

CAPACITY BUILDING: EXPERIENCES FROM THE WOMEN'S VOICE AND LEADERSHIP SRI LANKA PROJECT



Image Caption: Representatives of women's rights organization partners of the Women's Voice and Leadership Sri Lanka Project at the Results Harvesting Workshop (2024)

INTRODUCTION

Women and girls play a catalytic role in bringing about transformative change through their direct and indirect participation in all social, cultural, economic, and decision-making spheres. The contributions made by women's rights organizations (WROs) are crucial for promoting transformative change, as these organizations play a facilitative role in ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls. WROs in Sri Lanka have a long-standing history, spanning decades, of addressing women's rights issues, and possess a wealth of knowledge and experience in effective programming to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Recognizing the strong presence and influence of WROs in the Sri Lankan context, the Women's Voice and Leadership Sri Lanka project aimed to support WROs in their existing endeavors through feminist approaches to programming.

Capacity building (and funding support) was a key strategy through which the project aimed to support WROs, and encompassed diverse areas including organizational management, financial sustainability, service provision, advocacy, and networking. In line with the project's fundamental

approach to implementation, the capacity building component was also designed, delivered and monitored using feminist principles and values such as participation, inclusion, and empowerment as a base. The capacity building approaches used were diverse. It was strategic, evidence-based, and well curated, as it was dynamic, responsive to emerging needs, and informal. It aimed to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of WROs, foster an organizational culture rooted in feminist principles and values, contribute to the empowerment of individuals within WROs, thereby resulting in a ripple effect that extends to the communities they serve.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the WVLSL project, dedicated programs¹ that focused on promoting gender and women's equality in Sri Lanka were implemented which focused on diverse aspects of women's empowerment as well as building the capacities of WROs to work towards women's empowerment.² The WVLSL project harnessed the numerous lessons learned from these initiatives, a significant lesson being the importance of enhancing the capacities of WROs to work on diverse themes and subjects, thereby improving service delivery, advocacy, and networking initiatives. This capacity building also ensures long-term sustainability, enabling continued progress toward advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Close consultation with national, district, divisional, and community level WROs, International Non-Governmental Organizations, and international and bilateral agencies, revealed that the most critical and shared priorities and challenges faced by WROs in Sri Lanka, essential for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment including capacity building in technical subjects and specific knowledge on diverse women's issues, management and leadership training, documentation and reporting, proposal writing and fundraising, financial management, and developing and implementing results frameworks. They also identified the need to learn from and share information and experience with other similar organizations, established WROs, and with government and other duty bearers. To gain a deeper understanding of the capacity building needs of WRO partners of the WVLSL project, a Baseline Survey and Capacity Needs Assessment was conducted and a Capacity Building Plan was formulated.

¹ Shakthi Gender Equity Project (Shakthi), the Women Defining Peace Project (WDP) both funded by GAC, clear gender equality components of the GAC funded Good Governance and Institutional Strengthening Project (GISP), the UNDP implemented Access to Justice and Social Integration (SELA-JSI) Program and the USAID funded the Professional and Institutional Capacity Enhancement (SPICE) project.

² Jayasundere, R. and Thewarapperume, U. (2019). *Women in Sri Lanka: Equality, Achievements, Struggles and Empowerment- A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Sri Lanka* (unpublished) This paper is produced for the Women's Voice and Leadership – Sri Lanka Project based on previous work by the authors.

STRATEGIC CAPACITY BUILDING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS: ASSESSING NEEDS AND DESIGNING SOLUTIONS

A Baseline Survey and Capacity Needs Assessment conducted by the WWL-SL project in its inception phase provided a deeper understanding of the capacity building needs of WROs in order to support their work. The primary aim of the survey was to evaluate the capacity and operations of WROs, establishing benchmark indicators to monitor and track WWL-SL collaboration with them based on a framework designer to measure their performance prior to the WWL-SL project (and after). Additionally, it was imperative to identify their specific capacity needs in order to provide tailored capacity-building assistance to WROs within the WWL-SL project. Hence, a Capacity Needs Assessment, conducted alongside the Baseline Survey, supported developing a responsive Capacity Building Plan, tailored to the unique requirements of WROs.

Key Findings from the Capacity Needs Assessment:

Many WROs used a rights-based framework to articulate the needs and concerns of women in the community and the impact of these issues, but often faced challenges in identifying root causes and connecting issues with gender-based discrimination due to a lack of clarity on structural issues from a feminist perspective. Despite this, they developed sensitive interventions as a result of their decades of experience and close connections with the community, balancing between practical gender need and strategic gender interests. However, many encountered difficulties in distinguishing short-term impacts from long-term outcomes, articulating the deeper logic of their interventions, critically analyzing the underlying assumptions of their interventions, and the process through which their interventions would affect change.

Some WROs stood out as exceptions, such as those working on Muslim women's rights concerning marriage and divorce, labor rights of Free Trade Zone women, and domestic workers' rights. These WROs have undertaken advocacy initiatives spanning from community to national levels, effectively addressing pertinent issues within their focus areas. They showed clearer strategies as a result of their focus on specific issue areas, whereas those with broader agendas faced challenges in maintaining focus and impact. Despite prioritizing women's rights, some WROs had difficulty articulating underlying structural causes and faced challenges staying informed about legal and policy changes affecting their work.

WROs demonstrated understanding of national laws and international frameworks and showed a clear grasp of the socio-economic context in which they operate, particularly those in the North and East, those promoting women's political participation, and those advocating for the labor rights of women in Free Trade Zones. However, other WROs appeared to employ consistent strategies irrespective of changing socio-political contexts, often due to the perceived stability of women's practical needs.

While some WROs recognized the value of national-level networks for staying informed and collectively advocating for change and organizational visibility, many expressed deep skepticism in collaborating through networks as they believed it gave them little recognition or benefit to their organizations. While collaborations with the state were deemed critical for legitimacy, the effectiveness of such collaborations varied, and only a few took the initiative to develop their own networks, maintaining leadership roles and active involvement.

Additionally, some WROs acknowledged the need to nurture leadership skills among younger members but struggled with power dynamics and committing to this task. Challenges in securing funds were prevalent, attributed to various factors such as language barriers and inadequate skills in proposal writing and financial management.

The Capacity Building Plan:

The WVL-SL Capacity Building Plan, developed in close consultation with partner WROs (a feminist approach in itself), addressed their diverse practical and strategic needs as highlighted in the Capacity Needs Assessment. This plan aligns with the project's expected outcomes: improving WRO management and sustainability, enhancing service delivery and advocacy, and increasing the effectiveness of women's rights platforms, networks, and alliances to affect gender-sensitive policy, legal, and social change.

A Capacity Building Plan addressed the capacity building needs of WROs in two ways: firstly, by providing support to individual organizations, and secondly, by offering capacity building for groups of WROs through collective training. The Capacity Building Plan also identified potential resources and resource persons to support the provision of capacity building for WROs. The project developed individual capacity building plans for all WROs and a consolidated one for the project, addressing WRO capacity building needs and identifying experts and expert organizations to support the capacity building of WROs.

The Capacity Building Plan encompassed a comprehensive array of topics to achieve these outcomes. These included enhancing WROs knowledge on foundational principles of feminist approaches to women's empowerment, discourse on conceptual approaches and emerging trends in women's rights work. It aimed to enhance capacities for problem analysis, socio-economic and socio-political assessments, understanding theories of change, as well as develop skills in technical writing for proposal development.

Additionally, the plan emphasized the development of strategic plans and fundraising strategies, coupled with annual work plans, alongside revisiting, and potentially revising the WRO's vision, mission, and

objectives, developing organizational policy documents, and effective management strategies encompassing administrative, human resource, and financial systems.

The plan addressed technical knowledge on policies, laws, and international commitments impacting women, as well as basic skills in supporting survivors of gender-based violence. Monitoring, evaluation, and assessment techniques were also covered, along with designing and implementing sustainable advocacy campaigns, including identifying areas for advocacy, appropriate strategies, and campaign tools, with an emphasis on new media and social media. Furthermore, the capacity building plan aimed to cultivate leadership abilities while fostering power-sharing dynamics.

The implementation of the Capacity Building Plan was deeply ingrained in feminist principles and approaches, developed with a focus on inclusion and participation, in alignment with feminist values.



Image Caption: Proposal writing workshop conducted for WRO partners.

KEY APPROACHES TO BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

Joint and Individualized Capacity Building

Joint capacity building programs were opened up to all WRO partners including multi year funded partners, rapid response partners, and those keen on participating while not receiving any funding support from the project. Joint training covered an array of topics and skills development including technical knowledge on service delivery, leadership, advocacy, organizational management, and sustainability approaches such as fundraising and organizational development. Support was also provided on project conceptualization, organizational and financial management, human resource development, communications and media, constituency building, and sustainability strategies to partner WROs and other

organizations working on the promotion and protection of women's rights and women's empowerment. These joint capacity building programs provided WROs with an opportunity for peer learning as well as many were designed to be knowledge and experience sharing programs. An unexpected outcome of joint capacity building was that it also provided a platform to enhance informal networking among WROs. Years of bringing together partner WROs as well as non-partner WROs for capacity building initiatives enabled collaborations on specific matters and knowledge sharing.

In addition to joint capacity building, WWL-SL adopted an individualized capacity building approach whereby WROs facilitated organizing individualized internal training to address operational capacity building needs. The initial plan was to facilitate WROs in employing mentors to provide this individual capacity building support and for troubleshooting. However, this could not be implemented as planned as there was an acute lack of individuals to provide this type of overall support, specifically with expertise in feminist approaches. To remedy this, WWL-SL worked in close consultation with WROs to identify their needs and also identify technical experts to provide support. This approach empowered WROs to assess and prioritize their own needs and articulate their expectations of technical experts in terms of capacity building outcomes. WROs also ensured that feminist methodological approaches were incorporated into every process including feminist conceptual approaches, methods to include participation and meaningful engagement of all persons involved, use of simple methodologies in local languages and WRO ownership of process and results.

These connections with technical experts will be valuable for WROs moving forward as it enables sustained access to capacity building beyond the WWL-SL project as and when needs arise. Furthermore, this has also enhanced the capacities of WROs to identify and outsource initiatives in a more methodical and conceptually sound manner.

Informal On-The-Job Mentoring to Enhance Individualized Capacity Building Support

Initiated as a capacity building approach from the project's outset, on-the-job mentoring persisted throughout its duration, significantly contributing to the overall capacity building of WRO partners. Centering feminist principles, this mentoring took various forms, including field visits, telephone conversations, online meetings, and reviewing and supporting the development of various documents such as project proposals, budgets, and policies.

This approach was particularly impactful in enhancing WRO management, operational, and fundraising capacities. A significant outcome was a heightened awareness among WROs regarding the importance of fundraising for long-term organizational sustainability. Consequently,

WROs actively sought the WVL-SL team's on-the-job mentorship to enhance their fundraising capabilities, focusing on activities such as project identification, proposal development, donor interactions, and monitoring. This approach was pivotal in helping WROs establish robust management, financial, and operational systems capable of effectively managing new funds.

Open discussions and joint problem-solving empowered partners to make informed decisions related to enhancing financial resilience, improving staff capacities, adapting project interventions, and implementing best practices. This engagement also benefited the WVL-SL team, providing valuable insights into ground realities and enriching their technical support to WRO partners.

"Mentoring WROs usually goes beyond providing technical inputs.

For some, it's about getting support in reviewing their overall implementation strategies or about capturing and interpreting their results; and for some, it could be about seeking a third-party view on managing organizational power dynamics. The mentoring role provides us the opportunity to reflect on our own stances, roles, boundaries, and multiple identities; and make conscious efforts to minimize dependency while upholding trust, comradery and sisterhood."

Shyamala Sivagurunathan, a member of the WVL-SL Technical Committee



Image Caption: Field visit to the Rural Women's Forum office in Vavuniya district.

Empowerment Approach to Address Power-Dynamics

The WVLSL team was mindful of the donor-recipient power dynamics between The Asia Foundation and partner WROs and adhered to feminist principles of participation and empowerment to address it. This positioning established The Asia Foundation as a neutral entity and a safe, flexible space for WRO partners to openly discuss challenges and seek support in finding solutions. The WVLSL team consistently and explicitly sought the interest and willingness of WRO partners to receive support in program management and operational practices in the spirit of equal partnership, thereby respecting their autonomy and individuality.

The active involvement of WROs in identifying, selecting, briefing, and contracting mentors demonstrated their ownership and interest, facilitating their active participation in decision-making processes. This approach not only contributed to long-term sustainability by enhancing WROs' capacities to identify their needs and seek solutions, but also strengthened their ability to incorporate feminist methodological approaches.

Evolving Approach to Address Contextual Changes

Adapting to contextual changes and shifting needs was key for the capacity building component to be relevant and affective. While the Capacity Building Plan provided a strong framework, challenges to the linear implementation of the capacity building plan were brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, compelling the project team to adapt to the changing context and priorities of WROs and their constituencies.

The first main change was the need to work online or through a hybrid method (part online, part physical) in the delivery of capacity building. While the project had to make provision for the distribution of digital equipment and training to enable this change, it also helped reach a wider number of staff (due to the reduced cost of travel and ability for more people to join the same virtual sessions) and enabled a wider and richer scope of content to be covered (due to the ability to conduct several online sessions at no additional cost and in a time-efficient manner).

The second change was to the strategy of implementing capacity initiatives. Due to the varying levels of knowledge and uptake by the WROs, the WVLSL team had to adapt the capacity building implementation plan. The team was compelled to design more detailed sessions, provide additional skills training, conduct several pre-sessions prior to conducting physical trainings and incorporate practical components to the capacity building initiatives.

The third change was related to sourcing trainers, resource persons, and mentors with combined experience in feminist programming and technical knowledge, from within WRO localities, with the necessary language capacity and also value for money, to deliver the capacity building

support. However, the project sourced and developed internal trainers and mentors from its own staff, and project committees (from the Selection Committees and Technical Committees) and sustained relationships with existing mentors and resource people who have supported WROs and are likely to continue this support after project closure.

Planning and designing capacity-building initiatives to address the needs of WRO partners using this approach required a substantial investment of time. The resultant capacity building process adopted for the project was a learning for the WVL-SL project although it was created by the necessity at the time of project implementation due to the challenging COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis context and is considered a best practice of the project.

Integrating Internal Capacity Building into Project Activities to Enhance Long-Term Organizational Sustainability and Ownership

WROs were encouraged to identify their organizational management and operational capacity needs and integrate them into the projects funded by WVL-SL as a measure to enhance long-term sustainability and ownership by WROs, empowering them with long-term skills and resources. This approach differed from usual practices, where donors typically only fund predefined project-related activities rather than organizational strengthening efforts. By enabling WRO partners to incorporate their organizational capacity building needs as specific activities within their WVL-SL funded project, it enhanced the capacities of WROs in general and specialized aspects of organizational functioning.

The general aspects included development of organizational Strategic Plans, organizational fund raising strategies, Finance Policy and Procedures including Finance and Administrative Manuals, various operational and administrative tools, Organizational Constitution amendments, Results Reporting systems, Risk management Plans, tools to incorporate feminist theories and principles into programming, reviews and revisions of Administration Policy and Procedures, development of data bases, development of Job Descriptions for staff, Gender policies, Anti-Harassment policies, organizational assessments of both operations and programming, qualitative and quantitative data analysis and visualization, and advocacy systems including information technology and social media for advocacy and producing video clips using mobile phones for advocacy initiatives.

The assistance provided to the Muslim Women's Development Trust stands out in particular. The organization faced challenges due to a limited administrative system, resulting in unclear communication, overlapping responsibilities, ambiguous tasks, high staff turnover, and a lack of continuous skills development for staff. These challenges were exacerbated by the stressful external environment, where the organization faced community backlash due to its rights-based progressive advocacy

approaches to reforming Muslim personal laws. This further complicated the management and operational limitations faced by the Muslim Women's Development Trust, impacting the personal wellbeing of its staff. With the support of WVL-SL and an external consultant, the organization was able to identify its specific challenges. By integrating specific activities into the WVL-SL supported project, the Muslim Women's Development Trust successfully implemented effective administrative policies and tools. Additionally, they enhanced the knowledge and skills of their staff, improved services, refined data gathering and documentation processes, enhanced reporting mechanisms, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation of programs. Moreover, the organization provided support to its staff to manage stress resulting from the pressures of community backlash. This support, coupled with commitment and passion displayed by organization staff and strong leadership, enhanced the organizational management and operational capacities of Muslim Women Development Trust.

"...my organization and I do not feel alone; we are empowered by the fact that we are connected to a supportive army of sisters from across the country..."

(Juwairiya Mohideen, Executive Director, Muslim Women's Development Trust, speaking with reference to the support provided by WVL-SL project and other like-minded organizations across the country)

Among other such examples, the Rural Women's Front (Galle district) also integrated management and operational support into the WVL-SL supported projects.

"The Asia Foundation's WVL-SL project has been a turning point in reviving the organization. The Strategic Plan formulation workshop helped us reflect on our journey and gave us the necessary strength and vision to revive the organization. We have now taken steps for registration at the NGO secretariat, we have already planned to revise our constitution and conduct an annual general meeting to reappoint the Board of Directors, which was not well functional due to lack of engagement in the last few years. "

Sriyani Pathirage, The President, Rural Women's Front (Galle District)

Other specific capacity building interventions included Entrepreneurship Development Plans, staff computer skills development system for

management systems, mental health well-being management support systems to staff and their families, support for organizational registration (including all necessary legal and other documentation) with the Government's NGO Secretariat, support to include community representation in WRO Boards of Directors, a Support Plan for commercial sex workers, an assessment of befriending and legal support, upgrading on an existing library systems to new tech-based systems, documenting the process involved in building the capacity of facilitators and their engagement in addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, an organizational assessment on advocacy contribution to personal law reforms, a digitized database on GBV case management, development of a Drop-in center guidelines and database for a center for commercial sex workers, organizational website development, an information management system for micro credit programs, and an assessment of labor rights cases for a collection of WROs working on labor rights.

The approach also facilitated the dissemination of learnings to WRO staff, ensuring in-house capacity retention. Enabling WROs to invest in these core areas contributed to their long-term sustainability beyond the WWL-SL and enhanced their contributions to advancing women's rights and gender equality. In the last five years, WWL-SL observed a growing recognition among donors of the importance of operational capacity building, evidenced by the increasing integration of such capacity building efforts within donor-funded projects and mechanisms.

Encouraging Critical Reflection as an Approach to Capacity Building

Joint capacity building programs employed a critical reflection approach to delve into conceptually dense topics, promoting deeper internalization among participants. This was particularly effective for WROs to learn about feminist concepts, principles, and approaches. The approach, unlike lecture-style learning, combined reflection and analysis with practical knowledge where WROs were guided to connect what they already 'do' and 'know' to feminist concepts, principles, theories, and approaches to enhance learning outcomes. The capacity building workshop series 'Feminist Approaches to Development Programming' and the workshops on Feminist Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in particular used this approach. Individual capacity building, either by experts or on-the-job mentoring by the WWL-SL team, was another way in which WROs were encouraged critical reflection and enhanced WRO capacities to incorporate feminist values and principles into programming and organizational governance.

This approach facilitated WROs in identifying issues and gaps in programming on women's rights in their own contexts, to strengthen their understanding of women's rights concepts and to begin thinking of how they can conceptualize program approaches as feminist approaches, while

maximizing resources, connecting with technical experts, and drafting budgets. This approach also created space for reflexivity, where WROs were able to examine their individual biases, experiences and power dynamics, all of which contributed towards their self-identification as feminist organizations implementing feminist work.

Peer Learning Approach

WROs have a rich history of community engagement and extensive knowledge and experience in developing effective strategies for successful intervention. This includes building long-term relationships with community members, collaborating with state officials and institutions, partnering with local and international organizations, and integrating an intersectional lens into programming to ensure the inclusion of socially excluded groups. Leveraging this, WWL-SL created various platforms for WROs to share their knowledge and experiences with other WROs.

WROs actively contributed their extensive expertise during joint capacity building programs, engaging in group discussions and through the delivery of presentations. The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion workshop, in particular, was notable for being entirely WRO-driven, with WRO experts working with socially excluded groups were invited to share insights and delve into effective programming strategies. The outcomes were positive, as many WROs began incorporating an intersectional approach, ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups in their initiatives.

“...we want to change the draft of our strategic action plan as it does not include the LGBTQIA+ community...after the workshop we realized that we have overlooked [the LGBTQIA+ community] and we would like to have this included in our organization’s strategic action plan... we realized that transgender children are at risk of dropping out of school...we encounter this a lot in our work. For instance, we helped reschool a child as they were not allowed to wear clothes that fit their gender identity and expression...”

(Manori Thantrige, Executive Director, Eksath Lanka Welfare Foundation, Nuwara Eliya)

WROs also shared their knowledge and experiences by weaving capacity building and networking programs into their projects. For instance, Women’s Development Federation’s success as an organization that mobilizes women from the community and actively works towards strengthening their economic empowerment has inspired numerous partner WROs of the WWL-SL project to adopt similar strategies in their respective communities. The networking and learning event organized

by Women's Development Federation through their WVL-SL supported project for nine WROs across several districts was a success, providing WROs with essential insights and best practices for implementation, initiated opportunity for further communication, and laid the foundation for future collaborations.

"...we felt a great sense of motivation to learn and implement these learnings in our own communities...We now have a better understanding of what challenges to expect and how to address them and how we as CSOs we should engage with the State to secure a favorable response and support...we have a clear starting point now."

[Social Welfare Mandram, Nuwara Eliya District after their networking and field experience with Women's Development Federation]

Similarly, the Center for Social Concern, a Rapid Response Fund recipient, collaborated with ten partner WROs across 10 districts to conduct the "Assessment of Feminization of Aging" and engage in evidence-based advocacy. The study is an outcome of the expertise of the Center for Social concern and close collaboration of WROs that contributed to the research. Their participation in the Center for Social Concern's project has strengthened the capacities of these WROs to mainstream age-inclusive rights-based approaches in their work, further advancing age inclusivity in development processes in Sri Lanka.

Knowledge and experience sharing extended beyond the WRO partners of the WVL-SL project. WROs were also invited to share their programming experiences with other development practitioners. For instance, WROs focusing on women's labor rights presented their work to The Asia Foundation staff, highlighting the challenges faced by women workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Islamic Women's Association for Research and Education organized a session during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in 2023, where WROs from Tamil-speaking regions shared their intervention and prevention initiatives addressing sexual and gender-based violence at the community level with development practitioners and donors.

Intergenerational Approach in Developing Knowledge of WROs

To encourage power sharing and the passing down of knowledge to younger members of WROs for the long-term sustainability of the organization, WROs were encouraged to invite younger members (along with senior staff) for join capacity building initiatives organized by the WVL-SL project. Certain capacity building initiatives such as Women and Law workshop were designed as Training of Trainers workshops, equipping participants



Image Caption: Workshop on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

with the skills to provide similar trainings within their own organizations.

Furthermore, internal WRO individual capacity building ensured that younger staff were included in training programs. Through the provision of management and operational capacity building, WROs were able to develop organizational constitutions, policies, document best practices and develop training manuals as a means of supported collective learning within the WROs. For instance, the Vernathee Women's Collective', a movement facilitated by Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum weaved in to their projects an activity to build mechanisms to support intergenerational collective learning through continuous training, mentoring, sharing of knowledge, experiences, resources, and developing a constitution for the movement to maintain clarity of vision and the transfer of democratic feminist principles as new members join.

Inclusion Approach

Special attention was paid to the attendance of mothers with infants where support was provided for carers to accompany the mothers and using of safe spaces for programs as well as the undivided attention of the WWL-SL team to ensure disability access and related services needed, linguistic ability ensuring that programs were conducted in local languages with interpretations often by the WWL-SL staff themselves, and attention to special concerns on the participation of transgender women in mid transition process were some ways that the project encouraged participation using an inclusive approach. The inclusive approach ensured capacity building was accessible to all.

THE OVERALL OUTCOMES OF CAPACITY BUILDING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

The results of the WVLSL project's capacity-building support for WROs encompass a variety of aspects. Through comprehensive capacity-building initiatives, WVLSL facilitated the integration of feminist values and principles into the operations and programming of partner WROs, leading to a gradual adoption of feminist approaches and a deeper understanding of women's rights concepts. This capacity-building effort also extended to improving service delivery and advocacy, resulting in some observable improvements such as the introduction of new services, expanded community reach, and increased engagement in advocacy platforms. Moreover, WVLSL contributed to enhancing networking and advocacy capabilities among WROs, thus enabling their active participation in policy development and legal reforms. Despite facing challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, WROs persevered in advocating for women's rights, amplifying the voices of women and girls at the grassroots.



About the Project: The Women’s Voice and Leadership Project, Sri Lanka is funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by The Asia Foundation Office in Sri Lanka. The project’s goal is to build the capacities and support the activities of local women-led women’s rights organizations and movements seeking to empower women and girls, advance the protection of the rights of women and girls, and achieve gender equality.

About this document: The “Approach Notes” series of factsheets, developed as part of the Women’s Voice and Leadership Sri Lanka project’s communications strategy, provides an overview of the approaches used by the project team in the implementation of various project objectives, delving into the results achieved, insights, and lessons learned throughout the project’s duration. The document serves as a reflective guide on the journey of implementing the project and underscores the significance of feminist approaches in shaping its achievements.

Women’s Voice and Leadership- Sri Lanka

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