



FINAL REPORT

Baseline Study for EU Funded Project - Women in Learning and Leadership

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Lead Evaluator - Dr Achala Abeykoon
Research Team – Lakmali Liyanage & Gayan Dias

Contact:

Nawaz Mohammed
Country Director
Search for Common Ground
No 185/6 – 1/1 Havelock Road
Colombo 05
Sri Lanka
11 2506600
srilanka@sfcg.org

Mohammed Sadaath
Program Manager for Monitoring & Evaluation
Search for Common Ground
No 185/6 – 1/1 Havelock Road
Colombo 05
Sri Lanka
11 2506600
msadaath@sfcg.org

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Abbreviations

CSOLs	Civil Society Organization Leaders
EWLs	Elected Women Leaders
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
KIIs	Key Informants Interviews
SFCG/Search	Search for Common Ground
WILL	Women in Learning and Leadership

Executive Summary

Background

The local government election of Sri Lanka held in February 2018 marked a historic and significant milestone for the female political representation in the island as it was the first time that an election made it mandatory for a 25% quota for women in local government under the Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act, No.16 of 2017. Search for Common Ground (Search) has been one of the pioneering and active organisations in this space to take initiatives at national level to increase the women's participation in politics by advocating for amendment of relevant electoral laws and political party policies and by identifying and training potential female political leaders for political leadership roles.

The Women in Learning and Leadership (WILL) project implemented by Search from 2014 to 2017 was one such successful project that empowered grassroots level women leaders as political leaders. However, it has become vital to explore the present status and the requirements of these newly elected and mostly inexperienced women leaders at the local governments. Taking a step forward, Search has planned a project with an overall objective to strengthen women's voice and participation in political decision-making in Sri Lanka.

The objective of this baseline study is to support the above project by studying the existing situation of Elected Women Leaders (EWLs) and Women Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) leaders' participation in decision making. This includes examining the barriers, supporting factors, opportunities, needs and existing efforts of EWLs and female CSO leaders. The baseline was carried out in four districts: Badulla, Kurunegala, Ampara, and Jaffna.

Methodology

The baseline study employed a mixed-method data collection approach with both quantitative and qualitative methods. This included a primary data collection; a survey of EWLs (177) and CSO leaders (48) and key informant interviews (47) and a review of secondary data. The data were collected in May and June 2020 using remote data collection methods such as phone interviews due to COVID-19 crisis. Quantitative data was entered to Google forms and the data analysis was done using MS Excel. The qualitative information from KIIs were coded under common themes and used in the analysis to answer the key questions.

Limitations

The limitations faced were twofold in nature; one caused due to conducting telephone interviews and the other due to existing imbalanced gender power relations in Sri Lankan society. The telephone interviews with the participants were delayed at times during data collection due to technological and other social and political engagements of participants.

Further, the imbalanced gender power relations existing in Sri Lankan society due to its patriarchal social structure was another challenge that the research team had to face during the data collection period. For instance, during the survey, several husbands of EWLs particularly in Ampara, Jaffna and Badulla districts mentioned that their wives are incapable of answering any questions on their role as EWLs and these husbands asked enumerators to conduct the interviews with them.

Key Findings

Active participation and influencing decision making process: Only 2% of EWLs held decision making positions such as ‘Chairwoman’ or ‘Vice-Chairwoman’ whereas more CSOLs served in positions of influence such as ‘Presidents’ (33%) and ‘Secretary’ or ‘Treasurer’ (17%). Only 51% of EWLs and 58% CSOLs have implemented proposals that they have presented. Further, only 47% of EWLs proposed to establish a standing committee on women and gender in their respective local councils.

Demonstration of positive leadership, advocacy or accountability: Both EWLs and CSOLs have a clear perception of positive leadership. With advocacy, CSOLs have a better understanding compared to EWLs but both need clear guidance on advocacy on women political decision making. Finally, both EWLs and CSOLs do not have a clear perception of accountability.

With the above context in mind, 81% of EWLs and 67% of CSOLs were able to quote at least one concrete example of positive leadership, advocacy and accountability. However, this observation needs to be considered with caution given that most (44%) of the examples quoted were to do with ‘Infrastructure Development’ for EWLs and ‘Education / Awareness Services’ (36%) for CSOLs.

Support of male counterparts: Majority of EWLs (63%) and CSOLs (60%) have experienced extremely low, low or moderate support by their male counterparts while making decisions at the local council/ in their respective CSOs.

Campaigns organized by CSOLs to support women’s political decision making: Around 52% of CSOLs quoted that they have organized campaigns to promote women’s political decision making. However, after further probing and analysis, it was found that CSOLs have worked to obtain 25% quota in 2018 for women’s political empowerment and most of the campaigns were organized by NGOs/INGOs. CSOLs have supported these organizations through village level involvement.

Existing Capacity and Capacity gaps: Majority of (93%) EWLs and (77%) CSOLs quoted that they have received some kind of capacity building training to perform their duty and responsibility. However, the majority of them have not undergone fundamental training in gender rights and mainstreaming, effective communication, political leadership and engaging with the media.

Barriers to their full and active participation: EWLs confront both structural and agency barriers in their political careers. The structural barriers are mainly related to the traditional

and patriarchal social structure (across all three ethnicities), perceptions of the community, and financial difficulties which affect EWLs. Agency barriers are limited education levels of EWLs and lack of knowledge and skills of gender sensitive decision making.

Current initiatives that address women participation: At present, there are only a few initiatives that have been implemented to address women participation at the selected districts and at the national level. KII participants mentioned that the legal enactment of 25% quota for females to enter politics was significant and suggested the need for extending it to provincial council level as well. Further, the Diploma course on local government Act, regulations, gender mainstream, politics in general, etc. organized by University of Peradeniya for EWLs and CSOLs is much appreciated by the EWLs and District and National level activists. The Institute of Local Government and few other similar organisations have also conducted short term courses for EWLs such as on the Act, its laws, rules and regulations through model local councils, experience sharing with EWLs from other districts and leadership/capacity building.

Hence, EWLs and CSOLs must be made knowledgeable on areas such as the Act, laws and regulations of the Local Government in order to actively participate and influence decision making process in their local councils. This will ultimately assist them to gradually overcome structural barriers. Further, they need to have a clear perception on advocacy and accountability. Plus, more initiatives need to be implemented at a local and national level if EWLs are really to make an impact in the local political system.

Recommendations

This study found that the EWLs were not actively participating neither influencing the decision making process. Even though both EWLs and CSOLs had a clear perception of positive leadership, their understanding on advocacy on women political decision making and accountability as female political leaders was not satisfactory. Further, the majority of EWLs and CSOLs experienced lower levels of support by their male counterparts while making decisions at the local council. It was further found that EWLs require trainings on diverse areas to actively participate and influence the political decision making process. However, the campaigns organized by CSOLs to support women's political decision making were considerably low and there are only a few initiatives at present that have been implemented to address women participation at the selected districts and at the national level.

Recommendations for conducting training sessions for EWLs and CSOLs

- Making EWLs thoroughly aware of the Act of the Local Government, its laws and regulations that are specifically related to financial management, 32 rules and the legal functioning of the Council.
- Provide training on effective use of accepted methods such as use of Right to Information Act, mass media and social media, complaints submission mechanisms and process to the Human Rights Commission, approaching relevant officials, making petitions, etc. when they face challenging situations as local council members.

- Provide necessary skills and knowledge needed to establish standing committees for women and gender in the local councils.
- CSO leaders must be trained on running their CSOs considering the legal aspects of registering their CSOs and maintaining their financial transparency adhering to the legal frameworks.
- CSOLs who have been playing an important role in women's politics, must be made aware to form financially independent CSOs and to enhance their human resource (trainers/experts) means.
- Also, CSOLs must be provided with necessary skills needed to act as trainers of trainees and mentors in their communities in order to identify, motivate and train potential young women who can become successful female politicians.
- Provide training on gender responsive budgeting, social auditing, political and positive leadership, effective communication and gender rights and mainstreaming for both EWLs and CSO leaders. Even though the majority of them have attended training programs at least once, their knowledge on above areas is in considerably low level.

General Considerations

- Sensitize male council members and husbands of women leaders on local government Act and importance of having women in politics particularly at the local government level

1. Background Information

Introduction

The local government election of Sri Lanka held in February 2018 marked a historic and significant milestone for the female political representation in the island as it was the first time that an election made it mandatory for a 25% quota for women in local government under the Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act, No.16 of 2017. Consequently, electing almost 2,000 women, their representation at the local government level (Municipal Councils, Urban Councils, and Pradeshiya Sabhas) increased to 22.8% in 2018 which has never exceeded 2% until then due to the dominance of the patriarchal culture within political parties and low nominations for women at elections (CLGF, 2020). For instance, there were only 53 women out of a total of 3,928 members in the local councils, 1.3%, just before the 2018 election. The female representation in Parliament also remains at a very low level, 5.8%, as per the last Parliamentary elections in 2015. This is considerably below the average for Asia, 19.6% (IPU 2017).

Local government has a long history in Sri Lanka dating back to 1946 and it was given a new lease of life with the introduction of a three tier system of local government comprising Pradeshiya Sabhas, Urban Councils and Municipal Councils in 1977 (Kodikara & Samuel, 2018). The electoral system to local government was based on a First Past the Post system of election. However, it was transformed to a proportional representation (PR) system in 1977. Further in 2012, a hybrid system of elections, which combined First Past the Post and PR was introduced. This included the significant milestone amendment of the local Authorities Elections Act in 2017 (The Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2017). It was in Section 27F of this Amendment, that 25% of the total number of members in each local authority shall be women members was made mandatory.

In democratic governance, inclusiveness is considered as a core value. This means that women, the poor, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous populations and all other marginalised and disadvantageous groups have a right to participate meaningfully in the governance system and influence decisions that involve them (UNDP, 2007). Yet, due to the patriarchal social structure of the country, many decision-making positions and priority setting in society are managed by men. And, needs of men and women are different and in a country like Sri Lanka where there has been a 30 years' war, the post conflict needs and priorities of men and women are different. Poor representation of women in politics is further caused by a number of reasons such as lack of support by political parties to involve women to their decision-making levels and reluctance to give nominations to women. Due to 'dirty political culture' that exists in the country, women who participate in politics have to face more abuse, criticism, violence and discrimination than men.

Sri Lanka obtained universal franchise rights in 1931, had two women as heads of the government and the female political awareness, voter turnout and female participation in election campaigns is also known to be high in the country (Liyanage, 2018). Despite these advantages, the 25% quota has been hard fought by women activists, organisations and the National Committee on Women (NCW) for almost 20 years.

Search for Common Ground (Search) has been one of the pioneering and active organisations to take initiatives at national level to increase the women's participation in politics by amending relevant electoral laws and political party policies and to identify and train potential female political leaders for political leadership roles. The Women in Learning and Leadership (WILL) project implemented by Search from 2014 to 2017 was one such successful project that assisted grassroots level women leaders to empower themselves as political leaders. The project was conducted to strengthen the capacity of emerging women, political leaders, to engage in local governance; to create positive public attitude towards women as political leaders using various forms of media, specifically radio; and to engage political parties to increase participation of women in local authorities through dialogues and advocacy activities in Kurunegala, Badulla and Ampara districts.

At present, it has become vital to explore the present status and the requirements of these newly elected and mostly inexperienced women leaders to the local governments as they have come to a midpoint in their political role gaining more understanding, knowledge and experience of their positions, needs of the communities they represent and the mechanism of the local government system. Hence, by enhancing skills and knowledge needed for these women leaders, it would further benefit them to become politically empowered independent leaders and thereby to be reelected to the local governments or to climb the political ladder. The changing perception of female political leaders by the society would consequently enable the gradual increase of women's political representation in the country. Past projects that were conducted to increase female political participation have also pointed-out the need for continuous skill and knowledge development of these newly elected women in order to make them competitive politicians. Hence, in 2020, Search for Common Ground has planned another project to Strengthen Women's Voice and Participation in Political Decision-Making in Sri Lanka.

Project Overview

Project Title: Women in Learning and Leadership (WILL): Strengthening Women's Voice and Participation in Political Decision-Making in Sri Lanka.

Basis for the project: The elected women leaders in 2018 through the 25% quota have limited experience in political leadership and advocacy to their constituents. They also lack the support of male counterparts to perform as local representatives effectively. Moreover, these elected women leaders face issues due to patriarchal social structure where women are confined to traditional gender roles. They encounter physical violence and harassment from their male counterparts and other men in communities. These incidences depict that changing the representation system in the legislature itself is not sufficient for the meaningful participation of women. Women CSOs have been primary actors in advocating for 25% quota in local government and they are supporters of elected women leaders. Therefore, it is expected that CSOs will strengthen the capacity of elected women leaders and will connect them with their constituents. Thus, strengthening CSO capacity in legal advocacy, public awareness raising, networking and service delivery is paramount.

Donor: European Union.

Length of project: 24 months.

Geographic locations of the project: Ampara, Badulla, Jaffna, and Kurunegala districts of Sri Lanka.

Overall Objective of the project: To strengthen Sri Lankan women's voices and participation to positively influence political decision-making processes.

Specific Objective: To enhance the capacity of local women's organisations and locally elected women leaders as active, respected, and accountable actors in political decision-making processes.

Expected Results of the Project

1. Increased capacity of local women CSO leaders and locally elected women leaders to participate in decision-making at the district, provincial, and national level in a way that is more accountable to their local constituencies;
2. Increased collaboration between women political leaders and local communities to understand the needs of their constituencies and develop response strategies;
3. Increased capacity and engagement of local media actors to challenge negative stereotypes and enable positive attitudes towards women's role in decision-making.

Groups targeted in the project: 160-200 Elected Women Leaders, 40-50 Representatives from Women CSOs, 20 Local Journalists.

Major Activities that are planned

Activity 1: Capacity building and networking and advocacy for women leaders and CSOs

This activity includes training women CSOs, providing sub granting for local women CSOs, professional development training, forming women in learning and leadership clubs, advocacy and networking activities.

Activity 2: Collaboration between women political leaders and local communities to develop response strategies to constituents' needs.

This activity plans to conduct women led needs assessment and resource mapping and to have mutual accountability dialogs with constituents of elected women leaders.

Activity 3: Media Engagement

The sub activities planned under this are, media fellowship opportunities for journalists, roundtables with local journalists and women leaders, radio productions and social media campaign

2. Methodology

The baseline study of the WILL project focuses on studying the existing situation of elected women leaders and female CSO leaders' participation in decision making. This includes examining the barriers, supporting factors, opportunities, needs and existing efforts of elected women leaders and female CSO leaders. The baseline was carried out in four districts: Badulla, Kurunegala, Ampara and Jaffna. The objectives of the baseline report are as follows,

2.1 Objectives of the Baseline Study

1. To analyse the situation of women CSO and elected women political leader's participation in decision making at local and regional level
2. Mapping of current initiatives women participation at the national and local level
3. To collect baseline data for the project indicators

2.2 Research Team

The research team consisted of three consultants: Dr. Achala Abeykoon as the Senior Advisor, Ms. Lakmali Liyanage as the Engagement Lead and Mr. Gayan Dias as the Project Manager. The consultant team employed two male and four female enumerators from Sinhala and Tamil backgrounds for data collection.

2.3 Data collection method and sampling

The baseline study employed both primary and secondary data collection methods. Mixed-method data collection approach which followed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was used to collect primary data. This included a survey with 225 elected women leaders and CSO leaders and 47 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with selected stakeholder participants. Due to calamities of COVID-19, data collection activities had to be carried out using remote data collection tools in May/June 2020 in Ampara, Badulla, Jaffna and Kurunegala districts.

2.3.1 Review of Secondary Data

Extensive literature review was conducted by the consultant team. This included project documents including project application and log frame, past project documents of Search and past academic research articles. These documents assisted the consultant team to understand the current status quo of female political leadership in Sri Lanka at local government levels and their participation and influence in decision-making.

2.3.2 Key Informant Interviews

Purposive sampling method was used to select stakeholder participants for the KIIs. Interview guides for each stakeholder group were prepared in English and were translated into Sinhala and Tamil languages prior to data collection. A total of 47 KIIs were conducted using the phone interview method. These phone calls were recorded in the mobile phones of the enumerators with the consent of the participants for the preparation of transcripts. This included (06) elected women leaders (a total of 24) and two CSO leaders from each of the four districts (a total of 08), district level activists (a total of 11 from four districts) and four (04) national level activists.

2.3.3 Survey of elected women leaders and CSO leaders

The survey questionnaire method was carried out with a minimum of 40 elected women and minimum of 12 CSO leaders from each four districts. Two separate questionnaires were prepared in English and translated into Sinhala and Tamil languages prior to the survey. The consultancy team finally interviewed a total of 225 participants from all four districts excluding the participants of pilot interviews. This included 177 elected women leaders from urban and semi urban local councils (Refer Annexure 1 for the map of selected Councils of elected women leaders) and 48 CSO leaders from all four districts. The pilot study was conducted in Badulla district with four elected women leaders and two CSO leaders from both Sinhala and Tamil ethnicities. All these interviews were conducted over the phone and the answers given by the research participants were entered to the Google forms while they were answering or as soon as the interviews were finished. The survey mainly focused to collect information on the baseline indicators mentioned in the Log Frame.

2.3.4 Experience of Remote Data collection

The consultancy team had to employ a remote data collection method, primarily over the phone, to collect primary data in this study due to the global pandemic COVID-19. This is the first time that the team tried this method. The pandemic hit Sri Lanka in March 2020 and during the same period the contract was signed for the baseline study. The Sri Lankan government imposed an island wide curfew for more than two months. Due to this situation in the country, it became impossible to carry out the data collection in the field. Hence, it was decided to conduct a remote data collection.

Initially, the Search program team and their district level partners provided the names and contact details of possible participants. Then, a database was created by the consultancy team including information of the participants such as their names, contact numbers, age, local council representation, the date interviews were to be conducted, etc. It was shared among all the enumerators in Google Drive. Thus, enumerators were able to mark the interviews as they completed them. WhatsApp groups were created for communication between enumerators and the consultancy team and for the training of enumerators. Further, Google Hangouts was used to conduct meetings between the consultancy team and the Search project team members. Hence, all these online platforms and

communication technologies were employed to connect all the relevant individuals who were under lock down in their homes all over the country.

Prior to the interviews, district level partners who are familiar with EWLs and CSOLs in their districts informed the participants of the upcoming survey. This helped to reduce most of the difficulties in contacting participants and explaining the survey to them as enumerators were strangers to them. The pilot study was carried out in Badulla with four EWLs and two CSOLs in both Sinhala and Tamil languages. Then, the survey was initially conducted in Ampara (predominantly Tamil speaking) and Badulla (predominantly Sinhala speaking) districts in tandem.

The first step of the survey was to contact participants to get an appointment from them. Then the participants were contacted on the given times and their consent for the study was taken verbally prior to the commencement of interviews. Thereafter, questions of the survey were read to the participants and the answers given by participants were entered to the Google forms created by the consultancy team. The KIIs were also conducted over the phone and these interview calls were recorded with the consent of the participants as they had to be transcribed later.

However, some participants were difficult to be contacted at the first attempt and sometimes participants were not available at the given times. Moreover, in some cases given mobile numbers were not reachable. Thus, some of them had to be contacted several times and reachable phone numbers had to be searched. Search program team and their district level partners helped the consultancy team when confronted with such difficulties. It must be noted, it would have been very difficult to complete 225 over the phone survey interviews and 47 KIIs without the immense support of the Search program team and their district level partners. The consultancy team also had to closely monitor and follow up the progress of the data collection paying close attention to the entire process. Although the remote data collection method created novel challenges for the survey team as discussed in the 'Limitations' section given below, the consultancy team was able to contact participants, gather required data and was able to build up positive rapport with them. For instance, few research participants even requested enumerators and the consultants to visit them in their home towns after the COVID-19 calamities. Thus, this remote data collection method set a good example for similar studies worldwide that need to be carried out without delays during crises.

2.3.5 Review of Secondary Data

Extensive literature review was conducted by the consultant team. This included project documents including project application and log frame, past project documents of Search and past academic research articles. These documents assisted the consultant team to understand the current status quo of female political leadership in Sri Lanka at local government levels and their participation and influence in decision-making.

2.3.6 Research Ethics

In order to maintain the ethical standards of this research study, Consent forms were prepared in English for both survey and KII participants and they were translated to Sinhala and Tamil languages. Prior to each over the phone interview, consent forms were read out to participants and their verbal consent was obtained. The consent forms were also emailed to the district level partners to obtain research participants' signatures in the hard copies. Consent forms were emailed to each of the relevant national level activists along with the interview questions prior to their interviews and their verbal consent was obtained at the beginning of interviews.

2.3.7 Sample Frame

The sample consisted of 177 elected women leaders and 48 CSO leaders as presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Sample of participants of the Survey

Category	Badulla	Kurunegala	Ampara	Jaffna	Total
Elected women Leaders	44	45	43	45	177
Civil Society Leaders	11	12	12	13	48

2.3.8 Profile of Survey participants

The profile of survey participants is presented in table 2.2 below.

Description	Elected Women Leaders		CSO Leaders	
	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity				
Sinhala	92	52%	20	42%
Tamil	63	36%	22	46%
Muslim	22	12%	6	12%
Age				
18 - 24	2	1%	1	2%
25 - 34	24	13%	10	21%

35 - 44	54	31%	13	27%
45 - 54	56	32%	13	27%
55 - 64	33	18%	9	19%
65 or over	8	5%	2	4%
Education				
Up to Grade 5	1	1%	0	0%
Grade 6 to 9	10	6%	8	17%
O/L passed	54	31%	13	27%
A/Level	74	41%	12	25%
Diploma / Vocational Course	19	10%	4	8%
Undergraduate Degree	16	9%	6	13%
Postgraduate Degree	3	2%	5	10%
Marital Status				
Single	9	5%	7	15%
Married	154	87%	35	73%
Widow	11	6%	4	8%
Single mother	2	1%	2	4%
Divorced	1	1%	0	0%

2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was entered to Google forms and the data analysis was carried out using MS Excel. The KIIs were transcribed and the transcripts were prepared in English. This qualitative information was coded under common themes and used in the analysis to answer the key questions.

2.5 Limitations

The limitations faced were twofold in nature; one caused due to conducting telephone interviews and the other due to existing imbalanced gender power relations in Sri Lankan society.

The telephone interviews with the participants were delayed at times during data collection due to technological and other social and political engagements of participants as follows:

- Elected women and CSO leaders have multiple roles as council members, leaders of their communities, mothers, and wives in their households. Further, their political role as elected women leaders and CSO leaders became more demanding during COVID-19. For instance, they had to actively engage with distributing aid packages for the poor. Some of the EWLs were engaged in income earning activities such as farming or as labourers in tea estates. Hence, sometimes, it became difficult for the research team to contact elected women leaders and CSO leaders and had to make several attempts to contact them.
- KIIs are important to gather in-depth information in different perspectives and rapport building between the interviewer and the interviewee is important. Hence, KIIs require more time than survey questionnaires. At times, due to their demanding, multiple roles, it was difficult to keep them engaged for longer periods of time. For instance, while conducting a KII with a EWL from Badulla, she had to interrupt the call during the interview as her baby had woken up. Then, the rest of the interview was carried out at a later time. Another KII held with a EWL from Ampara was also interrupted as her husband wanted her to make a cup of tea for him. Thus, some of the KIIs were conducted in parts and this approach may have limited the information.
- In Badulla and Jaffna districts, the participants in remote areas were difficult to contact due to poor mobile network coverage.

- Further, the festive season of Ramadan period (from April 23 to May 23) fell within the data collection time and this also caused delays in contacting particularly Muslim participants.

Imbalanced gender power relations existing in Sri Lankan society due to its patriarchal social structure was another challenge that the research team had to face during the data collection period. The research team experienced such gender power imbalances when conducting telephone interviews with the participants as follows.

- During the survey, several husbands of EWLs particularly in Ampara, Jaffna and Badulla districts mentioned that their wives are incapable of answering any questions on their role as EWLs and these husbands asked enumerators to conduct the interviews with them. During the data collection period, it was revealed that some of the politically active husbands have transferred their opportunity to their wives due to increased opportunities for women under the 25% quota system. While this could be one reason for this situation, there could be other reasons as well. For instance, this also reflects the power control of male heads of the families on their female members. Even though women have come to political leadership positions, at household level, they are still controlled by their husbands within the families.
- In Kurunegala district, few participants were restrained from participating in the survey due to restrictions imposed by the male political party leaders that they represent. This again reflects the male dominance in political parties.
- Further, when the survey was carried out in Ampara among the Muslim EWLs, male enumerators were not allowed to conduct telephone interviews by their husbands. Hence, the consultancy team had to replace their two Tamil speaking male enumerators to two female Tamil speaking enumerators in order to continue the telephone interviews. Similar incidents occurred with few telephone interviews conducted in Jaffna with Tamil EWLs. This trend again reflects the patriarchal social and family structure of the Sri Lankan society because male heads of the families do not like their women to talk to male strangers over the phone assuming that it would lead to extra-marital affairs. This is proven in past research studies in many conservative societies (Abeykoon, 2017; Doron & Jeffrey, 2013; GSMA Women, 2012). This further emphasizes how the adoption of even a new communication technology is influenced by the gender relations of that particular community. However, none of the interviews conducted with Sinhala EWLs or CSO leaders were disturbed in this manner and they owned and used their own mobile phones.

3. Findings

3.1 Project Indicators

Across the four districts, surveys with quantitative questions were conducted to collect data for the indicators. These project indicators help to understand the status quo of women CSOLs and EWLs. The following tables summarize the project's outcome indicators that will be measured and recorded throughout the life of the project.

Table 3.1: Project Outcomes by Indicator - EWLs & CSOLs

EWLs / (CSOLs) %		Ampara	Badulla	Kurunegala	Jaffna	Overall
3.1 Project Outcomes by Indicators:						
3.1.1 % who say that they have actively participated and influenced decision-making process at least once:	A week	21 (-)	- (-)	- (8)	13(15)	8 (6)
	A month	56 (67)	84 (64)	82 (83)	87 (46)	77(65)
	In 3 months	16 (33)	16 (27)	13 (8)	- (31)	11(25)
	In 6 months	5 (-)	- (9)	2 (-)	-	2 (2)
	In 12 months	2 (-)	- (-)	2 (-)	- (8)	1 (2)
3.1.1 (a) No. of times spoken in the last council / organization meeting attended:	1-2 times	70 (42)	70 (18)	80 (8)	67 (31)	72 (25)
	3-4 times	21 (25)	27 (36)	13 (50)	27 (38)	22 (38)
	5 or more times	9 (33)	2 (45)	7 (42)	7 (31)	6 (38)
3.1.1 (b) Outcomes of the proposals presented at a general meeting, standing-committee or other level:	Accepted	65 (74)	80 (61)	79 (55)	80 (58)	76 (63)
	Rejected	35 (26)	20 (39)	21 (45)	20 (42)	24 (37)
	Implemented	39 (62)	59 (50)	51 (68)	55 (50)	51 (58)
3.1.1 (c.i) Current positions held by the EWLs in the local council	Chairman	-	0	-	2	1
	Vice Chairman	-	2	-	-	1
	Member	98	95	100	98	98
	Other	2	2	-	-	-
3.1.1 (c.ii) Attempted to change a policy, practice or law within state or non-state structures or institutions?	Yes	33	48	58	33	43
	No	67	52	42	67	57
3.1.1 (d) Current positions held by the CSOLs in the organization	President	(50)	(36)	(42)	(8)	(33)
	Secretary	-	(18)	(33)	(8)	(15)
	Treasurer	-	-	-	(8)	(2)
	Member	(33)	(27)	(17)	(46)	(31)
	Other	(7)	(18)	(8)	(31)	(19)

3.1.1 (e) Current level of participation in committees operating in local councils / organizations	Yes	74 (67)	91 (27)	91 (50)	96 (23)	88 (42)
	No	26 (33)	9 (73)	9 (50)	4 (77)	12 (58)
3.1.1 (f) Committees represented by EWLs	Finance and policy making	15	27	35	27	27
	Housing and community development	18	31	31	27	28
	Technical services	6	4	12	16	10
	Environment and amenities	62	38	22	29	35
3.1.2 % of EWLs surveyed who state that their level of engagement in decision making and day to day activities within their local council has increased		88	93	93	91	92
3.1.3 % who can identify at least one concrete example of when they demonstrated traits of positive leadership advocacy, or accountability		72 (83)	89 (91)	98 (67)	67 (31)	81 (67)
3.1.4 % who report that they are respected by their male counterparts while making decisions at the local level / at your organization	Extremely Low	5 (8)	5 (-)	2 (-)	4 (27)	4 (9)
	Low	5 (-)	5 (-)	18 (-)	11 (9)	11 (2)
	Moderate	48 (50)	48 (50)	62 (67)	33 (27)	48 (49)
	High	41 (8)	41 (50)	18 (33)	44 (18)	34 (27)
	Extremely High	2 (33)	2 (-)	- (-)	7 (18)	3 (13)
3.1.5 % of CSO leaders who have organized at least one campaign to promote women's role in political decision-making	Yes	(58)	(45)	(75)	(31)	(52) ¹
	No	(42)	(55)	(25)	(69)	(48)
3.1.6 Campaigns organized on women's empowerment under your leadership - CSOLs	Child Abuse & Protection	(18)	(33)	-	-	(11)
	Access to Finance	(18)	(33)	-	-	(11)
	Violence Against Women	(27)	(33)	(15)	(50)	(26)
	Political Empowerment	(18)	(17)	(8)	(50)	(17)
	Economic Empowerment	(9)	-	(77)	-	(29)
	Missing Persons	(9)	-	-	-	(3)
	Health Practices	(18)	-	-	-	(3)

¹ None of the 27 examples provided by CSOLs are related to organizing a campaign to promote women's role in political decision making

3.1.7 Designed or engaged advocacy campaigns with women political leaders - CSOLs	Yes	(17)	(27)	-	(23)	(17)
	No	(83)	(73)	(100)	(77)	(83)

3.1.1 Active participation and influencing decision making process²

Out of the total EWLs interviewed, only 2% held the ‘Chairperson’ or ‘Vice-Chairperson’ positions in the Local Councils and the majority (98%) were acting as council ‘Members’. As pointed out by several KIIs with district/national activists and CSOLs/EWLs, one of the main reasons for this observation is that the majority of these new EWLs are inexperienced and it is their first time holding any position of power. Majority being male members is also another reason for this trend.

“The majority in the council are men. Male councilors will never vote to make a female councilor a chairperson. Maybe it's due to historical and cultural situations that they don't like to see women in decision making positions. We had the first female prime minister, but the situation of women is this” – EWL, Ampara

“Many women in councils are new. They need experience.” – EWL, Badulla

Whereas, the majority of CSOLs have decision making positions compared to EWLs. Out of total CSOLs, 33% have mentioned that they are ‘Presidents’ while 17% have mentioned that they are serving as ‘Secretary’ or ‘Treasurer’. Around 31% of CSOLs are members. The reason(s) for the above observations is possibly due to many CSOs being exclusively for women only and membership in several CSOs/CBOs.

In inquiring about the active participation in decision making, the majority (77%) of the EWLs quoted that they actively participated in the decision-making process at least once a month (please see Table 3.1). This observation was common across all the four districts. A possible explanation for this trend could be that the local council meetings are usually held once a month. Thus, EWLs perceive this opportunity as active participation in decision making monthly. However, when probed on the number of times they spoke in the last council meeting, 72% EWLs claimed that they spoke only 1-2 times which highlights active participation may not be the current status quo for EWLs. As revealed during KIIs, in many local councils, each member is allowed to speak 1-2 times. Several EWLs mentioned that they do not attempt to speak more than 1 -2 times as ‘it is not appropriate’. This trend could be because they are newly elected members to the councils. Another reason could be the fact that they are women. In Sri Lankan society, women are always trained to speak softly when it is needed. Speaking a lot and speaking loudly are generally perceived as inappropriate behaviour for a respectable woman. However, their lack of knowledge on the Act, laws and regulations could also be another reason because many

² In this study, the active participation and influencing decision making process is defined as if EWLs/CSOLs have been able to secure funds for projects of their interest through councils/respective government administrative structures/NGOs or INGO and whether they have implemented the projects and, if EWLs/CSOLs have proposed the council members/CSO members to establish women and gender standing committees/implement new activities.

claimed that if they know relevant information such as the legal provisions, they could have spoken more and challenged some of the proposals and decisions taken in their councils. This is further explained by a national activist as follows;

“the fear of talking comes when you don’t have the knowledge in what you're talking about and also not having a knowledge in the current affairs ... more than men women have the issue of coming out and talking in public, and women are scared – as they worry other will judge, men will open up –even if it’s a lie, they will make a lie as if it’s a true case” –
National Activist

In asking the same question from CSOLs, 65% have participated in the decision-making process at least once a month. This is slightly lower compared to the EWLs (77%) as there is a higher proportion of CSOLs who are participating in decision making only once every 3 months. Looking at the four districts, Jaffna (39%) has the least (once in 3, 6 & 12 months) and Kurunegala (91%) has the highest (once in a week & month) frequency of participation in decision making (please see Table 3.1). As mentioned by the CSO leaders, this could be because in many CSOs, meetings are held every three months. Further, 76% of CSOLs have claimed that they speak 3 - 4 times or 5 or more times in meetings which supports the statistic of 65% of active participation at least once a month. During the KIIs also it was revealed that CSO leaders do not face difficulties in expressing themselves in the meetings because the majority of them hold leadership positions and members of many CSOs are only women.

On further probing, the consultancy team observed that the majority of EWLs have not actively participated and influenced the decision-making process. This was captured through inquiring about the proposals they put forward and their representation in standing committees at the council.

Regarding proposals of EWLs, only 51% of proposals have been implemented at the councils in spite of the high rate of acceptance (76%) (please see Table 3.1). This highlights the fact that even though EWLs are heard, they are yet to influence councils to follow through on their proposals. According to few district and national level activists, the fact that they are being women is one reason for this lower rate for not implementing their proposals.

Further, lack of funds in the councils is found to be another reason.

“Main issue with Soranathota is that we don't have money to implement any proposals” –
EWL, Badulla

And their membership of the political party is another reason for this situation. For example, a EWL from Kurunegala district who represents the JVP party has proposed 24 proposals for the last two years, yet none have been implemented so far. As indicated by many EWLs, funds are allocated only to the party members who are in power along with the Chairman of the councils.

Also, the majority (57%) of EWLs have not attempted (individually or as a group) to change a policy, practice or law within state or non-state structures or institutions which is not beneficial for the public. This further proves the point that their active participation and

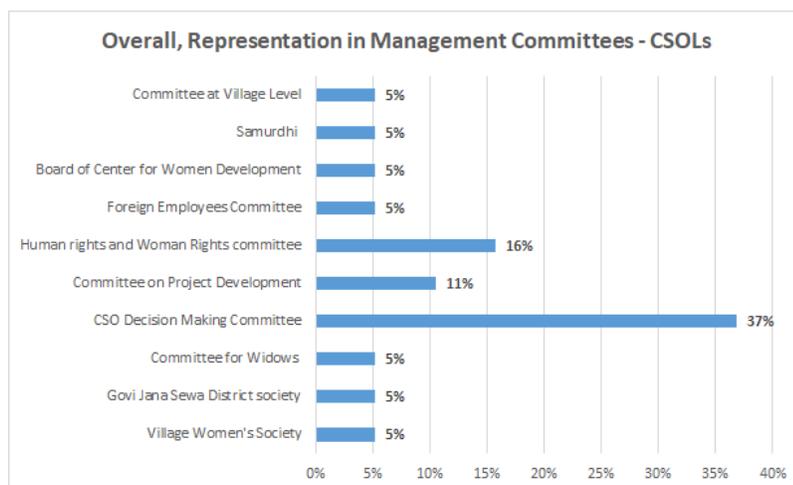
influence in decision making is actually limited contrary to the claims made in 3.1.1. in Table 3.1.

Further, even though representation of EWLs in standing committees is 88%, most (35%) of the representation of EWLs in standing committees occur in the ‘environment and amenities’ related committees (please see Table 3.1). This also calls to action a shift towards other areas of the local government which is still very much dominated by elected male leaders such as ‘technical services’ and ‘finance & policy making’. And only 31% of EWLs have presented proposals on women’s economic empowerment and the proposal presentation related to prevention of GBV, rights and entitlement of women and women education...etc. are less than 20%. In terms of proposals of CSOLs, only 58% have been implemented. Majority (36%) of CSOLs have proposed ‘education and awareness services’ while 27% have proposed ‘infrastructure development’. As revealed in the KIIs and the survey, lack of gender sensitivity of the EWLs could be a reason for the lower level of proposals presented on gender issues. As highlighted by several national and district level activists, many of these new EWLs have forgotten the fact that they have been elected to the local councils particularly to represent the voice of women more in their communities.

“Women need to understand why are they representing – they are not there to do the same thing the men are there to do; proper understanding of representation is a must” – National Activist

“Women leaders can bring the issues of hardships experienced by women-headed households in these platforms and find solutions. And sadly, sometime women leaders are not aware of the issues faced by women, they need to know the entire background, facts and figures of women who are suffering” – District Activist, Jaffna

Hence, it is important to remind them and develop their necessary capacities to achieve this goal. When EWLs were asked whether they have proposed to establish a standing committee on women and gender in their respective councils, only 47% of them claimed that they have presented such proposals. Its highest percentage (69%) is recorded from Jaffna district while the lowest (11%) is from Badulla district. Thus, the experience of Jaffna EWLs in this regard can be shared among the EWLs of other districts. According to a EWL from Badulla, they have been unable to present proposals on women and gender as they are ‘looked at differently’ by their male council members. Lack of awareness on gender issues by the male council members could be a reason for this. Around 42% of CSOLs also have claimed that they are representing management committees at their CSOs and out of this, 37% of CSOLs are representing CSO decision making committees (please the chart below).



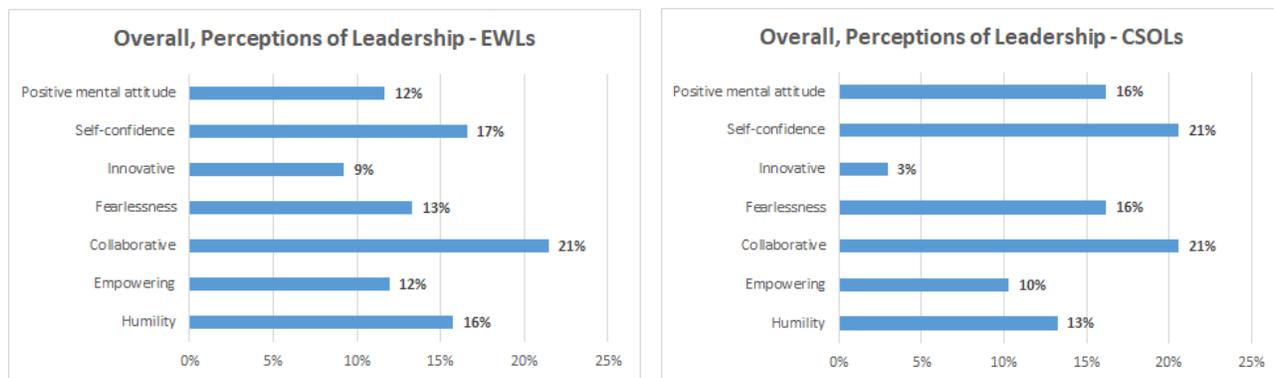
It is apparent from the above analysis, that the majority of EWLs are not actively participating and influencing decision making at the council. Another reason for this is that as the consultancy team was informed, in Jaffna, two seats from the PR list is distributed among eight women. This means each woman will have only a one-year term in the council. This situation is a barrier for EWLs to learn, experience, and influence in decision making. EWLs are also limited in their active participation due to existing socio-cultural barriers for women. This is highlighted by following quotes from EWLs.

“Male counterparts do not let us talk freely in the council, they interfere, and they laugh at our proposals” – EWL, Badulla

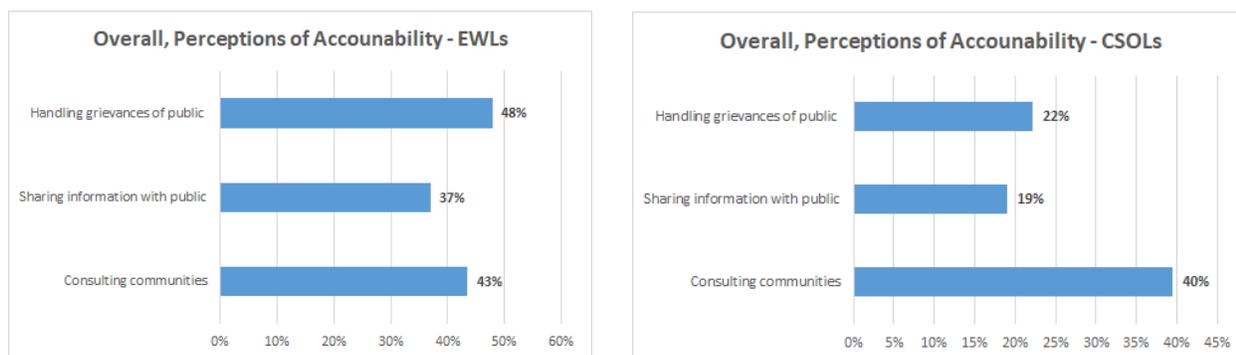
“President and male councillors do not like to include women in standing committees especially in finance committee” – EWL, Ampara

3.1.2 Demonstration of positive leadership, advocacy or accountability

Prior to inquiring on examples of positive leadership, advocacy and accountability, EWLs were probed on how they perceive positive leadership, advocacy and accountability. Majority of EWLs perceived leadership as collaborative (21%), self-confidence (17%), humility (16%) and fearlessness (13%). Similarly, with CSOLs, the majority perceive leadership as collaborative (21%), self-confidence (21%), positive mental attitude (16%) and fearlessness (16%) (please see charts below). Through this data it can be understood that both EWLs and CSOLs have an understanding of positive leadership.



When it comes to accountability, it is commonly perceived by EWLs as handling grievances of the public (48%) and consulting communities (43%). However, sharing information with the public is recorded only at 37%. Further, when interviewing, EWLs mentioned that they perceive accountability as helping people without considering their political parties. For CSOLs, the common perception on accountability is consulting communities (40%), handling grievances (22%) and sharing information with the public is recorded as 19% (please see the charts below). This data suggests that both EWLs and CSOLs do not have a clear perception of accountability as both perceive it as handling grievances and consulting communities. This can be because of the general political atmosphere in the country as traditional politicians perceive accountability as grievance handling and consulting communities. Whereas, many EWLs and CSOLs perceive that sharing information with the public is not that important.



On the perception of advocacy, 57% of EWLs and 46% CSOLs have not done or did not have an understanding of what advocacy means. Around 43% of EWLs claimed to have done advocacy, majority of them have conducted meetings with groups or networks related to areas such as violence against women and drug prevention. Regarding CSOLs, 54% have claimed that they have trained community members, have conducted meetings with groups or networks and have interacted with communities. They have done advocacy on areas such as violence against women and preventing sexual harassment of children. Some outstanding examples from Ampara are provided below:

“Over the last 4 years I have been working on revising MMDA (Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act). And helping affected Muslim women to pursue legal proceedings” – CSO, Ampara “I have been involved in an advocacy campaign to change relevant laws in the judicial system regarding child abuses. Further I have filed a case at Human Rights Council on Muslims women's right” – CSO, Ampara

“There's a caste called ‘Sheeval’- their employment is tapping toddy and many of them are toddy tappers. All of them are poor, they live under the poverty line. There are 320 families in a village all of them are relatives, there is a school for them and recently the government wanted to close this school. I went door to door, engaged youth and managed to change this decision. I am happy I have been 100% successful here.” – EWL, Jaffna

Compared to EWLs, the CSOLs have a clearer perception on advocacy. However, the majority of both EWLs and CSOLs need clear guidance on advocacy to promote women’s role in political decision making.

When it comes to demonstrating positive leadership, advocacy or accountability, overall, the majority (81%) of the EWLs were able to quote at least one concrete example. Interestingly, Jaffna had the lowest percentage of 67% whereas in Kurunegala almost all (98%) EWLs were able to demonstrate leadership, advocacy or accountability skills in their local council (please see Table 3.1). The majority (67%) of the CSOLs were able to quote at least one concrete example. However, this is significantly lower compared to the EWLs (81%). Looking at the four districts, Jaffna (31%) performed the worst and Kurunegala (91%) the best against this indicator similar to the EWLs highlighting a consistent trend across the two groups.

However, many of these examples are related to positive leadership as their understanding on advocacy and accountability was at a low level. It must be further noted, most (44%) of the examples quoted had to do with ‘Infrastructure Development’ for EWLs. This is understandable given most of the proposals presented were infrastructure related.

“They concreted the road to our village, but they could not finish 500m. I talked with RDA and finished the road” – EWL, Ampara.

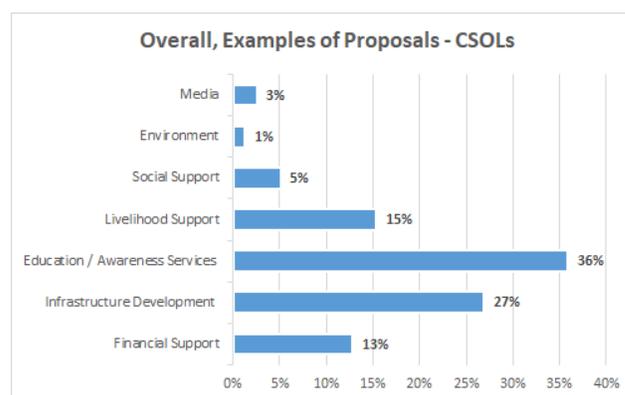
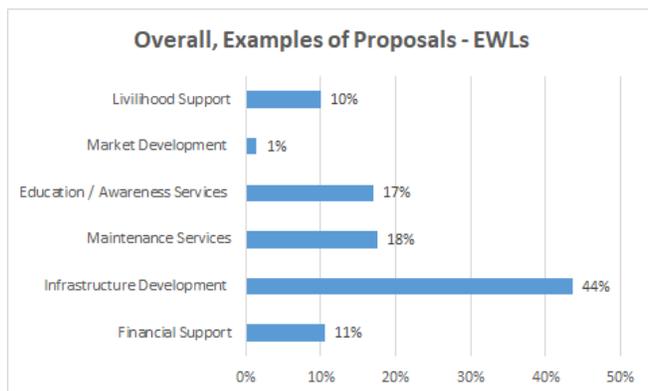
“I constructed few roads and houses under “Gamperaliya” project” – EWL, Kurunegala

Interestingly, many participants provided examples of their engagement in providing assistance during COVID-19 as it is their recent experience (categorized under financial support) (please see chart below). Therefore, the observation of 81% of EWLs able to quote at least one concrete example of positive leadership, accountability and advocacy needs to be considered with caution. In contrast, most (36%) of the examples quoted by CSOLs had to do with ‘Education / Awareness Services’ followed by ‘Infrastructure Development’ (27%) and ‘Livelihood Support’ (15%) (please see charts below).

“I have assisted to develop roads and to get electricity to the area” – CSO, Kurunegala

“Has been part of many rights based advocacy initiatives related to women, children, education, constitutional reforms.” – CSO, Jaffna

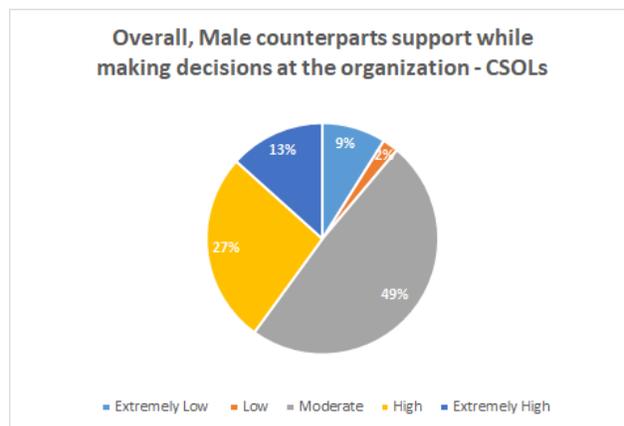
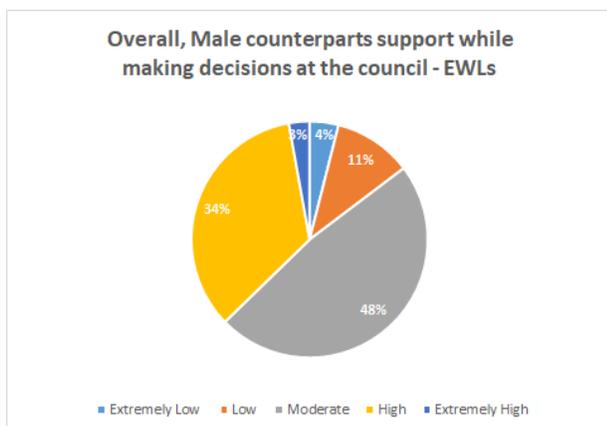
“I have worked for Violence against women. Have involved in such families and settled the matters” – CSO, Kurunegala



3.1.3 Support of male counterparts

Overall, the majority (63%) of EWLs have experienced extremely low, low or moderate support by their male counterparts while making decisions at the local council level which needs to be noted (please see chart below). Notable district to continue to improve on this indicator would be Kurunegala with a percentage of 82%. During the KIIs and the survey, it became clear that mostly elderly EWLs, more than 50 years old, claimed that they are respected by their male counterparts and they are not disturbed while speaking in council meetings. This could be because of the respect for the elders. As a national activist describes this,

“It’s wrong (respecting only elderly EWLs) I don’t believe in it, there is a jealousy about young women coming, the word used is 'Nangi' (younger sister), to put them in their place and in a lesser position.” – National Activist



However, there was an exceptional view point on the respect of male counterparts by one of the Tamil EWL from Jaffna as follows;

“In my council, men councilors never raise their voices against my proposal because I always agree with their thought that men and women are not equal, because of this all the 21 men councilors give me their fullest support.” – EWL, Tamil, Jaffna

This low level of support from the male counterparts is further discussed in the Barriers section (3.3). The same situation is slightly low with CSOLs as it is 60%. Looking at either end of the spectrum, Jaffna (27%) has the highest percentage of CSOLs who felt extremely low support whereas Ampara (33%) has the highest percentage of CSOLs who felt extremely high support. However, it needs to be noted, in women CSOs the presence of male counterparts is limited therefore these statistics can be skewed based on the individual characteristics of the districts and CSOs.

3.1.4 Campaigns organised by CSOLs to promote women’s role in political decision making

In questioning about campaigns organized to promote women’s political decision making, 52% of the total CSOLs have mentioned that they have organized campaigns. However, when examining the examples, they have provided, it was clear that none of the participants who answered yes, have organized campaigns to promote women’s role in political decision making. Few such examples are provided below.

“I educated communities to vote for women candidates at the last local government elections” – CSO, Ampara

“I persuaded women to be representatives at the polling booths” – CSO, Badulla

“Have done programs for community on female councillors” – CSO, Kurunegala

Further, during the discussion and when doing KIIs, it was found out that CSOLs have worked to obtain 25% quota in 2018 for women’s political empowerment and most of the campaigns they have given as examples were organized by CSOs/NGOs or INGOs. CSOLs have supported these organizations through village level involvement. The quotes of CSOLs are mentioned below.

“We did campaigns in Colombo and in other districts for a 25% quota for females. Women Resource Center, MOLAR and other CSOs, Search organized these campaigns together. I coordinated with village level societies I am working, and I went to these campaigns with other community members. I have also organized a few campaigns here (Kurunegala) as well” – CSO, Kurunegala.

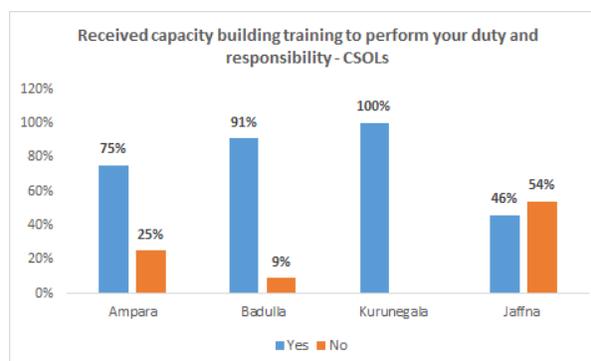
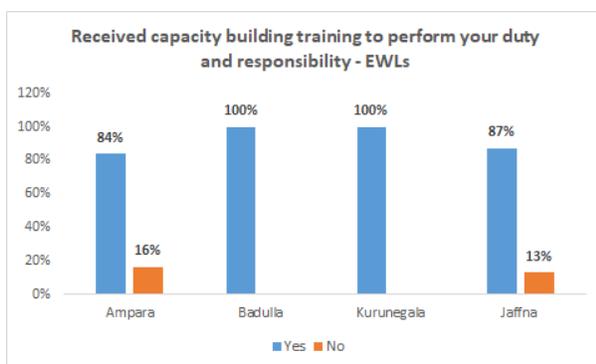
“We worked with CSOs to get a 25% quota for women. And went to campaigns in Galle and Colombo organized by Purawesi Sabawa. I went to these campaigns with the village level team. There were about 20 participants in these village level teams. We also did street dramas. We organized these through Women Development Center” – CSO, Badulla

About 48% of CSOLs have claimed that they have not organized campaigns and have mentioned several reasons such as fear, lack of support, lack of knowledge, no opportunity and financial difficulties. As KIIs revealed lack of necessary funds was the main reason for them to not engage in the areas related to political decision making. District level activist from Ampara commented as follows,

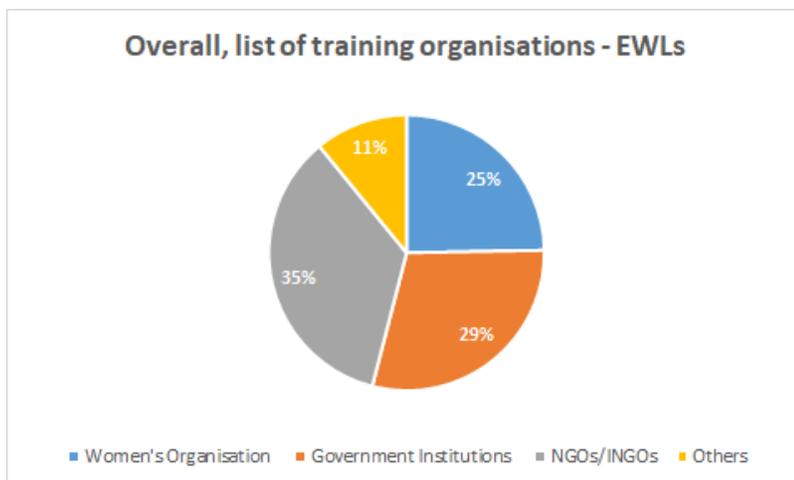
“We already do the work which we can do voluntarily. However, to do awareness and empowerment, we have resource persons, but we lack funds. At our capacity, we do link elected women with organizations where they can get help”

3.2 Existing capacities and capacity gap of women leaders

To understand the existing capacities and capacity gaps of EWLs/CSOLs, they were probed in terms of whether they had received any kinds of capacity building training to perform their duty and responsibility. Overall, the majority (93%) of EWLs had received some kind of training with Ampara (84%) having the lowest and Badulla (100%) / Kurunegala (100%) having the highest percentage of EWLs who have undergone training (please see Table 3.2). These high percentages are understandable because just before and after the elections, the focus of many INGOs, NGOs, CSOs and government institutions was on capacity building of women political leaders who would be contesting and who were elected to the local governments. Similarly, the majority (77%) of the CSOLs received some kind of capacity building training as well. However, this percentage is significantly less than the EWLs. Also, interesting to note, Jaffna (46%) and Ampara (75%) which had the two lowest percentages against this indicator when it comes to CSOLs is directly correlated with the two lowest percentages against the same indicator when it comes to EWLs. And since 75% of all EWLs were part of a CSO before becoming politicians, it is imperative that more focus is placed on the training of CSOLs.



Interestingly, most (35%) of these EWLs received these training from NGOs/INGOs followed by government institutions (29%) and women organisations (25%) (please see chart below). Some of the NGOs/INGOs that were mentioned were the likes of Search, Satri, USAID, UN, UNICEF, Change, World Vision, Chrysalis, JSAC, and IOM to name a few. Whereas, most (48%) of the CSOLs received training from government institutions followed by NGOs/INGOs (28%) and women organisations (24%). This is in stark contrast to EWLs, whereby NGOs/INGOs played a more active role in the training and development field. This marks an opportunity for more NGOs/INGOs to get involved with CSOLs given they have been traditionally the resource pool for future EWLs.



In terms of types of training attended by EWLs, the majority of EWLs have not participated in most relevant training programs. For instance, 79% of EWLs have not participated in programs on political leadership and 80% for gender rights and mainstreaming. 83% claimed that they have not attended training on effective communication while this is 96% for social auditing and 96% for participatory budgeting. Meanwhile, 94% have not attended training sessions on gender responsive advocacy tools. Therefore, it makes sense to provide training in all these areas plus tailor future training programs to cover areas that are not already provided by other NGOs/INGOS in the field (please see Table 3.2).

The problem solving skills of the EWLs in all four districts was very low. When they are confronted with problems, 51% of the total EWLs resort to dealing it with the ‘Chairperson’ of the councils. According to them, most of the time they talked with their ‘Chairperson’ face-to-face or over the phone about their issues after the council meetings. The use of other legal methods that they can rightfully use to overcome challenges such as use of Right to Information Act, media, social media, filing human rights cases or writing a petition was very low (less than 10% across all). Most important to note, media and social media were used only 9% and 8% by the EWLs respectively to address challenges.

Also, when it comes to knowledge about the functions of local authorities and relevant law, regulations and act, the majority (68%) of the EWLs quoted only a moderate level of understanding which is an area that needs immediate attention. During the KIIs and questionnaire interviews, many EWLs highlighted the fact that they would like to enhance their knowledge on the Act, its laws and regulations particularly related to financial management and policy making in order to actively participate in the decision making process of their councils.

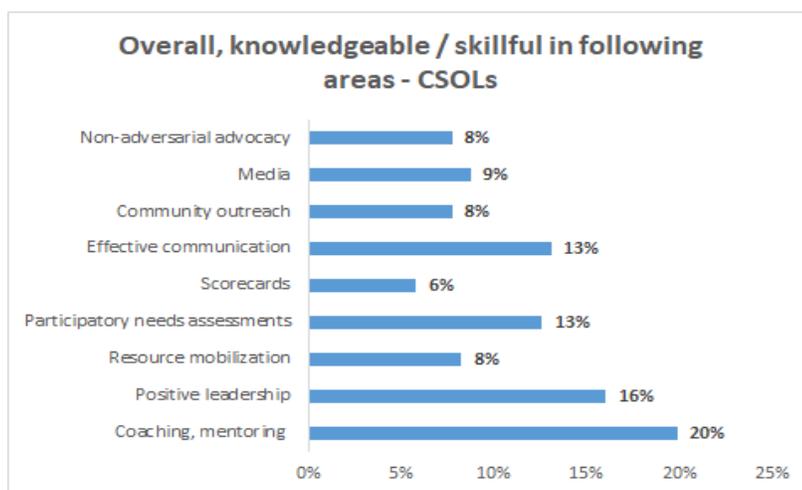
“Before we enter the local government, we should study about relevant legislation and we must have knowledge in preparing budgets and other financial matters. If we go to the local government without knowing all these, it is useless.” – EWL, Ampara

Also, during a KII with a national level activist, lack of legal knowledge about the powers invested in the position they hold was a recurring theme in the conversation. National and district level activists also believed that the EWLs must “know the Act from A to Z”.

Additionally, EWLs claimed that they would like to enhance their soft skills such as skills in second languages, that is on English and Sinhala or Tamil to gain and to impart knowledge. They were also willing to enhance their computer literacy.

“I like to learn more about female politicians at international level. How they came to those positions. In Sri Lanka, women have come into politics through family background. Those are not women who knew people, their pain and sweat” – EWL, Badulla

Similar to EWLs, CSOLs also have not attended training programs on many of the areas such as gender rights and mainstreaming (80%), effective communication (87%), political leadership (84%), social auditing (95%), gender responsive budgeting (96%), and gender responsive planning (94%). Therefore, providing training on all these areas is vital plus it might make sense to partner with existing government institutions in the field to avoid duplication (please see Table 3.2). CSOLs also highlighted the need for learning second languages and IT.



“Many programs are conducted in English language. I need to develop my English knowledge. And Tamil language is also important. We have Tamil and Muslim councilors as well. So, if we know Tamil language, it's easy for us to give our knowledge to them. Even today, we have connections with female councilors from Northern and Eastern areas. But, if we are more knowledgeable on language, then it's easy for us to communicate with them. Information Technology is also important. Even in our CSO, we don't have access to a computer. So, we cannot learn even from using.” – CSO, Kurunegala

Finally, it is encouraging to see at least 20% of CSOLs are knowledgeable and skillful in coaching and training (see chart below) (please see Table 3.2). This would be useful when it comes to using CSOLs to train and coach the existing EWLs in power. However, a lot more can be done in getting a majority of CSOLs to be knowledgeable and skillful in areas such as positive leadership (16%), effective communication (13%), community outreach (8%), resource mobilization (8%), and media (9%). Especially, in the current context, the ability to navigate the media (both mainstream and social media) is a skill needed to succeed in almost any public office. Therefore, it is recommended to look at areas that are needed in the current context to succeed and develop capacity development plans around that.

It is also important that, in designing training programs, Search needs to pay attention to gender roles of women, cultural restrictions and ground realities. Some participants from Badulla mentioned that they live in rural areas and it takes 1-2 hours' bus ride even from Badulla. Therefore, they requested to have training in Badulla. Some other women councillors mentioned as follows,

“No, No I was unable to attend residential workshops. As my husband was busy with his job, I was unable to leave my children home and attend for residential workshops.” – EWL (Sinhala), Kurunegala

“I do not like to attend residential training because I am very particular with my food selection. Since we are Brahmins, we have that problem. Still my family has not given me freedom to that level where I can attend residential training. Still I am afraid of my mother “ – EWL (Tamil), Jaffna

“I have attended residential workshops. But the thing is I didn't stay at the hotel. I returned home each day but participated in the workshop series. I felt awkward to spend the night at the hotel as I am the only Muslim lady in the team. I felt comfortable coming home the same day and attending the workshop the other day.” – EWL (Muslim), Kurunegala

Further, the educational level of the EWLs and CSOLs must be taken into consideration when conducting training programs. For example, there was an EWL in Badulla who was unable to read and write. During the survey questionnaire, she answered the questions with the help of her husband. The educational level of EWLs in Ampara, particularly among Muslim EWLs is at a low level and many of them were unable to understand the questions posed in the questionnaire and in KIIs. Hence, a national activist advised that “so then you will have to have different modes of approaching them”.

There were further concerns on conducting training for EWLs and CSOLs by the national and district level activists. According to them, some of these training sessions are designed for short periods of time such as from 10am to 2pm. Hence, participants become less motivated to participate perceiving it as a waste of time. Few of the other issues highlighted by a national activist are as follows;

“We were all targeting the same women – every time, so they were overloaded with information, or certain women were not active in taking part, I don’t think we were able to cover all the women, maybe for political reasons – some parties didn’t want their members coming, so some were left behind. See the NGO phobia is also there.” - National Activist

Some of the EWLs particularly those who represent the JVP party also admitted that they do not want to participate in the trainings organised by outside organisations as their party organises more useful training programs.

Table 3.2: Existing capacities and capacity gaps of EWLs & CSOLs

EWLs / (CSOLs) %		Ampara	Badulla	Kurunegala	Jaffna	Overall
3.2 Existing capacities and capacity gaps of EWLs & CSOLs						
3.2.1 Received any kinds of capacity building training to perform your duty and responsibility	Yes	84 (75)	100 (91)	100 (100)	87 (46)	93(77)
	No	16 (25)	- (9)	- (-)	13 (54)	7 (23)
3.2.2 Attended the following training programs	Gender rights and mainstreaming	20 (18)	18 (25)	22 (20)	22 (21)	20 (20)
	Political leadership	19 (13)	25 (22)	21 (20)	20 (13)	21(16)
	Engaging with Media	10 (14)	13 (9)	12 (13)	9 (13)	11 (13)
	Effective Communication	13 (13)	15 (25)	11 (16)	15 (18)	13 (17)
	Gender responsive advocacy tools	7 (13)	3 (3)	6 (9)	6 (5)	6 (8)
	Gender Responsive Planning	14 (7)	5 (3)	9 (7)	7 (11)	9 (7)
	Gender Responsive Budgeting	10 (7)	4 (3)	7 (2)	4 (8)	7 (5)
	Social Auditing	4 (4)	4 (3)	5 (7)	3 (5)	4 (5)
	Participatory Budgeting	- (13)	5 (6)	5 (7)	9 (5)	4 (8)
	3.2.3 EWLs level of knowledge about the functions of local	Extremely Low	-	-	-	-
Low		2	18	11	18	12

authorities and relevant law, regulations and act	Moderate	74	61	80	56	68
	High	23	18	9	27	19
	Extremely High	-	2	-	-	1
3.2.4 Knowledgeable / skillful in the following areas	Coaching, mentoring	(16)	(27)	(26)	(18)	(20)
	Positive leadership	(16)	(15)	(19)	(15)	(16)
	Resource mobilization	(9)	(12)	(3)	(8)	(8)
	Participatory needs assessments	(13)	(18)	(6)	(12)	(13)
	Scorecards	(5)	(3)	(6)	(8)	(6)
	Effective communication	(13)	(12)	(10)	(15)	(13)
	Community outreach	(8)	(3)	(6)	(11)	(8)
	Member	(12)	(3)	(10)	(8)	(9)
	Non-adversarial advocacy	(9)	(6)	(13)	(5)	(8)

3.3 Barriers to the active participation of the elected women leaders in decision making

This section looks at the barriers to full and active participation of elected women leaders. The barriers to EWLs were mainly identified through qualitative analysis. The section is categorized into two sections as structural and agency barriers.

3.3.1 Structural Barriers

These newly elected women leaders confront different forms of structural barriers. Firstly, 87% of all the EWLs interviewed were married. The majority of these EWLs of all three ethnicities belong to traditional and patriarchal social structures of their respective communities. Hence, they are compelled to perform their traditional gender roles in the private sphere while carrying out their responsibilities as political leaders in the public sphere. EWLs commented on this as follows.

“We are farmers. I have to cook and treat laborers who work in the field. And we have our grandchildren with us. We both have to look after them too. And I perform my role as a political leader as well while holding many positions in civil societies. So I think I have that capacity to balance all the responsibilities in my life.” – EWL (Sinhala), Kurunegala

“I manage both household work and income earning. It's always a one-man show. I teach and cook and do all, my husband doesn't eat if I don't cook. I have one daughter and two sons.” – EWL (Muslim), Ampara

“Some are saying that we have no other job and that's the reason we are in politics. They criticize our positions and our willingness to get into politics, and place us as women who are ignoring our children and families.” – EWL (Tamil), Jaffna

“Men always think that women politicians behave against social boundaries and cultures. We are not seen as disciplined or someone who's doing good to society. They always have a diluted view on us.” – EWL (Tamil), Jaffna

“...the culture remains as an obstacle. Say a woman married – she herself puts barriers to her life.” – CSOL (Tamil), Jaffna

Secondly, as women in conservative societies, many of them were afraid of tarnishing their ‘good name’ as respectable wives and mothers due to their involvement in politics. For example, as expressed by several participants, they had obtained permission from their husbands before entering politics. Some EWLs who were mothers thought that their children should never be disrespected by the communities due to their political career. Hence, it was a common belief among them that they would be unable to have a progressive political career if they are not supported by their husbands and family members as they would be looked down upon by society. One of the EWL in her early forties who was abandoned by her husband due to her active involvement in politics, found it difficult to attend to political activities alone ‘without the strength (support) of a man’ in her life.

“..... family cooperation is essential. Especially for married women, they need 100% cooperation from the husband. Cooperation of children is also essential” – EWL, Ampara

Thirdly, financial difficulties were another major structural barrier faced by these EWLs. Even though many EWLs from all three ethnicities wish and aim to continue their political career up to parliamentary level, they all are aware that it would be an extremely hard goal to achieve as they are unable to spend a massive amount of money on their supporters as done by traditional politicians. EWLs comments on this regard as follows.

“In the current political culture, we need to have money to be in politics. It’s a must. As women, we are not rich enough to engage in politics. We came with the quota system, however, if the preference vote system is there, we cannot survive in politics. They consider money and power in politics.” – EWL, Ampara

“I am an average family-oriented woman. I don't have a powerful money background. If you want to go further in politics, you have to have a strong income.” – EWL, Badulla

“Politicians have transformed people into giving them something to vote on. All parties are doing this, but we don’t have the financial strength to do such things....” – EWL, Ampara

Fourthly, as women in patriarchal societies, they face further difficulties in carrying out their duties as local government council members. As discussed above, in survey findings 63% of the interviewed EWLs believed that they are not respected by their male counterparts. In asking for any comments for their answer, EWLs from all four districts responded as mentioned below. Further, as the majority of these EWLs have been selected to the local council from the PR list and thanks to the 25% quota system, sometimes they are disgraced as ‘*pin manthre*’ (members selected by chance/ by luck).

EWL comments table on support of male counterparts in council:

Ampara	“Sometimes they don't even listen to us and totally neglect”
	“They don't like to give priority to female councillors”
	“When we try to talk about one thing, all the men from the same party will rise up and talk against us. Their story ends with a council session. They speak louder than us even though we speak our minds too. So, we will end up being quiet”.
Badulla	“Male counterparts do not support us. Therefore, we don't stand much to present our ideas. They don't take us for the discussion.”
	“I’m not allowed to present proposals or to raise my voice as I’m disturbed by the male council members in power”
Jaffna	“Male councillors possess deep patriarchal thinking and their ideology is that women are not equal to men. And they do not think that women are suited for decision making.”
	“They never speak when issues and needs related to women in the community are discussed.”
Kurunegala	“They disturb us. They show their power.”
	“They laugh when women stand up. Now we don't care about that.”

Some of them face threats and difficulties from the male council members outside of the council as well.

“When I was involved in a road construction project, they displayed my photo in a poster. Men who don't want to see our popularity went out at night and removed the photo. They will not let us serve” – EWL (Tamil), Ampara

Fifthly, EWLs are unable to secure funds to implement their proposals as they are not supported by the majority of male counterparts in the council. Additionally, when their respective local councils are not financially strong, these EWLs are unable to acquire any funds to implement any projects to their communities.

“I have been in the local government for two years. But I didn't get any funding from the local council to serve our people. Men know this because they have been members for a very long period. They have experience whilst we are new to the local council” – EWL, Ampara

Consequently, the constituents of EWLs are dissatisfied. EWLs commented on this as follows.

“During this Covid-19 period, I managed to secure 20 dry packs from the Pradeshiya Sabha. There are about 1,500 families here. People said, “We voted for you. Then why can't you provide dry food for all of us?”. So, during instances like this, it becomes difficult to satisfy all the people” – EWL (Tamil), Badulla

Sixthly, sometimes, EWLs confront difficulties when they are the minority in the majority. For example, in Ampara, in certain pradeshiya sabha, Sinhala EWLs represent the minority where the majority is Tamil speaking council members. Thus, they face difficulties due to language barriers.

“when I was new to the council, I signed a Tamil letter without knowing it was against the President, however later I explained and settled it. We have to wait for the translation to present our ideas.” – EWL (Sinhala), Ampara

Finally, party politics have become another barrier for their political roles. As indicated by many EWLs, they have become compelled to obey and act on the demands of their respective political parties from which they received their nominations. Many were also not sure if they would get the nominations from their political parties.

“I expect to get nominations for future elections. But, with party politics, you never know, they may not give nominations for us sometimes” – EWL, Badulla

“I don't want to be in parties, it's like they use us as a puppet and reduce our capacities” – EWL (Muslim), Ampara

“Some of them have necessary skills and capacities, but the problem is the party politics. As they're stuck in the party politics, they must act within the framework of party politics. So even though they have skills they're unable to use them” - District Level Activist, Badulla

Further, some EWLs are even unable to present a proposal as they represent the opposition party in their councils. For instance, one EWL from the JVP party has presented 24 proposals during the last two years. However, none has been accepted so far. According to interviewed EWLs, sometimes their proposals were not even recorded in the *Hansard*.

Consequently, due to party politics, many EWLs have forgotten the main reason for electing them to the local councils, which is to represent women and their issues in the local government level. According to a district level activist, these new EWLs must always be reminded that their party is ‘women’s party’.

3.3.2 Agency barriers

Lack of skills and knowledge on the Act and other laws and regulations of the local council is found to be another major barrier for the active participation of these EWLs. Majority of EWLs (73%) have studied up to O/L and A/L. As highlighted by some of the District level activists and CSO leaders and as experienced by the research team, the education level of EWLs has made it difficult for them to understand the laws and regulations of the Local Council Act. Due to this lack of knowledge on Act particularly related to financial management they are unable to raise their voice against injustice or corruption.

District Level Activist from Ampara commented,

“We have trained elected women leaders on public speaking, organizing & leadership skills, knowledge on procedures and activities practiced in local governments, awareness on politics, local council laws, etc. But, after doing one training we can’t expect them to be fully knowledgeable in that area. They may have learned two or three points from those training. We need to train them continuously”.

During the survey and the KIIs, it became evident that many EWLs were not involved in gender sensitive decision making and they were not aware of it. For example, when the survey was carried out, most of the EWLs were busy with COVID -19 relief activities, particularly in distributing the allowance of LKR 5,000 and the welfare bags with essential goods among the deserving community members and families. However, only one EWL from Kurunegala pointed out the fact that many women and young girls were unable to buy sanitary pads as the shops were closed down due to the curfew imposed throughout the country. Yet, they were not included in those welfare bags as the female council members were not consulted by their male counterparts when making decisions on welfare bags distribution.

According to a District activist from Badulla,

“Now, these EWLs have forgotten why they were elected. They were elected mainly to stand on behalf of women’s issues. Yet, now they have forgotten everything and behave as traditional politicians. So, they only fight to get one or two street bulbs to the villages they represent.”

3.4 Current initiatives that address women participation at the national and target locations

3.4.1 Existing training programs for elected women

At present, there are only a few initiatives that have been implemented to address women participation at the selected districts for the study and at the national level.

- One such admirable initiative is the Diploma course conducted by the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka for selected EWLs on Local Governments. Only 80 participants are selected for the course that is conducted on weekends for 32 weeks. The course has been initiated in 2015 by the National Women's Committee and its lead role has been taken by Prof Kamala Liyanage of University of Peradeniya. At the moment, the course is being conducted for the third time. In the present batch, the majority of its participants are EWLs selected from all over the country. Additionally, few selected CSO leaders, women leaders who were unable to secure enough votes in the last election and few university students are included for a batch. The participants are educated on areas such as the local government Act, regulations, gender mainstream, politics in general, etc. They are also supposed to produce a small-scale thesis as part of its requirement. Further, they are taken for field studies to visit certain local governments. There were several interviewed EWLs who have successfully completed this Diploma course in previous batches and they much appreciated this course. Some of the district and national level activists also perceived this as a fruitful initiative to politically empower women leaders.

However, as pointed out by some EWLs, it has been difficult for them to travel to Kandy from their areas and finding accommodation has also been a challenge for them. According to a district leader,

“...if a women's welfare organization can be identified in Kandy, these women could have been provided accommodation. So, inter-connections among these women's organisations, people must be built-up, when it's asked what should be done for EWLs everybody says training, but that's not enough...” - District Level Activist, Badulla

As few EWLs mentioned, the Institute of Local Governments and few other similar organisations have also conducted short term courses for EWLs.

- According to a district level activist, another initiative conducted by a NGO is making council members aware and training them on the Act, its laws, rules and regulations through model local councils. This is conducted for both male and female council members. The participants, council members, are requested to appoint a Chairman, a Secretary and Members. Then they are requested to conduct a model council meeting as they usually do and the trainers note down weaknesses and drawbacks. Thereafter, they are advised of their faults and areas to be improved according to the 32 rules of the Act. Then again they are requested to conduct another adhering to the proper laws and regulations of the Act. This has also been an interesting training program for the local council members as they gain knowledge and skills through practice and they are kept interested.
- A CSO leader in Kurunegala admitted that they conduct training programs particularly on experience sharing amongst them who participate from different parts of the country such as Badulla, Galle, Northern and Eastern districts. This is conducted by a network of district level CSO leaders and it is conducted regularly such as every six months or three months. They have been unable to conduct it this year still due to COVID-19 crisis.
- The above CSO leader further mentioned that her organisation conducts a training program for young females aged 20 and 21 on leadership skills and capacity building. According to her, she conducts this program as an initiative to form a second generation of women political leaders.

After the 2018 Local Government election, the focus of many CSOs has been deviated to economic empowerment and other issues. According to a CSO leader from Ampara for instance, her CSO launched a campaign on ‘Women’s Participation in Politics’ during 2018 local government elections to increase the representation of women in politics. Yet,

“After elections, women were given training on topics in relation to the economy and urban livelihood. Women should continuously be provided with training and awareness on the subject of politics. Only then can they remain in politics and see a future ahead” – CSO leader, Ampara

While this could be one reason, lack of funds is also found to be one of the main reasons for lack of current initiatives to conduct continuous support for EWLs.

3.4.2 Existing opportunities to increase the participation of women in the local political system

Obtaining a 25% quota which enabled the dramatic increase of women’s political representation in local council governments is perceived as the greatest opportunity that women could achieve by many KII respondents. Hence, all key stakeholders discussed the importance of making the best use of this opportunity. They thoroughly believed that every possible initiative must be taken particularly by women’s organisations to make sure that this quota system would continue. Some further suggested that this must be extended to the Provincial level as well.

“Women came to power in 2018 thanks to a 25% quota. If women are facilitated to come to provincial councils and to the parliament, there will be more participation of women.” – District Level Activist (Sinhala), Badulla

“There's a stereotypical idea in society that women are not capable of being a political leader. They see women as weak human beings who are not suitable to be a leader. Now we have received a good opportunity to change that stereotypical idea of the people. We need to work hard and prove to them that, although we are women, we are strong enough to handle the power and responsibilities as a minister. If we prove to society we deserve more chances to enter politics, we will get many opportunities.” – EWL (Muslim), Ampara

Some of the KIIs brought to light that if the newly EWLs perform their duties as for the wellbeing of the women in their communities, the representation of women in politics can be gradually increased.

“If we work in the field, I think other women also will follow us. We have to be active and this will help other women to join politics.” – EWL (Sinhala), Kurunegala.

“Women didn't get involved in politics earlier. We need to empower women. Women lack knowledge, security and money to involve in politics. It's good if all local council female councillors can get together to move forward. We need to create women for the future” – EWL, Badulla

4. Conclusions

4.1 Project Indicators

Actual participation and influence in decision making of EWLs and CSOLs

Around 77% of EWLs and 65% of CSOLs in all four districts have participated in decision making at least once a month. However, when considering implementation of proposals, only 51% of EWLs and 58% CSOLs have implemented proposals they have presented. Main proposals that EWLs have implemented are ‘infrastructure related’ and the majority (36%) of CSOLs have implemented proposals related to ‘education and awareness services’. Further, the majority (35%) of EWLs are representing standing committees on the environment and only 37% of CSOLs are representing decision making committees. Thus, it is apparent that, although the majority of EWLs and CSOLs claimed that they have actively participated in decision making and influenced decision making, they must be empowered more on this.

Demonstration of positive leadership, advocacy or accountability by EWLs and CSOLs

In inquiring their perception on positive leadership, it was clear that both EWLs and CSOLs have an understanding of positive leadership. Regarding accountability, the common perception of EWLs and CSOLs is that accountability is related to handling grievances and consulting communities and sharing information with the public is not considered important. Majority (43%) EWLs claimed that they have done advocacy. The key areas they have attended are violence against women and drug prevention. Around 54% of CSOLs have advocated on violence against women and preventing sexual harassment of children. Both groups need clear guidance on advocacy on women political decision making. Around 81% of the EWLs and 67% CSOLs quoted examples. However, 44% of examples of EWLs are infrastructure related and 36% of the examples quoted by CSOLs are ‘Education / Awareness Services’.

Support of male counterparts for EWLs and CSOLs

Majority (63%) of EWLs and (60%) of CSOLs have experienced extremely low, low or moderate support by their male counterparts while making decisions at the local council.

Campaigns organized by CSOLs to support political decision making

Although 52% have claimed that they have organized campaigns to promote women’s role in political decision making, none of the examples they provided are related to political decision making. Most of the campaigns they have mentioned are organized in 2018 by CSOs/NGOs or INGOs, and CSOLs have support from village level. About 48% of CSOLs have mentioned that they have not organized campaigns due to fear, lack of support, lack of knowledge, no opportunity and due to financial difficulties.

4.2 Existing capacities and capacity gap needs of women leaders

EWLs and CSO leaders have received training through NGOs/INGOs, government institutions and women organizations. Even though a large proportion of the interviewed EWLs and CSO leaders claimed that they have attended capacity building training to perform their duties (93% and 77% respectively), the majority of EWLs have not attended training programs on political leadership (79%), gender rights and mainstreaming (80%), and effective communication (87%). Further, many of them have not attended training programs on social auditing (96%), participatory budgeting (96%) and gender responsive advocacy tools (94%). Thus, these would be the main areas that need to be focused in future training programs. CSO leaders also have not attended training programs on many of the areas such as gender rights and mainstreaming (80%), effective communication (87%), political leadership (84%), social auditing (95%), gender responsive budgeting (96%), and gender responsive planning (94%). The fact that 20% of CSOLs being skillful in training and coaching will certainly be beneficial to the project activities. However, CSOLs knowledge and skills on areas like community outreach (8%), resource mobilization (8%), scorecards (6%) and media (9%) were ranked low and these are areas for Search to look into.

In probing on problem solving skills of EWLs, 51% accepted that they solved the issues by talking to their heads of the council. The use of other legal methods such as use of Right to Information act, media, social media, filing human rights cases or writing a petition were recorded as less than 10%. Further, EWLs knowledge on local council law and functions was also limited, as 68% claimed that they have moderate understanding on local council law. The training programs to EWLs need to focus on these areas further. In addition to above requirements, EWLs, themselves mentioned that they would like to enhance their knowledge on English and Tamil or Sinhala. Some outstanding EWLs who have keen interest to move forward in their political career mentioned that they have interest in learning about female international politicians. CSOLs also highlighted the need for learning second languages and IT.

4.3 Barriers to their full and active participation

EWLs have both structural and agency barriers to their full and active participation in politics. The structural barriers are mainly related to the traditional and patriarchal social structure of the country which affects EWLs of all ethnicities. Those are, multiple roles of EWLs in private and public sphere, fear of tarnishing good name, financial difficulties to move upward in their political career, lack of support from their male counterparts in councils, and party politics. Agency barriers are limited education levels of EWLs and lack of knowledge of gender sensitive decision making.

Although structural barriers are difficult to be influenced by the project, lack of support from male counterparts at council can be addressed through training of male counterparts. This is an area that needs to be considered at current projects or in future project initiatives. However, the project activities explicitly support overcoming agency barriers of EWLs through providing training and empowering EWLs.

4.4 Current initiatives that address women participation at the national and target locations

Existing training programs for elected women

There are few initiatives to address political decision making of women at present. One such course is the 32 weeks' diploma course initiated by the National Women's Committee and organized by the University of Peradeniya. The course is designed for EWLs and it includes lectures as well as field visits to local councils. At present, they are training the third batch. Institute of Local Government also organizes short courses for EWLs. And, there is also another initiative by an NGO to train on local council law and procedure through creating a model council.

Existing opportunities to increase the participation of elected women

The 25% quota received for female political representation enabled a dramatic increase in female councillors in local council level. Therefore, many who participated in the survey highlighted the importance of making the best use of this opportunity. Some suggested including a quota system for provincial council level as well.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the survey and the KIIs, several recommendations can be drawn. They are divided under two categories.

5.1 Recommendations for conducting training sessions for EWLs and CSOLs

Making EWLs thoroughly aware of the Act of the Local Government, its laws and regulations that are specifically related to financial management, 32 rules and the legal functioning of the Council can be the main focus of the training programs conducted for the EWLs. Further, they need to be made knowledgeable on Standing-Committees, their formations and functioning. Majority of them were particularly interested in learning more on the financial and policy-making standing committee where all the important decisions are taken. This would enable them to be more confident to speak out in the Council meetings and to challenge others rightfully and thus to be more active in decision making. Consequently, they will be able to gain more respect from their male counterparts, political party leaders and from the communities they represent.

CSO leaders must be trained on running their CSOs considering the legal aspects of registering their CSOs and maintaining their financial transparency adhering to the legal frameworks. It was found that some of the CSO leaders were the founders of their own CSOs and still their functions are carried out in an informal manner.

EWLs can be provided with necessary skills and knowledge needed to establish standing committees for women and gender in the local councils as it was found that proposals by the EWLs on this aspect is still very low. It would be recommended to share experiences of EWLs from Jaffna where a higher number of EWLs have made proposals to form a standing-committee on women and gender in their respective local councils.

It is recommended to provide training sessions in the areas of gender responsive budgeting, social auditing, political and positive leadership, effective communication and gender rights and mainstreaming for both EWLs and CSO leaders. Even though the majority of them have attended training programs at least once, their knowledge on above areas is considerably low. CSO can be further trained on areas such as community outreach and resource mobilization as well. Especially, in the current context, the ability to navigate the media (both mainstream and social media) is a skill needed to succeed in almost any public office. Therefore, it is recommended to look at areas that are needed in the current context to succeed and develop capacity development plans around that.

Both EWLs and CSO leaders need to be made aware and trained on the terms of advocacy and accountability and their importance and applicability in their political and leadership roles.

As the group who has been playing an important role in women's politics, knowledge and skills of CSOLs must be enhanced on coaching and training. This would be useful when it comes to using CSOLs to train and coach the existing EWLs in power. They must also be provided with necessary skills needed to act as trainers of trainees and mentors in their communities in order to identify, motivate and train potential young women who would act as successful female politicians. This is a potential area to build capacity especially in the districts of Badulla and Jaffna.

Further, EWLs must be trained more on gender sensitive decision-making because it became evident that the majority of them lack necessary skills in this regard. For instance, even though about 90% of the EWLs have presented proposals to their councils, the majority of them have been on infrastructure developments. Even the proposals presented on gender related areas were on self-employment. Hence, they have to be trained on preparing gender related proposals. As pointed out by several district and national level activists and CSO leaders, this would avoid them falling merely into the role of traditional politicians whose main concern is attending to infrastructure developments.

The EWLs have to be trained on the effective use of accepted methods such as use of Right To Information Act, mass media and social media, making complaints to the Human Rights, approaching relevant officials, making petitions, etc. when they face challenging situations as local council members.

As requested by many EWLs and CSO leaders, they are very much interested in learning second languages such as Sinhala or Tamil and English and IT skills. They were further interested in learning about international female political role models and politics in general. These soft skills would enable them to be exposed to new knowledge, to be confident of their roles and to be more communicative with other ethnicities.

Additionally, it is recommended to guide CSO leaders to form financially independent organisations. As findings indicated many CSO leaders struggled in providing necessary support to the EWLs due to lack of funds.

5.2 General Considerations in conducting training sessions

In addition to above recommendations, gender roles, gender power imbalances, cultural boundaries and educational level must be considered when designing training programs.

Due to experiences of the consultancy team during the data collection period, it is recommended to conduct orientation sessions as necessary for the husbands of EWLs selected for the training programs explaining their content and the arrangements. This may assist to reduce the tensions that would arise from the male heads of the families in allowing their women to participate in these training sessions.

It is highly recommended to conduct training and awareness programs for male council members as well. As indicated by several district and national level activists, the knowledge level of male council members on local government Act and functions is at a low level. Additionally, male members in the community must be made aware of the importance of having women in politics particularly at the local government level because

attitudinal change of male members in the society is essential for the progress of women in their political path.

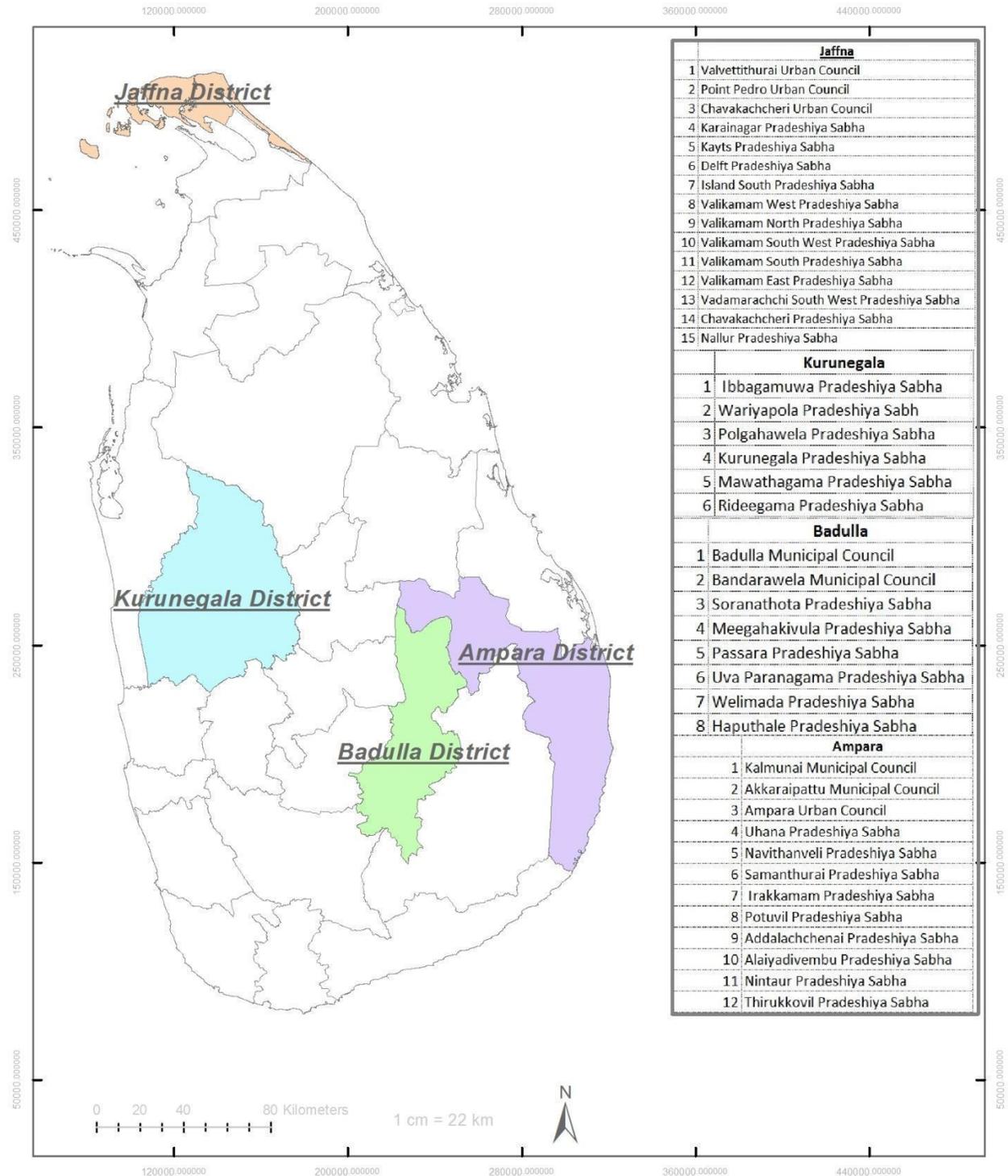
As these EWLs have been acting as Council members for more than two years and CSO leaders also have been in leadership positions for longer periods of time, their training programs can be designed to be more interactive giving more opportunities for question and answer sessions.

As pointed out by several district and national level activists and CSO leaders the community members, both males and females, must be made aware of the importance of electing female leaders in their communities to the local government or provincial councils. In 2018, many potential women with positive leadership skills with good educational backgrounds were unable to be elected as they were unable to secure enough votes from the wards they represented. Meanwhile, some of them were unable to obtain nominations from any of the major political parties.

Further, as much as possible resource persons for the training sessions have to be recruited from the same area where these sessions will be conducted as their knowledge, experience and understanding of the ground realities are more relevant than the resource persons who come from outside the area.

6. Appendices

Annex 1: Map of Local Councils included in the survey



Annex 2: Survey tools

Attached separately

Annex 3: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Attached separately

Annex 3: References

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