Review of current laws and policies on maternity leave in consultation with women's organizations and employees, so as not to undermine women's job prospects and sustain Sri Lanka's gains on child health and nutrition.
15. Social policies and social protection measures put in place to protect women workers as they begin to bear the brunt of the global economic crisis. As the Sri Lankan economy extensively relies upon women workers in key sectors,(garment, plantation and migrant workers), where retrenchment stemming from the crisis begins to affect women workers, it will be critical to offer them social protection and implement policies that do not lead to an underutilization of their skills.

MEDIA

Demeaning portrayals of women persist in Sri Lanka especially but not only at election time when obscenities about women candidates and politicians are not uncommon. The media is one of the most potent weapons to promote positive images of women through newspapers, journals, radio, TV and video visuals. But sexism in advertisements, cartoons, articles and editorials still prevails. Many TV series uncritically depict violence against women and sexist attitudes. Many portrayals of women keep to their traditional roles as wives and mothers and do not reflect the developmental, educational and professional roles for women that Sri Lanka has agreed to both nationally and internationally.

Women are also underrepresented in media production, especially in its technical departments and at decision-making levels.

Women journalists have also censored, harassed, attacked, abducted and illegally detained.

We recommend:

1. More training and employment of women in the media, especially in technical production.
2. Implementation of the Code of Conduct prepared by the Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC) for media personnel, to promote positive attitudes towards women, as well as to combat sexism and stereotyping of women in the media.
3. Gender-sensitizing programmes for media personnel.
4. Support for a continuous media-watch in three languages to monitor and expose sexism in newspaper articles, advertisements, cartoons, videos and television programmes, especially teledramas.
5. Campaigns to persuade newspaper editors, journalists and TV and radio station management, advertising agencies and the Press Council to be more concerned about combating sexism in the media.
6. Zero tolerance of the harassment, abductions, attacks and illegal detention of female and male journalists. Commitment to freedom of expression and speech.

Extract from the *Code of Ethics for Gender Representation*, published by the Women's Research and Education Centre (WERC)

These guidelines have been designed to assist television station managers to draw up guidelines for broadcast policy regarding advertising agencies and commercial production houses. The objective is to encourage the positive and realistic portrayal of women in advertisements.

- Avoid using women as degrading, sexual and commercial objects to attract the attention of male viewers.
- Avoid using women in advertisements for products that have no relevance to females.
- Avoid portraying women in subservient roles and as 'stupid' individuals in a manner that communicates such roles to be the norm.
- Avoid portraying women in a manner that communicates housework as being their only or primary role, but promote the portrayal of their multiple roles.

- Avoid portrayal of women in a manner that indicates housework as having primacy over other roles that they perform in society.
- Avoid portraying women performing household tasks while the rest of the family relaxes.
- Avoid portraying male children as dominant, and female children playing out housewife/motherhood roles.

HEALTH

Women in Sri Lanka have greatly benefited from the absence of overt gender discrimination in health care, the provision of free health services and the priority given to maternal and child health services for over six decades. However, marked regional variations in health statistics are a matter of concern. Government efforts to improve health-care provision by decentralizing and strengthening the provincial health administration has not uniformly contributed to the improvement of the health status of women in some areas, particularly in the plantation sector and conflict-affected areas in the North and East. The burden of ill-health weighs heavily on rural and low-income women, and especially working women, who face the double burden of tasks at work and in the home. Some of the pressing health issues facing these women, particularly in depressed districts and conflict affected districts in the North and East, include acute malnutrition, anemia, low-birth-weight babies and slow decline in morbidity affecting the quality of life of women.

Overall, health programmes have also traditionally focused on mother and child programmes, leading to the neglect of adolescent health, occupational health, geriatric care, mental health, health of disabled women, and the impact of gender-based violence on women's health. Social and cultural attitudes of some of the care providers may also make access to contraceptive services to certain sub populations like unmarried women and adolescent girls difficult. While maternal mortality has been significantly reduced, home deliveries are responsible for a significant proportion of maternal deaths. The breakdown of the care provision mechanism and transport services in the conflict-affected areas may make women resort to take the option of home deliveries, thereby risking their lives.

We urge:

1. Targeted programmes for the reduction of maternal and infant mortality as well as morbidity rates, and of anemia and malnutrition, among women and girls on plantations, in conflict-affected areas, in poor rural and urban areas, and among women in detention.
2. Recognition of reproductive health-care as a right and provision of effective training for health care workers to ensure that all women irrespective of marital status and age have access to contraceptive and reproductive health services as and when needed. There is a need

to recognize and fulfill the contraceptive requirements of unmarried, widowed and divorced women. Although these women are not denied services in the State Family Planning programmes, special effort has to be made to ensure that they are able to access these services equally.

3. Expansion of fully equipped 'Well-Women Clinics,' to all parts of the country, and increased regular check-up and screening facilities, in all state hospitals for forms of cancer and other diseases affecting women.
4. Extension of the responsibility for women's health to employers to provide proper first aid, and toilet facilities for women workers, as well as to strictly follow occupational health and safety regulations.
5. Campaign for reproductive rights for all women, and ensuring of more accessible and informed choice in the selection of family-planning methods.
6. Strengthening of HIV/AIDS prevention among women.
7. Concessions in access to basic services, health facilities and transport to poor single-parent families and the elderly.
8. Discounts on medication for women and men over 55 years of age.
9. Counselling programmes for women in stress/crisis situations. More research and action on mental-health problems, including high rates of suicides among youth.
10. Recognizing violence against women as a health issue, and integrating remedial and preventive measures into training programmes in medical faculties and health policies.
11. Since gender-disaggregated data is not collected and even if available is not analyzed in statistical data published in the health sector, such data should be made available to help plan interventions that would benefit many women

EDUCATION

The level of women's and girls' education and literacy is a positive factor in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has also achieved the third MDG –United Nations Millennium Development Goal gender equality in participation in primary and secondary education. But there are still areas where there is illiteracy. Literacy is low, especially among women on plantations and in low-income rural areas and among the urban poor. Negative attitudes to women are also often promoted in schools and in textbooks in all languages. We urge:

1. Improvement of primary and secondary education levels, and removal of gender disparities in provision of facilities, for girls from plantations as well as the rural and urban poor.
2. Enforcement of compulsory education nationwide up to 16 years.
3. Monitoring of textbooks for gender bias, sexism and racism, as well as incorporation of gender-sensitive material in textbooks and curricula.
4. Proactive measures to increase the enrollment of girls and women to vocational, technical, scientific, new technology and management training programmes so as to reduce gender imbalances.
5. Establishment of adult educational, functional literacy and skills-development programmes for illiterate women, and retrenched and unemployed women.
6. Sensitization of teachers, school children and university students on issues of gender equity.
7. Incorporation of gender issues in school curricula, and expansion of Gender Studies programmes in universities with an aim towards gender-mainstreaming educational institutions at all levels.
8. Skills training for women displaced by war and for war widows.
9. Conduct sex education programmes in schools to provide knowledge on male / female sexuality, contraception, venereal diseases, etc.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Women are often affected by oppressive social practices, which are excused on the grounds of culture, tradition and customary law. These include many remnants of feudal social structures and attitudes of the past, such as the caste system based on hierarchy and inequality, and the practice of dowries which makes daughters a 'liability'. The prevalence of patriarchy in the home, in society, and in the law, has led to various types of discrimination against women, and to male domination and son preference. There also still exist numerous taboos, superstitions and negative attitudes towards women. We urge:

1. Amending all customary laws and the general law to eliminate provisions that discriminate against women.
2. Discouragement of social practices harmful to women and girls (e.g. virginity tests, attitudes to widows, female genital mutilation).
3. Equal inheritance for sons and daughters, and the banning of dowries. Equal inheritance in state-sponsored settlement schemes.
4. National media and education campaigns to combat sexist social practices. More gender / sex-education in schools.
5. Introduction of measures to combat alcoholism and drug abuse.
6. Promotion of religious and ethnic harmony through women's networks.

LAW REFORM

Much remains to be done in the area of law reform of both the general and customary laws. We urge:

1. That all laws discriminating against women and contrary to fundamental rights are amended to complement the constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination. This will mean the removal or amendment of all discriminatory laws against women.
2. Amendment of constitutional provisions so as to expand the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court beyond executive and administrative action to private actors / persons.
3. Strengthening of the law on sexual harassment, including civil remedies and with compensation. All employers, including the private sector, should set up complaint investigation procedures and awareness programmes in relation to sexual harassment.
4. Raising age of marriage for ALL to 18; and introducing egalitarian personal laws.
5. Amending laws to allow abortion in cases of rape, incest, and risk to women's mental and/or physical health.
6. Review of maternity leave regulations in consultation with women's organizations and employees.
7. Decriminalization of homosexuality and lesbianism among consenting adults, in keeping with modern laws.

8. Introducing laws against hate speech that incites hostility to ethnic groups, women and individuals.
9. Expediting the amendment of the current fault-based divorce laws to incorporate the concept of 'breakdown of marriage'.
10. In the case of foreigners, a *permanent* status must be granted where the female or male spouse has resided a considerable number of years in the country. Visas to foreign spouses and their children must be given at no cost to the applicants, based on the principle of family unity.
11. Non-discrimination in the State Land Settlement laws (and inheritance laws) that currently favour men - especially when the State grants land.
12. Changes to the Land Development Ordinance Schedule III, where due to the concept of "male head of the household", women in resettlement schemes are at a disadvantageous position as males are given preference in allocating land permits.
13. Recognition of both wife and husband as 'heads of household'.
14. Changes in antiquated vagrancy laws oppressive to women, and the strengthening of legislation on child prostitution, forced prostitution and trafficking, in keeping with international norms and principles regarding these issues.
15. Legal literacy programmes to increase women's awareness of the law and their legal rights.
16. Repeal of colonial laws prohibiting sale of alcohol to women.
17. Serious consideration of the report by the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on Sri Lanka's discriminatory personal laws, particularly Muslim law.
18. A National Commission on Women to be set up as an independent body, with the power to investigate complaints of discrimination, conduct educational programmes, engage in litigation, as well as initiate and pursue research.
19. Legally recognizing the right of women who adopt infants to maternity leave. At present, maternity leave is granted only to women who have biologically gone through pregnancy and given birth.

SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

1. Sufficient resources and budget allocations for recommendations and reforms relating to women and gender issues, and increased expenditure on women's education and health.
2. Prioritization and setting up of a timeline for appropriate public and private bodies to meet targets on all recommendations and reforms related to women.
3. A National Commission on Women to be set up as an independent body, with the power to investigate complaints of discrimination, conduct educational programmes, engage in litigation, as well as initiate and pursue research.
4. Ministry of Women's Affairs: the further training of ministry officials in gender issues.
5. Gender Impact Assessment Committee in Department of National Planning to appraise how policies and programmes affect women of all communities. Gender awareness and equity need to be integrated into all levels of government policy planning and implementation, with gender focal points (persons trained in gender issues) in all ministries.
6. Gender-disaggregated Data: Gaps in economic and social statistics need to be filled, as the contribution of women to the economy and households is undervalued.
7. Promotion of public consciousness on women's issues, and implementation of the 1995 Beijing International Women's Conference Platform for Action.
8. Support Women's Studies, assertiveness training, and training in self-defense for women through various institutions (educational / work / social and cultural).
9. An Ombudswoman to inquire into women's on-going grievances and complaints.
10. Implementation of the Women's Rights Bill or the drafting of a Bill on Women's and Gender Issues so as to ensure that Sri Lanka's commitment to CEDAW (UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) can be operationalized through legal means.