

Report:
**Tackling Stigma of Conflict Related Sexual Violence
through the Sri Lanka National Action Plan on
Sexual and Gender- Based Violence (SGBV NAP)**

**Jetwing Colombo 07
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Abbreviations

CBO	- Community Based Organisation
CEDAW	- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	- Civil Society Organisation
CWDU	- Child and Women Development Units
FHH	- Female Heads of Households
GBV	- Gender Based Violence
INGO	- International Non-Governmental Organisation
JMO	- Judicial Medical Officer
MoE	- Ministry of Education
MoH	- Ministry of Health
MoJ	- Ministry of Justice
MWCA	- Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
NAP	- National Action Plan
NCPA	- National Child Protection Authority
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organisation
NIE	- National Institute of Education
PDVA	- Prevention of Domestic Violence Act
SGBV	- Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SVC	- Sexual Violence in Conflict
WDO	- Women Development Officers

Executive Summary

This workshop was jointly conducted by the British High Commission in Colombo and FOKUS WOMEN on the 29th of August 2017 at Jetwing Colombo Seven. The workshop was attended by members of the British High Commission, FOKUS WOMEN, UN officials, Donors, Diplomats, Partner Organisations of FOKUS WOMEN, state officials, International Non – Governmental Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, lawyers, academicians, media personnel and religious leaders.

The focal point of the workshop was to discuss how to utilise the existing Sexual and Gender Based Violence National Action Plan of Sri Lanka to tackle stigma that is faced by victims who have faced sexual violence in conflict. To achieve this end, three key resource persons discussed the following aspects:

- The entrenchment of stigma through literature, myths, and religion and how such stigma continues to affect women who have faced sexual violence especially in conflict situations.
- Introduction to and description of the SGBV NAP of Sri Lanka.
- Entry points to tackling stigma using the SGBV NAP.

This was then followed by a group work in which the attendees were requested to develop a template comprising of how victims of sexual violence in conflict are to be protected from further violence and how to prevent stigmatisation of such victim survivors. The participants presented their findings and recommendations at the end of the workshop.

Methods

The first segment of the workshop was delivered in theatre style formal presentations which drew on the expertise of a women's rights practitioner / activist, a member of the National Committee on Women, and a Technical Specialist on Gender and Women's Empowerment affiliated with the United Nations Development Programme.

During the second segment of the workshop, the participants were divided into six groups. During this exercise they were expected to discuss amongst themselves and develop mechanisms of how to deal with victims and survivors of sexual violence in different sectors. The third and final segment of the workshop comprised of the participants presenting their findings to the attendees utilising a specific template to produce a set of country specific steps that can be adopted to achieve the objective of preventing stigma associated with sexual violence in conflict.

The findings of the groups were presented in relation to individual, community and national / structural levels. The following key areas were analysed and presented by the participants at the workshop:

1. Education
2. Justice and law reform
3. Economic development and employment
4. Health and mental health
5. Disaster response and management
6. Rights of children

1. Introductory Comments

The introductory comments to the workshop were given by Mr. Tom Burn, the Deputy British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka and Maldives.

This workshop is a continuation of a workshop held in November 2016 entitled “Preventing Sexual Violence: Tackling Stigma in Sri Lanka”. There are so many different elements to a post conflict situation. Tackling stigma in conflict related situations continue to be underestimated. It is important to address stigma as it contributes to healing and ensures that sexual violence victims can live a harmonious life. Failing to address stigma could contribute to the intensification of problems between ethnicities especially when there is a failure to provide adequate protection to children born of rape in conflict circumstances.

Sexual violence in conflict (SVC) impact many aspects of society. Survivors could be helped by providing psycho-social support as these aspects are intrinsically linked together. Tackling stigma associated with survivors of SVC remains a top priority of the United Kingdom as the role of women in any society is incredibly important. It is further recognized that empowering women to play a full economic role is significant in developing the entire society.

The Former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, The Right Honourable William Jefferson Hague recognized the significance of preventing SVC which led to the drafting of the ‘Principles for Global Action: Preventing and Addressing Stigma Associated to Sexual Violence’¹ which are expected to be launched at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017. Building partnerships locally and internationally will help create awareness of the complicated workings of stigma manifestations at local, national, and community levels. This understanding will lead to inclusive approaches that may be utilised in tackling stigma effectively.

¹ Hereinafter referred to as “Principles for Global Action”.

2. Background and Objectives of the Workshop

Ms. Shyamala Gomez, the Country Director of FOKUS WOMEN explained the background and the objectives of the workshop to the participants.

At the workshop that was held in November 2016, all stakeholders recognized stigma as a pressing issue that requires immediate addressing. This created the first opportunity for Sri Lankans to examine stigma as an issue that should be tackled in facing the reality that there are men, women and children who continue to be affected due to SVC. The Principles for Global Action recognizes stigma as a social scar.

At the three day expert roundtable meeting that was convened at Wilton Park UK in late November 2016 which was attended by various stakeholders, an initiative was adopted to inform UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) with the intention of shaping principles for global action to prevent and tackle stigma. This meeting was also attended by victims and survivors of SVC, especially from the African region, who bravely shared their experiences and the stigma that they continue to face as victim-survivors. This experience highlighted the fact that connotations of sexual violence remain broad and complicated. For instance, an attendee from Colombia asserted that she wishes to be referred to as a 'victim' as opposed to as a 'survivor'. Exposure to differences in needs create an awareness as to how different 'labels' are to be used with reference to individuals, their lived realities, experiences, and expectations.

In the Sri Lankan context, it is essential to recognize that women from all three communities, i.e., Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim, have suffered violence due to the nearly three-decade armed conflict. This reality has to be borne in mind when attempting to address the stigma they face. This further necessitates an understanding of how SVC has led to early cohabitation and early marriages. Therefore, it is essential to broadly conceptualise what SVC means.

The Principles for Global Action contains ten core principles which look at resourcing, financing, and sustainability. The principles further contain thematic recommendations. Moreover, it seeks to address how stigma affects survivors of sexual violence and the necessity of international and global networks to encouraging financing of addressing stigma. The aim of the principles is to build momentum to tackle stigma among the stakeholders. Assistance of all stakeholders

such as religious leaders, civil society, international community and governments is necessary in this respect as it is necessary to ensure cross – sectional collaboration in addressing stigma and to prevent future sexual violence through the application of education and providing a stable and workable framework for the principles.

While it is necessary to address stigma faced by all victims of sexual violence, the focal point of the Principles for Global Action is to address the stigma faced by victims of SVC. In the Sri Lankan context, it is necessary that the attempt to address stigma is incorporated into the existing Sexual and Gender Based Violence National Action Plan (SGBV NAP) as it facilitates the implementation of addressing stigma through existing policies. It is further intended to incorporate the need to address stigma into the future Human Rights National Action Plan of Sri Lanka. As such, the participants of the workshop were encouraged to cautiously reflect on how stigma associated with SVC could be addressed effectively.

3. Expert Comments and Sharing of Experiences

3.1. Stigma Through a Women’s Rights Practitioner’s Lens

In this segment, Ms. Vasuki Jeyasankar, Women’s Rights Activist and Gender Consultant shared her personal experiences as a practitioner of women’s rights dealing with victims and survivors of SVC. This presentation drew on literature and religion that perpetuates violence against women thereby contributing to the perpetuation of stigmatisation of victims of SVC.

Stigma faced by victims of SVC is more pronounced for Tamil, Hindu women whose experience is referred to by the Tamil term ‘பாலியல் வல்லுறவு’ which literally translates into ‘destroyed chastity’.

The impacts of the use of the term ‘destroyed chastity’

- Feelings of impurity, guilt, and worthlessness
- Isolation from family members and community
- Inability to face intimate partners (husband, boyfriend) due to feelings of guilt and impurity
- If pregnant, guilt associated with not knowing whether to love or reject the child of rape

Rapes and sexual violence that take place in conflict contexts also contribute to the creation of more guilt if the alleged perpetrator is from a community identified as an ‘enemy community’. There is a heightened sense of violation in the victim and the community feels justified in further rejecting the victim and any child born of such violence. This leads to displacement from communities and in some contexts, victimized women leave their homelands to avoid stigmatisation. There are also instances where women abstain from reporting sexual violence to prevent being further stigmatized.

Historically, the term ‘rape’ refers solely to the sexual violence faced by women and the society does not regard a man who has been subject to sexual violence as having faced a destruction of chastity. The patriarchal understanding that women belong to men as ‘property’ further entrenches the view that women who have been subject to sexual violence, especially by an ‘enemy’, should be rejected from society as it brings shame on the entire community. Unwillingness to have a male relative enter into marriage with a woman who has been sexually abused or raped also leads to isolation or removal of such female victims from society. Drawing on an example from Valachchenai, Sri Lanka, it was noted that a woman who was allegedly raped by a military official during the conflict later fell in love and married a man from the Tamil community. However, during her pregnancy, the family of the male had refused to accept her and the victim, her mother, and the child born of the subsequent marriage are now no longer living in Valachchenai.

A reason for holding stigma as a part of the culture is because of its entrenchment within literature and religion as acceptable notions of control over women. The majority of the Tamil speaking population from the North and the East are continuously reminded and taught since childhood, the virtues of chastity and purity of women through various stories.

Why is stigma a part of culture?

- Literary stories are taught in educational institutions without any critical engagement to assess the acts of the characters that are being presented as heroic even subsequent to narrations of their sexual offences.

Ex. 1: In the story of '*Parashuram*' (Lord Ram with an axe), his wife 'loses her purity' by appreciating the physique of another man. Subsequently, upon the orders of the suspicious father, the sons are justified in beheading the mother.

Ex. 2: Seetha of '*Ramayana*', upon being returned to Ram, attempts to prove her purity by walking on fire and being in exile in the jungle while being pregnant only to subsequently bury herself.

- Religions and temples perpetuate the view that 'purity' of a woman is important and that there are circumstances that justify the use of 'rape' as a method of winning a war or exercising control over an individual or an entire community.

Ex. (epic / myth): 'Alli', a matriarch, who was successfully controlling her territory, was put to sleep by 'Lord Krishna' to facilitate Arjuna to rape her. Subsequently, Alli was forced by her own mother and Arjuna's four wives to marry him.

- Perpetual use of ancient stories such as *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, continues to justify acts of 'Gods' who are presented as men who violated rights of women for 'justifiable' causes.
- History justifies the 'self-sacrifice' of women to prevent them from being subject to sexual violence of 'enemies'. The glorification of women who sacrifice themselves to prevent being subject to sexual violence perpetuates the view that women are responsible for protecting their 'honour' and 'chastity' and that women who are unable to do so can only become glorified through self-sacrifice for the maintenance of self, family, and community honour.

Ex: It is stated that 24,000 women who were in 'Jaisalmer Fort' in Rajasthan, India, engaged in self-immolation referred to as '*Jauhar* or *jubar*' to protect their 'honour' from Turkish invaders.

- There is scant or no censorship of ‘anti-women’ perspectives from ancient religions / literature as they are regarded as essential and significant aspects of culture.
- Modern literature / movies continue to portray similar anti-women perspectives which are appreciated as great story lines.

Ex. (modern South Indian Tamil Film): In the film titled ‘*Kalabha Kadbalan*’ describes the story of a woman who is forced by a man to love him and engage in sexual relations with him which finally leads her to commit suicide.

- The judges, doctors, human rights workers who are expected to act objectively have also been exposed to above mentioned ‘anti-women’ perspectives and continue to embrace such beliefs as a part of their religion or culture.

While individuals may be able to deal with the violence they have faced, it is important to identify mechanisms to deal with historical records and beliefs that have been entrenched in humans since time immemorial. Merely providing counselling or a livelihood is insufficient as that does not prevent stigma that a woman has to face subsequent to being subject to sexual violence. It is necessary to facilitate such women to obtain health care, continue education, continue a career, and continue to live in a place of her choice and amongst her choice of community, without being stigmatized. As such, it is essential to proactively address historical records of anti-women perspectives.

Another factor that has to be given due consideration when dealing with the issue of stigma associated with SVC, is the destruction of evidence associated with such incidents. In one alleged incident reported from Sri Lanka, a mother of four, who was allegedly raped by police officers, was killed by detonating a grenade on her abdomen thereby erasing evidence of the rape. As the killed woman was associated with the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the LTTE portrayed this event as one that justifies a retaliatory attack.

3.2. Sexual and Gender Based Violence National Action Plan

Ms. Swarna Sumanasekera, Chairperson of the National Committee on Women of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs of Sri Lanka provided an overview of the

origin and workings of the Sexual and Gender Based Violence National Action Plan.

The National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender Based Violence of Sri Lanka has been presented to the donor community and the Sri Lankan government is currently expecting funding from the donor community for its implementation. The SGBV NAP has been presented to both the Parliament and the Sectoral Oversight Committees. This NAP incorporates human rights, gender equality, and equity and seeks to function on prevention, intervention, and engaging in advocacy for policy changes. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MWCA) is responsible for coordinating with the other ministries which are involved with the NAP. The MWCA further intends to update the CEDAW Committee regarding the process of the NAP by 2018.

Some of the principles incorporated into the NAP have been adapted from the Report of the Leader of the Opposition's Commission on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls. The NAP also seeks to establish 'vigilant committees' within the Sri Lankan society which are expected to work on issues of violence against women and to create awareness among the members of the society to bring incidents of sexual violence to light without the victims being subject to stigmatisation concerning the violence that they have faced. In order to create awareness amongst the 'vigilant groups' as regards the processes that need to be adopted with regard to victims of gender based violence, the Gender Training Manual of OXFAM has been utilised.

The Action Plans further seek to incorporate measures to tackle cyber violence with the aid of the Criminal Investigation Department of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the implementation of the Action Plan will be done with the support of the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA). The NCPA intends to build capacity of its officers.

Women's Helpline in Sri Lanka – '1938' currently receives complaints mostly from urban areas. With the use of SAARC funding which is to be received in 2018, Sri Lanka's government intends to improve awareness regarding the accessibility of services for women who faced violence by accessing the helpline 1938. Corrective measures also include counselling programmes which are provided with the intention of providing emotional support to victims of violence.

In Sri Lanka, the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) was introduced in 2005. Even though the Act provides victims with the opportunity of obtaining protection orders, very few such orders have been obtained under the Act so far. Therefore, the MWCA, with the support of the legal community of Sri Lanka, have drafted amendments to the PDVA which will be presented to the Parliament of Sri Lanka in due course.

Under the transitional justice project that has been undertaken by Sri Lanka in view of reconciliation, MWCA is in the process of collecting and updating information on female heads of households (FHH). In September 2017, programmes will be conducted by the MWCA to sensitize the Ministry of National Integration and Reconciliation, Ministry of National Co-Existence, Dialogue and Official Languages. The MWCA further intends to work closely with the grassroots levels of the Sri Lankan society to assess and improve how these services are accessed by those in need.

The MWCA further engages in collaborative actions with UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs with regard to capacity building and providing training to officers who work with women who have been subject to violence. Moreover, liaisons are being developed with media to prevent gender based violence. The current Action Plan comprises of the initiatives to provide a paralegal training to the Women Development Officers (WDOs) and a training to sensitize all officers to gender. The United Nations Development Programme has further assisted the government of Sri Lanka to develop modules on Gender Based Violence and utilise them for training police officers. Actions to combat GBV have been accelerated due to the introduction of the NAP.

3.3. Introduction to the Policy Framework and SGBV NAP

Ms. Bimali Amarasekere, Technical Specialist of Gender and Women's Empowerment of the United Nations Development Programme provided an introduction to the Policy Framework of SGBV NAP and further listed out possible entry points to the tackling stigma through the national action plan.

Goals and objectives of the SGBV NAP of Sri Lanka are as follows:

Goals

- Zero tolerance of gender based violence in Sri Lanka
- Violence free life for women and children

Objectives

- Facilitate and coordinate multi sectoral response to address GBV
- Incorporate national policies and plans of different sectors under an overarching policy framework to address GBV
- Promote and facilitate plans and programmes of multi sectoral agencies and civil society to address GBV
- Collaborate and coordinate the effective implementation of NAP to address GBV

SGBV NAP of Sri Lanka was developed with a participatory approach with contributions drawn from sectoral experts and officials, NGOs and INGOs. Sector plans of the SGBV NAP are to be implemented by the ministries of the relevant sectors. Moreover, the NAP is expected to ensure uniformity, congruence, and avoid duplication of responses.

The SGBV NAP intends to create a violence free life to all citizens of the country. The sub sectors of the NAP are coordinated by the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs of Sri Lanka. The framework of the NAP is three-pronged:

- Prevention
- Intervention
- Policy advocacy

Prevention is aimed at taking measures before SGBV occurs and addressing the underlying cause of SGBV while eliminating or modifying perceptions pertaining to gender and sexual violence. It is further necessary to bear in mind that children who are born as results of sexual violence or children born to women who have been subject to sexual violence face secondary stigmatisation which needs to be prevented through the implementation of the SGBV NAP.

The NAP only concerns conflict related sexual violence as the stigma associated with such violence prevents victims / survivors from reporting against the violation and / or accessing services that are provided. The NAP is an overarching plan which is applicable to all parts of Sri Lanka. Its survivor centric and has been drafted in a manner to prevent re-victimisation of those who have been subject to violence during conflict. This aspect is covered under ‘intervention’ incorporated into the policy. From providing temporary shelters to providing protection and

psycho-social support to victims and survivors are covered under the intervention aspect of the NAP.

The strategies that have been envisioned for the prevention of sexual violence against girl children focus on raising community awareness, promoting positive values within relationships, developing life skills, raising awareness concerning the negative impacts of early marriage and teenage pregnancies.

3.4. Concluding Comments

With reference to history and literature, a useful framework was provided to facilitate the understanding of how stigma is embedded in the society. How literature, religion and their continued teaching affects communal thinking provides an interesting overview of stigma's influence on the society. This further indicates how the thinking patterns of all individuals are framed.

The use of terminology to perpetuate stigma and how language should be used differently and effectively to hold offenders and perpetrator liable rather than stigmatizing the survivors and victims, become important in attempts to address stigma. Seeking to address stigma with these perspectives in mind would invariably contribute to the introduction of effective solutions to tackling of stigma faced by victims and survivors of SVC.

At the national level, the MWCA of Sri Lanka needs to incorporate tackling stigma faced by victims of SVC into the SGBV NAP. This necessitates a categorization of the individuals who have faced violence in different contexts. For instance, gender segregated data, data on FHH are necessary to prevent different categories of individuals being denied rights and to prevent them from falling through the cracks of implemented systems.

At the community and structural levels, it is essential to address secondary stigmatisation faced by children born to victims of sexual violence, especially in conflict circumstances. Tackling stigma should be incorporated into the SGBV NAP and the group work of participants at the current workshop will be utilised to develop templates that will be used in developing recommendations to tackle stigma faced by victims of SVC. It is further necessary to be mindful of how stigma penetrates into religions, implementation of law and justice, and education.

4. Thematic Recommendations Extracted from Group work

At the end of the workshop, the attendees were required to prepare action plans for addressing stigma at the individual, community, national, and structural levels. The attendees who were divided into six groups, presented their views under the following thematic segments:

1. Education
2. Justice and law reform
3. Economic development and employment
4. Health and mental health
5. Disaster response and management
6. Rights of children

4.1. Education

Activity	Summary / Aim / Objectives	Steps to Affect Change	Key Partners
Individual			
Inspire and sensitise relevant stakeholders to take a stand against stigma leading to attitudinal and change of norms/values	To sensitize parents and educational officers on the impact of stigma of conflict related sexual violence women survivors.	<p>Awareness raising in families to inculcate habits of treating victim survivors of sexual violence without stigma</p> <p>De-stigmatising narratives pertaining to sexual violence</p> <p>Instilling values for others</p> <p>Encouraging the use of social media in a safe and sensitive way</p> <p>Sensitising parents, teachers, officers in education regarding the impact of excessive expectations from children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Media and Communications
Community			

<p>Inspiring and sensitising religious and community leaders to take a stand against stigma leading to attitudinal, value and norm changes</p>		<p>Review of curricular in religious schools</p> <p>Promoting value education and non-violence and compassion towards victim survivors of SVC</p> <p>Promoting alternative peace building activities through art, literature etc. to create attitudinal changes</p> <p>Reinterpreting and addressing communal understandings of stigma created through religious / literary texts, practices, festivals etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education (MoE) • Religious Schools
National / Structural			
<p>Sensitising policy makers to take a stand against stigma</p>	<p>Awareness raising and creating a nuanced understanding of stigma amongst all stakeholders</p> <p>Sensitising policy makers on the impact of stigma on victims of SVC</p>	<p>Initiate policy dialogues on stigma to increase understanding</p> <p>Review educational curricular and removing stigma related content, language and introducing a victim, survivor centred approach</p> <p>Ensuring critical and reflective analysis of texts and stories through the use of current human rights frameworks</p> <p>Sensitising teachers to treat victim survivors as equals</p> <p>Streamlining awareness regarding stigma into educational curricular at all levels, i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary.</p> <p>Adopting a multi-disciplinary approach to victims of SVC and</p>	

		<p>associated stigma</p> <p>Promoting alternative peace building activities</p> <p>Ensuring that youth are not exposed to negative values through media, use of alcohol or drugs</p>	
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4.2. Justice and Law Reform

Activity	Summary / Aim / Objectives	Steps to Affect Change	Key Partners
Individual			
Raising awareness		<p>Awareness raising concerning punishable criminal offences such as SVC and rape</p> <p>Using a sensitive lens to deal with issues of stigma</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Justice (MoJ) • Ministry of Law and Order
National / Structural			
Timely access to justice		<p>Ensuring that legal proceedings and trials are conducted in a timely manner</p> <p>Holding perpetrators accountable and bringing them to justice / ensuring rehabilitation</p> <p>Removing words associated with stigma from the legal vernacular</p> <p>Shifting the language and responsibility of rape to the perpetrator</p> <p>Ensuring access to justice to victim</p>	

		<p>survivors and allowing a space to provide evidence without being stigmatised</p> <p>Reducing costs associated with justice especially in marginalised / rural areas</p> <p>Re-instil confidence in the justice system through awareness raising on justice mechanisms available to survivors</p> <p>Initiating public outreach programmes</p> <p>Criminalising marital rape and legalising abortion in cases of rape</p>	
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4.3. Economic Development and Employment

Activity	Summary / Aim / Objectives	Steps to Affect Change	Key Partners
Individual			
MWCA to coordinate with governmental and non-governmental organisations to maintain a confidential database on victims of SVC	<p>To create a database and maintain confidentiality</p> <p>Identifying and prioritising victims and allowing access to services without being subject to further victimisation</p> <p>A key indicator in this respect could be the percentage of victims of SVC being selected as <i>Samurdhi</i> Beneficiaries</p>	<p>Defining SVC for identification</p> <p>Recognising victims of SVC as economically vulnerable groups</p> <p>Raising awareness on the necessity to maintain confidentiality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MWCA • Divisional and District Secretaries • Local NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) • Mental Health Units in hospitals

Creating a stigma free work environment in the mercantile sector	Sensitising the management on labour laws pertaining to women Ensuring decent working conditions for women	Providing training on labour laws to employers and employees Establishing clear guidelines concerning sexual violence against women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Department • INGOs • NGOs • Ministry of Industry and Commerce
Empowering women to seek employment in the formal sector		Improving safe and accessible systems of transportation Introducing improvements to human resource policies adopted by different sectors (especially in the mercantile sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Labour • Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation • CSOs • NGOs • UN Agencies
Avoid reinforcing stigma through product marketing	Ensuring the quality of products produced by victims of SVC	Business consultations with entrepreneurs on product development Training and skill development	
Sensitisation of <i>Samurdhi</i> and <i>Divi Neguma</i> Officials	The number of officers trained could be used as an indicator in this respect		

4.4. Health and Mental Health

Activity	Summary / Aim / Objectives	Steps to Affect Change	Key Partners
Individual			

Educating health care professionals on issues of stigma related to sexual violence	Ensure that the victim survivors dignity is protected and that healthcare professionals are responsive to the needs of victims	Awareness programmes for frontline medical staff Establishing a special mental health unit for women in general hospitals Training field staff on stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Professionals • Ministry of Health (MoH) • Hospital administrators
Legalising abortion	Protection of Women's Rights		
Community			
Criminalising underage marriages		Legislations Engaging community and religious leaders in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leaders
Improving sex education at educational establishment and making sex education compulsory		Incorporating stigma sensitive materials in to undergraduate curricular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoH • MoE • Ministry of Higher Education
Improve access to contraceptives			

<p>Forming communities at village levels to collect data on GBV</p>	<p>Ensure all incidents of sexual harassments are recorded</p>	<p>Identifying suitable partners for the community groups</p> <p>Providing trainings on the protection of privacy of victims</p> <p>Directing victims to responsible institutions</p> <p>Making communities aware of impact of stigma</p>	
<p>Criminalising marital rape</p>	<p>Protecting women's physical and mental health, deterring future cases, providing redress for victims</p>	<p>Legislations</p> <p>Prosecution of individual cases</p>	
<p>Expanding rape laws to include other forms of sexual assaults which are currently not included in the criminal laws</p>			
<p>Amending the PDVA</p>			
<p>Reforming attitudes regarding being a</p>	<p>Changing perceptions towards survivors</p>	<p>Providing counselling by trained and sensitised</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoH • MWCA

victim of sexual violence within families / Empowerment of victims		counsellors Setting up accessible facilities for victim survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INGOs • NGOs
Establishing Networks		Building relationships between NGOs, Women's Organisations, JMOs, local government officials and women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MWCA
National / Structural			
Creating an effective grievance handling mechanism for especially marginalised victims such as military widows who have been re-victimised by structural inefficiencies such as bribery	Ensure access to a trustworthy service and minimising and eliminating stigma on victims	Providing access to grievance handling mechanisms through divisional and district levels Making grassroots level officers aware of such mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoJ
Promoting sexual health		Providing emergency contraception at clinics Providing the option for abortion for victims who have conceived due to rape Sensitising medical officers and making the 'rape test' more accessible and victim friendly Local and rural hospitals to have at least one trained JMO	

4.5. Disaster Response and Management

Activity	Summary / Aim / Objectives	Steps to Affect Change	Key Partners
Individual			

<p>Creating social support systems that visit camps to provide social and psychological support to victims</p>	<p>Identifying and training support teams and providing them with identification that would enable them to enter camps without hindrances</p> <p>To ensure stigma free access to support</p>	<p>Identifying potential teams with a gender balance</p> <p>Providing sensitised training</p> <p>Issuing identification cards</p> <p>Establishing ready mobile units</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Disaster Management • MWCA
National / Structural			
<p>Incorporating lessons on stigma associated with victims of SVC into trainings of high level officials</p>	<p>Creating awareness and sensitivity</p>	<p>Incorporating lessons concerning the impact of stigma into various curricular</p> <p>Revising school curricular</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoE • National Institute of Education (NIE)
<p>Incorporating gender modules and practical lessons on tackling stigma</p>	<p>Focusing on gender, SGBV</p>	<p>Identifying training modules that address SGBV and tackle stigma</p> <p>Identifying and selecting a consultant and a team to formulate a manual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Disaster Management • MWCA • CSOs
<p>Capacity building of key officers that engage in disaster management to prevent re-victimisation of victims</p>	<p>Training relevant officials</p> <p>Creating gender sensitivity amongst relevant officials</p> <p>Number of persons trained could be used as a key indicator in this respect.</p>	<p>Selecting officers for training</p> <p>Arranging venues for training</p> <p>Initiating training of the trainers programmes</p> <p>Providing pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate the change of perceptions concerning GBV, gender, and SVC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Disaster Management • MWCA

4.6. Rights of Children

Activity	Summary / Aim / Objectives	Steps to Affect Change	Key Partners
Individual			
Introducing reproductive health lessons into school curricular	<p>Increasing the knowledge of school teachers on sexual health and improving teaching skills pertaining to the subject</p> <p>Updating school curricular</p> <p>Tackling stigma in classroom with regard to sexual health, victims of sexual offences</p> <p>Key indicators could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the assessment of increase of knowledge through pre and post tests - number of students who approach teachers and counsellors with regard to sexual health 	<p>Revisiting and updating curricular</p> <p>Providing teacher training and improving the sensitivity of teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoE • NIE • Family Health Bureau
Community			
Creating a safe environment for students / children within educational establishments and communities	<p>Creating a child friendly environment to access counselling services</p> <p>Improving access to counselling services</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of teachers and 	<p>Establishing a regulating body for teachers and counsellors through the Ministry of Education</p> <p>Developing a Code of Ethics and Conduct for Counsellors</p> <p>Standardising qualifications for teachers / counsellors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoE • MWCA • NCPA • Training Colleges

	counsellors trained		
Preventing commercial exploitation and trafficking of children	Community led campaigns / awareness raising against sexual exploitation and trafficking Number of registered Community Based Organisations could be an indicator.	Creating peer groups in villages, Community Based Organisations, establishing Children's, Youth, and Women's Societies Establishing grievance handling mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoE • NCPA • MWCA • Department of Labour • Department of Probation and Child Care Services • Child and Women Development Units (CWDU)
National / Structural			
Establishing child friendly legal mechanisms	Preventing stigmatisation and re-stigmatisation of children Preventing re-traumatisation of children	Initiating sensitisation campaigns Create a child-centred approach model Establishing a functional mechanism for effective follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoJ • MWCA • NCPA • Police • CWDU • MoH
Reporting on sexual violence on children	Preventing and reducing stigmatisation	Sensitisation campaigns for media personnel Introducing ethical reporting in media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Parliamentary Reforms and Mass Media

5. Entry Points to Tackle Stigma

- It is necessary to deconstruct the term 'chastity'
- It is essential to deconstruct and reinterpret myths, epics, and other references in literature that are based on emphasizing chastity.

- Use of forum theatre to question whether the acts depicted in historical dramas, literary pieces, and epics are acceptable according to objective morality.
- Taking control of terminology that is used in reference to sexual violence, especially those that are associated with conflict.
- Monitoring standards of institutions where young children who have been subject to sexual violence have been sent for institutionalisation.
- Adopting measures for the reintegration of victims of sexual violence into the society.
- Effective camp management (IDP camps / Disaster Management Camps) to prevent re-victimisation and stigmatisation of those who have already been subject to abuse.
- Developing gender equality with regard to preparedness, mitigation, response, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- Sensitization and capacity enhancement and development of teacher – student relationships with a focus of raising general awareness.
- Inspiring and sensitising religious and community leaders to adopt a stand against stigma.
- Strengthening psycho-social counselling initiatives.
- Capacity building of staff and students in higher education
- Establishing and strengthening services provided to victims of ragging violence, sexual and gender based violence.
- Providing vocational and technical education.
- Expanding public health and ‘*Mithuru Piyasa*’ Initiatives to enhance services available to victims of SGBV.
- Building collaborations and effective professional relationships among different stakeholders.
- Ensuring that media respects confidentiality of victims of sexual violence and respect ethical reporting guidelines.
- Introducing effective and victim – friendly reporting of sexual violence.
- Adopting measures to prevent reinforcement of stigma through product and service marketing.
- Promotion of alternative peace building activities such as drama, theatre, art.

6. General Recommendations

- Raising awareness at the individual, community, structural and national levels.
- Improving sex education.
- Review of school curricular to eliminate gender insensitive information / stories.
- Changing and removing stigmatizing mindsets of people through reformulation and reinterpretation of historical references.
- Working with educational institutions to encourage students and teachers to critically evaluate historical anecdotes and literature that encompass anti – women perspectives.
- Changing, controlling, regulating, censoring, and monitoring media that promotes and perpetuates anti-women perspectives and glorify self-immolation of women to protect ‘honour’ in the event of being subject to sexual violence.
- Changing the dialogue and terminology from victim blaming and shaming to hold the offenders and perpetrators liable. It is necessary for the society and the families of the perpetrators to rethink what we think of perpetrators and adopt an approach that rejects violence and rape.
- Expanding existing laws.
- Introducing laws for providing a safe and stigma free work environment for victims of sexual violence in conflict.
- Removing words associated with stigma from the legal vernacular.
- Sensitising court staff including judges to the special circumstances of victims and survivors of sexual violence.
- Developing a child and women friendly legal mechanism especially equipped to deal with women and children who have been subject to sexual violence during conflict.
- Training all stakeholders and officers of state and all individuals working with victims and survivors of sexual violence and sensitising them to the different needs of such victims and survivors.

6. Conclusion

All stakeholders in the Sri Lankan society at individual, community, religious, structural, national levels are required to act in collaboration for the elimination of

stigma associated with sexual violence in conflict. To achieve this end, it is necessary to raise awareness while advocating for policy changes and introducing amendments to the existing laws. It is further necessary to collaborate with media to eliminate the spreading and perpetuation of anti-women perspectives.

Gender sensitization at all levels and providing necessary training to all stakeholders is a key step that is necessary in attempts to prevent stigma associated with victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Special measures are required to be adopted to safeguard children born of sexual violence or born to victims of sexual violence, from being subjected to secondary stigmatisation.

Despite many reports of sexual violence in conflict, the extent of violence and what should be listed under the said category remain undefined and unclear thus creating difficulties with regard to the provision of services to victims and survivors. Accurate identification of the types of violence that have been inflicted upon victims ranging from minor sexual abuse to rape and forced impregnation should be documented with data that is segregated in accordance with sex, geographical area, ethnicity, and age groups in order to facilitate effective provision of remedies.

(Report authored by: Danushka S. Medawatte)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Background Note

Tackling Stigma of Conflict Related Sexual Violence through the Sri Lanka National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender- Based Violence (SGBV NAP)

Background Note

This workshop is a follow up to a workshop held in November 2016 by FOKUS WOMEN, in collaboration with the British High Commission Colombo, on tackling stigma faced by conflict related sexual violence survivors (CRSV). Tackling and preventing stigma suffered by survivors and victims of sexual violence in conflict is a priority focus of the United Kingdom-led global campaign for the Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI).

The impact of stigma on survivors of sexual violence during the war in Sri Lanka has received little attention. What are the root causes of stigma and what are the risks of failing to act? How does stigma impact survivors and their families? What are the roles and responsibilities of the different sectors involved in tackling stigma and what are the opportunities and challenges they face? More importantly, how is stigma understood, manifested, and what are the options available for tackling stigma, at the individual, family, community, national and global level?

The Principles for Global Action is a universal set of principles formulated through international efforts surrounding conflict and sexual violence in conflict (SVC) that ensure the prevention and elimination of stigma. The principles are aimed firstly at international policy and decision makers in order to develop a greater understanding of SVC related stigma in conflict-affected environments. At the national level, the Principles act as an aid to governments in tackling stigma, including relevant Ministries, other governmental agencies at national, provincial and local level and the non-governmental sector.

The aims of the ‘Principles for Global Action’ document are:

- *‘To sustain and build momentum for all stakeholders to address and prevent SVC and ensure that, when they do so, they are taking the issues of stigma into full account.*
- *To build a deeper understanding of the function of stigma; in particular in maintaining existing gender orders, reinforcing gendered inequality through and beyond conflict, and driving gendered assumptions around sex and sexuality, and how it needs to be recognised as an integral part of approaches to addressing and preventing sexual violence, in and beyond conflict.*
- *To provide a go-to tool for national governments, donors, international bodies and the wider international community to develop a greater understanding, awareness and integration of ending stigma into their prevention efforts and responses to SVC.*
- *To ensure that existing support to victims/survivors and children born of rape is responsive to the principles, considerations and recommendations set out within the Principles for Global Action document.*
- *To promote an understanding of stigma as profoundly gendered, grounded in social expectations and understanding of gender roles, with the aim of improved and increased holistic victim/survivor-centred responses and support to those that have suffered as a result SVC (including child witnesses and children born of rape), and ensuring that national and international stakeholders do not contribute to or reinforce SVC-related stigma (or the gendered roles that give rise to such stigma).*
- *To mobilise increased, sustainable support to grassroots and national organisations led by victim/survivors, from States and the international community.*²

The objectives of the workshop are:

² Excerpt from the ‘Principles for Global Action: Preventing and Addressing Stigma Associated to Sexual Violence in Conflict’, Draft for Consultation, March 2017.

1. To determine gaps in addressing stigma in existing programmes carried out under the Sri Lanka National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender- Based Violence (SGBV NAP) using the Principles for Global Action as a guiding framework.
2. To identify and create cross sector collaborations to foster a holistic approach to tackling stigma.
3. To follow up on the recommendations made at the workshop on stigma held in November 2016.
4. To identify ways to address stigma at the national/structural, community and interpersonal/individual levels, as recommendations to the government in rolling out the SGBV NAP.

The workshop outcome will be to identify opportunities where the Principles for Global Action can be integrated into the existing programmes initiated under the Sri Lanka National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender- Based Violence, (SGBV NAP), which is driven by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs.

Participants of the workshop will include NGOs, survivor support organizations, Technical Leads from Ministries appointed under the SGBV NAP, other government officials, health professionals, religious and community leaders, international agencies, the donor community and the legal profession.

Appendix 2 – Agenda of the Workshop



Tackling Stigma of Conflict Related Sexual Violence through the National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender- Based Violence (SGBV NAP)

29th August 2017

JETWING COLOMBO SEVEN

8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m.

AGENDA

8.30 - 9.00 a.m	Registration
9.15 - 9.30 a.m	Introduction and Comments, <i>Mr. Tom Burn</i> , Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission
9.30 - 9.45 a.m	Introduction and objectives of workshop and Overview of Principles for Global Action, <i>Ms. Shyamala Gomez</i> , Country Director, FOKUS WOMEN
9.45 - 10.00 a.m	Introduction of participants
10.00 - 10.45 a.m	Overview of Stigma and its Impact on CRSV survivors: A Practitioner's Perspective, <i>Ms. Vasuki Jeyashankar</i> , Women's Rights Activist
10.45 - 11.00 a.m	Role of the MWCA in implementing the National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV NAP), <i>Ms. Swarna Sumanasekera</i> , Chairperson, National Committee on Women
11.00 - 11.15 a.m	Tea
11.15 - 11.45 a.m	Tackling Stigma through the National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV NAP), <i>Bimali Amerasekera</i> , Technical Specialist, Gender and Women's Empowerment, UNDP
11.45 - 1.00 p.m	Group work
1.00 - 2.00 p.m	Lunch
2.00 - 3.30 p.m	Group work cont.
3.30 - 3.45 p.m	Tea
3.45 - 4.30 p.m	Group work presentations
4.30 - 4.45 p.m	Wrap up and next steps

Appendix 3 – List of Participants

Name	Designation	Organization
DONOR/DIPLOMAT/UN		
Philippe Dickinson	Second Secretary	British High Commission
Damiano Sguaitamatti	First Secretary, Political Affairs	Embassy of Switzerland
Sumudhu Jayasinghe	Human Rights & Anti-corruption Officer, Political Section	British High Commission
Tom Burn	Deputy High Commissioner	British High Commission
Minal Cabraal	Business Advisor	Market Development Facility
Sudarshana Jayasundara	Social Development and Gender Specialist	Asian Development Bank
Kithmini Aviruppola	Focal Point, UNICEF-MOJ Project	UNICEF
Ritsu Nacken	Resident Representative	UNFPA
Asmi Musthafa	Program Assistant	UNFPA
Julia Rauer	Transitional Justice Advisor	OHCHR
Bimali Ameresekere	Technical Coordinator, Gender and Women's Empowerment	UNDP
Jennifer Hart	Counsellor	Canadian High Commission
Vidya Perera	Senior Advisor	Norwegian Embassy
Elise Loftheim	Intern	Norwegian Embassy
Tobias Wolfgarten	Advisor	GIZ
STATE		
Swarna Sumanasekare	Chairperson, National Committee on Women	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs

Asansa Kaumadi	Development Officer	Ministry of Foreign Employment
Dr. Madura M. Wehella	Additional Secretary	Ministry of Education
Chathura Liyanarachchi	Assistant Director	Disaster Management Centre
Hasara Mihindukulasuriya	Assistant Manager, Programmes	National Child Protection Authority
Badra Withanage	Director of Education	Ministry of Education
H. C. D. De Zoysa	Legal Officer	
I. D. Danasiri	Community Health Coordinating Officer	National Council for Mental Health
R. A. S. A. Rajapakse	Assistant Director, Development	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
Kumudu Perera	Legal Officer	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
Dr. N. Mapitigama	Medical specialist	CCP, Family Health Bureau, Ministry of health
Prof. Sharaine Fernando	Chairperson	Women's Committee, Sri Lanka Medical Association
CIVIL SOCIETY/NGO/INGO		
Pubudini Wickramaratne	Senior Advocacy Advisor	OXFAM
Heshani Ranasinghe	Gender Advisor	OXFAM
Prabodhini Munasinghe	Legal Advisor	ICRC
Passanna Gunasekera	Gender POC	USAID
N. Sukirtharaj	Co-ordinator	JSAC, Jaffna
T. Sumathi	Director, Monitoring and Evaluation	Shanthiham, Jaffna
Arulanantham Shivani	Counsellor	Shanthiham, Jaffna

Mariam Wadood	Attorney-at-law, Project Coordinator	Women in Need
Shreen Saroor	Activist	Women's Action Network
Duminda Wanigasekera		Samuththana
Ranmini Vithanagama	Researcher	International Centre for Ethnic Studies
S. Sharmila Darshini	Director	Centre for Humanitarian and Integrated Development
M. C. M. Buhari	Executive Director	ESDF - Sri Lanka
FOKUS WOMEN PARTNERS		
R. M. S. Rathnayake	Executive Director	Rajarata Praja Kendraya
Rupa Gamage	S.P.C	Rajarata Praja Kendraya
Amalka Edirisinghe	Director - Programs	Family Rehabilitation Centre
Anagi Guneseekara	Clinical psychologist	Family Rehabilitation Centre
Sumika Perera	Coordinator	Women's Resource Centre
Sumana Nellampitiya	Military Widow	Women's Resource Centre
Mala Weerasekara	Military Widow	Women's Resource Centre
Maithrey Rajasingam	Executive Director	Viluthu
K. Mahaluxmy	District Coordinator	Mannar Women's Development Federation
Jehan Perera	Executive Director	National Peace Council
RELIGIOUS LEADERS		
Fr. Dr. V. Patrick	Catholic Priest	Jaffna

Rev. B. Chandraratane Thero	Buddhist monk	Puttalam
A. Manabudeen	Maulavi (Muslim priest)	Jamiathul Ulama, Kallankudy
H. M. Shajahan	Secretary	Jamiathul Ulama, Kallankudy
Moulavi B. A. S. Sufiyan		DIRC, Vavuniya
Ruvi Perera		Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC
LEGAL		
K. Ganeshwaran	Legal Advisor	Home for Human Rights
MEDIA		
P. Umachandra	Manager, News 1st	Shakthi TV
ACADEMIA		
Prof. Kumudu Wijewardana	Senior professor	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Malathi De Alwis	Socio-cultural Anthropologist	
FOKUS WOMEN STAFF		
Shyamala Gomez	Country Director	FOKUS WOMEN
Thilina Madiwala	Programme Manager	FOKUS WOMEN
Kamaleswari Letchumanan	Programme Officer	FOKUS WOMEN
Ando Anthappan	Project Coordinator	FOKUS WOMEN
Uthpala Madurasinghe	Finance and Administrative Officer	FOKUS WOMEN
Chethana Ranatunge	Intern	FOKUS WOMEN
Maleesha Fernando	Intern	FOKUS WOMEN