



GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

**UNDP SRI LANKA COUNTRY OFFICE
2023 - 2027**



UNDP Sri Lanka Gender Equality Strategy 2023-2027

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1. Introduction

Gender equality has been and continues to be central to the mandate of UNDP, as the integrator of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender equality is an essential development goal in itself, as well as fundamental to the achievement of the overall development agenda. The 2030 Agenda envisions a world in which “every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed.” Gender equality is thus essential to achieve the guiding principle of the agenda of “leaving no one behind.”

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the international legal instrument that requires Sri Lanka as a ratifying country, to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promote women's and girls' equal rights. Also, since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, Sri Lanka has taken numerous steps to achieve gender equality, including reforms to domestic laws and the integration of gender-related priorities into government action plans.

This Gender Equality Strategy (GES) 2023-2027 of UNDP Sri Lanka (herein referred to as the Strategy) has been informed by recommendations from the review of the previous gender strategy of the Country Office (CO) and the gender seal appraisal mission. It is aligned with the current UNDP Sri Lanka Country Programme Document (CPD) 2023-2027 and national development plans and policies of Sri Lanka, in particular the recent Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy 2023-2033. The Strategy has been informed through consultations with various stakeholders, including UNDP staff, representatives of civil society organizations, women’s rights organizations and the Government of Sri Lanka. These consultations have been an important part of the process to identify gaps and opportunities, as well as inform the framework of the Strategy.

The Strategy outlines the commitment of UNDP to find solutions to address the key gender equality challenges in Sri Lanka, through its programming. It is an important guide for the CO to sustain its overall gender mainstreaming processes, policies, capacities and to continue to build on the momentum of its gold certification in the Gender Equality Seal.¹

The Strategy thus aims to achieve the following main objectives:

- To translate [UNDP’s corporate Gender Equality Strategy \(2022-2025\)](#) into UNDP Sri Lanka’s operational context, considering the socio-economic and political reality.
- To translate the commitments made by UNDP in its CPD 2023-2027 by taking a two-pronged approach of, firstly integrating gender considerations into programmes and projects, and secondly having robust stand-alone interventions towards gender equality and women’s empowerment.

¹ The UNDP Gender Equality Seal is a corporate certification tool for gender mainstreaming that recognizes good performance of UNDP offices/units to deliver gender equality results. It provides a framework that guides the CO in meeting specific performance standards. The seal is also a quality assurance initiative that tracks, measures and certifies the competence and achievements in advancing women's rights and corporate gender equality goals.

- To continue investments in its internal processes, operations, systems, capacities and workplace culture to solidify UNDP Sri Lanka's position as an employer of choice-providing a safe, inclusive and accessible workplace for all.

2. UNDP's Core Values and Gender Mainstreaming Principles

UNDP's approach to gender mainstreaming is a dual one, firstly by designing and implementing gender-specific targeted interventions, and secondly by mainstreaming gender concerns in the development, planning, implementation and evaluation of all policies and programs. To this end, all of UNDP Sri Lanka's programmes will continue to be informed by context specific gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data to assess the different implications of any planned policy or programmatic intervention for women and men.

The Strategy will adhere to the following principles and key tenets that will be fundamental to the gender mainstreaming efforts of the CO.

- **Human rights-based approach to development:** UNDP Sri Lanka will ensure that program design is based on analysis of gaps in the realization of the differential rights of women and men, and the differential power relations and dynamics which drive them. In this context, all programme areas will emphasize the fulfilment and realization of human rights principles, by focusing on rights and duties of right holders and duty-bearers.
- **Address social norms and power relations:** Acknowledging that social norms create gendered roles and harmful stereotypes that limit the potential of women and girls in all spheres, the CO will pursue initiatives and work with strategic partners to challenge such stereotypes and patriarchal norms.
- **Focus on transformational change:** The CO will focus on addressing and removing institutional, societal, political and legal barriers, and pursue initiatives that accelerate structural transformations towards gender equality.
- **Leave no one behind:** Ensuring the principle of leaving no one behind will help UNDP to reach the most disadvantaged, and will support the CO's role in examining multiple and intersecting aspects of vulnerability and discrimination, between gender and ethnicity, regionality, sexual orientation and disability.
- **Aligning and localizing the global six signature solutions:** The programmatic interventions of the CO will build on the six global signature solutions by (1) addressing poverty and inequality through a major shift in economic thinking, a radical reconfiguration of economic power relations and diminishing the structural barriers in the economy that keep women behind; (2) building effective, inclusive and accountable governance systems that keeps development focused on meeting people's needs and realizing their rights; (3) building resilience to a wide range of shocks and crises, including conflict, climate change, disasters, environmental degradation and epidemics through the promotion of community-based models and state institutions to ensure that both women and men shape and benefit from solutions to crises; (4) advancing the environmental dimension of sustainable development by addressing land degradation, deforestation, water scarcity and pollution that disproportionately affect marginalized people, especially women; (5) closing the energy gap by bringing sustainable energy solutions to unconnected communities, and challenging inequalities in green energy systems, policies,

decision-making and ownership, as well as at the technical and service provision levels; (6) promoting a dual gender mainstreaming approach of implementing stand-alone interventions on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as implementing gender approaches across all other six signature solution areas.

3. Gender Equality Challenges and Gaps in Sri Lanka

It is important to situate this Strategy in the historical, as well as the current political and economic context of Sri Lanka. The decades-long civil war made long lasting impacts on the country's social, economic and political fabric. The Easter Sunday attacks in 2019, and the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic which added to economic worsening due to loss of tourism revenue and the overall impact of lockdown measures, further exacerbated the situation. By April 2022, the crisis had taken a critical turn, with dollar reserves at record lows, the extreme devaluation of the rupee, and the high cost of living impacting the ability to purchase essential commodities and leading to shortages of food, fuel and medicine. Sri Lanka is still reeling from the economic crises with a build-up of debt sustainability and public finance issues over several decades. Sri Lanka's economic crisis has been driving millions of people into poverty, jeopardising their fundamental rights and freedoms. The crisis has been **multi-dimensional and led to food insecurity**, a dire shortage of fuel and transport, loss of livelihoods, shortage of essential medicine and healthcare equipment. In Sri Lanka, 55.7 percent of the population grapples with multidimensional vulnerability. Translating to over half of the population, that is a staggering 12.3 million individuals out of the 22.2 million population are deprived in at least three out of the twelve indicators that span the critical dimensions of education, health, disaster, and living standards.² Disenfranchised groups, such as women, especially female headed households, children, and LGBT+ communities have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. Incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) increased, and food inflation rates soared, leading to households adopting food-based coping strategies, with women being most impacted by reduction of portion sizes, skipping meals or lack of nutritional high-quality food.

The onset of the socio-political and economic crisis in 2022 led to a public uprising as an indication of the built up frustration with weakened governance structures, absence of accountability, and incoherent planning. Amidst this crises, disparities, inequalities and vulnerabilities intensified for specific groups, especially women, young people, the elderly, the disabled and minorities. The March 2022 report of the United Nations Human Rights Commission underscored the deteriorating status of **human rights and heightened risks to social cohesion**.

Sri Lanka ranks at 110th position on the Global Gender Gap Index, and among the bottom 10 countries for political representation of women, with only 5.3 per cent in Parliament. The 2016 amendment to the laws that govern local governments resulted in the legislative allocation of a 25 percent quota for women in local government. Despite the entry of a significant number of women into local government, women's **meaningful representation** with decision-making power in political decisions remains elusive.

² Understanding Multidimensional Vulnerabilities: Impact on People of Sri Lanka 2023, UNDP Sri Lanka.

Patriarchal values and social norms continue to influence gender roles, with deep rooted notions of women's reproductive role and marital status, thereby positioning women's roles in the household and men's roles as the primary breadwinners. This influences a number of issues. For instance, women's low **labour force participation** at 35.4 percent, which is half of that of men's labour force participation exists despite the high levels of educational attainments and other social indicators for women. Women are the highest contributors to the national economy working in the plantation sector, in the industrial sector (largely the export processing factories) and as migrant workers. They continue to dominate these sectors, confined to low skilled and low paid work with minimum social protection or career advancement opportunities. Even within **foreign employment** which is the second highest foreign exchange earner. Despite the fact that female migrant workers are being employed as domestic workers, while the majority of the males are recruited as skilled workers, foreign exchange earnings indicate that migrant workers in the Middle East, remitted 52% of all remittances in 2017. Women migrant workers in such precarious jobs are vulnerable to a violation of their rights, including SGBV.

The **micro-small and medium-sized enterprises** (MSMEs) sector plays a vital role in the socioeconomic development of Sri Lanka. MSMEs form the backbone of the economy, accounting for more than 50 per cent of GDP and employing 45 per cent of the country's labour force. Women make up a large segment of this sector in the form of micro-enterprises, run by rural women that tend to be informal, home-based and low-skilled. Being part of this informal segment means that most women entrepreneurs lacks the potential for scalability and growth, and have limited access to financing and other government support measures. In addition, women are restrained by stereotypical attitudes that devalue their entrepreneurial potential compared to men, and gendered division of labour which restricts their roles to the care economy, among other challenges.

Gender-based wage disparities is another hidden issue, as equal pay for equal work is not always followed in certain formal sector employment and most widespread in the informal sector employment. Women bear the **burden of unpaid care work**, which further multiplied during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, their unpaid care work remains unrecognized making their contributions invisible from the formal labour force in the country.

The National Women's Wellbeing Survey (2019) on women's lifetime experiences of **SGBV** indicates that one in four women (24.9%) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 by a partner or nonpartner. The survey also finds that one in five (20.4%) ever-partnered women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Non-consensual sex and underage pregnancies are two of the main forms of SGBV suffered by girls. SGBV continues at unabated rates and there is a serious lacuna in reporting on SGBV against gender minorities and more so on the intersectional analysis of victims and survivors. **Sexual harassment** in public transportation is the most prevalent form of violence against women in Sri Lanka, and a key factor affecting women's participation in the labor force and women's mobility.

The Penal Code was amended in 1995 and 1998 to strengthen the criminal law in protecting the physical integrity of women (and children).³ Protective legislation is enshrined in the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2005) and the Victim and Witness Protection Act (2015). Despite legal protections, the inadequacies of the **justice system** have impacted women adversely. Lack of gender sensitivity and gender responsiveness in the justice system has resulted in fear and a lack of trust in the formal justice system, especially among victims of gender-based violence. In recent times, domestic violence and digital violence has risen in alarming proportions exacerbated by the Covid-19 lockdowns and the economic crisis that has forced many to be confined to their homes impacted by diverse stresses created by these crises.

Sri Lanka has achieved gender parity across its high literacy rates, which are at 92 percent. However, this parity has not contributed to achieving substantive gender equality. Certain segregation and gaps continue, for instance there are far **lower numbers of girls in STEM** subjects. And although ICT can be an enabler of economic development and social justice, it continues to be mired with the pre-existing **gender digital divide** - in usage, access, availability and infrastructure.

Sri Lanka leads on many **health indicators**, with higher-life expectancy for women, and good access to maternal health services. Despite this, socio-cultural and religious overtones can create norms that limit the reproductive health and rights of women and girls. Gender norms also have a harmful impact on men and boys who are boxed into expectations to take risks, be strong and not seek help, often leading to negative health outcomes - including higher rates of suicide, homicides, substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, increased likelihood of perpetration of violence against women and children, and delayed health seeking behaviours among boys and men. Sexual orientation and gender identity also act as a barrier in accessing health related information and services, including reproductive health. The LGBTQI+ community often face delays in receiving health care, as well as prejudice when accessing healthcare services.

Women have been especially negatively impacted by the **war**, becoming female heads of households. Female headed households make up 23% out of 1.1 million households in Sri Lanka, and are usually more prone to poverty and higher levels of hardship. Land and housing ownership by women and gender minorities is extremely low, especially in communities in the Northern and Eastern provinces of the country, those living in plantation communities, those in urban low-income areas and those living in disaster prone areas.

Climate change in Sri Lanka is a priority issue with challenges stemming from flash floods, prolonged droughts, sea level rise and extreme weather patterns. Climate change also exacerbates inequalities and deepens vulnerability, impacting women and girls disproportionately. At the same time women also possess knowledge and capacity which can be leveraged for resilience building. The NDC revision process provided an opportunity to closely examine the alignment of proposed climate actions with the SDGs, as well as to

³ These included amendments to rape laws, recognition of statutory rape, and offences such as procurement of any person for illicit sexual intercourse, anti-trafficking laws, criminalization of sexual violence including sexual abuse and sexual harassment, recognition of incest as an offence, and the prohibition of the publication of details which reveal the identity of victims of sexual crimes.

analyze gender dimensions of mitigation and adaptation priorities. Based on this analysis, a multi-step approach to integrate gender into the 10-year NDC implementation plans has been developed across sectors.

4. Policy and enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment in Sri Lanka

The Constitution of Sri Lanka guarantees legal equality for men and women, does not permit discrimination based on sex, and recognizes a special provision to promote substantive equality that can be carried out through law, regulations, or administrative action for the advancement of women. The country's legal framework provides the necessary laws to uphold the rights of all, as well as provides mechanisms for redressal. However, personal laws consisting of Muslim law, Tesawalamai law and Kandyan Law in some instances contradict specific rights of women in the Constitution.

The main state machineries for ensuring gender equality came into force with the establishment of the Women's Bureau in 1978. The Ministry of Women's created in 1985 is the national women's machinery; and following the formulation of the Women's Charter in 1993, the National Committee on Women (NCW) Sri Lanka was established. In 2000, Women and Children's Desks were established at police stations to also help address the growing concerns around SGBV. The Gender Bureau at the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations was established in 2008.

UN conventions ratified/acceded and signed by Sri Lanka

- Ratified UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) - 5 October 1981
- Signature to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) - 4- 15 September 1995
- Ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – 1991
- Sri Lanka ratified a key International Labour Convention on gender equality, the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) on 01 April 1993
- Sri Lanka acceded to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 3 January 1994
- Sri Lanka acceded to the CEDAW Convention Optional Protocol on 15 October 2002
- Ratified UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) on 22 September 2006
- Provisions related to trafficking were introduced by the Penal Code Amendment Act No. 16 of 2006

National policies

- The first government policy on women, the Women’s Charter - 1993 (only a Policy document does not have legal force)
- National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka - 2003
- The National Labour Migration Policy formulated by the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare - 2008
- The Family Policy was formulated by the Ministry of Social Services Sri Lanka in December 2010 and this was passed in 2014
- Family Policy of Sri Lanka - 2011
- National Policy Framework for Social Integration was formulated - 2012
- National Human Resources and Employment Policy formulated - 2012
- National Youth Policy formulated – 2014
- National Plan of Action on Women – 2014 (not rolled out)
- Draft Women Headed Households Policy in process. Concept approved by Cabinet – 2016
- The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy, 2023 - 2033

National Action Plans

- The National Committee on Women drafted a Plan of Action Supporting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) in 2005 which was not rolled-out
- The National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (NAP-PPHR) 2011-2016 was formulated in 2011
- The second National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (2017 – 2022) formulated in 2017
- The National Action Plan on Women (2014-2018) on the 12 Critical areas as per the BPFA – received provincial Cabinet approval, but not launched or rolled out.
- The National Plan of Action for the Implementation of LLRC Recommendations – Responsibilities by Thematic Area was formulated in 2014
- The Policy Framework and National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) 2016 -2020 approved by Cabinet in 2016

5. UNDP’s work on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Sri Lanka

As a development partner in Sri Lanka for over 55 years, UNDP has several key comparative advantages to support its development priorities. These are in the areas of partnerships and leveraging its convening power; providing integrated solutions to development challenges; its positioning as a policy and thought leader; being able to bring in strategic innovations and digital led-solutions; and being an agile development partner able to pilot ideas and bring them to scale.

UNDP Sri Lanka has worked for years in the areas of inclusive governance and addressing environmental and climate concerns, and has placed gender equality at the centre of its development mandate. It has been working to address a number of key challenges as per its previous Gender Equality Strategy 2019-2022.⁴ A review of the previous strategy revealed that UNDP had been able to achieve strong gender equality results under “challenging circumstances and in a volatile context that included the Easter attack, the election of a new president and government, the passage of the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fall and rise of the government with a new president in the midst of an economic and governance crisis”.

⁴ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation, 2019.

In 2022, the CO received the Gold Seal certification award with a combined score of 97.5% across the seven dimensions that the Seal process assesses. This reflects a high level of commitment, leadership and ownership for gender equality and points towards the CO's intention to achieve more transformative gender equality results in the new country programme. The Gender Seal appraisal found that the UNDP Sri Lanka found ways to pivot its programming during the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis to ensure relevance and responsiveness to the needs of the situation on the ground, for instance by bringing in strong gender dimensions to the work on migration and taxation.

UNDP has generated pioneering solutions for gender mainstreaming in several areas, for instance by leveraging the justice sector to address SGBV, and engendering the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and Climate Change Policy. It has also been an influential actor in supporting the national gender equality agenda, through the National Action Plan on SGBV as well as the new Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Through its current CPD 2023-2027, UNDP has strongly positioned its work on gender equality and women's empowerment across its programming; and this new GES will support the operationalization of this vision, and support in maintaining the momentum of the Gender Equality Gold Seal.

6. Strategic Framework of the GES

The Strategy reflects on the general situation and context in Sri Lanka for gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as examines its UNDP's own internal policies and practices. It thus provides entry points to address gender inequality issues through the ongoing programme cycle, and through the operational, human resources (HR) policies and reporting procedures of the CO.

Through this strategy, UNDP will have three main roles in the area of promoting gender equality:

1. **Influencer** | UNDP CO will leverage its position of trust and credibility with the government to influence policies to be gender-responsive, and influence the public through larger campaigns and social media outreach, especially focusing on youth as well as engagement with men and boys as allies. Increasingly UNDP Sri Lanka is influencing public policies on gender responsive social protection, gender and taxation, SDG budget tracking with specific focus on SDG 5.
2. **Advocate** | UNDP will develop key messaging for each of its programming areas, and work with civil society organizations and other partners to amplify the advocacy for gender equality in Sri Lanka.
3. **Convenor** | UNDP will leverage its role as the integrator of the SDGs to convene multiple stakeholders, across sectors to foster new partnerships for gender equality, while continuing to create space for civic engagement. UNDP Sri Lanka has initiated dialogue with development partners of empowering rural women as food producers and contributors to economy in overcoming economic challenges, promoting investment on women led MSMEs and reducing digital gender divide.

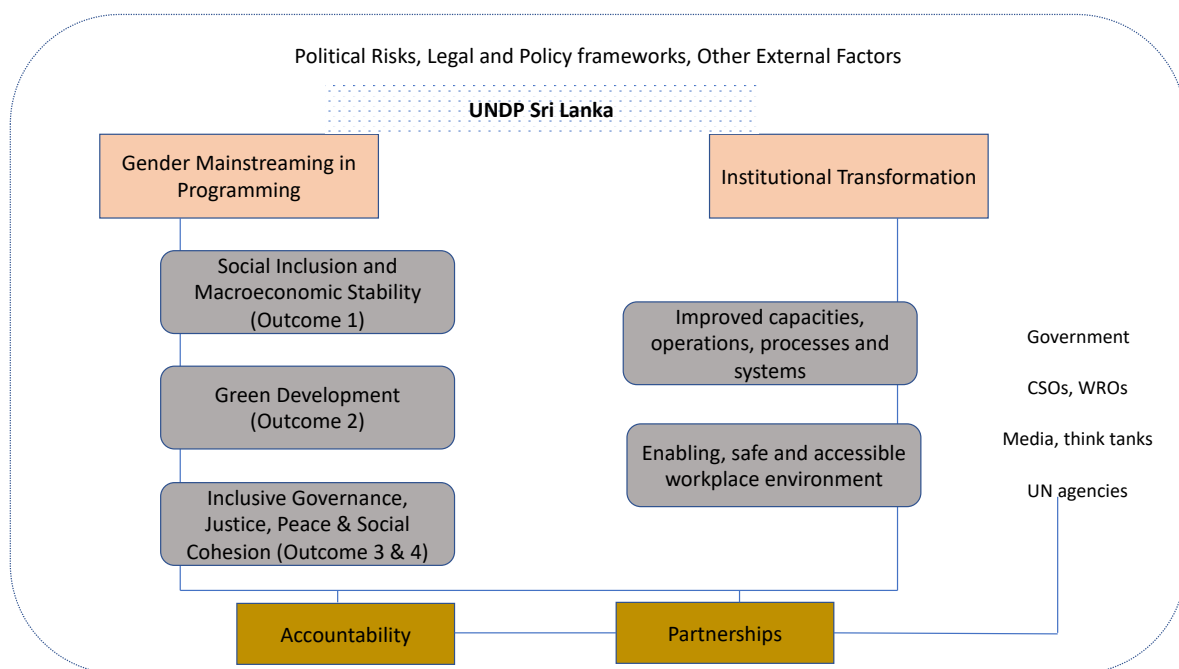
Through these roles of influencer, advocate and convenor, UNDP Sri Lanka will continue its role in advocating for and influencing national policies to be more gender-responsive. UNDP will promote both the normative case for gender equality as a development issue, as well as the business case of promoting gender equality for economic growth. At the same time, UNDP Sri Lanka will continue to engage with government, civil society, academia and the private sector in promoting initiatives that advance the gender equality agenda.

The GES framework is organized in two pillars:

- * gender mainstreaming in **programming outcomes** of the UNDP CPD towards the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment;
- * **institutional transformation** through:
 - a. improved capacities and efficient processes and systems
 - b. enabling environment for a safe and inclusive workplace culture

Cross-cutting areas of accountability and partnerships are key across both pillars.

Figure 1: The UNDP Sri Lanka GES framework



6.1 Programmatic Focus for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

While UNDP has not adopted Outcome 6 (on gender equality and women’s empowerment) of the UN Cooperation Framework (CF), it has instead opted to develop gender-responsive output indicators for each of the four outcomes that form its CPD 2023-2027. This approach allows UNDP Sri Lanka to strategically integrate critical gender considerations across sectors. This is in line with UNDP’s value addition and role as the integrator of the SDGs, bringing in a

strong gender lens across important thematic areas related to governance and public administration, livelihoods and macro-economic policy, as well as environmental management and climate change. Emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment has been placed at the centre of each pillar of the CPD, and the GES has identified key intervention areas (below) that will be delivered, through a combination of rights-based approach and equality/equity-based approach being used, based on the context, the type of project and stakeholders involved.

In addition to the programming areas outlined in the CPD, the Sri Lanka CO plays a very important policy advocacy and influencing role by organizing and participating in policy dialogues and forums, where it strongly advocates for gender equality and women's empowerment. The CO has put in place a portfolio approach to enhance integration, create an effective policy-practice nexus with field-work feedback loops; promote effective collaboration between teams; and ensure maximizing resources and efficiencies. The CO currently has four portfolios to implement its ambition in the CPD, which will continue to evolve to deliver on the CPD.

The SDG Action Hub is a platform where analytics on critical development challenges are explored for deepening the understanding of critical issues and emerging trends at hand; "dots are connected" for greater integration of UNDP's responses, and; programmatic and policy engagement actions are identified for timely adjustment and/or execution. Deep dive sessions were conducted on gender equality and women empowerment as part of SDG Action Hub and such analysis supported GEN 3 project design and integrating gender equality in the other portfolio interventions. Through this new GES, the thematic focus on gender equality will be strengthened as part of the SDG Action Hub.

As the portfolios and thematic areas flesh out their detailed implementation plans for the next four years, it is important that each portfolio undertakes a gender analysis, develops baselines and uses these to inform its own gender action plan, which is resourced and actionable.⁵ This will enable the CO to take a systematic approach to ensure that each portfolio maintains a strong gender mainstreaming focus, and is able to deliver on its commitment outlined in the CPD, as well as the CF.

Pillar 1: Social inclusion and macro-economic stability

Key intervention areas under this pillar are aligned with Signature Solutions 1 and 6.

- Invest in **data collection** capacities to provide a stronger evidence base, and to ensure that recovery policies and processes are informed by sex-disaggregated data. Support
- Expand on the **multi-vulnerability index** from a gendered perspective, including but not limited to issues of women's domestic and care burden to inform national policy making.
- Develop campaigns and messaging to translate research findings on women's unpaid care work into policy recommendations and advocacy that **challenges gender-stereotypes** in specific professions and jobs for women.
- Advocate for **gender-responsive fiscal and social protection** measures that support Sri Lanka's graduation strategy, which incorporates voices and perspectives of women, and

⁵ This recommendation was also made in the review of the previous GES, as well as in the final report of the Gender Seal Mission.

recognizes existing gender gaps in food security, water security and agricultural production.

- Leverage **SDG financing** as an entry point to explore intersecting issues related to climate change and gender- for instance identifying how energy insecurity impacts women and women-owned businesses and possible financing solutions with the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) on energy security.
- Expand on the pioneering work and support the implementation of recommendations carried out through the **SDG taxation framework** to evaluate the coherence of tax systems from a gender lens, and accordingly set tax reform priorities, including innovative labour market policy incentives for the private sector.
- Explore **gender budgeting** within **innovative financing** options such as debt-for-nature swaps, green/blue bonds, and market intelligence on SDG investment opportunities through the SDG investor maps.
- Map out different strategies in the MSME sector, in particular the informal sector (where a majority of the women entrepreneurs are). Support **diversification of women's economic opportunities** by streamlining and consolidating initiatives to provide access to finance, skills building, networking and mentorship for women entrepreneurs to develop digitally transformative and climate smart solutions.

Pillar 2: Green Development

Key intervention areas in this pillar are aligned with Signature Solutions 3, 4 and 5.

- Develop and **mainstream gender standards** in integrated solutions in climate, nature and energy towards green development. Strengthen **women's voices and perspectives** in the policies and interventions being designed to support the green transition.
- Support **women-led enterprises in new green jobs**, especially in the tourism value chain.
- Improve women's access to resources such as land, information and technology and promote **gender lens in nature-based solutions**.
- Ensure that **disaster loss and damage databases** at national and local levels include sex-disaggregated data, and are able to assess gender differentiated disaster vulnerabilities, early warning and preparedness, such that these can be translated into budgets and actions for preparedness and response.
- To operationalize policy commitments, ensure that the **budget integration tools** include gender equality and human rights issues, such that **budget allocations** related to climate actions consider the differentiated needs of men and women, and are responsive to the needs of rights holders.
- Strengthen **policy and institutional mechanism** for implementing the **NDC's gender-responsive climate mitigation and adaptation actions** across various sectors. This would include a range of interventions from sectoral gender analysis to identify gender gaps, to identifying implementation strategies to address the gender gaps, building gender-related knowledge and capacities and allocating financing, as well as ensuring that gender and social equity indicators are captured and reported.
- Institutionalize the use of tools like the participatory vulnerability assessment tool that can help **identify targeted vulnerabilities** of women and other marginalized groups, and point towards how project interventions can reduce these vulnerabilities and enhance benefits.
- Ensure gender dimensions in **just energy transition** through women's improved access to resources, technology transfer and financial literacy.

Pillar 3: Strengthening democratic governance and establishing a more cohesive and inclusive society

Key intervention areas under this pillar are aligned with Signature Solutions 2 and 6.

- Continue advocacy for women’s political participation, and strengthen the capacities of the **women’s Parliamentary caucus** to bring in stronger voice and representation.
- Promote victim-centric and **gender-responsive legal services**, including for sexual and gender-based violence survivors, through victim and witness protection, legal aid, and continued support to strengthening women’s shelters.
- Promote **women’s leadership roles** in local governance levels, and capacitate women leaders to deal with online and offline violence and harassment.
- Identify pathways to **challenge social norms** that limit the potential of women and girls through research and innovative pilots, and promote their **role as change agents** in social cohesion initiatives.
- Support **policy and legal reforms** that help address the barriers, and support women’s access to justice, such as through the NAP on WPS, NAP on SGBV, debt conciliation, among others.
- Invest in the **institutional capacities** of justice sector institutions and service providers to ensure gender-responsive services can be delivered for women and girls. Leverage **digital solutions** for public sector modernization to improve efficiency of key institutions to deliver people-centered services with a gender lens.
- Lead **policy interventions on SGBV** through the multi-sectoral National Action Plan to address SGBV 2024-2028.
- Strengthen engagement with youth and male allies in **SGBV prevention efforts**.
- Address the **gender digital divide** and ensure that technology can become an enabler for women’s empowerment, accounting for gender gaps in the new National AI Strategy and other policy developments.

6.2. Cross-cutting enablers of the Corporate Gender Equality Strategy

The CO strategy is premised on and aligned with the corporate Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025 which identifies finance, digitalization and strategic innovations as three enablers of change that are fundamental to gender equality.

Finance. By supporting the government of Sri Lanka to align public and private finance with gender equality commitments through the INFF, SDG financing tools and broader gender-responsive fiscal policies which can unlock new financing options for gender-sensitive green/blue economy and blended financing. The Country Engagement Plan (CEP) agreed between UNDP and the Government of Sri Lanka seeks to bring together the national priorities on financing for development and the SDGs, with a specific focus on taxation, which provides an entry point for integrating a gender lens.

Digitalization. By closing the gender digital divide in access to, and use of digital technology, and helping to put measurable gender equality goals at the centre of national digital strategies. Also, by leveraging the power of technology to adapt and adopt new digital solutions to address gender challenges and accelerate diversified women’s economic empowerment opportunities. Another key element of increasing digital access will be on enhancing online safety and security and minimizing exposure to online GBV and harassment.

Strategic innovation. By leveraging UNDP Sri Lanka’s capacity on innovations to support government and other partners to adopt a more systemic and transformational lens to address multiple facets of gender inequality at the same time. Through a gender portfolio review, coherence and synergies between different initiatives to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment can be leveraged. Emphasis will be placed to co-design smaller strategic initiatives, which can provide a space for using behavioural insights to test new ideas, learn, reflect and adapt these solutions. The CO has already initiated engagement with the private sector, such as through the MOU with Uber Sri Lanka on “Delivering Change #EndSGBV”. Such engagements can help bring in complementary expertise and resources of different stakeholders to address gender gaps and challenges.

6.3 Institutional Transformation

For the CO to deliver on the gender elements of its programme portfolio (as outlined above), it is important that there are institutional practices and processes in place, that are internalized by all staff.

Gender mainstreaming processes

UNDP Sri Lanka will continue to ensure that gender concerns are fully integrated at all stages of the programme/project cycle. The CO will institutionalize SOPs that require a gender review of all projects at the design stage in order to identify key gender gaps and ensure ways to address these through specific programmatic interventions. The intent being to ensure that all programmes move towards being gender-responsive and transformative in approach and impact.

All project teams must go through the following steps across the project cycle at the design, appraisal, implementation and monitoring and evaluation stages as a standard process (Table 1). Additionally, the Gender Mainstreaming checklist (Annex 1) provides a simple list of different project components that should include gender aspects, from data collection. For further detailed guidance on screening and development, project teams should refer to the UNDP Sri Lanka Screening Tool for Project Development and Implementation. The RRMT must ensure that the gender check-list and SOPs are institutionalized during project and programme design, implementation and monitoring.

Table 1: Gender mainstreaming SOP across the project cycle

Design	Appraisal	Implementation	Monitoring & Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Consult with the Gender Specialist on the project idea to identify gender issues that can be integrated into the project concept √ Involve the Gender Specialist/Gender Task Force in the project formulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Include the Gender Specialist/Gender Task Force as a resource person and advisor in the LPAC process √ Document ‘before and after’ and how comments from the LPAC are addressed into a revised project document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Ensure gender balance and competencies in hiring project teams √ Engage with local CSOs, gender experts and women’s rights organizations √ Ensure that community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Consider participatory monitoring such as public hearings, social audits etc. that would allow all stakeholders, especially women and other marginalized groups to participate √ Establish annual gender disaggregated indicators and targets, means of verification,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Key gender and inclusion issues and gaps are identified and outlined in the situation analysis ✓ Based on the assessment, specific entry points are identified within the programmatic areas ✓ Results framework should include: (i) gender output definitions, indicators, baselines and targets; (ii) specific activities to achieve the set targets ✓ Specific strategies should elaborate how women will be meaningfully engaged in the project ✓ Ensure that women's perspectives are part of the stakeholder consultations (through CSOs or other representatives) ✓ Consider that the gender activities are budgeted ✓ Identify gender marker rating for the project outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explore risks as part of the SESP, and identify measures to avoid mitigate or manage any possible negative gender impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ consultations ensure the engagement and perspectives of women ✓ Ensure that implementing partners are aware of UNDP's gender strategy and are equipped to deliver on this commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ timing in annual M&E plan ✓ Include a separate section on gender in the reporting format of monitoring visits and evaluation report ✓ Track the budget expenditure with respect to gender activities ✓ Document and submit qualitative case studies related to gender transformative changes across projects ✓ Evaluation ToRs should include gender competency in selection, and gender assessment in the scope of work
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Capacities and Learning

UNDP Sri Lanka has a Gender Specialist position, who will continue to serve as the anchor and coordinator for this Strategy. The Gender Specialist role will report to the RR, and also be part of the SDG Action Hub, which includes all other portfolio leads, as well as the CITRA Lab. As the dedicated gender capacity and with this strategic positioning, the Gender Specialist will have a vantage point for an overview of the gender mainstreaming work across the office.

For the successful implementation of the Strategy, it is important that all staff understand and have adequate technical capacity in gender mainstreaming. To this end:

- all staff will complete on-line trainings/mandatory courses on gender sensitivity and mainstreaming;
- members of the Gender Task Force (Gender TF) will participate in the regional community of practice to gain insights on good practices of other COs;
- ensure that gender competencies feature prominently in new recruitments;
- a presentation on gender equality, including organizational policy and relevance in Sri Lanka's country context will be part of the orientation package delivered to all new recruits as part of the onboarding process;
- regular information sharing and orientation on gender strategies and policies will be made available to all CO staff, as well as to project staff situated in the field;
- managers will identify targeted online and in-person training courses on gender across their respective sectors and areas of work;
- targeted trainings to improve gender mainstreaming skills, especially related to monitoring capacities
- leverage regional and global learning opportunities, for e.g. the Global Learning Lab on Gender Equal Economies to enhance UNDP's learning on how to promote a feminist economic agenda through UNDP's work.

UNDP Sri Lanka's Whole Office Learning Plan (WOLP) 2022-2023 has the **theme of transformative learning and gender equality**, with specific 'learning day and learning time' in order to institutionalize a learning culture and enable staff to utilize it. The current WOLP has a focus on gender sensitivity and disability inclusion, and provides mentoring support and career growth initiatives. In the future, learning plans of the CO will continue to be linked with gender equality goals.

Communications and Knowledge

UNDP Sri Lanka actively produces topical knowledge products and disseminates these, including gender related knowledge and experiences through various platforms and in global, national and regional events. It is important that this Strategy speaks to, and is aligned with other strategies of the CO such as the Communications Strategy, which has an explicit focus and target on gender equality and women's empowerment. A few key elements of this intersection will continue, and be expanded in the following areas:

- each programme area and portfolio will continue to develop key advocacy messages that are used across speeches, events, publications. This will help UNDP to foster strategic dialogues with stakeholders and create its position on the nexus of specific issues like gender-climate change; gender-responsive justice reform etc;
- explore new approaches to measure impact and capture system transformation, and communicate such stories of transformation.
- use persuasive techniques such as modern ways of story-telling and digital technologies to transform complex issues into accessible information, especially for public outreach.
- all communication tools and platforms have gender-related content across themes;
- support strategic national advocacy campaigns wherein gender equality concerns can be promoted;

- promote gender-inclusive language, both in internal as well as external communications;
- develop knowledge products with the aim to influence and inform policy, promote targeted good practices, and build capacity for gender equality;
- leverage social media platforms and media outlets as a way to increase public engagement and outreach on gender issues;
- work with influencers, where relevant, to promote gender equality causes;
- ensure that all communications materials and platforms support a positive narrative of women's roles, leadership and agency across the use of stories, reports, images, websites;
- leverage the gold certification received as part of the Gender Equality Seal certification to create a strong and coherent narrative of UNDP Sri Lanka's role as a gender champion. This could be used for influencing government partners, as well as showcasing to existing and potential donors.
- develop an intelligence/development bulletin on gender equality and women's empowerment annually/bi-annually (this could be a simple 2-page document) which outlines the development context in the country, and UNDP's position on key developments in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment across its portfolios. This will help develop a more pro-active approach to being visible and raising the profile of UNDP's work, also with partners whom UNDP may not currently have funding from.

Gender parity and valuing diversity

Currently, the overall staff composition in August 2023 was 75:73 (female:male) ratio.

The mentoring focus, also mentioned in the WOLP could be used to effectively mentor young female talent and continue having a strong pipeline of female talent. To continue on its positive trend and sustain its parity results, the CO will:

- maintain a repository of 'gender questions' that can be used in recruitment processes, including incorporating gender competency questions for new recruitments;
- continue the practice of ensuring gender balance in interview shortlists, as well as panels;
- introduce a standard gender component to the orientation/induction package for all new recruits, which includes information related to the corporate and CO level GES, the UNDP guidelines on Workplace Harassment and Abuse of Authority, the CO Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, as well as information on country specific gender gaps, concerns and priorities;
- strive for gender diversity across all other intersecting factors, from religion, ethnicity and regionality (as most relevant);
- pay special attention to areas where the biggest occupational segregation takes place, for instance by hiring men for certain roles to create more balance and promoting women in departments like IT;
- make deliberate attempts to identify and promote the participation of women-owned MSMEs as vendors for UNDP procurement opportunities.

An inclusive work environment

An inclusive work environment is key for staff to feel included and safe. Such a work environment is also critical to high productivity and engagement among staff. A number of initiatives will be spearheaded in this area, including:

- open dialogue sessions about topics related to diversity, inclusion, and other relevant topics. This will involve, where relevant, external experts to speak and initiate dialogue among staff to internalize UNDP's policies;
- crowdsource ideas for new CO internal initiatives, such as office retreats, to include voices and perspectives from all corners of the office;
- create a grievance mechanism, which is accessible and anonymous for all staff to use, and ensure that issues are dealt with respectfully;
- promote ideas of shared parental responsibility, and support for gender equality at the workplace;
- promote gender-sensitive and inclusive language within the CO, adapted from the global guidelines and ensure that staff are oriented and equipped to apply them;
- ensure that all staff are aware of the zero tolerance to sexual harassment, including of the PSEA workplan, focal points and reporting mechanisms;
- orient implementing partners to UNDP policies and standards around PSEA;
- empower staff to engage meaningfully in the CO's activities, for instance by creating opportunities through task forces or having junior staff lead staff meetings and/or play a role in other events;
- create opportunities for family days and/or community days for staff to be able to bring their families and collaborate on joint events;
- ensure that the global policies on work-life balance are adequately adapted to the CO's context, regularly communicated to staff and they are encouraged and empowered to utilize flexible work arrangements. The use of policies should be documented and disaggregated, in order to diagnose if there are any bottlenecks for staff to avail the work-life balance policies.

7. Pathways to achieving the Gender Strategy

The Strategy identifies a set of 10 pathways (*the how*) to achieve the above outlined gender interventions and impacts through UNDP's programme areas in order to address institutional barriers, and leverage partnerships to strengthen its gender results.

1. **Bring in women's voices and support their agency:** The strategy recognizes heightened vulnerabilities of women and girls, as well as the need to meaningfully engage them in designing and implementing projects. Interventions supported by UNDP Sri Lanka will go beyond counting numbers of beneficiaries disaggregated by sex and will focus on empowering and creating agency for women and men towards closing gender gaps. This will be done by ensuring that programming across all portfolios brings in women's voice and agency in an intentional way, for instance by including this as part of the project design SOPs to engage, educate and empower women as part of the project interventions, and bringing in their perspectives and lived experiences to policy forums. Women should be leveraged as change agents and key actors in a process of transformative social and development change, while applying the concept of intersectionality more vigorously.

- 2. Engage male champions and allies:** Patriarchal norms and oppressive forms of masculinity impact both women and men negatively. Men and boys will be engaged, both as allies in closing gender gaps as well as addressing discriminatory attitudes and practices. This will be a critical element of the strategy in the prevention of SGBV, as well as to promote more balanced shared responsibilities to reduce the unpaid care burden of women. This element of the strategy should be applied across programming, advocacy and communications, as well as within the CO. A Gender Champions/Ambassadors initiative will be launched across programme areas that identifies, recognizes and leverages the voice and influence of key male champions from different sectors towards the gender equality agenda.
- 3. Engage youth for behaviour change and social norms change:** Youth make up a quarter of Sri Lanka's population, and UNDP has been working actively on their leadership potential, enterprise development, social innovation initiatives and educational awareness. As part of this strategy, UNDP Sri Lanka will target youth, across its portfolios to play a pivotal role in challenging harmful gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms such that they can play a catalytic and transformative role in creating behaviour and systems change to address gender inequality.
- 4. Leverage innovations:** Challenging the status quo on decades of discriminatory practices and patriarchal norms requires thinking out of the box. The CO will leverage its innovation capacity to initiate community conversations and behaviour-change campaigns and will support the exploration of the role of technology and digital solutions across its portfolios. These can help eliminate structural and societal barriers that prevent women from accessing financial and other services and help break traditional patriarchal chain of information, resources and power.
- 5. Create a Gender Seal offer:** UNDP Sri Lanka will explore ways to leverage the Gender Seal gold certification and create a service offer for organizations to support them with their gender equality goals, in particular for creating inclusive, safe and accessible workplace policies and practices. At the global level, UNDP has successfully used the gender seal certification with the private sector in Latin America, and is currently also developing a gender seal offer for the public sector. This could provide inspiration for UNDP Sri Lanka to develop its own contextually relevant service offer for different types of institutions, both public and private sector. This would also support the broader goal of making institutions and workplaces safer and more inclusive for women.
- 6. Better data and analysis for policymaking:** Designing targeted and responsive solutions for complex development challenges requires robust evidence. The CO will expand on the work carried out through the Citizens Survey to collaborate with the national statistical office, observatories, and other relevant parties to inform policy making across various sectors. This area of work can also be used to expand on creating new alternatives and indices to account for unpaid care work, capture the gender digital divide, GDP alternatives, and multiple dimensions of vulnerability.
- 7. Systematize gender mainstreaming principles across the project cycle:** UNDP Sri Lanka will ensure the application of gender mainstreaming principles through the entire programme cycle. By incorporating a gender analysis as a mandatory element of its programme/project design phase and ensuring voices and engagements of women, this would lead to an increase in targeted gender interventions as well as a strong gender lens across its programming areas and portfolios. These SOPs are outlined in Table 1.

8. **Develop a strong branding of UNDP's work on gender equality and women's empowerment in Sri Lanka.** UNDP Sri Lanka will leverage its monitoring systems and communications capacity to identify and articulate the impact of its work - with a focus on tracking behaviour change, policy implementation and documenting qualitative shifts in gender results. This would also help in framing UNDP's position as a gender champion that *supports gender-responsive policy foundations, addresses systemic and structural barriers and invests in women's capacities and agency for them to benefit equally from development*. This would help position UNDP's niche and complementary role vis-a-vis other UN agencies, like UN Women and UNFPA.
9. **Find synergies across portfolios.** Conduct a gender portfolio review to further flesh out and detail specific gender intervention areas across the portfolios. Such a review would help identify entry points for gender mainstreaming, common areas for gender analysis that can inform multiple projects/sectors, opportunities to develop a pipeline of gender projects (GEN2 /GEN3), and identify areas for collaboration for joint events/discussions across programme areas.
10. **Leverage UNDP's convening role.** Create multi-sectoral platforms to bring together government, civil society, private sector and media to discuss pertinent gender issues and find collaborative solutions. This is particularly relevant, on one hand in bringing civil society organizations and WROs together for coalition building and creating stronger advocacy, while on the other hand ensuring that these organizations have the space to participate and engage in decision-making and policy forums.

8. Cross-cutting issues

In order to achieve the programmatic results as well as the institutional transformation, there are a set of cross-cutting themes that need to be addressed. In this regard, the following elements have been put in place.

8.1 Accountability

Ensuring that the right accountability mechanisms are in place is essential for the successful implementation of the GES.

Leadership for Gender Equality

Senior Management led by the Resident Representative (RR) and Deputy Resident Representative (DRR), and supported by the portfolio managers will lead by example and ensure that achieving gender equality remains a core priority area for UNDP Sri Lanka. The CO leadership will continue to flag and raise gender issues with government partners and at other internal and external forums by integrating key gender messages in speeches, statements and advocacy efforts. Management will continue to advocate for 'gender balanced panels' across all UNDP hosted events. On the programming side, portfolio leads and managers will encourage their teams to constantly push to find solutions that can help achieve gender transformative results across their respective programme areas, with each portfolio team having its own gender action plan.

Gender Architecture

The two complementary pillars of the Strategy (i) programming; and (ii) institutional transformation will be delivered through a combination of the existing mechanisms.

The existing Gender Focal Team's (GFT) role will be transformed into a task force model: Gender Task Force (Gender TF), which will mainly consist of operations, finance, human resources, communications, the Gender Specialist, as well as include a few key programming staff. The main function of the Gender TF will be to operationalize the institutional transformation pillar, as well as have oversight on the overall implementation of the Strategy. Thus, the Gender TF be the principal internal gender equality oversight mechanism, driving the implementation of the overall GES implementation. The Gender TF will be chaired by the RR to provide leadership and guidance, with the Gender Specialist providing the overall coordination role. The Gender TF members will serve on a rotational two-year basis.

At the same time, gender analysis and deep dive sessions on gender equality will be further strengthened as part of the SDG Action Hub, and such thematic work on gender will include representation from all programming/portfolio teams, Communications team, CITRA Lab as well as the Gender Specialist. This stronger thematic thrust can be explored through a specific Gender Theme group under the SDG Action Hub, which will operationalize and monitor the implementation of the programming pillar of the Gender Strategy.

This architecture will allow for the complementary expertise within teams to contribute to the gender mainstreaming agenda of the CO, reporting to the RR as the Chair of this task force. A small pooled funding modality can be considered for this task force to conduct areas of joint research, advocacy or strategic pilot initiatives.

Performance Management

The performance management system/RCAs of senior managers, the Gender TF members will continue to demonstrate high level of commitment towards gender equality. This practice of specific gender KPIs is extended to all CO staff, thus requiring regular discussions and guidance from Human Resources, such that staff can develop strong, actionable and relevant KPIs to their specific job function and role.

The Gender Marker and Resourcing

The Gender Marker is UNDP's corporate tool used for tracking and monitoring financial allocations and expenditures that contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Gender Marker requires managers to rate projects against a 4-point scale (GEN0 to GEN3). In 2022, the total amount of expenditures with gender equality as the main objective (GEN 3) and significant objective (GEN 2) was 74.08%. UNDP Sri Lanka will undertake the following measures in order to improve and maintain its Gender Marker ratings:

- set an iterative target for the CO on GEN2 + GEN3 projects that the CO can build towards, starting from 2024 and culminating in a higher target by 2027.
- improve GEN3 project pipeline through targeted gender initiatives, especially by leveraging areas like justice-centered approach to SGBV, and women's entrepreneurship.
- place gender marker discussion on the agenda of the RRMT on a bi-annual basis.
- ensure that no new projects fall under the GEN0 rating for the new CPD cycle. For projects that fall under a GEN1 category, a full gender analysis will be undertaken to provide evidence of lack of gender mainstreaming opportunities and entry points;

- ensure that a dedicated Gender LPAC Checklist justifies the rationale for the Gender Marker rating selected for the project. This process will enable gender analysis to be an integral dimension in project design;
- ensure that the Gender Specialist is empowered to provide advice to project teams on gender marker ratings and how to improve them in the project formulation and design phase.
- ensure that the office allocates specific resources towards this Strategy, so that it remains actionable and can be operationalized.
- explore innovative options such as establishing an internal ‘pool of funds’ within portfolios to finance gender capacities and strengthen programming.

Gender Seal

The UNDP Gender Equality Seal is a corporate certification process that recognizes good performance of UNDP COs in delivering gender equality results. The Seal is a learning platform that helps COs/units to establish a baseline, fine-tune strategies, identify and address gaps and challenges, document innovations and showcase the impacts of interventions for gender equality. The seven benchmarks and key elements of the Seal are: Management system for gender mainstreaming, capacities, enabling environment, knowledge management, programmes/projects, partnerships, and results/impacts. At the time of development of the GES, the CO had undergone an appraisal mission in 2022 and was awarded a gold certification, with an overall score of 97.5%. The appraisal mission commended the CO on its efforts, but also provided some direction to keep the momentum. The recommendations from the appraisal mission have been reflected in the development of this GES.

The CO can further leverage its own learning on the Seal and create a service offer to help organizations (from the public and private sector) to adapt the Seal as a way to improve their gender results and promote more inclusive, accessible and safe workplace policies and practices.

Monitoring progress on the GES

The GES Action Plan is the operational piece of the Strategy. It should be discussed within the Gender TF and with wider staff and adopted by the whole CO. Specific implementation roles and responsibilities have been identified, and progress against the workplan will be reviewed every quarter and shared with the whole CO. Other aspects of the GES should also be owned and led by different parts of the office, for instance

- (i) programme team leads and project staff for the Programmatic Pillar;
- (ii) the Gender Specialist, Gender Task force and Communications, HR and Operations for the Institutional Pillar;
- (iii) senior management and relevant staff for the accountability of this Strategy.

8.2 Partnership Plan

Partnerships with multiple actors, for joint advocacy, projects, events, research and knowledge generation is an important element of this Strategy.

The **UN Country Team’s Gender Theme Group** is an integral part of the UN System’s collaborative approach towards the achievement of gender equality results in Sri Lanka and

in delivering the ambition outlined in the UNSDCF. UNDP's strong involvement and engagement in the interagency mechanism will continue to provide a coordinated and coherent UN-system wide response to enable transformative systemic changes. This engagement will further leverage targeted collaboration through joint advocacy and research initiatives with other resident and non-resident United Nations agencies, as outlined in the UNSDCF. Specifically, there are already joint programming with UNICEF and UNFPA, which will be continued and further expanded.

UNDP Sri Lanka has been a long standing partner of the **Government of Sri Lanka** and has various ongoing engagements to deliver on the national development priorities and the SDG agenda. Partnership with the Sri Lankan Government will remain critical to advance the gender equality agenda. To this end, the CO will engage with the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, but also with other line ministries in advancing the gender mainstreaming agenda across areas like climate change (Ministry of Environment), justice sector reform (Ministry of Justice), to name a few. Similarly, it will also engage with departments, not just at the federal level, but also in a decentralized manner in order to work on critical areas such as addressing SGBV. UNDP Sri Lanka can further leverage the Gender Seal offer for the public sector, building on the global offer.

In Sri Lanka, the **private sector** is transitioning from charitable to strategic contributions, with many companies indicating an interest in the development sector, beyond a license to operate. Many companies seem to be transitioning from philanthropic giving to strategic business of *creating shared value*- by producing measurable business value through addressing social problems that intersect with their business. The private sector can play an important role in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Sri Lanka. Companies are interested in working with UNDP and are important strategic partners in achieving the SDGs. Through the existing MoU with the UN Global Compact (UNGC), UNDP Sri Lanka has access to various companies that are part of the UNGC network. The CO can leverage this and further its engagement with the private sector, especially in promoting gender-inclusive workplace practices- through an adaptation of the Gender Seal, and in supporting women's economic empowerment through value chains, with broader impact on the female labour force participation in the country.

UNDP will expand on its engagement with **civil society organizations (CSOs)**, especially **women's rights organizations (WROs) and feminist organizations** that represent local needs and interests. This engagement will be at the following levels:

- * through its platform approach UNDP Sri Lanka will create civic space for such organizations for their advocacy, as well as to have a voice in policy making;
- * engage these organizations in the formulation, design and implementation of its own programmes and projects;
- * work with WROs and CSOs to build their capacities;
- * ensure that select WROs and feminist thinkers are engaged as part of the existing CSO Advisory Group. The CSO Advisory Group will be revived to serve as a forum for dialogue and sustained engagement at all levels. This group can keep UNDP grounded to issues and constituencies that it serves, in creating a gender transformative future for Sri Lanka. The CSO Advisory Group, with the engagement of WROs and feminist

thinkers can (i) serve as an advisory group to UNDP to flag key national agenda items that require attention; (ii) serve as boots on the ground to provide insights about key gender issues from the ground to inform programming; (iii) consolidate diverse ideas and avoid groupthink to create momentum on addressing sensitive and emerging issues; (iv) strategize on how to engage the younger generation to continue evolving the feminist thinking and discourse in the country.

UNDP will also improve its engagement on gender equality with other actors, including **academia and think tanks**, as well as with **media** (mainstream, social and alternative media organizations) in challenging stereotypes that perpetuate gender discrimination and creating new positive narrative for women's leadership. In this context, a focus on engaging youth and leveraging their voice for changing norms would be extremely relevant.

9. Action Plan for Operationalizing the Gender Equality Strategy 2023-2027

Indicators	KEY ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE	2023/2024				2025				2026				2027			
			Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
UNDP has in place processes, policies and practices that can help support programming to be gender-transformative cycle																		
	Transform the Gender Focal Team to the new Gender Task Force model, and strengthen the gender thematic programming focus in the Gender Theme of the SDG Action Hub	Senior Management, Gender Specialist, Gender Theme Group/SDG Action Hub																
	Undertake a gender analysis, and develop baselines as each portfolio develops its implementation plan for the CPD outcomes	Portfolio Managers, Gender Specialist, Gender Theme Group/SDG Action Hub																
	Develop a gender action plan based on the gender analysis and GES programmatic recommendations (outlined under Section 6.1) for each portfolio, which is resourced and time-bound	Portfolio Managers, Gender Specialist, Gender Theme Group/SDG Action Hub																
	Develop a pipeline of standalone gender projects, in the form of concept notes and proposals that can be readily used with donors and government	Gender Specialist, Gender Theme Group /SDG Action Hub																
	Gender Marker Rating for all programmes/projects to be on the agenda of RRMT (bi-annually)	RRMT, Portfolio Managers																
	Identify potential gender equality related partnerships with CSOs and private sector to inform the PCAP	Partnerships Specialist, Gender Specialist																

Endorse the gender SOPs as part of this new GES (refer to Table 1) to be followed across all programming areas	Senior Management, Gender Task Force																		
Orient programme staff on the new SOPs for gender mainstreaming in the programming cycle	Gender Specialist, Gender Task Force																		
Develop a new Gender Seal service offering for public and private sector	Gender Specialist, Gender Task Force, Comms Specialist																		
Identify key feminist organizations and WROS to engage in the CSO Advisory Group	Gender Specialist, Portfolio leads, Senior Management																		
Launch a Gender Champions/Ambassadors Circle to engage male champions across UNDP's work	Gender Task Force, Gender Specialist, Comms Specialist																		
Ensure that the final evaluation of the CPD cycle integrates a strong gender component or conduct a thematic gender evaluation to inform future programming	Senior Management, M&E Specialist																		
UNDP has in place processes, policies and practices that can help support its institutional transformation																			
Transform the new Gender Task Force, including members who can focus on institutional transformation aspects (workplace policies, recruitment and accountability)	Senior Management, Gender Task Force																		
Continue to integrate gender learning goals into the CO annual Learning Plan and institutionalize a 10% learning budget for gender (annually)	Senior Management, Learning Manager																		
Organize bi-annual trainings for programme staff to improve their understanding of gender and inclusion issues	Gender Task Force, Learning Manager, All staff																		

Organize bi-annual all-staff perception workshops and reflective sessions on gender sensitivity	Gender Task Force, Learning Manager, All staff																
Organize tailor-made training opportunities for programme managers based on a gender competency/capacity assessment	Gender Task Force, Learning Manager, Programme Managers																
Ensure that the Communications Strategy has a specific targeted gender component and actions (at the design of the Comms Strategy)	Comms Specialist, Gender Specialist, Gender Task Force																
Adopt SOPs for gender-sensitive recruitment practices, including gender balance in shortlists and interview panels, as well as integration of gender related questions in interviews and written tests	Human Resources, Gender Task Force																
Monitor gender parity and diversity status and update in the management meetings (regular)	Human Resources, Gender Task Force																
Ensure that staff are oriented on various policies including on gender and social inclusion, prevention of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse of authority, workforce diversity policy on a regular basis	Human Resources, Gender Specialist, Gender Task Force																
Ensure all staff complete the mandatory trainings on gender, PSEA courses.	PSEA focal points, Human Resources																
Conduct induction programme for the new appointees (staffs/personnel's/partners etc) on the GES as well as different policies including on PSEA (bi-annually)	Human Resources, Gender Specialist, PSEA focal points																

Orient and institutionalize UNDP policies related to the PSEA with implementing partners through sensitization trainings	PSEA Focal points, Portfolio and project Managers																		
Ensure regular implementation and monitoring of the PSEA annual workplan	PSEA Focal points																		
Create open dialogue spaces and learning opportunities for staff on issues of diversity, inclusion and workplace culture	Gender specialist, Gender Task Force, Senior Management																		

Annex 1: Gender Mainstreaming Checklist for Projects

Project Name:	Project ID:	Budget:
Technical Specialist Name:	Project Manager Name:	Gender Specialist checked project docs: Signature:
Technical Specialist checked project docs: Signature:	Project Manager checked project docs: Signature:	Team Leader checked project docs: Signature:

Project Component	Question	Yes	No	Partially	Comments
Analysis/ Justification	1. Does the project explicitly address a gender issue or issues? If so, please describe how and if not, please provide explanation.				
	2. Does the background/context analysis of the project examine: a) the different situations of women and men b) the impacts the project will have on different groups				
Data collection	3. Will the project collect and use sex disaggregated data and qualitative information to analyse and track the gender issues? Describe and other sub-criteria considered such as FHH, PWD				
Results Framework	4. Are outcomes, outputs and activities designed to meet the different needs and priorities of women and men? Has a gender				Gen Marker level:

	marker been assigned at the output-level? Please indicate Gender Marker level. (Refer UNDP's Gender Marker Guide)					
	5. Does the results framework include gender responsive indicators, targets and a baseline to monitor gender equality results?					
Budget	6. Have adequate financial resources been allocated for the proposed gender activities (vis-à-vis % of total budget)? If allocated, what is the % of budget allocated under gender – please mention under comments.					% of gen budget:
Partnerships & Stakeholders	7. Are women/ gender focused groups, associations or gender units in partner organizations consulted/ included in the project?					
	8. Does the project ensure that women, men and other can provide inputs, access and participate in project activities (target at least 40 % of whichever gender is underrepresented)?					
Gender Capacities	9. Has a gender expert been recruited OR does the project staff have gender knowledge and have gender related tasks incorporated in their job descriptions?					
	10. Will all project staff be sensitized to gender (e.g. staff will complete basic online courses on gender journey & PSEA. Have induction training and follow introduction to gender by UNDP gender team.					
Project Implementation	11. Is there gender balanced recruitment of project personnel and gender balanced representation in project committees?					
Monitoring & Evaluation	12. Will the monitoring and evaluation of the project cover gender issues and monitor behavioural changes and (where relevant transformative results) towards greater gender equality?					

Source: Adapted from UNIDO format