

## Chapter 6: Achieving Gender Parity and Equality

### 6.1 Introduction

EFA Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015 with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

### 6.2 Gender Parity and Equality in Sri Lankan context

Sri Lanka is strongly committed to policy of gender equality. The Constitutional provision (1978) of equal rights without discrimination on the grounds of sex, and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as universal franchise and equal rights to contest elections in 1931, and equal access to free education and health services have all contributed to promoting gender equality in Sri Lanka.

#### 6.2.1 History and policy Framework

- Universal franchise and equal rights to contest elections in 1931
- Equal access to free education and health services in the 1940s
- The Constitutional provision (1978) of equal rights without discrimination on the grounds of sex
- The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981
- The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC - 1989)

have all contributed to promoting gender equality in Sri Lanka.

In 1978 the Women's Bureau was established. In 1983 a ministry for Women's Affairs was set up together with the subject Health, for ensuring equal rights for women in policy formulation by the government. The Women's Charter, modelled on the 1981 convention, was accepted by government of Sri Lanka in 1993.

The Women's Charter details the rights of women under few categories.

#### 6.2.2 Womens' Charter - 1993

The section on Right to Education and training has five sub sections.

"The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure for men and women:

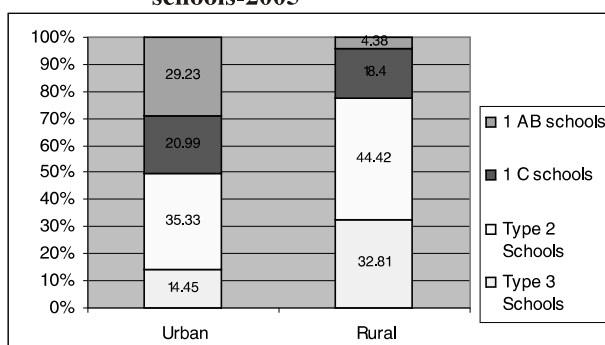
- (i) (a) access to the same educational opportunities in pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary, technical, vocational and professional education including co-educational, non-formal and continuing education, training and extension programmes.
- (b) access to 10 years of compulsory education.
- (c) access to the same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and study grants;
- (d) access to the same curricula, examinations, certification procedures, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and facilities in schools and training programmes, equipment of the same quality and the same opportunities to participate actively in physical and aesthetic education; and
- (e) access to career and vocational guidance and counselling programmes.
- (ii) recognising the primary responsibility which devolves on women in families which have disabled parents, the state shall ensure that disabled persons shall have equal access to education and training.
- (iii) In keeping with National Policy the State shall ensure to both mother and father the equal right of choice with regard to the medium of instruction in which children are to be educated taking into account the paramount interest of the children.
- (iv) The State shall take all steps to ensure the elimination of gender role-stereotypes

concepts in content and educational material in all types of education, through the revision, preparation and writing of teaching-learning material.

- (v) The state shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the reduction of early school-leavers and the organisation of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely.

In 1997 a separate cabinet ministry was set up. During this period an attempt has been made to remove gender stereotyping in school textbooks introduce gender sensitisation into the curricula at school level and in teacher education.

**Figure 6.1: Urban rural status of availability of schools-2005**



Source: School Census data, 2005

*1AB schools- provide all three streams Science, Commerce and Arts at senior secondary level, while 1C schools- schools provide only commerce and art streams at senior secondary level. Type 2 and Type 3 schools- schools do not provide senior secondary education*

**Table 6.1: Percentages of female enrolment in primary and secondary education-2005**

	Percentage of female enrolment in Primary education	Percentage of female enrolment in Secondary education
National	48	49
Sinhala medium schools	49	50
Tamil medium schools	49	50
Sinhala ethnic group	49	50
Tamil ethnic group	49	50
Muslim ethnic group	50	50
Urban schools	49	50
Rural schools	48	49
Plantation schools	49	49
Non plantation schools	48	50

Source: School Census ,2005

### 6.3 General Education

Even though economic constraints continue to be a barrier to promoting equal educational opportunities for boys and girls, free education has been a major agent of progress toward gender equality and poverty reduction.

Around 96% of the schools have been co-educational for decades girls from most socio-economic strata have had relatively extensive access to education.

But a hidden problem is revealed in data of Figure 6.1. Economic constraints and inequalities in resource allocation have, however, continued district-wise and urban rural disparities in the provision of education. In urban sector 50% of all schools provide senior secondary education, which is the avenue to higher education. But only 22% of rural schools provide senior secondary classes. Out of these only 4% provide science education facilities at the senior secondary level, in rural areas. Girls are more likely to be disadvantaged in access to science education at this level. (See also Table 6.5)

Table 6.2: Gender Parity Index for Selected indicators

Indicator	Sector	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Gross Intake Rate	National	1.00	0.98	0.97	0.98	0.98
Net Intake Rate	National	1.01	0.99	0.98	0.99	0.98
Gross Enrolment Rate in Primary Education	National	0.99	0.98	0.98	0.95	0.95
	Sinhala ethnic group					1.00
	Tamil ethnic group					0.94
	Muslim ethnic group					0.97
	Urban sector					1.02
	Rural sector					0.99
	Plantation sector					0.91
Net Enrolment Rate in Primary Education	National	1.03	1.00	1.00	0.98	0.98
Gross Enrolment Rate in Secondary Education	National	1.01	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.03
Net Enrolment Rate in Secondary Education	National	1.03	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04
Survival Rate to Grade 5	National		1.01	1.00	1.00	
	Sinhala medium schools				1.00	
	Tamil medium schools				1.01	
	Sinhala ethnic group				1.00	
	Tamil ethnic group				1.02	
	Muslim ethnic group				0.99	
	Urban schools				1.00	
	Rural schools				1.00	
	Plantation schools				1.03	
	Non-plantation schools				1.00	
Transition Rate from Primary to Lower Secondary Schools		1.02	1.01	1.00	1.01	1.01
Transition Rate from Lower Secondary Schools to Upper Secondary Schools		1.02	1.01	1.02	1.02	1.02
Adult Literacy Rate		0.94	0.96	0.94	0.96	0.96
Youth Literacy Rate		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	

Source: Annual School Census, MoE, Sri Lanka Labour force survey, 2005

Above statistics show that the GPI of GIR, NIR, GER and NER are all close to 1. This means that both sexes enjoy the same opportunities in access and participation in primary and secondary education. GPI of

Survival rate to grade 5 and Transition Rates are also close to 1. It says that once girls are in school they tend to progress as well as or better than boys.

### 6.3.1 Female teachers

The proportion of female teachers is a measure of gender equality. The female teacher stock in the primary exceed 80% while in the secondary cycle the percentage of female

teachers is over 55% as shown in table below.

This, in addition to showing a marked inequality, also translates into issues such as one-year maternity leave, as most of these lady-teachers are of child-bearing age.

**Table 6.3: Percentage of Female Teachers by Education Cycle 2001 - 2005**

Year	Percentage of Female Teachers in Primary Education	Percentage of Female Teachers in Secondary Education
2001	83	57
2002	84	59
2003	84	56
2004	84	57
2005	84	56

Source: School Census, MoE

### 6.3.2 Students Achievement

**Table 6.4: Gender wise performance at GCE O/L examination (1995, 2001, 2005)**

Year	No. Sat		No. Qualified for GCE A/L		Percentage qualified for GCE A/L	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1995	224,740	258,509	36,591	43,900	16.28	16.98
2001	123,344	132,427	42,083	55,756	34.12	42.10
2005	125,324	133,156	42,414	54,043	33.84	40.59

Source: Research and Development Branch, Department of Examinations

Table 6.4 compares the performance of boys and girls at the GCE O/L examination, the first public examination they sit after 11 years of general education. The statistics indicates that

girls perform better than boys at the GCE O/L examination and proceed to the next level GCE A/L.

**Table 6.5: Proportion of male and female in senior secondary level by GCE(A/L) stream 2005**

Stream	Male	Female
Science	52.9	47.1
Commerce	51.1	48.9
Arts	34.1	65.9

Source: School census, MOE

**Table 6.6: Gender wise performance at GCE A/L examination (1995-2004)**

Year	No. sat		No. qualified for GCE (A/L)		Percentage qualified for GCE (A/L)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
1995	59,128	77,596	28,129	42,004	47.57	54.13
2000	78,704	104,735	33,678	57,911	42.79	55.29
2002	98,676	118,828	34,436	57,790	34.9	48.63
2004	85,865	113,787	42,688	65,669	49.72	57.71

Source: Research & Development of Examination

The same trend can be seen at GCE A/L. More girls sit for the GCE A/L examination and qualify to enter university education.

## 6.4 Higher Education

Table 6.7 indicates the situation with regard female student admissions to university education over the years. It can be seen that women are well represented in most of the academic streams. Traditionally gender stereotypes maintain that one gender is better than the other at a certain areas of learning

such, as science and engineering are male domains. This trend can be seen from the table. Women are seen to be the majority of entrants to the arts faculties, law, dental science and agriculture. They are underrepresented in science, engineering and quantity surveying.

**Table 6.7: University admission by gender selected years**

Subject stream	1999/00		2001/02		2004/05	
	T	%F	T	%F	T	%F
Arts	3,865	69.5	4,039	73.0	4363	71.1
Management Studies	1,425	51.9	1,531	53.2	2560	48.9
Commerce	935	51.6	837	54.4	320	51.9
Law	193	78.8	200	79.5	225	75.1
Science	2,671	36.0	2,625	38.3	3087	40.2
Medicine	896	50.0	871	53.3	911	54.1
Dental Science	91	46.2	86	45.3	78	56.4
Veterinary medicine	91	56.0	87	37.9	77	57.1
Engineering	646	52.6	624	50.5	786	60.2
Agriculture	875	14.7	985	18.1	1089	18.5
Architecture	56	69.6	102	67.6	184	56.0
Quantity surveying	61	23.0	51	33.3	0	0
Computer Sc& IT			106	27.4	398	25.4
Total	11,962	50.9	12,144	53.8	25,471	29.0

Source: University Grant Commission

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Dental Science	91	46.2	86	45.3	78	56.4
Veterinary medicine	91	56.0	87	37.9	77	57.1
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## 6.5 Technical and Vocational Education

**Table 6.8: Percentage of female enrolment in technical and vocational training in leading public institutions**

Institute	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET)	40	40	41	40	40	37
Vocational Training Authority (VTA)	49	48	43	41	41	40
National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA)	30	NA	31	24	27	24

Gender differentiation in enrolment is seen in the island-wide network of technical and vocational institutes. The percentage of girls enrolled in courses in technical trades is low. (Table 6.8). Women apprentices are chiefly in textile, garment related and clerical establishments. IT attracts women students but they are concentrated at the lower level of operations, analogous to secretarial courses. Hence the tertiary and secondary vocational education sector, which should have the closest links with the labour market, equip women with a narrow range of skills and marginalises them in a changing economy. Although the access to technical and vocational education is not limited, traditional attitudes and cultural inhibitions prevent girls from joining some technical/vocational streams.

## 6.6 Literacy

Female adult literacy levels remains slightly low during 2001-2005 as the GPI is less than 1

(Table 6.1). This is affected by the low female literacy in Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, and Ratnapura districts with their large concentrations of plantations and in Moneragala district, the most economically and socially disadvantaged district in the country. (Table 5.7, Chapter 5).

## 6.7 Unemployment and Gender

Unemployment rates declined progressively since the mid-1990s to 6.2% male unemployment and 11.5% female unemployment in 2001. After 2001 it remains stabilised for both men and women. It is seen that women have been more adversely affected than men. It is interesting to note, too, that female unemployment rates have continued to be double those of men for 3 decades, irrespective of whether unemployment increased or declined.

**Figure 6.2: Trend in unemployment by students**

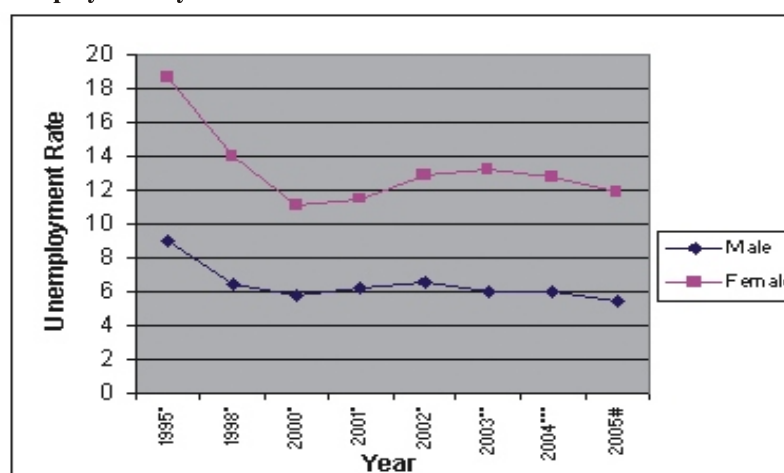
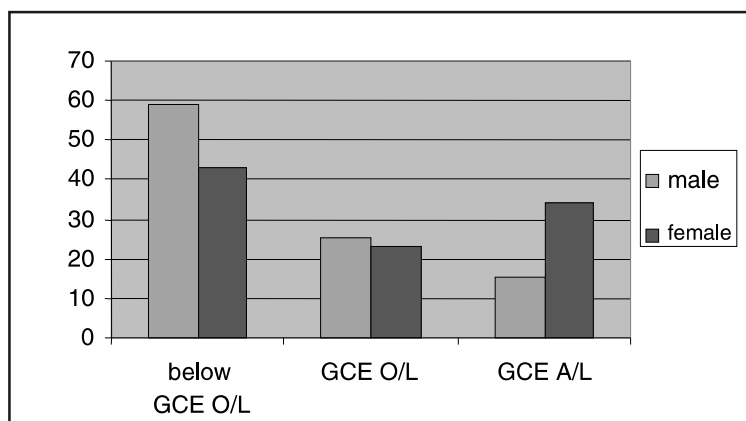




Figure 6.3 shows that male unemployment rates by educational level have decreased with increasing educational attainment, but female unemployment rate rises (Table 6.3) when it comes to GCE A/L. Nearly 70% of the educated unemployed (with a complete

secondary education or higher education) are currently women. Clearly women have equal access to education but not to employment and are unable to translate their educational gains into economic rewards.

**Figure 6.3: Composition of unemployed by level of education and gender**



Source: Special analysis of QLFD: Labour Market Information Bulletin

## 6.8 Conclusion

The goal of eliminating gender disparities in both primary and secondary education been achieved. In fact some action is needed to remove the adverse features in participation completion and transition in respect of male students, to achieve gender parity. However it

has to be noted that factors such as sexual violence, increase environment and inadequate sanitary facilities for girl need to be eliminated. Academic performances of boys and girls are converging. But fields of study and occupational orientations continue to be clustered by gender.



