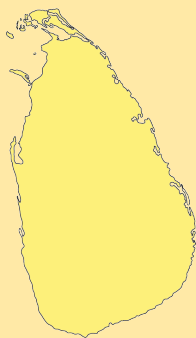


SRI LANKA



MEEREYA
BADHDHA,
UVA

CLIMATE JUSTICE
FEMINIST
PARTICIPATORY
ACTION RESEARCH
2017-18

COUNTRY PROFILE

In Sri Lanka, climate change has affected weather patterns and caused droughts, floods, and landslides. These, in turn, have affected the cultivation and production of rice. After the tsunami in 2004, Sri Lanka has witnessed an increasing frequency in disasters that lead to loss of lives and displacement of communities.

Sri Lanka ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1993. The Ministry of Environment has developed a strategy plan and set up a Climate Change Secretariat to implement it. Sri Lanka has also ratified a number of multilateral environment agreements including the Washington Declaration of Protection of Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities and the South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme. The island country now has its 2nd National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for Climate Change (2016-2025) in place. A major lacuna in the national programmes is the extremely low priority given to gender in environmental and social impact assessments. However, traditionally, women have been playing a

Organising women to demand basic services in landslide displaced community and participate in development planning

We Women, Lanka (WWL), an organisation working to address human rights violations and all forms of gender based discriminations conducted the Climate Justice FPAR. The Climate Justice FPAR worked with women in the resettled area of Meeriya badhdha. The community was displaced by landslide in 2014. Till date the community lacks basic civic amenities like drinking water, toilets, healthcare and schools etc.

The Climate Justice FPAR worked to mobilise the women to understand gender based discriminations, women's participation in governance and impacts of climate change in their lives.

WWL is working with the displaced community in the hilly tea estate in Meereya Badhdha. Most of the community work as labourers in the tea estate for their livelihoods.

major role in natural resources management and food security via home gardening, etc. Women have also taken on leadership roles in climate change adaptation and protection of the environment via several NGOs and/or donor-funded projects.



ISSUES FACING THE COMMUNITY AT MEEREYA BADHDHA

Out of an estimated 300 people, 70 children and 19 adults survived the devastating landslide in 2014 that displaced the community as a whole. They were then resettled in Poonagala state, 20 km away from their original village and workplace.

Lack of land security: Each family was given 6-7 perches of land with a house during the process of resettlement. However, ownerships of these land and houses have not yet been transferred to the community. The community feels unsure about their land ownership and feels insecure that they may be displaced again.

Limited livelihood opportunities: In the resettled area there are no income generating opportunities. The small tea estate nearby cannot employ everyone from the community. The absence of transportation facilities in the resettlement area makes it difficult to find work in other areas.

Lack of security for children and loss of livelihood for women: The community has seen increased risk of violence against women and girls within the community due to the lack of sustainable and gender-responsive water and sanitary facilities. The women, thus, do not feel safe in their new homes and hesitate to leave the children at home to go to work.

'We stayed 13 months in an old tea factory before getting this house. The factory hall is not big enough to accommodate 300 people and there were only two toilets with limited water facilities. My two daughters are young and 17 and 20 years old. Can you imagine how we managed with our menstruation? One day my elder daughter had gone to take bath at a place 4 km away from the temporary hall. When she was coming back after her bath through the forest area a group of boys stopped her and tried to assault her.'

No basic civic amenities: There are no health clinics. Pregnant women and sick people have to walk long distances to reach the nearby clinic. Other basic facilities like access to drinking water, space for home gardening or garbage disposal and management systems are also



not in place in the resettlement area. These have led to a number of health and nutrition deficiencies in the community, including stomach, respiratory and skin diseases in children.

Exclusion and increasing vulnerability of women:

Women, in particular, have become more vulnerable in the resettled areas as they have been completely excluded from decision making processes, local governance, land and property ownership, etc. WWL is working towards organising the women in this community to participate in local decision-making processes so that their needs are prioritised in the government plans.

During the CJFPAR women leaders from the community have been participating in the district administrative meeting through the Government agent of the Haputhale from March 2018. These meetings are important opportunities for them to speak directly to higher officials of administration, local politicians and NGOs in the district. The meetings are conducted once in two months at Haputhale Divisional secretariat office for planning and monitoring of the district development plan.



WOMEN-LED ACTIONS

Mobilising women for collective action: WWL is working to create an empowered women's advocacy group that advocates for basic facilities in their village. They are mobilising women to talk about the issues facing the community and raise these to the local government and demand immediate action.

Including women's voices in decision-making: It is important that women get to talk about their needs in order to ensure effective delivery of community programmes. For example, since women are the ones primarily responsible for providing food and water for the families, water supply programmes should design and implement their projects in consultation with women.

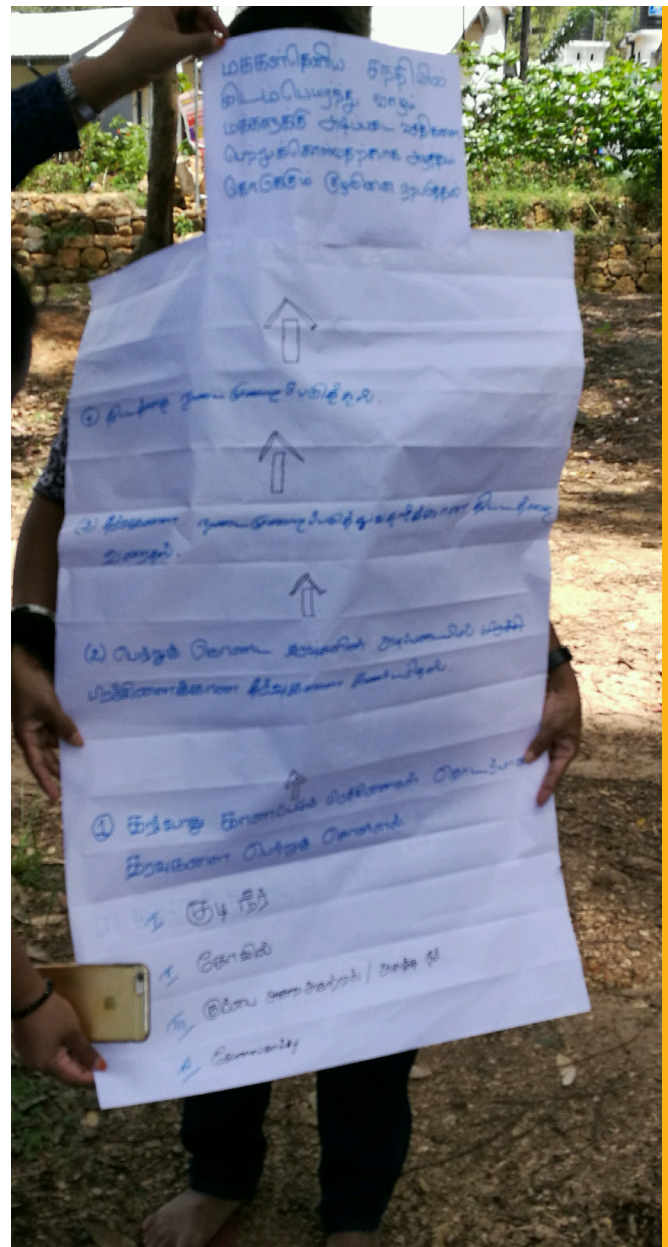


DEMANDS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

WWL and the women in Meereya adhdha have come together to demand changes that will not just improve the living conditions in the resettlement area but will also reduce gender based discriminations in their communities. Their demands are:

- Equal treatment, opportunity and rights for women in the resettlement process. Women have to be given landownership and livelihood opportunities equal to that of men.
- Include women's needs and demands in district development plans.
- Provide basic amenities in the resettlement areas to reduce women's burden and vulnerability. Consult women and include their opinions in these programmes.

WWL and the women from Meereya Badhdha will continue to build capacities of the women, participate in meetings and consult the women in making development plans for their area. They will also continue to regularly engage with the government to include their voices in the policy and programmes.



ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON WOMEN,
LAW AND DEVELOPMENT

WE WOMEN, LANKA



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