



# Youth Policy Programme

**Southern Province  
Stakeholder Consultation  
Sri Lanka**

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**Post-Brief**

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2016

## UNFPA SRI LANKA

Over the last four decades the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Sri Lanka has been working with the Government of Sri Lanka on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and young people. With Sri Lanka recently emerging as a middle income country, UNFPA is shifting its focus from capacity building and service delivery to addressing the four key youth issues in Sri Lanka



through policy dialogue, policy advice and policy advocacy. There are a number of challenges that hinder young people in grabbing the opportunities that they need. These include:

- 1. Cultural and social barriers**
- 2. Limitations in access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education**
- 3. Limitations in accessing Reproductive Health Services for young people**
- 4. Lack of an enabling environment to recognize the youth potential**

### Why invest in youth?

A safe and successful passage from adolescence into adulthood is the right of every person. This right can only be fulfilled if families and societies make focused investments and provide opportunities to ensure that adolescents and youth progressively develop the knowledge, skills and resilience needed for a healthy, productive and fulfilling life. This is more relevant to Sri Lanka now than ever before.

## UNFPA SRI LANKA YOUTH PROGRAMME

UNFPA Sri Lanka's Youth Programme is a holistic programme, which looks at youth at the center of development through a national and provincial lens; in the areas of youth-led policy making, policy implementation, youth leadership and Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education (CRHE).

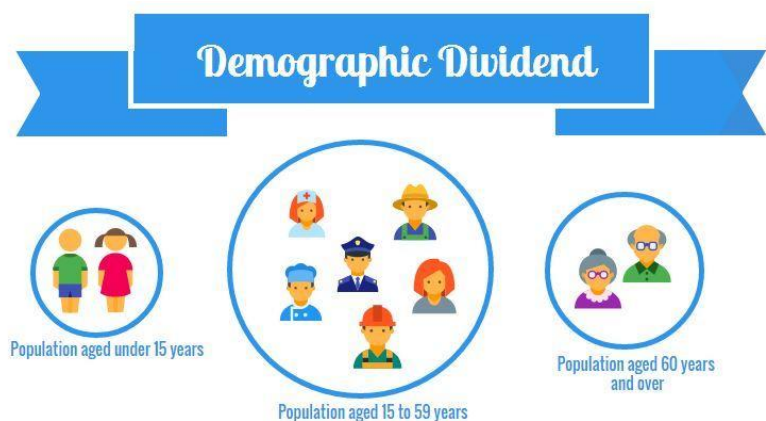
### Youth Policy Programme: Provincial-level youth policies

UNFPA Sri Lanka is convinced that with almost a quarter of the population being young, strong youth policies should be in place both at the national and provincial level. There are certain challenges common to youth at the national level and those which are specific for each of the provinces. It is important to identify such challenges and ensure that a holistic approach is taken while investing in youth. Through this project, UNFPA Sri Lanka aims to engage with all Provinces with technical support and advocacy for the formulation of holistic youth policies. Currently, through the Youth Policy Programme, UNFPA has worked with the Southern, Sabaragamuwa, Northern and Eastern Provincial Councils to develop recommendations for a youth policy.

## Reaping the Benefits of the Demographic Dividend

Over time, Sri Lanka has continued to invest in youth through provision of free education, as well as free health services. Nonetheless, a continuing disconnect between youth aspirations and the state has manifested in three violent insurrections that racked the country over the last four decades. Subsequently, efforts have been directed at trying to explain what caused such a reaction by young people. It has been increasingly acknowledged that elements related to poverty, unemployment, and marginalizations were crucial. It is within this context that UNFPA is placing young people at the heart of development and positioning itself to allow young people to reach their full potential.

Currently, 4.4 million out of a population of 20.4 million constitute youth (15-29) in Sri Lanka. In order for Sri Lanka to reap the benefits of this demographic dividend\*, UNFPA Sri Lanka is supporting national, sub-national institutions and other partners to take an integrated, evidence-based approach for the



From 1992, Sri Lanka's working population outnumber the dependent populations

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delivery of youth and adolescents friendly reproductive health services and ensure fulfillment of their associated rights. Further, through creating supportive policy environments and practices, UNFPA Sri Lanka is enabling youth to take leadership and contribute toward the country's transition toward peace and sustainable development.

## Why Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education (CRHE) in a Youth Policy?

Investing in young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights is crucial in order for young people to live lives of equality and wellbeing, reach their full potential, and contribute to the sustainable development of their communities. Young people need to know the basic anatomy and physiology related to sexual and reproductive systems, which will enable them to take informed decisions at the correct time in their lives. Inaccurate beliefs and poor knowledge and skills can prevent young people from realizing their fullest potential.

**CRHE helps empower young people to protect their health and well-being as they grow and take on family responsibilities**

\*Sri Lanka 25 million people and implications population and housing projections 2012-2062 by De Silva, W. Indralal, De Silva, Ranjith (UNFPA, 2015)

## TOWARDS A SOUTHERN PROVINCIAL YOUTH POLICY

UNFPA Sri Lanka in 2015 engaged with the Southern Provincial Council Ministry of Youth Affairs to develop a Provincial Youth Policy. For this purpose all relevant stakeholders from Government, corporate and civil society and youth leaders were brought together to contribute toward this effort.

The objective was to identify specific needs of youth in the Province and then begin a process of advocating and supporting the Provincial Council to formulate a youth centered policy.

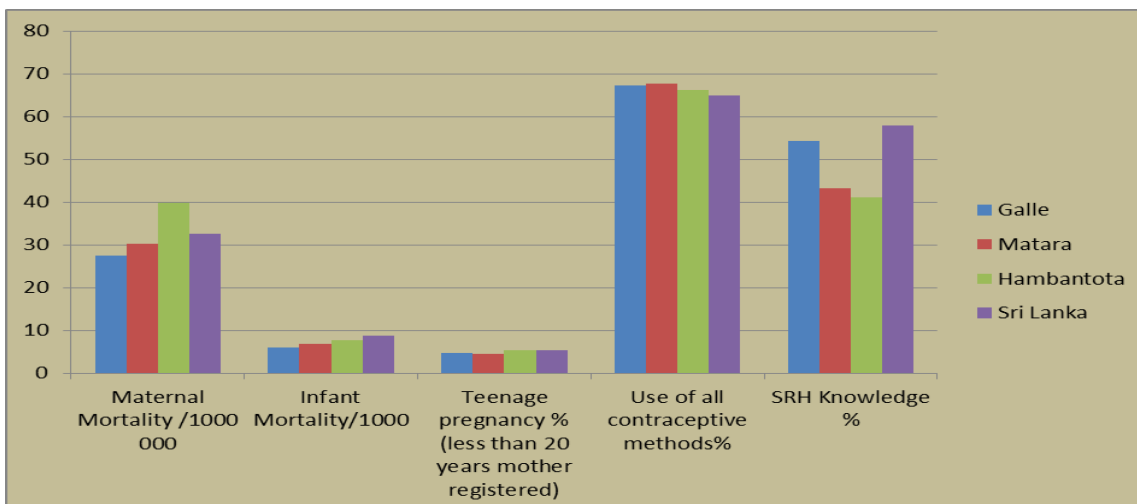


- **Create an enabling environment for young people to participate in decision making and to take a leading role in contributing toward Sustainable Development**
- **Empower young people through Comprehensive Reproductive Health Education and associated rights**

### District Level disparities on youth health in the Southern Province

- **Teenage pregnancies** are relatively higher in **Hambantota (5.4%)** of the Southern Province compared to **Kurunegala District (4.1%)**, **Matara District (4.6%)** and **the National level (5.3%)**.
- It is interesting to note that **Infant mortality** rate is lower in all three district in Southern province, when compared to **national level (8.8/1000 deaths)**.
- **Maternal mortality** rate (per 100,000 deaths) is high in **Hambantota (39.8)** when compared to **National level (32.5 per 100000 deaths)** while **Galle** recorded a low rate (**27.4**)

\*Annual Report on Family Health Sri Lanka 2013, Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka



## Youth Education dynamics in the Southern Province compared to other provinces

- Secondary Education is lower compared to national average (40.7%) in the **Matara District (40.2%)**, and **GEC O/L (16.2%) A/L (11.6%) and higher education (2.3%)** levels are lower in the province than national Level (17%, 12.3% and 2.7%, respectively).
- **Southern province (24.8%)** has a lower Computer literacy rate compared to the national level (25.1%).

\*Department of Census and Statistics Ministry of Policy Planning Economic Affairs, Child Youth and Cultural Affairs, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report – 2014 and Sri Lankas Socio-Economic Data – Central Bank June 2015

## Youth Unemployment data for the Southern Province

- **Unemployment is higher** compared to national average (4.3%) in the **Southern Province (6.0%)**
- **Government sector employees and entrepreneurs in the Southern Province (16% and 34.7%)** are high compared to the national average (15.2% and 33%) however the number of **Private Sector employees** is lower in the Southern Province (38.9%) compared to national average (40.5%).

\*Department of Census and Statistics Ministry of Finance and Planning, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report - 2013

## PROCESS FOLLOWED IN GETTING TO A YOUTH POLICY

**Focal Point** – A focal point was appointed by the respective Provincial Minister for Youth Affairs within the Province to coordinate the planning stages – the leadership is taken either by the Provincial Minister, the Secretary or their appointed official within the Provincial Ministry.

### Stakeholder Consultation

As a first step a high level multi stakeholder consultation was convened to bring together individuals from the public sector, private sector, civil society, religious leaders, as well as youth leaders. They contributed their expertise and insights to recognize the current trends and gaps in youth engagement in policy making and broadly discussed areas related to youth in terms of



employment, education, reproductive health, social and civic participation. A draft list of recommendations for policy resulted from this consultation and is set out below. A Steering Committee was appointed to take steps toward finalizing these recommendations into a **draft policy document**. This Committee is chaired by the Secretary of the Southern Provincial Ministry of Education and includes selected experts and young leaders from the three districts of the Southern Province (Galle, Matara and Hambantota). Thereafter activities are identified under priority areas of the policy implementation, including timelines and indicators. UNFPA Sri Lanka will continue to assist with

technical advice on the implementation of the policy to ensure that it is delivered to the highest International standards.

This consultation was supported by the Honourable Provincial Minister, Secretary and the Provincial Director of Health and senior officials of the respective ministries. Further, the following key provincial and district level officials from the National Youth Services Council, Youth Officers from the District Secretariat, Vocational Training Institute, university students, young leaders from all communities and localities. Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) compiled a draft recommendations report following the consultations.



## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS\*

The following recommendations resulted from a multi-stakeholder consultation held in December 2015 and several consultative meetings convened by the Provincial Ministry of Education Southern Province. These recommendations are to consider developments at the international, national and provincial level including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Young people's participation and contribution toward each of the following recommendations and at each level of implementation is of importance. Youth are considered as those within the age group 15-29. (*National Youth Policy Sri Lanka 2014*)



Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) coordinated this consultation. These recommendations were discussed under three broad categories as set out below.

- **Opportunities for Young People** – taking into consideration post-war economic growth and developments, there has to be timely opportunities created for youth.
  - Tourism – improving nature based/eco-tourism and other developing areas
  - Agriculture and Plantations – Use of modern technologies and techniques to be introduced and young people encouraged to develop their skills and values within this sector
  - Fisheries – connecting youth to Maritime Universities through Diplomas and other modalities to ensure their access to equal education, skills development and growth, increasing the acceptability of the profession/trade by professionalizing systems

- Traditional, non-traditional and entrepreneurship programmes to be further strengthened and strategically linking it to developing markets and industries including tourism
- **Youth Empowerment** – understanding that youth fall under both formal and informal sectors they must be provided access to necessary institutions and avenues to develop necessary skills and participate fully in society. Especially those who fail to continue in formal institutions.
  - Improving equity and equality in access to School education, including through the recognition of language rights, importance of learning about other religions and customs to develop cultural and ethical values, importance of comprehensive reproductive health education. Steps should be taken to improve the facilities of rural schools – teachers, training, IT facilities etc.
  - Vocational Training and skills development – introduce loan schemes or other methods for those who live in poverty to access such institutions dedicated for skills development. Improve the standards of local degrees and diplomas to meet internationally accepted standards. Investing in vocational training infrastructure to ensure best available facilities and trained facilitators are available
  - Health and well-being – improving access to sports and allocating sufficient financial support for Youth Clubs. Introducing comprehensive reproductive health education and knowledge at all levels to ensure that a holistic education on mind and body is received by all youth
  - Sports and arts -Using international programmes such as Galle Literary Festival to promote youth engagement in sports and arts to lead better lives and improve communication skills,
- **Safety-net for Young People**
  - Improving attitudes that constraint the potential of youths by linking schools with religious and cultural institutions, practical school based programmes and workshops
  - Youth participation and political representation – improving youth representation and local government level and meaningfully engaging them to rebuild trust with communities and with national level counterparts
  - Poverty, marginalization and related social problems – introduce Reproductive Health Education and awareness creation on Sexually Transmitted Diseases, introduce mechanisms to include marginalized youth groups (owing to caste, sect, religion etc)

\*These are the summary recommendations from the post-consultation report compiled by external consultants, Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) Sri Lanka. Further details on this report could be obtained by contacting CEPA Sri Lanka or UNFPA Sri Lanka.



## UNFPA YOUTH PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS



20.4 Million: Sri Lanka's Population at a glance (2015)



100 Voices Campaign Leading for Change (2015)



National Youth Health Survey 2012/2013 (2016)



Generation to Generation Dialogue Available in Sinhala and Tamil (2015)



Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for Reproductive Health Programmes in Sri Lanka (2014)



Delivering for Women and Young People (2014)

### For further information:

Contact: Neshan Gunasekera - Consultant, Policy Analyst – Youth and Young People

United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka, 202, Baudhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 07

Email: [ngunasekera@unfpa.org](mailto:ngunasekera@unfpa.org), Tel: + 94 (011) 2580840



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