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Gender-based violence in Sri Lanka: Has Sustainable Development Goal 5 been an effective policy tool?

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Research paper: **Gender-based violence in Sri Lanka: Has Sustainable Development Goal 5 been an effective policy tool?**

MA in International Relations – Department of International Relations

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Declaration of Authorship

I declare this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for a Masters degree in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Name: Kim Jurgensen

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Date: 9 July 2023

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Abstract

This research paper is an investigation of gender-based violence and gender inequality in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was chosen as a case study because it ended the 26-year civil war in 2009, and has had over a decade since this reset moment to rebuild the country. The paper builds on feminist research which says that high levels of gender inequality give rise to high levels of violence against women. The research is based on a gender structural inequality theoretical framework, and uses the Sustainable Development Goals (specifically SDG 5 which talks to gender equality) as the measurements of these structures. While there has been work done on various aspects of development in Sri Lanka, the purpose of this research project was to pull together the targets under SDG 5 and, using a process tracing methodology, demonstrate their effect on levels of violence against women. The research stated upfront that data for the dependent variable (violence against women) was already known, and that data would be sought for the independent variables (i.e. the remaining targets under SDG 5) to show correlation between the DV and IVs. The research showed that there has been poor implementation for most of the targets under SDG5, and as such the outcomes were mostly negative. These findings were in line with the theoretical framework of gender structural inequality, and the feminist writings of the link between gender inequality and violence against women. It was interesting to see that on two main areas i.e. sexual health and education (which does not fall under SDG 5), Sri Lanka has almost complete gender parity. This demonstrated that women's economic power and participatory parity (i.e. participating at senior level in the labour market and in government) were decisive factors in entrenching conservative societal views that undermine women's agency and entrenches unequal power dynamics in the home, where most of the violence occurs.

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS 7

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 8

Background 8

Sri Lanka's civil war 8

Gender inequality and gender-based violence 10

Problem Statement 12

Research Objective 12

Hypothesis 13

Research Questions 13

Significance of the study 13

Research Methodology 15

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 21

Gender equality and violence against women 21

Conceptual framework 22

Structural inequality 22

Understanding gender 23

Injustice 24

Violence 25

Hegemonic masculinity 26

Continuum of violence 27

Reset moment 30

Maintenance and manifestation of structural inequality 31

CHAPTER 3. DATA PRESENTATION 40

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS 60

Gender-based violence in Sri Lanka 60

Gender inequality and violence against women 64

Independent variables and dependent variable 66

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY 68

Background 68

Motivation for study 69
Purpose of the research 69
Hypothesis 69
Questions 70
Theoretical framework 70
Methodology 71
Data 71
Results 72
Possible further research 75
Final reflections 75
REFERENCES 77

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Amnesty International
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRSV	Conflict-related Sexual Violence
GBV	Gender-based violence
ICG	International Crisis Group
IASC	Inter Agency Standing Committee
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
OISL	Office of the Hight Commission on Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNHLPF	United Nations High Level People's Forum
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commission on Human Rights
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Commission
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organisation
WPS Agenda	Women, Peace and Security Agenda

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background

This chapter will give a brief overview of the case study and its historical experience with gender-based violence, especially in the time of the civil war. The chapter will then discuss the academic arguments that link gender inequality to gender-based violence. Following that, the chapter will give an overview of the Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, the chapter will look at five key areas of the research project namely the problem statement, the research objective, the hypothesis, the research questions and the significance of the study.

Sri Lanka's civil war

Sri Lanka is a country that had a protracted civil war, which finally ended in 2009 with the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Over the 26 years of the war, it is estimated that 100 000 people lost their lives, and 800 000 people were displaced (Glatz 2014, quoted in Traunmuller et al 2019, 2017). The civil war in Sri Lanka ended in 2009, though not through a negotiated settlement. The war was won by the Sri Lankan government, who were also the major perpetrators of sexual violence during the conflict, particularly in the final stages. Because of the geographical nature of the war, the push by the LTTE was to secede from the country in the north-east, which is where most of the fighting was concentrated, the end of the conflict left a country sharply divided along ethnic, religious and geographical lines. The areas in the north and east of the country had borne the brunt of the conflict. This was also where large areas of land had been expropriated by the government. The aftermath of the war for this geographical area was characterised by landless widows trying to survive in decimated areas.

While Traunmuller et al (2019, 2017) demonstrate that 13% of the population experienced sexual violence during the conflict, it is worth noting that this violence was highly segmented. Under the auspices of the UN Office of the High Commission of Human Rights (UNHRC,) a commission was established to investigate war crimes in the last years of the conflict. The investigating body was called OISL (Office of the High Commission on Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka). The 2015 report (UNHRC 2015, 117) noted that "One of

the most disturbing findings… has been the extent to which sexual violence was committed, often extremely brutally, by the Sri Lanka security forces…. The prevalence of rape, often on repeated occasions, was particularly shocking. OISL did not find any information to suggest that the LTTE was responsible for sexual violence, and different sources indicated that anyone found responsible for sexual abuse or violence risked harsh punishment by the LTTE. This demonstrates that the war gave rise to highly vulnerable groups of people, notably the Tamil minority, who were at far greater risk of conflict-related sexual violence than their Sinhalese compatriots (Wood 2006). It was this population that was largely displaced (62% vs 8%) (Traunmiller et al 2019, 2028). Indeed, the conflict was focused largely in the northern and eastern provinces, home to the Tamil minority, and experienced the worst levels of violence (International Crisis Group Asia 2008). Saja (2017, 65, 67) notes that gender discrimination and violence against women continues to be a key problem for communities in the northern districts of Sri Lanka and argues that the current interventions have failed to prevent violence against women or address the underlying structural problems that give rise to this violence. Women in the northern districts, the areas most affected by the civil war, are particularly vulnerable as many of them, an estimated 40 000, are war widows who now head up their households.

Sri Lanka's conflictual history, and the reset moment in 2009, makes it an interesting case study. Here is a relatively small island nation, of no political value to the world, that has suffered decades of civil war. This war was characterised at the end by high levels of gender-based violence committed by government soldiers against a minority of women in a specific geographical area. With a background of international conventions and laws, including the Sustainable Development Goals, it is interesting to see if the reset moment at the end of the conflict resulted in a better country for Sri Lankan women. Even though a minority of women bore the brunt of the gender-based violence at the end of the conflict, this opportunity to rebuild a better and more inclusive society has the potential to benefit all women in Sri Lanka, and to significantly improve the levels of equity between women and men.

Gender inequality and gender-based violence

A number of feminist scholars (Baron and Straus 1989; Caprioli 2005; Cockburn 2004; Cohen 2016; Farr 2009; Fearon 2010; Koo 2002; MacKinnon 2006) have identified gender inequality as a key factor in gender violence. Wolff (1990, 107) writes of the need for "… a systematic analysis of sexual divisions in society, of the social relations of cultural production, and of the relationship between textuality, gender and social structure."

The Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda) is a cluster of 10 resolutions (starting with UNSC Resolution 1325 in 2000) that address the gendered nature of war. The WPS Agenda has emphasised the link between gender inequality and levels of gender-based violence (GBV). The Agenda underscores the need to address structural inequalities as a means to reduce the levels of violence against women. In 2019, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 2467 which states that GBV in conflict is a continuum of GBV during peacetime, and that the root causes which need to be addressed include "structural inequality and discrimination." (UNORG 2019) Confortini (2006, 341) writes that "gender is essential to understand the origins of violence and the mechanisms through which it works." This is echoed by other feminists (Copelon 1995; MacKinnon 2006; Dauer 2001). True (2016, 6) says it is important to "contextualise this [conflict-related sexual] violence within the gendered structures of economic impoverishment and lack of opportunity that are not addressed typically by political settlements."

Also, in 2000 189 countries adopted the Millennium Development Goals, renamed in 2015 to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (SDG Fund 2018). The SDGs are a set of 17 policy areas to guide countries into creating a more sustainable and equitable future for all its citizens. SDG 5 deals specifically with gender matters and is divided into nine target areas. Two of these targets deal specifically with GBV. It must be pointed out that SDG 5 is not the only goal that has an effect on gender inequality. SDG 4 for example deals with education and the need to ensure that there is gender parity in the education sector. It could in fact be argued that all of the SDGs have a gender angle. But SDG 5 has specifics that the drafters felt would address the core of gender inequality matters countries need to address. In 2014 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, stated that the SDGs must resolve the failings of the Millennium Development Goals which had not

addressed issues of inequality. It is also worth remembering that the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) are encapsulated in the SDG targets, and it is this 2030 Agenda that states "Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels." This approach, that recognises the importance not just of the goals themselves, but the goals as tools of addressing inequality, makes the policy framework an excellent way to analyse and measure progress on gender equality. It is useful here to remember that this paper is specifically focused on the link between inequality and gender-based violence, and so, despite the plethora of other global frameworks designed to improve the lives of women, the focus of this research will be on SDG 5 as the most current and purposeful policy framework looking at gender inequality. The SDGs are useful because they allow the researcher to form a baseline, and to track any changes over specific time periods. They are also useful in that they allow for regional and global comparisons, which enriches the narrative of gender equality developments across countries. This is particularly valuable for a case study of Sri Lanka which is complicated by its recent civil war. The regional narrative allows for greater understanding of cultural and societal factors such as attitudes towards women's work and public participation, therefore dispelling any arguments that violence against women is high in that country precisely because of the civil war and the violence that was committed largely by government soldiers against civilian women. It strengthens the academic argument that violence, even in times of conflict, is mostly a continuum through times of peace and war, and is strongly correlated to gender inequality levels in a country.

Therefore from 2000 Sri Lanka, still in the midst of a civil war, signed two major international commitments, the WPS Agenda, and the MDGs (renamed the SDGs), that both

dealt with issues of gender equality and sexual violence. It should be noted that the scope of this research is largely limited to 2020, although some of the data reports were published in the two years after that. Two significant events have affected that country since then. Firstly is the Covid19 pandemic which affected the entire world, and had significant impacts on economies, employment and particularly on levels of intimate partner violence. This is not limited to Sri Lanka, but is an anomaly which changes the statistics. The second event is the mass protests in that country that started in March 2022. The protests were aimed at the government for implementing austerity measures that failed to save the economy. The measures included hikes in interest rates, withdrawal of the fuel subsidy and severe cuts to state expenditure. Despite this the Sri Lankan Rupee has been significantly devalued over the past year. This is the second anomaly in the SDG plan. Although it would be interesting to analyse why the adoption of the SDGs did not serve to adequately protect the economy and the country, that is not in the scope of this research. This research focuses specifically on the two decades since the adoption of the major international policy frameworks (WPS Agenda and MDG/SDGs).

Problem Statement

Despite a plethora of policy interventions (including CEDAW, Beijing Platform of Action, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and recently the Sustainable Development Goals), gender and sexual-based violence remain alarmingly high (Panadare 2020, Maduwage 2020, WHO 2018, UNHLPF 2022). Countries who have ended civil conflict post 2000 have had a unique opportunity under the auspices of the WPS Agenda to rebuild into gender-equal societies. Almost every country in the world has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which means there should be a significant reduction of gender and sexual-based violence. However, in the case of Sri Lanka preliminary research (WHO 2021, FPA 2021, Financial Times December 2020) indicate that violence against women across the country, not just in the areas that were most severely affected by the conflict, continues to be a serious problem, and that intimate partner violence (IPV) is disturbingly high in Sri Lanka.

Research Objective

The research looked at the Sustainable Development Goal 5 as the key international policy intervention on gender equality, to understand how the various targets under this goal have affected levels of violence against women. The research used Sri Lanka as a case study. The civil war in that country ended in 2009 providing an excellent opportunity to reset its policy framework and address underlying causes of violence (including sexual violence and violence against women), particularly gender inequality. The underlying argument of the paper is that countries characterised by high levels of gender inequality are likely to also have high levels of violence against women. The research objective is based on an if-then approach; if the targets under SDG 5 are being successfully implemented, then there should be a noticeable reduction in levels of violence against women. In order to meet this objective it will be necessary to understand what progress has been made in the case study and to provide an analysis of what that progress means.

Hypothesis

The research hypothesis is that persistently high levels of gender-based violence in Sri Lanka are due to the failure of SDG 5 to bring about gender equality in the country.

Research Questions

i. What progress has been made in Sri Lanka in the implementation of SDG 5?

ii. What can be deduced from different rates of implementation and success of each of the different target areas?

Significance of the study

The research looks at the period 20 years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, (which was the basis of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to the two decades since adoption, there is another noteworthy event that makes the investigation valuable. The civil conflict ended in 2009. At this point, despite it not being a negotiated settlement in the vein of say South Africa, there were peace talks. It is feasible to see this moment in 2009 as a 'reset' moment. A specific point in the country's trajectory where an opportunity was created to thoroughly reform the structural inequalities that give rise to socio-political injustices. A key part of this is the lived experiences of women in Sri

Lanka. Some of these women are survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, but all of them are citizens, many facing ongoing gender oppression that manifests in violence, (either committed by intimate partners or by strangers such as the sexual harassment on public transport that most women have to endure), and exclusion from public institutions such as the labour market and the political arena.

The theoretical framework, discussed in chapter 2, is feminist structural inequality. This framework, and the theoretical motivation for the WPS agenda, argue that there is a link between gender inequality and violence against women. As a signatory to the two big policy frameworks of 2000, Sri Lanka signalled its political support to address these structural inequalities. As a country that ended a civil war nine years later, Sri Lanka already had almost a decade of policy information that should have informed its post-conflict reconstruction plans. It is expected that the frameworks, and the peacebuilding processes would make Sri Lanka a celebrated country for implementation and progress. This research interrogates each of the targets under SDG 5 to gauge data availability, policy adoption and policy implementation. The analysis tells a story of where priorities are and what the failures, if any, tell us about the social norms and continuing struggles women face. Although it is clear that no policy framework works for every country, the indicators were drafted to be broad enough that they could be adapted for specific conditions. For example, the indicator on health care talks of access to reproductive services and the ability of women to make their own contraceptive and reproductive decisions. This presumably allows for successful implementation of the target both in countries that allow for termination of pregnancies, and those who prohibit it. This investigation aimed furthermore to demonstrate where, if at all, women have a voice in the policy field. In any political environment, policy implementation is often contested because of limited resources. The research shows that adoption of policies and laws is relatively easy. The nub is in the implementation, how data is captured, what the details of the plans are, who drives the implementation and if there are financial and other resources committed to the policy. The implementation success tells a story not just of political commitment, but of ongoing gender relations and the status of those who would benefit (in regard to SDG 5 this is women).

This research project adds value to the post-conflict policy field, to the studies of gender-based violence and the underlying causes of inequality and also to the discourse on gender in international relations.

Research Methodology

This research paper employs a process tracing methodology. Collier (2011, 824) defines process tracing as "an analytical tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence." Process tracing is a methodology employed in qualitative research that observes connections between variables. The methodology uses causal pathways, sometimes called concatenation, as an explanatory tool. Concatenation refers to groups of indicators or events that are linked together in a way that produces a particular result (Morgan 2016).

For this research project process tracing sought to test the theory by analysing the relationship between the IVs and DVs. The case study is Sri Lanka, but the research project is testing the theory that gender inequality is causally linked to gender violence, rather than answering a question that is specific to Sri Lanka. This is not to say that a different research project could demonstrate the generalisation of this argument. It may well be that, given the international nature of the SDGs, the same process could be applied to other countries in an attempt to demonstrate the causal link between gender inequality and gender-based violence. However, this is a single-case study specifically because of the political history of Sri Lanka, as outlined above.

This paper looks at gender-based violence in Sri Lanka. GBV is therefore the dependent variable in the methodology. The theoretical framework, discussed in the literature review section, argues that there is a direct link between levels of gender inequality and violence against women. Because the policy frameworks, particularly the SDGS, are aimed at addressing inequality, the logical conclusion is that a successful implementation of SDGs will result in both an increase in equality, and a decrease in gender-based violence. The research hypothesis at the outset of this paper was that persistently high levels of gender-based violence in Sri Lanka are due to the failure of SDG 5 to bring about gender equality in the country. The process tracing method allowed for interrogation of the implementation of the SDGs. The results provide an opportunity for rich analysis – if the targets in SDG 5 have all

been met, but gender-based violence continues to be high, then the theoretical framework (which argues the link between gender inequality and violence against women) is incorrect. However, if the targets have not been met, through a lack of policy implementation, we will be able to draw causal links between the specific indicators and the ongoing high levels of violence against women in the country. As Collier (2011, 824) points out "Process tracing requires finding diagnostic evidence that provides the basis for descriptive and causal inference."

As mentioned, the dependent variable (DV) for this research project is gender-based violence. In SDG 5 this is captured under target 5.2. which is "eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation" (UNSTATS). However, it is already known that levels of violence against women remains persistently high in Sri Lanka (Panadare 2020, Maduwage 2020, WHO 2018, UNHLPF 2022), and that unlike other targets (notably health and education) the government has not made inroads into this area. The DV is therefore coded as GBV, with an understanding (further discussed in chapters 3 and 4) that this is a negative outcome.

Removing the DV (5.2.), the remaining targets under SDG 5 form the independent variables (IVs). The IVs are coded (i.e. given specific names) - for purposes of summary in chapters 3 and 4 – as follows:

5.1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere – DISCRIMINATION

5.3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation – HARMFUL PRACTICES

5.4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate – UNPAID WORK

5.5. Effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

5.6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights – SEXUAL HEALTH

5. a. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources – ECONOMIC RESOURCES

5. b. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology – TECHNOLOGY

5. c. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality – LEGISLATION

The process tracing methodology analyses each of these targets separately, by interrogating what steps have been taken to meet the indicators underlying the targets. Collier (2011, 823) argues that this methodology can "add inferential leverage that is often lacking in quantitative analysis." Process tracing tells a story of outcomes and influences. It uses independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) and develops a pathway that links them together. Process tracing can be used to test a theory, to build on a theory, or to explain an outcome.

This research project has a strong theoretical framework, which is that eradicating structural gender inequality is a necessary step to eradicating violence against women. Because the policy framework (particularly in the form of the SDGs) is already in place, and because the DV is already known, this paper will take the form of theory testing. The expectation is that there are gaps in implementation of SDG 5, and these gaps infer a causational relationship to the ongoing gender-based violence in Sri Lanka. To put it a different way, if the approach was to explain an outcome, it would be expected that the Sri Lankan experience is unique in a way that differs it substantially from other countries who have committed to eradicate gender inequality through the SDGs. This paper is not arguing that. The choice of using Sri Lanka as a case study (rather than say looking at the global implementation rates of the SDGs or using a regional comparative study) is because of the 'reset' moment in 2009 at the conclusion of the civil war. As such, it may well be that the results of this examination can be applied to other countries, but that is not the scope of this research.

In this approach to process tracing, both A (the intervention) and B (the outcome) are known to the researcher. The intervention here would be the targets (IVs) under SDG 5. The outcome would be the results (successes or failures) of these outcomes. Once the IVs have been thoroughly analysed, they are linked to the DV in a way that suggests a causal relationship. Once again, if all the IVs have positive outcomes, but the DV is negative, then the theory does not hold. If there are weaknesses and negative outcomes in some of the IVs, it allows for a discursive analysis of the role these inequality targets play in gender-based violence, information which will be partly covered in the literature review. The mechanisms of implementation are the causal forces that links A to B, and connects the independent variables to the dependent variable.

In order to successfully apply the methodology, the following steps were taken. Firstly, the intervention was identified. In this case, they are the targets listed under SDG 5. Because one of the targets (GBV) forms the dependent variable, the remaining eight targets are the interventions that are studied. The second step was to find the data for the outcome. It is important here to talk about the challenges of available data. Gonzalez-Ocantos and LaPorte (Beach and Penderson 2014, quoted in Gonzalez-Ocantos and LaPorte 2021, 1408) note that although the goal of process tracing is "to 'examine the fingerprints' that the process 'should have left in the empirical record'" there can be gaps in the causal mechanisms caused by evidentiary lapses in data. It was understood at the planning stages of this project that not all data would be available. These gaps were carefully considered in choosing the topic, but it was felt that, despite the gaps, the research project should not be abandoned.

Complete data is not always available for research projects, but that should not necessarily mean the research should not be undertaken or put on hold. Gonzalez-Ocantos and LaPorte (2021, 1409) point out that the absence of data-rich environments put researchers at risk of abandoning projects altogether but argue that "this is obviously a highly unsatisfactory solution because it would leave important political phenomena and cases underresearched." The topic of GBV and gender inequality in Sri Lanka is an important one not least because of the historical moment Sri Lanka finds itself in (post-Covid19 recovery and dealing with civil uprising that started in March 2022). To wait for more data would mean an opportunity would be missed to analysis the status and experience of women in

the country, even without the nuances of Covid19 and civil unrest. As the political instability in the country continues, research that draws on historical information (even when some of that information is incomplete) to understand gendered issues is crucial. It could influence future changes in the country where, for example, more pressure is placed on the new administration to prioritise issues that most affect women.

In addition to the necessity of the research (even within the challenging context of data gaps), there is also methodological support for conducting the research despite these gaps. Gonzalez-Ocantos and LaPorte (2021) write of the need to do as much in-depth research in the process tracing progression, particularly when there are data gaps. They note that gaps could be undocumented steps (i.e. there is no data) or there could be hidden mechanisms at play (i.e. the data has been deliberately hidden). The responsibility of the researcher is to be transparent about these gaps in order for the reader to be able to query the suppositions that follow. The researcher can come to conclusions about the gaps by contextualising the process, interrogating the actors, or by finding secondary information that could suggest explanations for, or possible information on, those gaps. While these conclusions might not be probable, they can at the very least suggest feasible explanations. For example, there may be a gap in the data on women's land ownership in Sri Lanka. The researcher would be obliged to highlight this data gap, but also has options to develop an explanatory interpretation of the situation. Historical information that contextualises the land struggles, particularly during the conflict, and draws on the cultural and societal attitudes towards women's economic independence (including for example inheritance laws) may be an acceptable explanation suggesting that, despite laws around women's ownership of land, there is no evidence to track progress or measure the numbers. Gonzalez-Ocantos and LaPorte (2021, 1421) argue that "being explicit about the process…contributes to efforts to increase transparency in qualitative research."

This research project did not involve any interviews, and is based solely on information that has already been captured and gathered into usable data. Because of the nature of the topic (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), it is assumed the data will be concisely captured by agencies functioning at a state, regional and global level. At a country level, the first agency studied is the Department of Census and Statistics. The Department's stated

vision is “To be the leader in the region in producing timely statistical information to (achieve) the country's development goals” (Department of Census and Statistics). Where information was lacking, but also to corroborate, the SDG Sri Lanka site was consulted. In addition, other international bodies, such as the World Health Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, the World Economic Forum and the World Bank were researched to find the most comprehensive and up-to-date information, if this was not holistically captured in either the country or SDG sites. In addition to these formal data sites, research was done on media coverage of issues relating to SDG 5. This was particularly useful to elucidate information where data is missing. Fortunately, there are a number of Sri Lankan media sites available online, and global sites such as The Guardian, Al Jazeera etc. also have regional and country focus areas which will add to the analysis.

These methodological and information-gathering options served to both address any data gaps that may arise, and at the same time enrichen the research and analysis while highlighting areas for further research and data gathering priorities.

This chapter gave a brief overview of the case study and its historical experience with gender-based violence, especially in the time of the civil war. The chapter then discussed the academic arguments that link gender inequality to gender-based violence. Following that, the chapter reviewed Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, the chapter looked at five key areas of the research project namely the problem statement, the research objective, the hypothesis, the research questions and the significance of the study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Gender equality and violence against women

This chapter will look at the existing literature on how gender inequality affects gender-based violence. The chapter will also introduce the conceptual framework and explain why this has been chosen for this particular research study.

Archer (2006) argued there is a link between the way society views women and the levels of gender-based violence in that society. Ridgeway (2014) adds that understanding status is as important as understanding the role that power and resources play in shaping inequality in society, arguing that social structures develop and entrench societal norms into hierarchical groups of differing power. Wall (2014) points out the power imbalances created by these societal structure result in resource inequalities that shape relationships at community and household levels. She argues (2014, 6) that these unbalanced power relationships are what give rise to "gendered social scripts" and says this is a key factor in gender-based violence.

Additionally, women's marginalisation serves to further empower men, entrenching their agency not only in the household, but in the public sphere through their dominance of senior positions in the labour market and in government. These gendered roles and attitudes play an intrinsic role in domination and violence against women. The UNDP (2013) says inequality is a key determining factor in well-being, and notes that privilege creates space for prejudiced and discriminatory beliefs and attitudes to reinforce inequality and exclusion.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) states "Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global,

regional and national levels. All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls will be eliminated, including through the engagement of men and boys. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda is crucial."

Sri Lanka has historically scored well on some indicators, most notably education (Gunawardena, 2020) and health care (UNWOMEN 2020, SDG Indicators Database 2021). In both these areas the country rates top in the world. However, this is further evidence that equality in some areas does not necessarily translate into over gender equality and elimination of violence against women. Although social sciences cannot definitively prove causation, Sri Lanka remains an interesting case study precisely because these two indicators are such success stories. If women are as, and at times more, educated than men, and if they have equal access to the same quality of health care, what are the factors that could suggest explanations for continuing high levels of gender-based violence.

Conceptual framework

Structural inequality

For the purposes of this research, gender-based violence (GBV) is given to mean the same as violence against women (VAW). The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 2015 Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action (2015, 15) defines GBV as "any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private."

The chosen conceptual framework of this research is structural inequality, an approach that seeks to address how inequality is maintained. The approach acknowledges both the role inequality plays in gender violence and how this inequality is maintained. As Gimenez (1978, 302) notes "there are two levels of social reality: the level of visible social relationships and the level of visible structures whose laws of functioning and transformation account for changes and the observable level." Parekh (2011, 673) argues that "gender oppression ought to be understood as a form of structural injustice."

Confortini (2006) writes that it is important to note the gendered connectedness of different manifestations of violence: domestic, societal, state based and inter-state. This approach, she says (2006, 333), builds on Galtung's theory of peace which talks to direct, structural, and cultural violence and argues that "violence produces and defines gender identities and, in turn, is produced and defined by them." Tickner (1995) says it is useful to look at structural violence because it describes the insecurity of both individuals and groups.

Structuralism is a useful theoretical framework for this essay, given that the indicators outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) all refer in one way or another to the structures (for example, the legal frameworks, the labour market etc) that uphold and strengthen a specific system. An analysis of gender inequality in a country is well placed within a structuralist framework, as this illuminates the complex factors that work in tandem, what Young (2003, 4) explains are the "institutional rules and interactive routines, mobilization of resources, and physical structures", to maintain the subordination of women in a society. She (ibid, 2-4) refers to this as structural injustice, and references John Rawls who argued that the structure of society is primarily concerned with "the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation." Understood in this way, as structural injustice, Parekh (2011, 680) argues that any interventions should have a restorative justice approached which would require the development of conditions that allow people to live full lives without any structural hindrances.

Understanding gender

Martin (2004) has described gender as a social institution, while Lorber (1994) and Risman (2004) describe it as a social structure and Connell (1987) refers to it as an order. All of these sociologists have recognised the importance that power and inequality play in gendered social relations and use the structural framework to identify these power dynamics and the ideological and social practises that maintain the inequality. Risman (2004, 433) writes that "structure shapes individual choice and social interaction and . . . human agency creates, sustains, and modifies current structure."

True (2012, 7) refers to this as the feminist political economy and argues gender values are constructed through "the workings of power not only through visible coercion that is direct

in its effects but also in the material basis of relationships that govern the distribution and use of resources, benefits, privileges and authority within the home and society." Other economists (Siglitz, 2009; Piketty, 2014) have also recognised social patterns and how culture serves to replicate inequality.

Scholars (Connell 2002; Ferree, Lorber, and Hess 2000; Lorber 1994; Risman 2004) who see gender as a structured system of stratification and inequality argue that this framework allows for better analysis of individual actions and group interactions because "gender is embedded in all the social processes of everyday life and social organizations" (Risman 2004, 430). The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (UNOHCHR 1993) recognises that "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men…"

Connell (1990, 161) in fact argues that gender is central to understanding all aspects of society. "Social science cannot understand the state, the political economy of advanced capitalism, the nature of class, the process of modernisation or the nature of imperialism, the process of socialisation, the structure of consciousness or the politics of knowledge, without a full-blooded analysis of gender."

Injustice

The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW. 1979), to which Sri Lanka is a signatory, states that "discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms, with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity." It is these background conditions that Parekh (2011, 680) refers to when she says "structural injustice is produced and reproduced through the rules, norms and customs that form the background of our lives, which we enact habitually and without reflection."

Wood (2009) has pointed out that the LTTE was notably disciplined when it came to sexual violence, and, unlike government forces, there were very few reported incidents of sexual crimes committed by the movement. Wood (ibid) argues that this is due to strong social norms in the communities of the north and north eastern areas (where the LTTE was based) which frowned on sexual relations outside of marriage, and across cultures. Societal expectations and cultural norms serve to channel people into specific roles and behaviours rather than exposing these as manifestations of gender inequality. Boeston (2014, 45) writes that these structural inequalities are maintained through normative violence which she describes as "the power of norms to enable and restrict lives." Confortini (2006, 341) writes that "gender is essential to understand the origins of violence and the mechanisms through which it works." The 2019 Sri Lankan Women's Wellbeing Survey (2019) recognised that women were more vulnerable to violence because of their ongoing subordinate status which is a result of gendered power inequalities.

This structural framework is not gender-neutral but combines structure and agency perspectives into what Hartmann (1981) describes as a partnership between capitalism and patriarchy. A feminist structural framework offers a deeper understanding into "how patterns of violence against women are produced and reproduced…" (Samuel and Gunasekara 2019, 2). It interrogates how power is created, strengthened and maintain through societal structures, be they economic, social or political.

Violence

Rachel Manjoo (2011, 8) defines structural violence as "any form of structural inequality or institutional discrimination that maintains a [person] in a subordinate position, whether physical or ideological, to other people within her family, household or community." Patriarchy is the gendered manifestation of this power and this feminist approach allows us to explore the relationship between structural inequality and violence against women. Weeks (1998, 5) described this as "systems that traverse the entire social horizon and intersect at multiple points."

Enloe (2017) says the patriarchal system is constantly adapting so that changing values and beliefs "look new, reformed, 'up-to-date', occasionally even revolutionary." She says that patriarchy adapts in order to ensure that masculine domination remains in all structures of

society. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 832) described hegemonic masculinity as "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue", and says that rather than using violence, this is achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion." This builds on Gramsci's theory achieving and sustaining domination through the use of relative consensus rather than physical force. Connell (1987) points out that there is a patriarchal dividend to this power dynamic in which men benefit from oppressing women.

Hegemonic masculinity

Jewkes (2015) notes that men's dominant position in society is legitimised through shared ideals in a society. Hence, hegemonic masculinity explains how gender inequality is perpetuated through using consent, rather than force, to legitimate power in these structures. These ideals are nurtured in the public sphere, which Habermas describes as something distinct from the state. Zillah Eisenstein (1981, 222-223) says it is important nonetheless to recognise the role of the state in protecting patriarchy in much the same way it protects other systems of power and oppression such as racism and capitalism. Rawls (2001, 108) agrees that the state has some responsibility for the political mores writing that "the causes of the wealth of a people and the forms it takes lie in their political culture and in the religious, philosophical, and moral traditions that support the basic structure of their political and social institutions. As such, according to Parekh (2011, 683), states have the ability to address structural injustices in societies, at the very least through communicating and creating awareness that calls for public support for change.

An essential element of hegemonic masculinity is the subjugation of women which all men benefit from, even if not all men actively conspire to oppress women. Donaldson (1993) says this is constructed both culturally and economically through social arrangements that see women marginalised and powerless. Fraser (1995, 71) writes of cultural or symbolic injustice which she says "is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication." She argues this injustice manifests in a variety of ways including cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect.

Samuel and Gunasekara (2019, 3) point out that the success of the feminist movement in taking sexual violence out of the private space was that it became politicised and therefore recognised as an act of social power. Putting this information in the public domain allows for a demonstration of the link between structures of society and the oppression of women in private and public spaces. “The gender violence we experience today reflects the contradictory dynamics of family and personal life in capitalist society. And these in turn are based in the system's signature division between people-making and profit-making, family and ‘work’” (Arruzza et al. 2019, 26).

Donaldson (1993) recognises the link between structural systems and gendered social formations. He references the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci that explain how power is gained and maintained, and what this means for the changing nature of social groups, as encapsulated in the notion of hegemony. Donaldson (1993, 645) adds that hegemony is maintained through a variety of tools including the ability to define the situation – including how events and situations are understood – and formulate the moral guidelines of society. “Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear ‘natural’, ‘ordinary’, ‘normal’.”

Exploring gender-based violence from the perspective of structured inequality moves away from the narrow focus on either the protection of women (Aroussi 2011) or women’s participation in the peace process (Ellerby 2013; Olsson and Gizelis 2014).

Continuum of violence

Gonzalez (2016) points out that until the 1980’s peacebuilding was a gender-blind process that largely ignored women, but this changed with concerted efforts from feminist academics and activists to create recognition for the different experiences women had during war. Quoting Sharoni, Gonzalez (Sharoni 2010, quoted in Gonzalez 2016) argues however that the introduction of terms such as “rape as a weapon of war” has had negative consequences, portraying women only as victims and sufferers, rather than agents with power and the ability to constructively shape the peacebuilding process.

Boeston (2014) refers to the work of Eloy Neira, Patricia Ruiz Bravo and Mercedes Huancavelica to demonstrate the continuum of peacetime and conflict violence. Their

research of women's experiences during the civil war shows that many women describe the sexual violence of peacetime in much the same way they describe it during the conflict. The gendered power dynamics were the same but the perpetrators had changed. On the issue of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) Houge (2017, 14) writes that "a continuum perspective on CRSV emphasizes how there is a line running from the gender-based violence in society prior to the outbreak of armed hostilities, through to CRSV, and to the prevalence of e.g., intimate partner violence in the aftermath of war."

A number of organisations and researchers (Amnesty International 1999, 2002; HRW 2013, 29, 34; International Truth and Justice Project Sri Lanka 2015; Peel et al. 2000; Sooka 2014; United Nations Human Rights Council [UN HRC] 2015; Wood 2009), reported that the civil war in Sri Lanka was characterised by high levels of violence, including sexual violence, committed mainly by government forces against members of the population. Saja (2017, 66) notes that it remains difficult to get accurate data on sexual violence, because stigma continues to plague victims, both those who were assaulted during the war, and those who continue to be assaulted now.

Traunmuller et al (2019) conducted a representative survey using a list experiment technique, which they reported on in 2019. The investigation did not only focus on the more traditional understanding of conflict-related sexual violence (i.e. sexual violence committed by warring parties and armed groups) but was broadened to include intimate partner violence (IPV) as well as sexual violence committed by both strangers and acquaintances – but all during the time of civil conflict. The research demonstrated that 13% of the population had been victims of some form of sexual violence during the war.

In September 2015, six years after the end of the conflict, the Sri Lankan government supported a UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution outlining a transitional justice strategy that would include measures for reconciliation between the warring factions. The ICG (2017) reported that the Sri Lankan government was pressured by the UN Human Rights Council to introduce a transitional justice package that would rebuild the country and reunite warring factions, while at the same time focusing on reintegrating Tamil communities who had borne the brunt of the civil war.

Cockburn (2012) says that violence pre, during and post-war is both a continuum of place and a continuum of scale in that it moves between the home and battlefield and also moves from personal assaults affecting individuals to military-scale assaults affecting whole groups of people. Researchers (Wood 2014; Butler and Jones 2016) point to how sexual violence during conflict is often a continuation of the violence women face in peacetimes, from partners and strangers. However, as systems and infrastructure, such as policing, security services and judiciary processes, break down during conflict, levels are often exacerbated. (Plumper and Neumeyer 2006; World Bank et al. 2009, 479). One of the long-term effects of this is the marginalisation of women that reinforces an inferior status in society, even after the conflict is resolved (Solangon and Patel 2012, 427; Wood 2006, 325).

It should be noted that the majority of displaced people were the Tamil minority (62% vs 8% Sinhalese, of the total 800 000 displaced people). These were the people who landed up in displacement camps. These camps are notoriously unsafe for women due to a number of factors including low levels of security, insufficient sanitary facilities and high numbers of widows and children. The United Nations (UN 2011, reported in Traunmiller et all 2019, p 2030) reported that there were cases of women being sexually exploited in exchange for shelter, food or other assistance in the camps. This is a clear example of the continuation of sexual violence after the war has officially ended.

Meger (2016, 3) describes "the underlying material interests that are served through the use of conflict-related sexual violence and in the norms that sustain its use." Hudson (2012, 41) argues that the best predictor of state security is the physical security of women in that country. The WPS Agenda seeks to make the link between gender inequality and levels of gender-based violence (GBV), although True (2011, 84) says it fails to do that and instead ignores "the gendered socio-economic inequalities that make women more vulnerable during conflict and post-conflict situations" (2011, 84). For the WPS Agenda to be successful there needs to be a confrontation of how aggressive masculinities are built through the society including in the state and in the military. Cockburn (2004, 27-28) argues that the universality of gender systems means that an understanding of subordination and oppression – gender power dynamics – is imperative in order to analyse and address gender-based violence. Oxfam's (2018, 38) report on violence against women and girls in

Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific notes “the dominant patterns of male entitlement, control and domination over women’s bodies and rigid gender roles and power dynamics, add to the existing evidence base that VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) is rooted in, sustained and reinforced by gender inequality.” Cockburn (2004, 43) says violence is linked by gender from intimate partner violence right through to sexual torture during conflict.

Reset moment

In a reset moment, such as after a conflict, when a new order is being negotiated, it is important to understand conditions that gave rise to the conflict, and exacerbated existing injustices (such as gender violence). Young (2003, 7) talks of an assessment “of how the institutions of a society work together to produce outcomes that support or minimize the threat of domination, and support or minimize everyone’s opportunities to develop and exercise capacities for living a good life as they define it.” Parekh (2011, 674) adds that states have a responsibility to understand and also change conditions that give rise to structural inequality. Fraser (1995, 82, 87-88) says affirmative remedies for gender injustice only serve to affect the manifestations of structural inequality, but do not actually change the structures themselves. She says it is important for solutions to be transformative and this means change the underlying structures that give rise to gender inequality and injustice in the first place. For example, affirmative action policies could create spaces for women to access education and labour market opportunities, but would not necessarily change the types of jobs or salary disparities women had access to.

Saja (2017) reports that by 2017, almost eight years after the civil war had ended in Sri Lanka, the country had still failed to adequately reform its legal framework, political policies, institutional structures and cultural practices in a way that adequately addressed the gender needs in that country.

Parekh (2011, 677) argues for the need to see the subordination of women “as a form of structural injustice because if limits and shapes individual choices and circumstances, but is mostly sustained by the unintentional, unself-conscious actions of millions of people and in norms, habits and institutions.” Sultana (2010, 3) writes of “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women…in the family….and in society in

general." According to Fraser (1995, 79) the key factor giving rise to gender injustice in androcentrism which she defines as "the authoritative construction of norms that privilege traits associated with masculinity."

Young (2003, 5) argues that social structures are processes rather than states and says they create a knowledge base which inform our actions. "We act according to rules and expectations and because our relationally constituted positions make or do not make certain resources available to us." In this way both resources and rules are continuously reinforced for the different social positions within any structure. Jewkes et al (2015, 112) explain that hegemonic masculinity emphasises "the legitimating power of consent (rather than crude physical political power to ensure submission)." Parekh (2011) adds that these practices are carried out by everyday "well-meaning people" rather than tyrannical leaders.

Maintenance and manifestation of structural inequality

Jewkes et al (2015, 113) write about the importance of social groups in developing views on the different genders, but also the role these groups play in prescribing behaviours and allocating resources. This is what Donaldson (1993, 645) refers to as "both a personal and a collective project."

Connell (2005) argues that this subjugation of women creates a patriarchal dividend for men although Jewkes et al (2015) point out that this consensus is created by those who benefit but also by those who are oppressed. Quoting Lerner, Sultana (Lerner, quoted in Sultana 2010, 8) notes that the idea of subordination "allows for the possibility of collusion between him and the subordinate." Patriarchy is built and maintained through various societal structures including the media, the legal, political and economic systems, religion and the family. As Walby (1990, 20) states "In this system women's labour power, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's mobility and property and other economic resources – are under patriarchal control."

The 2018 WHO (2018, 2) report on Sri Lanka explicitly states that "the existing patriarchal culture in the country perpetuates traditional gender roles and stereotyping in which men are regarded as superior to women." Fraser (1995, 70-71) says that socioeconomic injustice is the result of unequal political-economic structures in a society and says this injustice manifests in various ways including exploitation, marginalisation and deprivation.

Gimenez (1978) writes that, in capitalist systems family is generally referred to as the domain of women, whereas men are in control in the productive sector. This reinforces the notion that women are natural homemakers and carers and that men are best suited in the labour market. Tong (1995, 132) notes that "Worldwide, women's oppression is strongly related to the fact that women's work, be it at home or outside the home, is still unpaid, underpaid, or disvalued, a state of affairs that largely explains women's lower status and power nearly everywhere." As Hoff and Pandey (2006, 211) point out, these structural inequalities serve not only to minimise opportunities, but also assign status and meaning to groups (such as gender) which means that "even after opportunities have been equalized across groups, the discriminatory regime will have persistent effects."

Gender oppression flourishes in societies which place the sole responsibility of social reproduction on women. The burden of unpaid work and long hours doing care work result in women being less prominent in the public sphere. Runyan and Peterson (1991, 87) write "It is simply not possible to understand how power works in the world without explaining women's exclusion from the top of all economic, religious, political, and military systems of power. ... [C]ontemporary power relations depend upon sustaining certain notions of masculinity and femininity, notions of what is expected in regard to men's and women's lives."

Hartmann (1981) adds that both the private households and the public labour market are areas where women are exploited by men. In the household it is through taking on an unfair quantity of the unpaid house and care work; in the labour market it is through segregation and wage discrimination which results in men consistently securing the best and highest-paid jobs. All these systems reinforce the subordination and relative powerlessness of women, which in turn undermine their bargaining power both in the household and in the labour market.

Gender inequality is starkly manifested in the unpaid work that women do, and in the disparities in the labour market as seen by the gender pay gap. It is sustained by the gender segregation of productive labour which determines which areas of work will be dominated by which gender – the unpaid and underpaid areas vastly dominated by women. As Collins et al point (1993, 189) out, "economic contribution is not sufficient to ensure that a person

benefits from the fruits of his/her." In countries which have weak or no social systems such as child-care facilities, women are further limited in career choices because of child-care responsibilities that are largely undertaken by mothers. Even in areas of the labour market that women are able to access, there have been historical disadvantages to their upward progression. Collins et al (1993, 192) cite the example of an increased demand for clerical and professional services in industrial societies in the 20th century. This resulted in more women entering the labour market, but according to them, "had negative effects on relative female participation in managerial and production sectors." The 2018 WHO (2018, 2) report states that more than half of people surveyed (both women and men) in Sri Lanka believed that women should prioritise home and family over everything else. These deeply entrenched views of women's role in society limit their opportunities in the labour market, isolate them from public and political life, and make them more vulnerable to sexual violence.

Privatised child-care arrangements are only open to women of higher classes who are able to employ child-minders. For the rest of society, organised child-care often only begins when children go to school, leaving mothers with the responsibility of looking after children who are below a school-going age. Household responsibilities are somewhat determined by income stratification – when women earn more, their male partners are more likely to contribute to household responsibilities. However, this is more so for working class than middle class families. It does however mean that women who earn more, have more bargaining power in the house, thus indicating more gender parity in the labour market has a knock-on effect in the household, linking what Collins et al (1993, 197) refer to as "the macro realm and…the micro practices of gender interactions, stereotypes and cognitive/emotional styles." The corollary of course is that women who work fulltime in the home have reduced domestic power, lack economic independence and are marginalised from social involvement. It should also be noted how female-headed households are often characterised by poverty, at least in part because an absence of affordable child-care makes it difficult for these women to access well-paid jobs in the formal labour market.

In the world of work, men continue to dominate the upper echelons of power. Donaldson (1990, 654) notes that without strong patriarchal systems in the home, it would be more

difficult to maintain a labour market that relies on cheap female labour and consistently marginalises women at management levels. “Sexual politics are simply not a problem to men of the ruling class. Senior executives couldn't function as bosses without the patriarchal household. The exercise of this form of power requires quite special conditions - conventional femininity and domestic subordination.” Moreover, the lack of women in positions of power in the labour market creates additional barriers to dealing with issues of sexual harassment in the workplace. Collins et al (1993, 203) argue that legal frameworks are not enough to end harmful practices against women in the workplace. Rather the expansion of “the bureaucratic side of formal structures; informal networks in organisations arise precisely in order to circumvent the clumsiness of bureaucratic rule.” In this way, having more women in senior positions will help in changing cultures and norms about how women are treated in the workplace.

It is also important to recognise gendered workplaces which pigeonhole women and have a snowball effect on cultural views. Nursing is one such example. Collins et al point (1993, 210) out that “as long as there continues to exist essentially all-female occupational spheres, these will continue to produce gender-distinctive cultures and images which in turn will reproduce the gender segregation of production.” A 2016 survey (WHO 2018, 2) in Sri Lanka revealed that women made up 100% of midwives, 90.2% of nurses and 71.2% of teachers. Yet even in these professions, women hit glass ceilings – for example, women make up only a fifth of all heads of schools, despite dominating the profession. (ibid).

Connell (1990, 452) argues that in order to challenge pervading patriarchal systems, men need to “challenge gender segmentation in paid work… (and) to operate in the workplace, unions and the state.” In the area of unpaid work, Connell (ibid) argues that hegemonic masculinity is especially entrenched given the attitude of most men to parenting (i.e. that active parenting is the primary role of the mother, while developing a strong reputation in the labour market is what men should focus on).

Donaldson (1993, 652) points to the intersectionality of class and gender, and how this manifests in hegemonic masculinity in both paid and unpaid work. “It is not only that the rich and powerful are paid handsomely for the time they sell, have more disposable time, more free time, more control over how they use their time, but the gender dimensions of

time use within classes are equally compelling. No one performs less unpaid work, and receives greater remuneration for time spent in paid work, than a male of the ruling class." Parekh (2011, 677) notes that even though in many western countries women have long had access to both education and the labour market, it remains true that they are paid less, their labour market participation is largely in jobs that are lower-paying, and they still have the responsibilities of a "second shift" in the home.

Taylor (1994, 25) writes that "Nonrecognition or misrecognition…can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred, Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need." Fraser (1995, 3) argues that the remedy for cultural injustice must involve mechanisms that create respect and value for marginalised and unvalued citizens which may "involve the wholesale transformation of societal patterns of representation, interpretation and communication in ways that would change *everybody's* sense of self."

Gimenez (1978, 310) writes of women's access to power and how this effects their further opportunities in society. "The differential power of individuals and aggregates of individuals at the level of social stratification is linked to their individual access to socially defined sources of power and prestige (e.g. money, property, education etc), which appear, at this level, as resources that individuals may acquire in terms of their 'bargaining power' or 'life chances' in the market."

Fraser (1990) writes of the importance of participatory parity in the political sphere, but points out that without socio-economic equality this is unlikely to happen. Without this equal access, women will not participate fully in the public sphere, but will rather form part of a subaltern counter-public. Using the example of domestic violence, Fraser demonstrates that feminists in the subaltern counter-public had to campaign to make domestic violence a public issue.

Jaggar (2001, 301) notes that "societies are structured by gendered value systems, which assign unequal status and privilege to men and women." She points out that while women make up the majority of the poor and marginalised in societies, they have almost no voice in global bodies such as the World Bank where policies are created. She says their lack of

agency across political spheres effectively disenfranchises them even on policies that most affect them. Beaman et.al. (2009) and Bhavnani (2009) have looked at quota systems in the political sphere as tools to enhance women's voices. Research in Mumbai (Bhavnani 2009, 23) shows that "the chances of a woman winning office conditional on the constituency being reserved for women previously are approximately five times the chances of a woman winning office if the constituency had not been reserved for women."

Collins et al (1993) point out that there have been significant developments in the health arena which have affected women including: better health care and general health conditions which reduce mortality rates; the development of birth control options and bottle feeding for babies which allowed mothers to go back to the labour market sooner because they no longer had to stay at home and breastfeed. However, the authors acknowledge that these developments have had varying effects. Women still face discrimination in the labour market and contraceptives are largely used by women who have opportunities for career advancement. They (1993, 193-194) further note that "where the economy is family-centred and labor-intensive, women may want many children, who add to the family budget as street venders or work helpers, even as a high birth rate perpetuates other aspects of the cycle of poverty."

Jewkes et al (2015) write that when women are economically empowered, there is a noticeable change in gender relations, especially where the underlying causes and resulting consequences of gender oppression are linked. They cite an example of microfinancing interventions in South Africa, and note that women are more likely to protect themselves from intimate partner violence (IPV) when there is clarity on the link between material insecurity and gender insubordination. On the other hand, when women are offered micro-financing solutions (that do not clearly link these economic and social issues) there is little evidence of a change in their personal circumstances.

Collins et al (1993) talk of the importance of evaluating gender inequality in a way that links macro distribution of gender power and property, with an ideological evaluation of the genders, pointing out that decision-making power is intrinsically linked to economic power that individuals garner through relative income.

Engels (1940) wrote of the link between women's subordination and the introduction of private property, arguing that men began to focus on acquiring and retaining property, and passing this onto their sons. This negatively affected inheritance rights of women, who became economically dependent on fathers and husbands. The power men gained from this dependence allowed them to confine women to the household, extract unpaid labour from women, and control their sexual and social behaviour. Sultana (2010, 5) argues that "the material base of patriarchy is men's control of women's labour power." It is worth noting that this power manifests by excluding women in the private sphere, but segregating and exploiting them in the public sphere. Gimenez (1978, 311) adds that "the present day structural differentiation between family and economic structure is a product of two distinct although related processes: a) the development of private property as a means of production – i.e. the emergence of class society and, concomitantly, the separation of the family from the clan and the rise of monogamous marriage and b) the process of capitalist development, which gives private property and monogamy historically specific characteristics."

Inheritance laws are a crucial part of economic power. In societies where women are excluded from inheriting, their economic and bargaining power is severely curtailed. As Collins et al (1993, 200) write "inheritance through maternal lines (including the males in those lines) gives women more control over economic resources than inheritance through paternal lines." In this way, they argue, kinship structures play a central role in how resources are mobilised and distributed across genders. Interestingly, Collins et al (1993, 206) argue that women stand a higher chance of inheriting from male relatives if they live in highly stratified societies where elite families dominate. "If…family ties further dissolve through lower marriage and higher divorce rates, this route will be further curtailed." They (ibid) add that that male-dominated states have had negative effects on women by for example, having men at community levels empowered over women. At the same time, wealthier women have historically contributed resources to feminist movements which have fought for structural change, although family-based elites where women have inherited power, have not translated into structural changes for women more broadly. This approach recognises GBV as both existing on a continuum and as a manifestation of gender inequality.

Whether it is termed ‘patriarchal violence’ or ‘structural violence’ it remains important to recognise that violence (in whatever form it manifests) in the home is linked to violence in the public domain through the patriarchal system. Fraser (1995, 79) points out the connectedness between political-economic structures and the cultural-valuation systems that oppress and marginalise women. “…they intertwine to reinforce one another dialectically, as sexist and androcentric cultural norms are institutionalized in the state and the economy, while women’s economic disadvantage restricts women’s ‘voice’, impeding equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres, and in everyday life.”

Patriarchy is not merely an ideology, it is a set of organized power structures that are managed and dominated by men. If the power imbalances are adequately addressed as, for example, part of a peace-building process, there should be a clear link between increased gender equality and decreased GBV. In other words, an increase in equity in the independent variables should see a decrease in measurements of dependent variables. Fraser (1995) argues that androcentric norms devalue women and result in multiple gender harms including sexual and harassment, domestic violence, as well as demeaning representations in the media – which all serve to further exploit women and isolate them from public life.

It must be stated that obtaining accurate data on sexual violence, particularly conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is very difficult. In times of conflict, many institutional and societal structures and processes do not work adequately, and in addition to this, social capital is weakened due to the conflict. In traditional societies feelings of shame and guilt are often exacerbated due to rigid cultural norms that have conservative expectations around women’s sexuality. Traunmiller et al (Perea 1998 quoted in Traunmiller et al 2019, 2019) note that this is especially so for Tamil communities in Sri Lanka where “sexual violence places female victims in an extremely difficult position as it violates highly valued notions of chastity and virginity before marriage.”

This chapter considered the existing literature on how gender inequality affects gender-based violence. The chapter also introduced the conceptual framework and explained why this framework was chosen for this particular research study.

CHAPTER 3. DATA PRESENTATION

This chapter will present the data for the independent variables, which are made up of the targets under SDG 5. The chapter will not look at the dependent variable, rather this will be discussed in the data analysis of chapter 4. To enrich this evidentiary picture, where possible, information will be shared on global and regional progress. This will give the reader a deeper understanding of how Sri Lanka is faring in comparison to its regional neighbours and to the rest of the world.

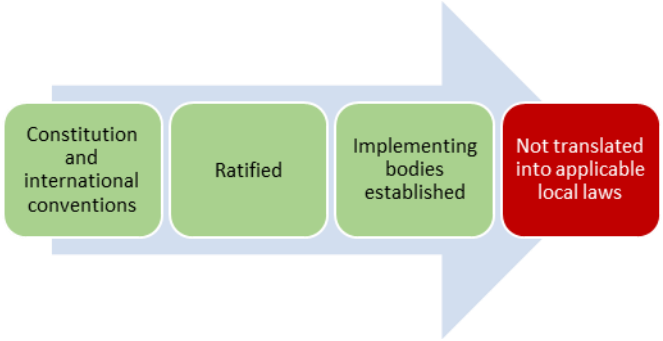
Key



<u>IV 1- DISCRIMINATION (Target 5.1)</u> – End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

Indicator 5.1.1.*: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex*:

Sri Lanka



WHO 2018

The WHO 2018 report notes that Sri Lanka has a number of legal frameworks and policies which purportedly address gender discrimination including:

- Article 12 of the Sri Lankan Constitution (1978) refers to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
- Establishment of the Women's Ministry in 1983
- Adoption of the Sri Lanka Women's Charter in 1993
- Establishment of the National Committee on Women (NCW) in 1994 (to oversee implementation of the Women's Charter).

In addition to these local laws, Sri Lanka has also ratified some important international conventions on women's rights and gender equality including:

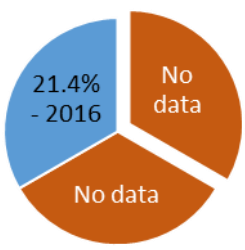
- The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981
- Ratified ILO Equal Remuneration Convention (22) in April 1993. But women still earn 30%-36% less than men in private sector (WHO 2018, 2).
- The National Plan of Action for Women in 1996 (following the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing).

However, the adoption of international frameworks, and the reference to gender equality in the constitution have not given rise to local laws that action these commitments. A key example would be around land rights, where women still face a number of cultural and legal barriers to ownership of land (Gunasekera 2021, FAO 2018).

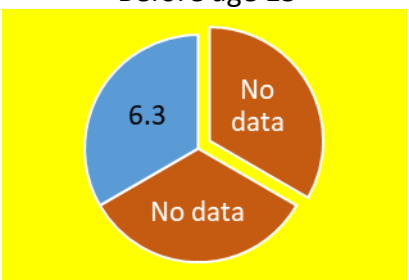
IV 2 - HARMFUL PRACTICES (Target 5.3) – Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Indicator 5.3.1.: *Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18:*

Before age 18



Before age 15



SDG Indicators Database 2021

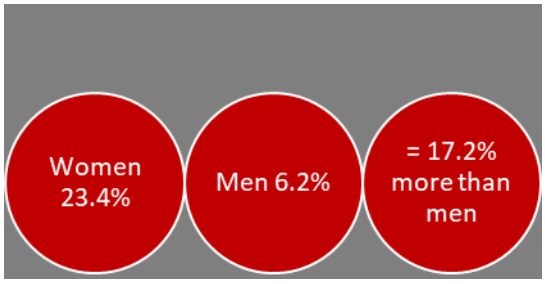
There is no data for this target (for both age cohorts), either for the region or for Sri Lanka specifically. The only information available is the global data.

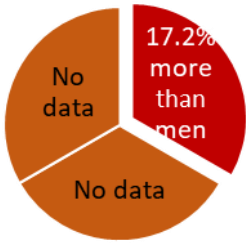
Indicator 5.3.2.: *Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting:*

There is no data available for this target. Anecdotal evidence suggests it does happen in Sri Lanka, but it is not possible to know to what extent. This is discussed in the next chapter.
The WHO 2018 (2018, 4) report notes that "some forms of GBV such as sex-selective abortion, dowry-rleated killings and honour killings are not reported in Sri Lanka." A 2017 Reuters article (Daniel 2017) refered to a 2008 fatwa saying the practice of female genital mutilation was mandatory in the Muslim community. Al Jazeera (Ibrahim and Tegal 2017) also stated that this practice was still happening in Sri Lanka.

<u>IV 3 – UNPAID WORK (Target 5.4)</u> - Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

Indicator 5.4.1: *Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location:*





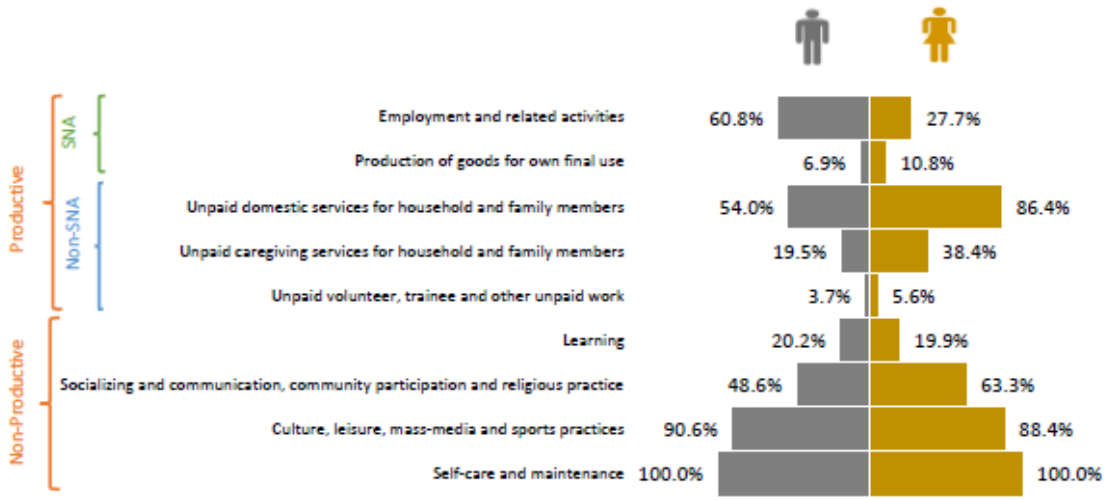
UN Sri Lanka 2022 (citing DCS Sri Lanka Time-Use Survey)
No data available for comparison from SDG Indicators Database 2021

Women in Sri Lanka spend significantly more time on unpaid domestic and care work than men. There is no information from this database to compare to global and regional levels.

The cultural norms in Sri Lanka further serve to create a society that may appear to support equality but prioritises traditional gender roles for women, such as home and care work. Because the state does not provide a lot of these services, it is expected that women will take on the unpaid burdens of maintaining the home, and caring for young children and the elderly. In addition to being unpaid, this creates challenges for women who want to work in the formal economy and also want to advance their careers. The massive discrepancies seen in the time use survey testify to the fact that it is not expected for men to equally share in these responsibilities. With an aging population, and a shrinking economy, the expectations of women are increasing.

The Ministry of Finance, Economy and Policy Development in Sri Lanka (Ministry of Finance, Economy and Policy Development 2017, vi) conducted a time use survey in 2017, and reports that there is a great gender discrepancy in participation rates in unpaid domestic services activities – 54 for men and 86.4 percent for women. Women spent almost twice as much time on unpaid caregiving work as men - 38.4 percent vs 19.5 percent for men (ibid, vii). Women spent 23.4 percent of their day on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 6.2 percent that men spent (ibid, viii).

Figure 4.1: Participation rates in nine major activity categories by sex

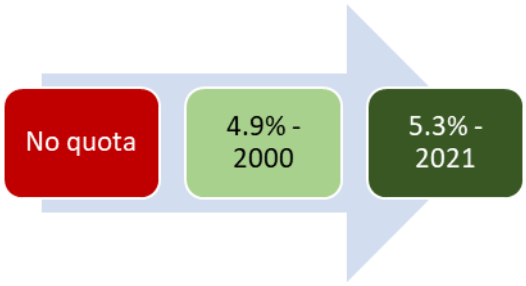


Sri Lanka Ministry of Finance, Economy and Policy Development Time Use Survey 2017, 29.

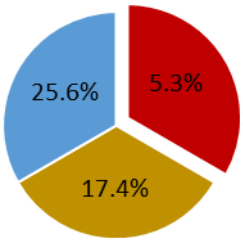
<u>IV 4 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Target 5.5)</u> - Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Indicator 5.5.1. *: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments:*

National Parliament



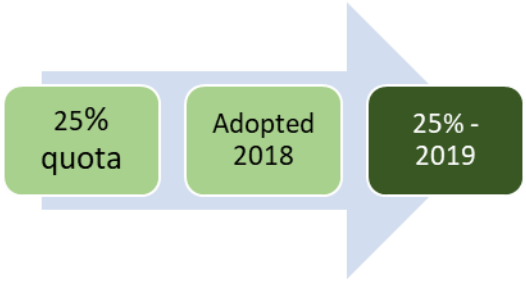
SDG Indicators Database 2021
UN Sri Lanka December 2022



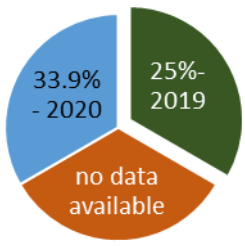
SDG Indicators Database 2021

At a national level, where there are no quotas, Sri Lanka has an exceptionally low level of female representatives. Despite a slight increase over two decades, the number has hardly changed, and remains significantly lower than global and regional levels.

Local and Provincial Government



UN Sri Lanka December 2022



SDG Indicators Database 2021

Sri Lanka performs better at local and provincial levels of government, where a quota system is in place. Although there are no comparative numbers for the region, the country is closer to the global average of 33.9%.

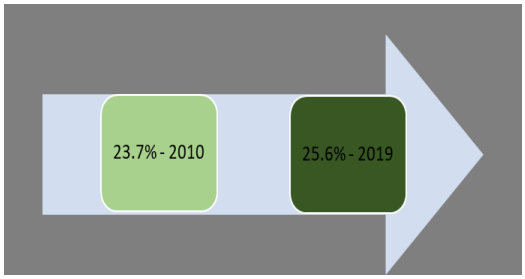
Another clear area of structural inequality is the political field. With one of the lowest levels of female representation in parliament in the world, Sri Lanka continues to exclude women from key areas of public policy and decision-making. Without these representative voices, it is hard to see how many of the other indicators can be addressed. For example, attempts to build a more equitable labour market have to include solutions to public transport, development of childcare support systems and interventions that make it easier for working mothers (particularly in female-headed households) to participate in the formal economy. Without the representation of progressive women, it is hard to see how gendered budgets could be developed and implemented to fund these solutions.

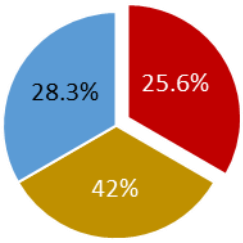
Women in the national parliament comprise only 5.3%, one of the lowest figures in the world, and an almost imperceptible improvement from the 2000 figure of 4.9%. UNSTATS (SDG Indicators Database 2021) puts the 2022 local government level at 10.9%. This is compared to the global average of 34.3%.

The Voluntary People's Review (2022, 24) writes that, despite policies, there are no adequate plans underwritten by sufficient funding and technical support, to fundamentally transform local governments and provincial councils in line with the aims of the SDGs. It is at this level that effective monitoring and data-gathering takes place. "While it is globally recognised that local governments have a unique role to play in planning, executing and monitoring of the SDGs, in Sri Lanka, they are handicapped by a lack of clearly devolved and decentralised authority, diffused institutional and legal frameworks, limited human and financial resources, and weaknesses in data systems hindering effective target setting and monitoring."

The lack of women at a local government level is of particular concern in a country where the geographical discrepancies resulting from the civil war are so stark. In the eastern province there are an estimated 44 000 households headed by women (VPR 2022, 26). The intervening variable in this case could be provincial budgets that have a portion dedicated to issues specifically affecting women. However, a combination of poor budgeting frameworks that notoriously ignored gendered complexities, plus a lack of representation of women at both national and local level, has meant there are no dedicated financial programmes to support gender work at a provincial and local level.

Indicator 5.5.2: *Proportion of women in managerial positions:*





SDG Indicators Database 2021

*Note that UN Sri Lanka 2022 puts this number at 27% in 2019

There was very little change over nine years on this indicator. It is captured as a positive outcome because there has empirically been an improvement, but overall it is captured as a negative outcome because the numbers are much lower than the regional, and also lower than the global average, and because the small increase suggests this is not because of a policy change.

The labour market is a key area where there is data, and where we can start to paint a picture of structural gender injustice. A number of organisations and researchers have repeatedly noted the low participation rate of women in the formal economy. Building on this, it is of little surprise then that women are not climbing the corporate ladder and growing the numbers of middle and senior managers in the labour force. The immediate question would be why, with high levels of both high school and tertiary education in the female population, this is not translating into more gender parity in the labour market.

Gunewardena (2015, 1) noted that between 1990-2015 there had been a signification increase in gender parity in education, but this had not translated into more women accessing the labour market. She noted that in 2015 the ILO had reported 77% of men, and 50% of women were active in the labour market globally, but that this number was more skewed in south Asia where 81% of men and only 32% of women had paid employment. A 2022 Verite Research reports (2022, 5) quotes the WEF as saying Sri Lanka had the 17th largest gender gap for labour market participation in the world.

In 2015 the levels of labour force participation (LFP) for women had stagnated at 35%-40%, higher than the regional average but had shown no growth for a decade (Gunewardena 2015, 5). It is logical that lower LPF rates of women will translate into fewer female managers. The question is why such highly educated women choose not to build careers in paid employment.

Part of the answer is in the structure of the labour market that is skewed against women. Women do not have access to state-sponsored child or elderly-care facilities that could make being a working mother easier. Moreover, the infrastructure, particularly transport, is not geared to support plans for women to build careers. Over 90% of women report they have been sexually harassed on public transport (UNPF 2020). This astounding figure would be a serious disincentive to many women who might otherwise consider joining the labour market, given the conservative nature of Sri Lankan society. The scope of this research was not to look into related issues such as the justice and policing system, but it is fair to assume that levels of reporting of sexual violence are low in part because of the conservative culture. Women are severely underrepresented in the formal labour market, but make up the majority of the informal economy. However, the informal sector is characterised by a lack of legal protection which exacerbates the vulnerability women face as they try to earn a living.

It would be worth noting here that there are around 50 ILO conventions that Sri Lanka has not signed, including notably conventions covering maternity protection, violence and sexual harassment, homework, part-time work and social security protection (ILO n.d., ADB 2015, 49).

Gunewardena (2015, 9) notes that a 1988 paper by Blau and Robbins predicted that 87% of married women would participate in the labour market if childcare services were free. She adds (ibid) this was followed up a 2010 paper by Connelly which said the number (of 87%) would drop to 47% if women had to pay for childcare, and noted further there was a direct correlation between informal childcare services and female LPF rates.

Solotaroff et al (2020) note that since the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka women have found it increasingly difficult to effectively participate in the labour market, for a number of reasons. These include social and cultural attitudes, which expect women to spend a

significant amount of their time on unpaid house and care work; lack of infrastructural and social support such as child-care facilities; and discrimination in the labour market in hiring practices. Even though they argue the gender wage gap is (slowly) closing, they recognise that poor and uneducated women, and those in rural areas, are finding it more difficult to access the labour market – creating a greater gap within the gender group.

However, sexist attitudes within the labour market also play a role. Medagama (2021) points out that despite dominating the teaching profession, there are still far fewer women at management level in the education sector than men.

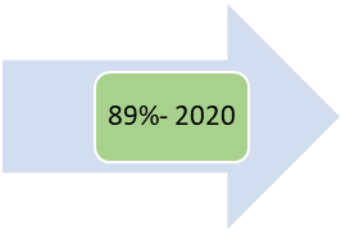
Although this target looks at leadership in the labour market, it must be noted that participation in the labour market is a key tool for addressing gender-based violence. In this case, if the Dependent Variable (DV) was labour market gender parity, and the Independent Variable (IV) was policies and laws to ensure equal access to the labour market, the intervening variable would be increased earning power of women because of paid employment. It is this that would empower women to have more autonomy in life choices, and options to leave abusive relationships. Participation in the labour market both empowers women economically and decreases their risks of being stuck in violent relationships.

The 2022 UN Sri Lanka report (SDG Indicators Database 2021) points out that the number of women in managerial positions has not changed in five years since 2015, stagnating at 24%. Note that this information was taken from the Labour Force Survey quarterly report (4th quarter) of 2020, which is conducted by the Sri Lankan Department of Census and Statistics. The data differs slightly from the UN Stats data (SDG Indicators Database, 2021) which says there has been an improvement from the 2010 number of 23.73% to the 2019 number of 25.6%. Either way, the number has barely changed in 10 years. It is worth pointing out the World Economic Forum data (2022, 36) which says that globally "women's share of senior and leadership roles has seen a steady global increase over the past five years (2017-2022). In 2022, global gender parity for this category reached 42.7%, the highest gender parity score yet."

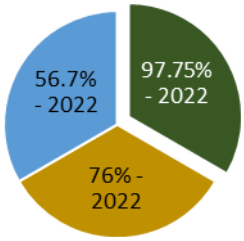
Given the low numbers of women in management positions, it is hardly surprising that in companies listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange only 136 of the 1500 board directors are women – 8.5% (CSE 2019).

<u>IV 5 – SEXUAL HEALTH (Target 5.6)</u> - Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Indicator 5.6.1.: *Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care:*

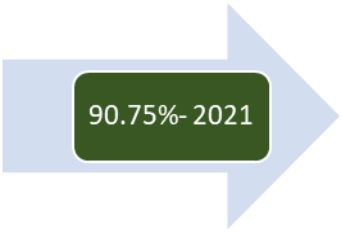


UN Women 2020



SDG Indicators Database 2021
(Own calculations for Sri Lanka figure – based on more detailed breakdown of sub-indicators which UNWOMEN does not include)

Indicator 5.6.2.: *Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education:*



UN Women 2020 (note, this is the average across the 4 main areas outlined under the IPCD)

Sri Lanka has continuously performed well in health equality, and remains one of the top performing countries in the world for this target (Gunewardena 2015; SDG Indicators Database, 2021).

Indicator 5.6.2 covers a number of global policy frameworks including the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (IPCD) and the Beijing Platform

for Action. The indicator looks at four broad areas, namely reproductive and sexual health care, maternity matters, HIV and HPV (WHO 2022). The ICPD took place in 1994 and resulted in a programme of action which 179 countries, including Sri Lanka, signed. The Programme of Action (IPCD 1994) stresses "the value of investing in women and girls, both as an end in itself and as a key to improving the quality of life for everyone. And it affirms the importance of sexual and reproductive health, including family planning, as a precondition for women's empowerment."

The UN Stats (SDG Indicators Database, 2021) site has given a much more detailed breakdown of these areas than other SDG data sites which makes comparison tricky because there is no comparable data for the region and globally that reflects this level of detail. It does however paint a useful picture as to how well the country is doing in this indicator, and across the majority of sub-indicators.

Gunewardena (2015, 4) reports that Sri Lanka has consistently scored high on the areas of women's health and fertility, and notes that since the 1960's women have outranked men in life expectancy. However, UN Women (2018, 279) notes that by 2018 there was no data on both indicators 5.6.1 and 5.6.2.

The UN Stats (SDG Indicators Database 2021) has not captured this data under the single indicator, but has broken it down into 18 sub-indicators, some of which include HIV/AIDS and some which specifically mention maternity care. The overall picture is that there is good support and information around sexual and reproductive health care for women. It is worth noting from the above data that the one area where the country scored low (19%) was the sub-indicator of termination of pregnancy rights. This is captured (SDG Indicators Database 2021) as "In 2022, the extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to abortion to women and men aged 15 years and older stood at 19%." This makes sense for a country that has conservative views around women's rights. Nonetheless, if all 16 sub-indicators are added up, the average still works out to almost 97% for this overall indicator.

The UN Stats (SDG Indicators Database 2021) reports that Sri Lanka has scored well on a number of laws and regulations aimed at women and men above the age of 15 including:

- HIV counselling and test services, confidentiality as well as HIV treatment and care – 100%
- Sexual and reproductive health care, information and education – 86%
- Sexual and reproductive health care, information and education on HIV and HPV – 100%
- Sexuality education and curriculum topics – 100%
- Contraceptive and family planning information – 87%
- Contraceptive services – 60%
- Emergency contraceptive services – 100%
- Sexual and reproductive health care, information and education on life saving commodities – 100%
- HPV vaccine – 100%
- Information and education on maternity care – 100%
- Access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education on maternity care – 63%
- Access to abortion – 19%
- Access to post-abortion care – 100%

The adolescent fertility rate is used to predict educational attainment, and Sri Lanka is the lowest rate in South Asia given that only 2% of women between the ages of 15-19 in that country gave birth before they turned 19 (WHO 18, 1). The World Health Organisation (WHO) in Sri Lanka collaborated with the country's National Family Planning Programme (under the Ministry of Health) and others to introduce tools and train staff on contraceptive issues that improve decision-making capacity (WHO 26 September 2022). Interventions include adoption of the Medically Eligibility Criteria Wheel (MEC-Wheel) for contraceptive use, online training and the South-South Learning Exchange between Nepal and Sri Lanka (ibid).

A WHO report (2022) notes that 270 million women are not having their contraception needs met, but a 2016 Demographic Health Survey in Sri Lanka showed that 65% of women

in the country are using contraception. This would be the intervening variable in the methodology – that not only are laws in place to support women's rights to make choices around their sexual and reproductive health, but that women are exercising these choices.

<u>IV 6 – ECONOMIC RESOURCES (Target 5.a)</u> – Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

Indicator 5.A.1.: *Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure:*



https://data.unwomen.org/country/sri-lanka
Across the globe (including regional and national) there is no data for this target.

Indicator 5.A.2.: *Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control:*



SDG Indicators Database 2021
UN Women 2020

Across the globe (including regional and national) there is no measurable data for this target. Sri Lanka has both national and customary laws which speak to this matter, but they

have not served to alter the gendered nature of land ownership, and there are no measurable statistics to demonstrate their effectiveness. The narrative is discussed further in the following chapter.

Unfortunately this is an area where there is a dearth of current data. UNSTATS, DATA UNWOMEN, SriLanka.un.org all have no data on these numbers. A report by the FAO (2018, 38), which references an agricultural census run by the Agriculture and Environment Statistics Division in Sri Lanka in 2002, points out that women owned just 16% of all privately owned land in Sri Lanka. Gunasekera (2021, 38) estimates that women living in villages own between 7-25% of land, but this number drops to around 10% for those living in newer settlements.

During the civil conflict the Sri Lankan military illegally occupied land belonging to civilians in the conflict-affected areas. These areas were used to set up government camps, and made it difficult for the Tamil population in the area to return to their homes. In October 2015 the country cosponsored a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council promising to return the occupied land, a promise that was reiterated two years later. (HRW 2018, 9). However, in 2019 around 40 000 people remained displaced in the war-affected areas of the north and north-eastern parts of the country (Kahn 2018) and according to the Land Portal 100 000 Tamils had not returned after fleeing to India during the conflict, most of them stranded in refugee camps (Land Portal, 2020).

Rathnachandra and Malkanthi point out that Sri Lanka remains a mostly agricultural-based society, with 82% of the population living in rural areas – and important to note, more women participate in the agricultural rather than industrial sector (Rathnachandra and Malkanthi 2022, 38).

It is noteworthy for example that on issues of land, the country has not made any significant attempts to gather data. This is a key area of potential economic empowerment of women, particularly those women who live in the conflict-affected north and east parts of the country. These areas are where a number of female-headed households are based, and so that gendered nature of existing laws, particularly the Land Ordinance, has a severe effect on economic opportunities and inter-generational poverty. The lack of data also suggests this is not a high priority area for the government. It is worth remembering that the end of

the conflict in Sri Lanka was not brought about through a negotiated settlement, it was a war that was won by the government. Moreover, it was that government which had expropriated large areas of private land, and although much of the land has been returned, the gendered land question is still an issue that largely faces women in areas that previously fought to be annexed from the country. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO 2018, 30) reports that although women play a significant role in the agricultural sector, their work is not valued and they remain disempowered. Levien (2017) argues that land dispossession contributes not just to inequality of gendered labour, but intersects with other inequalities such as caste, race and geography to further marginalise women.

In Sri Lanka there have been legal frameworks for a long time governing land use and land ownership, including those developed under British colonial rule. Referring to a 2015 Law and Trust review, Gunasekera (2021, 24) writes that "the Land Grants (Special Provisions) Act of 1979 was introduced so that the State can give land grants to those who are landless, but such grants entail restrictions against the alienation of property and are discriminatory to women." Although in theory women should be able to purchase, own and manage land in Sri Lanka, the reality is quite different. Inheritance plays a big role, particularly given the patrilineal nature of most Sri Lankan communities which favour sons over daughters. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (2018, ix) says that the gender biases in customary laws and in national legislations such as the Land Development Ordinance continue to exclude women from the agricultural sector. It (FAO 2018, ix) notes that programmes introduced to address these imbalances have failed to make any meaningful changes to women's ownership and management of land. "Gender mainstreaming policies, strategies and programmes are almost non-existent within the agricultural sectors (and) they have not promoted women as active participants in agricultural operations, enabled them to receive their fair share of agricultural assistance or participate equally in decision-making processes."

Ownership of economic resources, particularly land, is a crucial part of creating more equitable societies. Partly in countries that have been historical agricultural, it allows women to continue traditions of farming that they have grown up in. More importantly however, it gives them both financial independence and economic agency to make decisions

and have control over their lives. This is particularly in a context where, in parts of the country, there are high numbers of war widows. Financial security for vulnerable groups like these has the potential to break inter-generational poverty cycles, for a number of reasons including the ability to educate children, have their nutritional needs met, and access quality health care. As Levien (2017, i) points out "land dispossession consistently contributes to gender inequality, albeit in socially and historically specific ways. So while defensive struggles against land dispossession will not in themselves transform patriarchal social relations, they may be a pre-condition for more offensive struggles for gender equality."

IV 7 – TECHNOLOGY (Target 5.b) Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Indicator 5.B.1.: *Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex:*



SDG Indicators Database 2021 and UN Women 2020
None of the SDG platforms have captured data on this target.

The Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka (December 2022) reports that there is no data currently available for this indicator. Gamage et al (2021, 61) argue that the demand for mobile phones is influenced by a variety of factors including employment, level of disposable income, and understanding of technology. Taylor (2023) points out that in 2020 the number of cell phone subscriptions in Sri Lanka was 29.73 million, compared to 430 000 in 2000. The Global Economy website (The Global Economy n.d.) puts Sri Lankan cell phone subscriptions at 134.84/100 people, above the world average of 109.32/100 people. The 2019 Gallup report (2019, 11) states that in South Asia 32% of women are likely to have no access to cell phones or internet, while 13% have access to both.

Burchell and Papachristoforou (2019) argue that access to mobile phones, and to the internet, have the ability to make women feel both more connected with the world, but also

to make them feel safer. However, Desai et al (2019, 331) point out that although there are great opportunities in emerging technologies, there are also threats against women. “The communication tools accessible by new technologies are being abused by both men and women to assert dominance, to manipulate, to terrorize, to humiliate, and to silence.” The FT Sri Lanka article (5 July 2019) says that there is less online harassment in Sri Lanka than in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.

Technology offers opportunities for women to improve their lives, not just through greater connectivity, but through access to information and resources. The Voluntary People’s Review (UNHLPF 2022) notes that scant attention has been given to the role of technology as a transformation tool. Digital finance is an area that could significantly advance gender equality in a country where many women do not access financial support through mainstream institutions such as banks. The Women Matter report (CBSL 2019, 5) says that while most women (62%) claimed to be aware of financial services offered online, most said they would not feel confident using these. This results in women being more reliant on semi-formal and informal entities and unregulated microfinance institutions. This figure is starker when comparing rural (26%) to urban (16%) usage of informal institutional use by women.

The FT Sri Lanka (5 July 2019) reported that less than half of cell phone owners (47%) in Sri Lanka have smartphones and only 30% of Sri Lankan women use the internet. Kukreja (2018) refers to a Gallup 2017 poll which states that the internet gender gap in Sri Lanka is as high as 40% for women over the age of 15.

In order for cell phone ownership to be transformative, we would expect to see intervening variables that include issues such as networks to support women farmers, technology that gives women access to police and other social services in order to enhance their security, accessible financial and banking technologies that are used by women in rural areas etc. The Women Matter report (CBSL 2019, 5) states that “For long-term, broader financial inclusion, what matters is the uptake and usage of a range of appropriate financial products and services by individuals and MSMEs (micro, small, and medium enterprises), provided in a manner that is accessible and safe to the consumer and sustainable to the provider.”

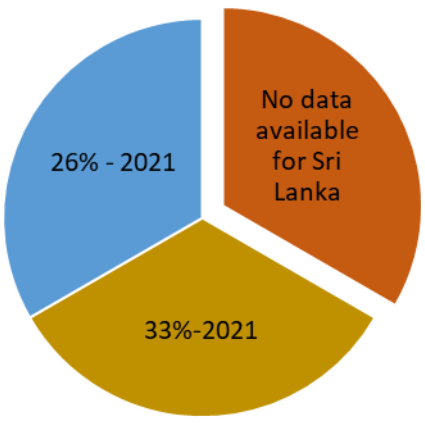
Although 79% of women own phones, only 1.2% of women use their phones for financial services (ibid).

If this is linked to the previous area of land as a tool for economic empowerment of women, it is clear that a lack of access to technology further harms the ability of women to create successful lives in the area of agriculture. This is particularly in the context of the laws, both agricultural and inheritance, not favouring women. In other words, it is assumed that cell phone ownership has some kind of empowerment value that includes a technological aspect.

Lastly, though beyond the scope of this research, the poor uptake of women to technology raises issues related to tertiary education and STEM fields. Beyond the issue of low LFP by women, it would appear that few women are accessing these careers as part of a strategy to address societal challenges such as bringing banking, financial and networking access to women in rural areas of Sri Lanka.

IV 8 – LEGISLATION (Target 5.C) Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Indicator 5.C.1.: *Systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment:*



(UN Women December 2020).
None of the SDG platforms have any data for this indicator specifically on Sri Lanka.

The UN Sri Lanka report (2022, 24) says that despite being guaranteed equal gender rights in the constitution, women in Sri Lanka still face outdated legislation which makes it difficult to operationalise this right. According to UNWOMEN (December 2020), by end of 2020 monitoring systems were only in place for 40.9% of the gender indicators, and there were significant data gaps regarding indicators related to unpaid work (domestic and care) and ICT skills. The site has no available data for Indicator 5.C.1 for Sri Lanka. The World Health Organisation (2018, 26) adds that there is weak implementation of laws and programmes, and laments the gaps in judicial processes. This demonstrates the lack both of available data, and relatedly, to monitoring and tracking systems that would be the basis for any resource allocations.

The Voluntary People's Review (2018, 19) writes that "To date, Sri Lanka does not have a national roadmap, policy, strategy, action plan, financing plan, monitoring mechanism and reporting structure for the implementation of the SDGs." The UN Sri Lanka report (2022, 91) says that there is no data as of December2022, but that, as part of the UN sustainable development cooperation framework, the Ministry of Finance should track and make this information available in the future.

Gunasekera (2021, 37) argues that "Despite the Sri Lankan constitution and international ratifications granting such gender equality on paper, there is a vast gap in its actual enforcement and practice."

The evidence outlined in this research paper supports Fraser's (1995) argument that socioeconomic injustice is the result of unequal political-economic structures in a society and says this injustice manifests in various ways including exploitation, marginalisation and deprivation. In the case of Sri Lanka, this socioeconomic injustice also manifests in intimate partner violence against women who are trapped because of their excluded status in society.

The evidence presented in chapter three shows that, for most of the IVs there has been a negative outcome. The purpose of this research project was to obtain a deeper understanding of why gender-based violence continues to plague Sri Lankan women. What is evident from that data is that women continue to struggle for economic resources, lack agency in the form of public voices in the labour market and in government, and are subject

to conservative societal views of the roles and responsibilities of women. This is congruent with Wall's (2014) argument that inequalities are formed and deepened by power imbalances in social structures, and that these inequalities in turn shape relationships at the different societal levels. The Sri Lankan picture is also in line with the UNDPs (2013) writing that the marginalisation of women allows gender discriminatory views and attitudes to flourish, particularly but not exclusively in spaces where women are largely excluded.

This chapter has been a presentation of the data for all the targets under SDG 5 that make up the independent variables of this thesis. The next chapter will offer a deeper analytical narrative of what this information tells us.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS

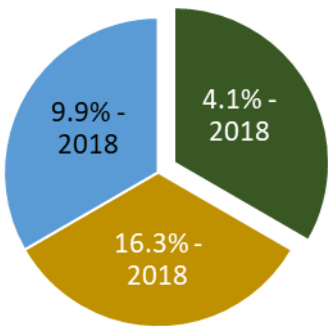
This chapter focuses on the dependent variable of the research project, which is coded VAW and pulls together the data presented on the IVs from chapter 3 to develop a narrative that answers the questions raised in chapter 1, i.) What progress has been made in Sri Lanka in the implementation of SDG 5 and ii.) What can be deduced from different rates of implementation and success of each of the different target areas? As a start, it is important to remember the basis of the thesis, which is that levels of violence against women in Sri Lanka remain high. This data (which is the DV of the thesis) is firstly discussed below, followed by a discussion on relationship between the evidence found in chapter 3 (on the independent variables) and the high levels of violence against women in Sri Lanka.

Gender-based violence in Sri Lanka

The data on SDG 5 for Sri Lanka paints a complex story of what data is available, what data has been tracked and what this information suggests as possible explanations for the status of women in that country, and the continuing high levels of gender-based violence.

The DV (coded as VAW) is captured under target 5.2 of SDG 5 which is to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. There are two indicators which look at violence against women over the past year and over a lifetime, perpetrated by intimate partners and by non-intimate partners. The data for the two indicators is presented below.

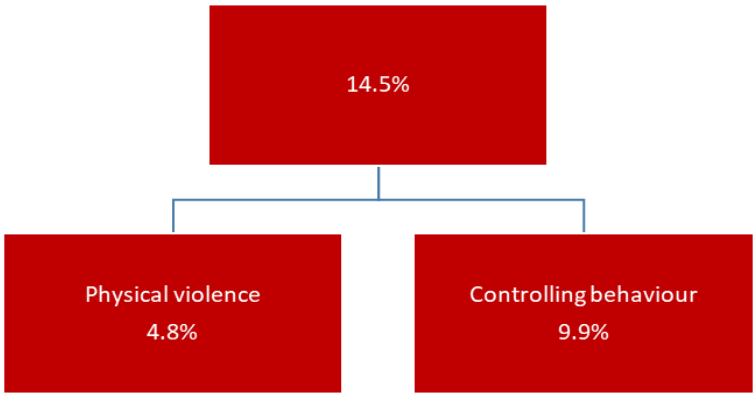
Indicator 5.2.1.: *Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age:*



SDG Indicators Database 2021 (note this only refers to physical violence)

Sri Lanka reports a lower level of *physical violence* than the global and regional number.

Violence against women in Sri Lanka over previous 12 months



Women's Wellbeing Survey 2019

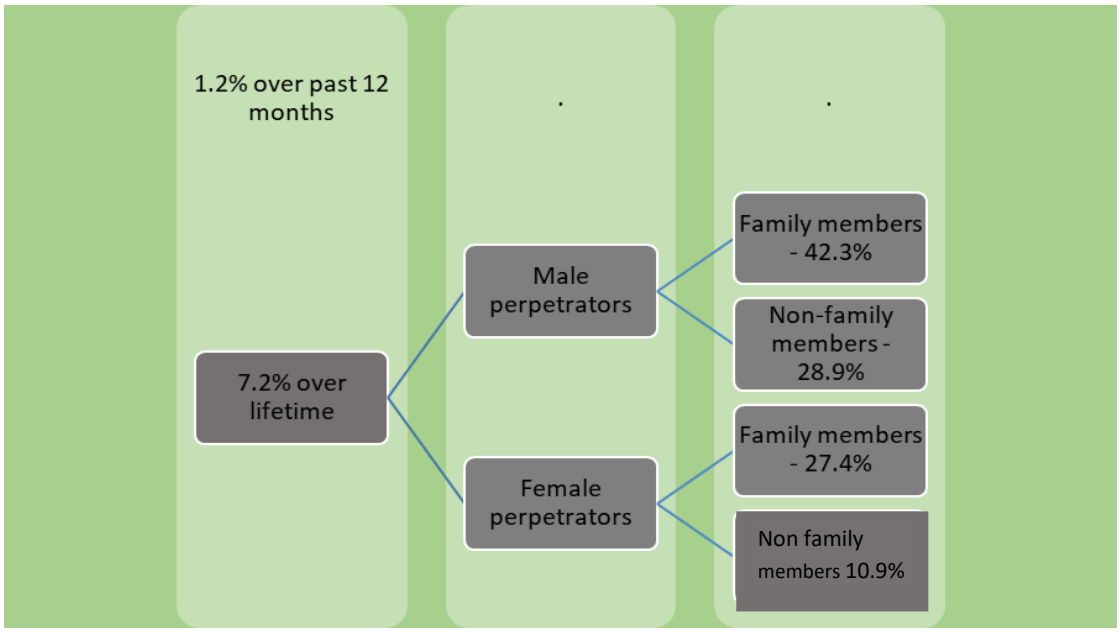
The Women's Wellbeing Survey (2019) gives a more detailed breakdown of violence against women in Sri Lanka. This information shows that, although levels of physical violence against Sri Lankan women appear relatively low, violence manifesting as controlling behaviour is a big factor. More than twice as many women have been victims of controlling behaviour over the past year, than have been victims of physical violence. Important to note, this data is from 2019. If Sri Lanka followed global trends of vastly increased rates of physical violence against women during the pandemic (beyond the scope of this paper), those numbers will be different.

Lifetime violence against women in Sri Lanka



Women's Wellbeing Survey 2019

While the data shows that over the past year the levels of physical violence against women in Sri Lanka were relatively low, the number increases over a lifetime of evidence. As this timeframe lengthens, women are almost as likely to be physically as psychologically abused.



Women's Wellbeing Survey 2019

The above graphic demonstrates that Sri Lankan women are far more likely to be harmed by an intimate partner or family member than by a stranger.

Indicator 5.2.2.: *Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.*



Women's Wellbeing Survey 2019

The levels of violence against women committed by people other than intimate partners over the previous year (i.e. 2018) was (compared to levels of intimate partner violence) very low, according to the Women's Wellbeing Survey of 2019. This reinforces the understanding that violence against women is mostly committed by intimate partners or family members.

Noir (2013) raises the issue of women's attitudes towards gender-based violence and says these "reflect a deeper acceptance than men of social and cultural attitudes that discriminate against women. For example, 58% of women, compared to 41% of men, believed that a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep the family together." Brendon el al (2020) write that misogyny and sexist attitudes towards women have been normalised in Sri Lankan society. They argue that, although there is a high level of access to sexual and reproductive health services, there is a low level of understanding of sexual rights and what consent means.

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) was unanimously adopted in 1993. Bandara (2019) writes that there is both a high level of domestic violence and an increase in suicide among young women in Sri Lanka.

Panadare et al (2021, 1) describe violence against women as "a widespread and ever-increasing phenomenon in Sri Lankan social fabric." They point out the high levels of domestic, or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Sri Lanka is congruent with the regional statistics – they quote Guruge, Illesinghe, Gunawardhana, & Perera's 2015 report (ibid, 2) that South Asia's rate of 41.7% are the second highest levels of IPV in the world, based on a survey of 81 countries at that time.

A 2016 study (Panadare et al 2020, 3) of the central province of Sri Lanka showed that most women only associated physical violence with IPV and did not recognise other forms of abuse such as psychological and economic, as violence.

Maduwage (2020) writes that almost a quarter of Sri Lankan women have experienced some form of sexual or physical violence, and nearly 40% have been the victims of physical or emotional violence that can take the form of controlling behaviour or economic deprivation. Sri Lankan women are much more likely to be abused by intimate partners than by strangers. An analysis (Fulu 2013) of violence against women in the region found that over 40% of Sri Lankan men had emotionally abused their partners at some point in their lives. The analysis also found that physical violence was more common than sexual violence in marriage, but pointed out that rape within marriage was not considered a crime unless the spouses were legally separated (ibid). Even outside of marriage Hodal (2013) reports that 96.5% of Sri Lankan men who had committed rape said they had faced no consequences.

The Sri Lanka Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 of 2005 (quoted in Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics 2020, x) defines domestic violence as "an act which constitutes an offence specified in Schedule I; any emotional abuse, committed or caused by a relevant person within the environment of the home or outside and arising out of the personal relationship between the aggrieved person and the relevant person."

There are two important things to note from the 2019 Women's Wellbeing Survey (Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics 2020, 5): first is that women are more than twice as lucky to experience some form of violence from their partner as from a stranger and second, the biggest manifestation of this violence is controlling behaviour.

A WHO report (2018, 2) noted some worrying attitudes of both men and women in Sri Lanka including:

- A belief by more than half of all people interviewed (i.e. both genders) that the most important role for Sri Lankan women is in the home taking care of the family
- 58% of men said violence was justified to defend the honour of the family
- 70% of men felt it was their duty to provide financially for the family.

The belief that women in Sri Lanka should prioritise looking after the house and the family, is congruent with Archer's (2006) argument that there is a correlation between societal attitudes towards women and levels of gender-based violence.

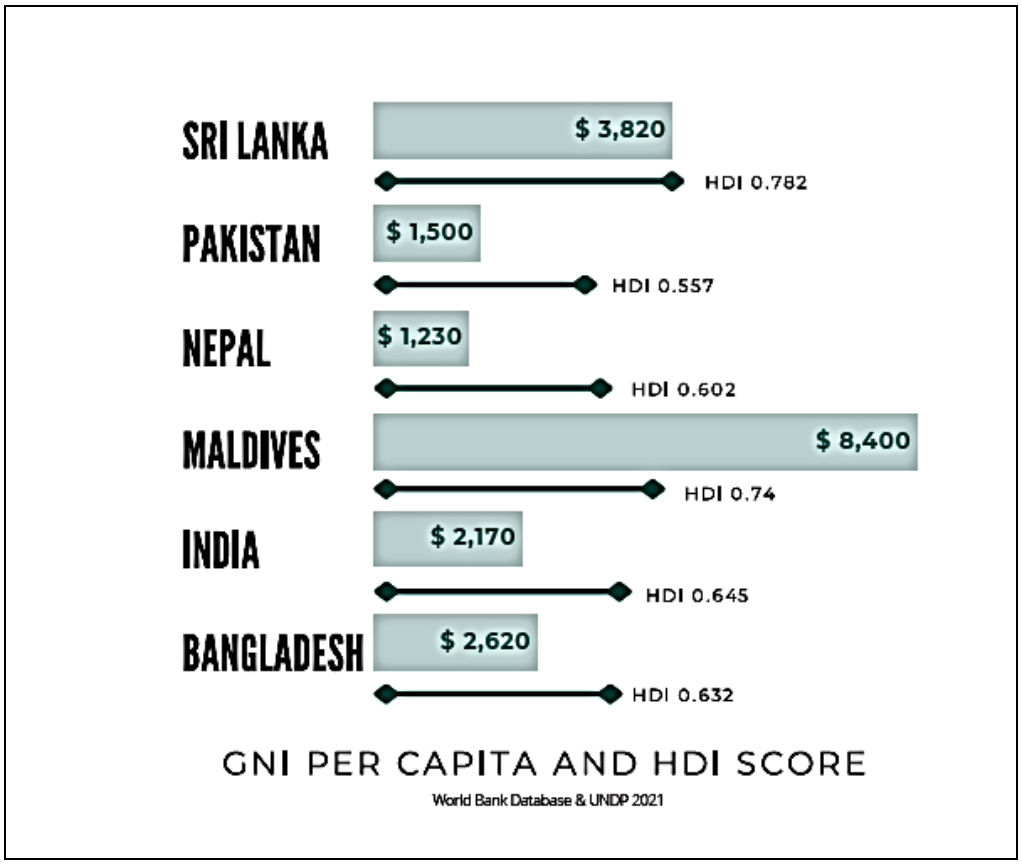
It is not just in the home that women are subject to various forms of violence. The 2022 Voluntary People's Review (United Nations High-Level Political Forum 2022, 24) lamented the lack of good data on VAW reports that 90% of women in Sri Lanka have been the victims of sexual harassment on public transport. This clearly has an effect on labour market participation, as over 50% of women use public transport. There is moreover a low conviction rate for perpetrators of GBV in Sri Lanka. In 2016 there were 9042 reported cases, but only 4976 convictions. (Annual performance report: Police Department 2014, quoted in WHO 2018, p19).

Gender inequality and violence against women

Wall (2014, 4) explains that something which is considered a foundational cause of a social ill is often referred to as a determinant, what she says is "the set of underlying conditions

that enable the risk factors for experiencing a particular health issue such as violence against women." The theoretical framework of this research is feminist structural inequality, a theory that speaks to the role of societal structures in gender inequality. These structures are captured and measured under the Sustainable Development Goals. The targets listed under SDG 5 make up the independent variables outlined in the methodological approach. The independent variables have been captured and discussed under chapter 3, but the next part of chapter 4 looks at the relationship of these independent variables to the dependent variable of violence against women.

The graphic below describes Sri Lanka's position on the Human Development Index (HDI) out of seven countries in the region. According to the UNDP (n.d.) the HDI "is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions".



UN Sri Lanka 2022, 16.

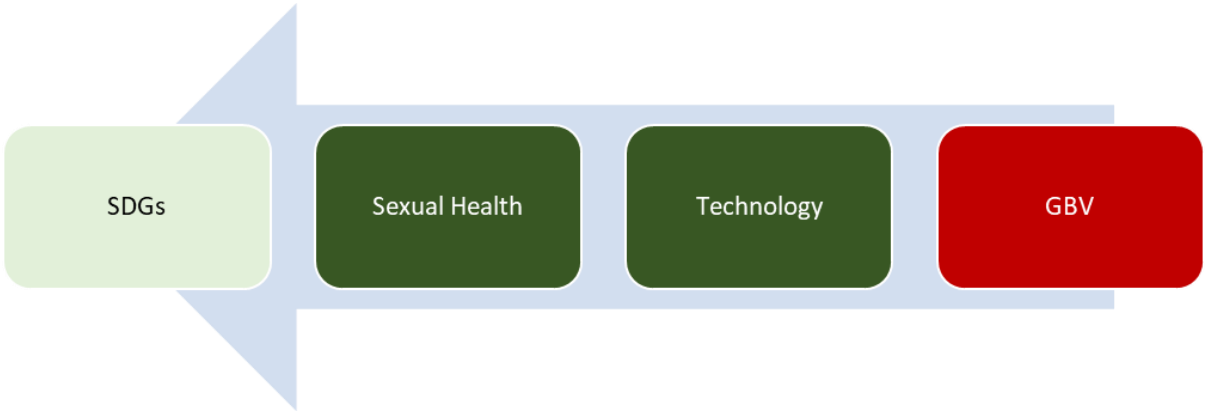
Wanasundera (2022) argues that in fact not only are there no signs of improvement in the struggle for gender equality in Sri Lanka, but the country has regressed over the years. They

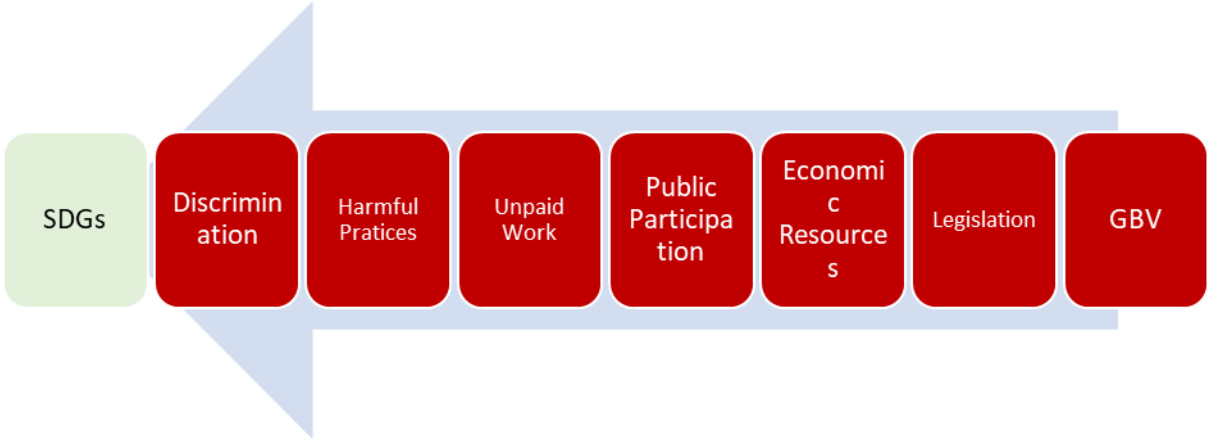
point out that in 2006 the index was 0.720, placing it 13 out of 115 countries; but this dropped to 120 out of 156 countries in 2020, with only 67, 7% of the gender gap being closed. This gave Sri Lanka the second highest gender gap in the region, just above Bhutan.

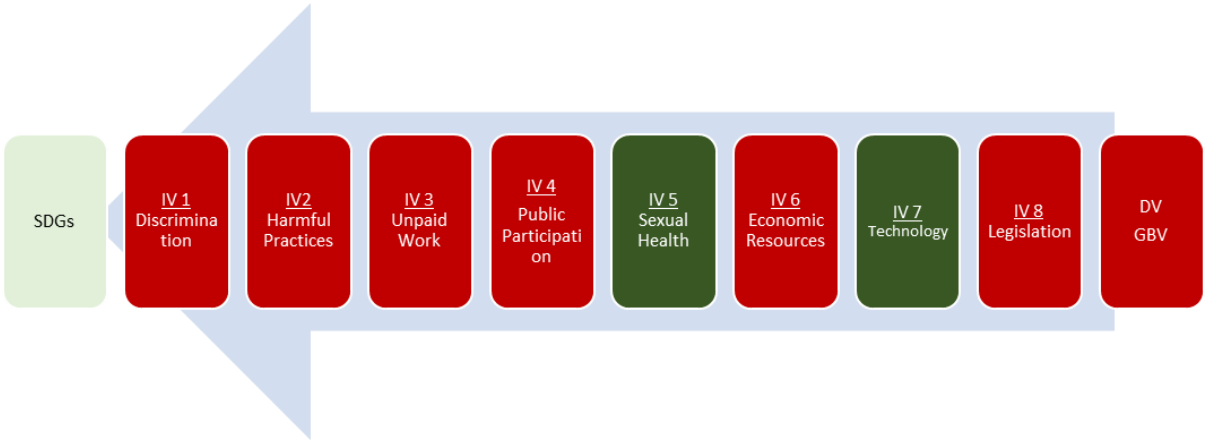
Independent variables and dependent variable

Of the eight independent variables interrogated in chapter three, only two (sexual health and technology) showed positive outcomes.

The graphic summary below is a visual representation of the targets under SDG 5 and their outcomes. From this it is clear that the only positive outcomes are Independent Variables 5 (SEXUAL HEALTH) and 7 (TECHNOLOGY). The remaining Independent Variables all have negative outcomes.







The data presented in these two chapters demonstrates Fulu et al's (2013, 109) point that "Structural inequalities and harmful gender norms underlie violence against women."

This chapter has developed a narrative giving deeper explanation to the data presented in chapter 3. The narrative started off with information on the DV (coded as VAW) and then related this to the IVs presented in chapter 3. This process revealed that only two of the IVs (sexual health and technology) had a measure of positive outcome. The remaining IVs had negative outcomes. Applying the process tracing methodology, it is argued that the failure to successfully implement the remaining IVs has resulted in a continuation of gender inequality experienced by Sri Lankan women. In line with the methodological approach and theoretical framework, the ongoing violence against women experienced by many Sri Lanka women is causally associated with the failure of these IVs to advance gender inequality.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY

This chapter summarises the previous four chapters, and ends with some personal observations and suggestions for further research.

Background

Sri Lanka is an interesting and complex country. A civil war that was concentrated in the east and north-east parts of the country was finally ended in 2009, after 26 years, when the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers who had been fighting for secession. The end of the conflict was characterised by high levels of sexual violence against mostly Tamil women, committed by the Sri Lankan military. However, the Tamil Tigers were lauded for their discipline and for not having committed similar atrocities against Sri Lankan women during the course of the war. The conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the Sri Lankan military is significant because it demonstrates the nuances and complexities of a country rebuilding itself after decades of conflict. Not only were these acts of violence largely one-sided, they were also mostly confined to a particular group and geography of the country. The war was highly concentrated, and so the biggest areas requiring transitional justice and peacebuilding programmes were in the north and east of the island. In other conflicts that are resolved through negotiated settlements (for example South Africa and Liberia) there is some semblance of power equality when the warring factions meet at the negotiating table. However, Sri Lanka was different in that the war ended because one of the parties (the Tamil Tigers) was defeated by the other party (the Sri Lankan government through its military forces). Though the scope of this paper was not to look at issues of transitional justice, it bears mentioning that the WPS Agenda (to address issues giving rise to levels of violence against women in war) was not a driving political concern at the end of the conflict. This is demonstrated by the low levels of prosecutions for conflict-related sexual violence. Kodikara (2016) reports that there were only two cases where military personnel were prosecuted and found guilty of sexual violence (and of murder). This is despite hundreds of testimonies from women who had been sexually assaulted during the war. In addition to the disregard for gender issues, women were significantly underrepresented in a forum where issues that most affected them could have been raised. Despite being involved in the conflict (either as mothers demanding information on disappeared sons, or as campaigners

against terrorism), women were largely excluded from all six attempts at peace talks as well as the final negotiations at the end of the conflict (Schneiderman 2009).

Motivation for study

Notwithstanding the complexities of this particular conflict as a feminist analysis (i.e. that the CRSV was both ethnically and geographically concentrated on a minority grouping of women) it was felt that Sri Lanka would be a good case study to interrogate the relationship between violence against women and gender inequality. A big motivation for this was the timing of the end of the conflict. By 2009 the country had adopted a plethora of international gender frameworks (including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action, UNSCR 1325 and, most relevant for this research, the then-named Millennium Development Goals in 2000.

The end of a conflict is a good reset moment for any country. Sri Lanka had the benefit of a host of international policies to help rebuild a better and more equitable country. The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by most countries in the world, had been worked into detailed action plans with targets and goals to guide countries on implementation. It is argued that the SDGs is the best framework to focus on, because it is ongoing, requires regular reporting with baselines that tracks developments by country, region and globally. SDG 5 focuses on gender equality and outlines a number of specific targets which can be tracked and measured and evaluated (when there is data available).

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research was to, using the information provided under the SDG ambit, interrogate the progress Sri Lanka has made on gender equality and then build a narrative of these outcomes and their relation to gender violence in the country.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis stated that persistently high levels of gender-based violence in Sri Lanka are due to the failure of SDG 5 to bring about gender equality in the country.

Questions

i. What progress has been made in Sri Lanka in the implementation of SDG 5?

ii. What can be deduced from different rates of implementation and success of each of the different target areas?

Theoretical framework

The SDGs, particularly SDG 5, are a good tool to operationalise the theoretical framework of feminist structural inequality. This is because SDG 5 collates data on some of those very structures the theoretical framework refers to, such as the labour force (paid and unpaid), as well as the legal, health care and political structures. The structural inequality theory argues that these structures serve to deepen or lesson inequality in the way they are operationalised. And while some structures may have excellent gender equality outcomes, such as sexual health care, there is a deep interconnectedness that often links the different structures to each other. An example would be the labour market. In Sri Lanka, few women make up the ranks of middle and senior management, yet the laws specifically talk to equality in the workplace and equal opportunities for women. Moreover, Sri Lanka's education system is one of the most equal in the world, with girls sometimes outperforming boys and women in that country having high levels of education. Despite these positive gendered outcomes, women only dominate in traditional gendered roles such as nursing and teaching. There are a myriad of possible explanations for this unexpected outcome including that there are very few women parliamentarians so the opportunities for championing issues specifically pertaining to women (sexual harassment on public transport, a lack of social services such as child-care facilities, a private sector that is reluctant to grant maternity leave or make it easy for mothers to both work and raise children) are left to men, who themselves are products of a very conservative society.

What was known in the beginning is that Sri Lanka still suffers from high levels of violence against women. While intimate partner violence is more likely to take the form of emotional (rather than physical violence), sexual harassment in the public arena (i.e. sexual harassment by strangers on public transport which most women in Sri Lanka have

experienced) is very widespread. The research then was to analyse why these levels of violence against women remain high, when the SDGs provide a clear and measurable framework to implement programmes that will increase gender equality in the country. Two research questions arose from the hypothesis (which is that persistently high levels of gender-based violence in Sri Lanka is due to the failure of SDG 5 to bring about gender equality in the country). The first question is: What progress has been made in the implementation SDG 5? And the second question, following on from this, is: What can be deduced from different rates of implementation and success of each of the different target areas?

Methodology

In order to answer these questions, a process tracing methodology was adopted. Process tracing is useful because it allows for a deeper interrogation of policies and implementation, opening space to develop a narrative that correlates outcomes. A dependent variable is identified (in this case gender-based violence) and analysed against the independent variables (in this case the remaining targets under SDG 5). Because the outcomes of the remaining variables were not known a deductive approach was employed. The targets were identified, and the outcomes sourced from the relevant database. In addition, research was done to identify any intervening variables that would have affected the outcome. In this way it was possible to identify the successful areas, the unsuccessful areas, and where there was no data captured on the official SDG sites, to find other sources that told a story which both helped to explain the lack of data and suggest what the outcome would be.

Data

UNWOMEN (December 2020) reports that by the end of 2020 monitoring systems were only in place for 40.9% of the gender indicators, and there were significant data gaps regarding indicators related to unpaid work (domestic and care) and ICT skills. As stated previously, this research was conducted in the knowledge that not all data was available. Abandoning research as crucial as this because of data gaps would lose an opportunity to assess the evidence that is available, but furthermore, the gaps themselves tell a story.

Results

Of the indicators under SDG 5, only two (sexual health and technology) were found to have positive outcomes, and the rest were deemed to have negative outcomes. Independent Variable 1 (captured as DISCRIMINATION) talks to the legislation in place to end discrimination against women and girls. Sri Lanka has embraced a number of laws and policies in this regard. These include provisions in the constitution and the adoption of international frameworks and protocols (such as the SDGs). An intervening variable here would be the setting up of institutions to monitor and implement these laws, and Sri Lanka has a number of bodies and departments within the governmental architecture which have been established to do this. However, the second intervening variable would be the successful development and implementation of local laws to marry the international commitments, and this has not been the case. So, although the frameworks have technically been adopted, they have not been translated into workable legislation, leaving the legal structure unequal and discriminatory towards women. Independent Variable 2 (captured as HARMFUL PRACTICES) talks to the issue of i) marriage at a young age and ii) female genital mutilation (FGM). There is no data available for either of these targets. However, other sources (WHO 2018, Reuters 2017, Al Jazeera 2017) report that FGM and other forms of gender-based violence including dowry deaths, honour killings and sex-selective abortions are still practiced in Sri Lanka. This has allowed for coding this target as a negative outcome, despite there being no data on the offical SDG sites. Independent Variable 3 (captured as UNPAID WORK) looks at the issue of unpaid work, and how much time each gender spends on domestic and care work. The data shows that women spend almost three times as much time on unpaid domestic and care work as their male partners. This is obviously coded as a negative outcome. Independent Variable 4 (coded as PUBLIC PARTICIPATION) looks at women's leadership, both in the public (government) sector, and in the world of work. Sri Lanka has one of the lowest levels of women in national parliament in the world. Although there is a slight increase in female managers, this target is coded negative because an intervening variable would have been some form of affirmative action legislation in the labour market. Coupled with the high levels of education enjoyed by Sri Lankan women, it can be assumed that the changes to middle and senior management would be much higher if this were the case. In addition, Sri Lanka still performs lower than either the region or the

world on this target. Independent Variable 5 (coded as SEXUAL HEALTH) is a great success story for the country. The target is about rights and access to sexual health, including contraceptives, HIV and maternal health, for women. Sri Lanka remains a leading country on most areas of sexual health (rights and access to termination of pregnancy being one area that is very low). Independent Variable 6 (coded as ECONOMIC RESOURCES) looks at land rights including ownership and legal support for access to land. Again, there is no data for this target, but various reports (Gunasekera 2021, FAO 2018) note that the existing legislation is gender-blind and does not address sexist and patriarchal practices (such as inheritance discrimination against women) under cultural laws. Independent Variable 7 (coded as TECHNOLOGY) talks to how women access technology, and looks particularly at mobile phone ownership. Here too there is no data, but it appears from reports (Taylor 2023, FTSL 5 July 2019) both that the majority of women have access to cell phones, and that online harassment is lower in Sri Lanka than in other countries in the region. It would appear that mobile phone ownership has not translated into beneficial use of technology for women, such as increased use of online banking, but this is beyond the immediate scope of the target. Lastly, Independent Variable 8 (coded as POLICIES) looks at the tracking and support mechanisms to ensure policies and legislation are effectively implemented. Despite there being data at a global and regional level, there is no data for Sri Lanka. The Voluntary People's Review reports there is no plan for implementation, financing or monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs in Sri Lanka (VPR 2018). This is then coded as a negative outcome.

At this point answers can be given to the two questions outlined in chapter one. The first question that can be answered is what progress has been made in Sri Lanka in the implementation of SDG 5? The data shows that progress has been mixed. Sri Lanka continues to perform exceptionally well globally on issues related to sexual and reproductive health, and the data shows that cell phone ownership among Sri Lankan women is relatively high, even if this has not translated into using technology for services like banking (note the target does not specify the use of technology, only the ownership of mobile phones). However, on the remaining IVs the outcomes were all negative (either reported as negative by the data captured in SDG portals, or deduced as negative where there was no primary data but where secondary sources elucidated further narratives.

The second question that can now be answered is what can be deduced from different rates of implementation and success of each of the different target areas?

These outcomes tell the story of women's lived experiences as a result of their exclusion from financial opportunities. Women in Sri Lanka are largely unable to build financially independent lives for themselves, because patriarchal practices prevent them from owning land, and the labour market structure prohibits career pathing and advancement. It should be remembered here that Sri Lanka has refused to ratify a number of ILO conventions which would strengthen the position of women in the workplace. Women are excluded from national politics and so are unable to influence policy priorities or budgeting support for gendered programmes. This ties in with the picture of a conservative society where women are dependent on their male partners or family members, and in return are expected to undertake significantly more unpaid work in the home and caring for the young and the elderly. It also supports the outcome that women have less bargaining power within the family, (because they have no economic resources to leave) and so have less say in harmful practices such as FGM and other forms of violence directed against girls and women. All of this gives clarity to an argument that women who are financially and politically excluded from society, are at the mercy of those who have voices, economic resources and therefore power. It makes sense in Sri Lanka that manipulation and emotional violence with threats of withdrawing economic support, are the most common forms of violence, committed by intimate partners, which women have to face.

The process tracing methodology was effectively used to demonstrate the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. An analysis of progress on the SDGs (SDG 5) that formed the independent variables, showed that there has been poor implementation resulting in negative outcomes of the indicators. As a result the structural inequalities that are characterised by gendered power imbalances have remained intact in Sri Lanka. Women's voices have remained marginalised in the public sphere because they have been excluded from positions of power in the labour market and in government. Their financial capital is limited, both as a result of this marginalisation, but also because of laws such as those which have prevented them from owning land and building economically sustainable lives in the agricultural sector. The structural inequalities have reinforced the

conservative societal views of what women should be prioritising (home and care work) and what rights men have, particularly in the household. The process tracing methodology was a valuable methodological approach to demonstrate the correlation between the gendered structural inequality that persists in Sri Lanka, and the ongoing violence that women in that country experience.

Possible further research

The scope of this research was deliberately limited to the pre-Covid19 timeframe. It would be interesting to research the effect Covid19 had on SDG 5, and further to analyse the overall implementation of the SDGs (i.e. beyond SDG 5) to assess how well prepared the country was for this global shock. This paper also did not look at the civil uprising of 2022 and the economic meltdown in Sri Lanka. A possible area for further research could be to examine whether higher levels of gender equality might have prevented this. This research might benefit from more quantitative methodologies such as regression analysis. A last possible area of investigation would be concentrated on women from the conflict-riddled areas of the north and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. Particularly around issues of land rights, it would be interesting to see what specific interventions could meaningfully assist in rebuilding the lives of these women, including the war widows and internally displaced people.

Final reflections

It seems unfortunate that a country that has struggled so long under a civil war has been unable to rebuild itself in a way that creates opportunities for meaningful and productive lives for women. The failure of the government to significantly address the structural gendered inequalities has meant there have been no challenge to the societal conservativism that characterises Sri Lanka. It is a society where, despite excellent educational outcomes, women are relegated to unpaid household and care work, excluded from having public voices (either in government or in the labour market) and consequently become economically dependent on men they are related to. As a result, there is a significant power discrepancy in the family setup which is characterised by women's voices being drowned out and their agency minimised. It is disappointing that the government failed to grab the opportunity of the reset moment in 2009, a reset which would have

resulted in a boost to the economic welfare of the country and a more equitable and just society for Sri Lankan women.

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