

Women's Call to Political Parties and Candidates contesting the Sri Lankan Parliamentary elections of 2020

A Women's Manifesto

Declaration

As women, we strive for an ethical political culture and a democratic and just society, within which all human rights are valued, protected, promoted and fulfilled by the State, and where all people are equal and treated without discrimination. We strive for a society in which everyone can be free from harm, live with dignity, choose their own employment, have access to quality healthcare and education, access decent housing, and live within a society and state where diversity, dissent and accountability is valued.

We assert that women's rights have historically been restricted through a socially conservative interpretation of 'gender', which has dictated restrictive gender roles and harmful stereotypes.

We affirm that women and other historically marginalized communities should have the right to access justice and be treated fairly within the justice system.

Our demands:

Political Institutions and Practice

1. Ensure the number of cabinet ministers does not exceed 20 and at least 25% of the cabinet comprises of women
2. Provide for temporary special measures to ensure a minimum 25% representation of women, including at decision making level, in Parliament, local and provincial government and government agencies
3. Protect the provisions of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.
4. Introduce mandatory legal provisions to ensure that all registered political parties have at least 25% women in their key decision-making structures
5. Ensure a gender balance in the appointments to all independent Commissions established under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution
6. Expedite legislation to establish an independent National Commission on Women within the provisions of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution
7. Ensure progressive thinking of future generations by including education on the concepts of peace, gender and gender equality in all national curricula
8. Ensure all national level data is sex and gender disaggregated
9. Implement transitional justice mechanisms to ensure justice and trust building among affected people
10. Ensure the liability of non-state actors for violations of the equality clause of the Constitution is recognized

Human Rights and Legal Reform

11. Progressively incorporate all ratified international instruments, including CEDAW, into domestic legislation and review existing legislation for compliance with international human rights commitments
12. Ensure that all women shall enjoy equal rights to the inheritance, acquisition, management, administration and disposition of property and ensure that all discriminatory laws (specifically including the Thesawalamei Law and the Land Development Ordinance) preventing such rights be repealed or amended
13. Amend the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1951 ensuring full realization of demands of Muslim women and full compliance with fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution within six months of the new Parliament

Information and Hate-Speech

14. Commit to strengthen and implement right to information (RTI) procedures and mechanisms through public education and capacity-building, including for the state sector

Development, Traditional Livelihoods and Ecological Justice

15. Commit to enacting special policies to address the issues of women in poverty, as a recognition of the feminization of poverty
16. Support traditional livelihoods including those of women through more inclusive policy and resources

Labour and Work

17. Ratify ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers
18. Introduce a pension scheme for women and men migrant workers
19. Ensure that all workplaces should be safe and inclusive environments. The state should uphold this principle, as well as ensure all non-state entities including the private sector to uphold it

Violence against Women and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

20. Ensure that girls from all communities are equally protected by statutory rape law
21. Include age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality and reproductive education as an integral part of all educational curricula, including in teacher training

Policy Development and Implementation

22. Develop policies for female heads of households, which enable an environment in which they can live free from harm and oppression, in dignity, where their socio-economic rights are protected, and their access to social welfare benefits are strengthened
23. Ensure that policies on women are progressive and are implemented through an effective mechanism
24. Recognize the feminization of ageing (that the ageing population of Sri Lanka will be made up of a majority of women), and formulate policies to meet their specific needs, including inter alia, housing, health, livelihoods and transportation

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The Women and Media Collective