



Gender discrimination in south Asian context: Guidance to identify social responsibilities and recommendations for problem solving mechanism

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Abstract

Usually women are treated differently and unequal than men in their education, career, economic advancement and political influences. It is a common type of discrimination that is happening throughout the world, even in the developed countries. In particular, this study is focused on 07 Districts in Sri Lanka, and 1,400 women representing both employed and unemployed categories of both urban and rural localities with age from 18 to 55. The overall assessment therein was to discover whether there are disadvantages causing against women due to gender disparities predominated the social context, if so, what are those disadvantages and also to determine what are the negative effects of such that could influence the development of entire society, directly or implicitly. Applied data collection process was consisted by questionnaires, focused group discussions, revealing case studies and observations and results were analyzed through quantitative and qualitative approaches. 67 % of unemployed data providers stated that they are satisfied on the decision making processes prevailing at home settings. In contrast, 40 % of the employed respondents expressed that they are not happy about the status of decision making at domestic level. Several other factors too, were emerged as obstructive elements affecting women to keep away from national development. Barriers affecting for growth of job prospects too, were prevailing in every sector. Attending extended educational needs, unattainable promotions of selected jobs due to personal aspects and no compassionate environment available for promotions, increased risk of un-infectious diseases were some of them. Under these circumstances, a suggestion is made to establish a National Committee for Controlling Gender Based Discrimination (NCCGBD) as to be pursued through Divisional Secretariats. This to be focused on empowering societies of rural women with the aim of surmounting problems of women thru' the said network. It should be emphasized that the gender awareness is an influential factor that affects national development in any country. Hence it is vital to pay sufficient attention also in focus of the procurement of policies in respect of national development.

Keywords: discrimination, empower, gender, NCCGBD, women

1. Introduction

It is unblemished that woman adorns varied nature of composition in the social context. Also discernible that the role of woman has turned into a complexity in the modern society. Woman brings about multifaceted tasks such as; child births, nourishing them, control of domestic activities, up-keeping family needs and to be employed on varied jobs are some of them. The argument in the society is that even within the feminist perspectives, women have to face above blockades due to the influence of the factors of male dominance and the patriarchy. The males' domination against women, by ways of pressurizing or exploiting them has created the system of patriarchy within the society (Bhasith.1993). Within this scenario the women are ill-treated or regarded differently not by a segment of males but it is happening within the social system represented by them. The said social system is built through the male domination and the disgraceful attitudes of males to thrust women to a lower rank which prevails from the inception up to the end of human society.

In particular, this study is focused on 07 Districts in Sri Lanka, and 1,400 women representing both employed and unemployed categories of both urban and rural localities while, also rationing the age limits from 18 to 55 years. The overall assessment therein was to discover whether there are disadvantages causing against women due to gender

disparities predominated the social context, if so, what are those disadvantages and also to determine what are the negative effects of such that could influence the development of entire society, directly or implicitly. The gender difference becomes a socialized factor from the childhood of both males and females and certain decisive factors are there with taboos too. Notwithstanding the fact that women accomplish varied tasks within families, education, economic aspects, religious sector, and the political structure yet, it is efficacious within modern society that women are affected negatively including their rights due to the reasons of gender based disparities.

2. Research Problem

Under the role and status of women's circumstance, the research problem focused on series of studies based on gender sensitization so as to assess whether the accessibility of females for vital elements are equal to the males

3. Objectives

Identify the nature of discrimination faced by women and girls from a contemporary society's point of view
 Understand the complexity of gender discrimination in Sri Lanka from a geographic context with specific focus to a set of key select districts
 To suggest process can be an exclusive modality to attain

overall problem solving mechanism of women as strategic approach be considered as a vibrant move to empower women

4. Literature Review

Gender Discrimination: Women Perspective done by Samidha Pokharel, 2008 [4] and this study argued that the perception of women in discrimination in various aspects in a male dominated society. The study was designed as a descriptive study based on sample survey. The total of 200 women was selected randomly for this study. The study findings show that there is a discrimination against women in various aspects. Women are aware of discrimination in the societal and household levels. They perceive more discrimination in the societal level comparing to household level. Married women perceive more discrimination in mobility, property, occupation, and education. Similarly, unmarried women perceive more discrimination in mobility and way of behaving (Pokharel, 2008).

According to sustainable development of Ethiopia done by Endalcachew Bayeh, 2016 [1] and this study consider gender and customary practices as major factors responsible for discrimination. The study findings show that societal discrimination exists in male dominated society. Women are aware of discrimination practices at home and society as well. They perceive more discrimination practices at the societal level comparing to household level. They perceive different members of the family such as father, husband, and mother in-law are responsible for discrimination. To some extent women themselves were found to be responsible for discrimination as they perceive the things culturally and perform it accordingly accepting the gender based responsibilities without considering it as discrimination (Bayeh, 2016) [1]. And also number of studies have explained the gender base discrimination and its effects for the gender discrimination. According to Bradshaw, *et al.* 2013 [2] their study on Women’s role in economic development: Overcoming the constraints and this short paper aims to highlight the important role women have and can play in economic development. It addresses three questions: what is the evidence base to support investing in women? What are the current constraints on realizing the full potential of women in the process of economic development? What are the priority areas of intervention necessary to unblock these constraints? It is focused on women and on economic development, rather than on the wider issue of gender and development. However, before looking at the evidence base, constraints, and interventions, it will provide a brief context of the evolution of thinking around women and development (Bradshaw, *et al.* 2013) [2].

In Sri Lankan context

D.S.W. Gunewardene, 2016 [3] through his study on Gender Inequality in Sri Lanka has discussed Gender equality is both a core concern and an essential part of human development. However, in no society do women yet enjoy the same opportunities as men. They work longer hours and they are paid less, both in total and pro rate. Their choices as to how they spend their time, in both work and leisure, are more constrained than they are for men. These disparities generate substantial gaps between how much women and men can contribute to society, and how much they respectively share in its benefits. The objective of this study was to analyse how gender inequality indicate that different dimensions in Sri Lankan context. Study was based on

secondary data gathered from literature survey which are directly related to the issues addressed in this study. The study was revealed that disadvantage and marginalization of women and discrimination against them is a global phenomenon. Everywhere in the world, there are still considerable differences in living conditions and upward social mobility opportunities between men and women due to unequal factors. In Sri Lankan context traditional women have much less social, economic, political and domestic power than men. However, they have played considerable role inside the family as homemakers (Gunewardene, 2016) [3]. Through this several literature its obviously clear all most all studies have focused to identify the nature of problem and its consequences. But its timely need to solutions to control gender discrimination in society and so that from this study has mainly focused to some preventive methods in contemporary society.

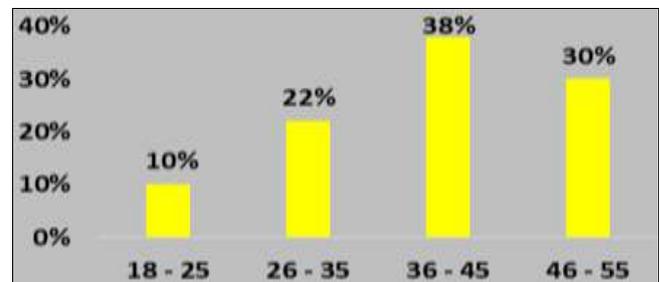
5. Methodology

The selected study area of the research is comprised by 7 districts namely; Galle, Ampara, Monaragala, Jaffna, Anuradhpura, Kurunegala and Gampaha District. The process adopted in the selection of data providers was to earmark the social settings existing within the rural, urban structures and also the geographical factors prevailed in each district. The selected number of data providers were 1,400 whereas, 200 data providers were selected from each district with the representation of 100 employed and the balance 100 of unemployed and the age limits specified were from 18 to 55 years. Applied data collection process was consisted by questionnaires, focused group discussions, revealing case studies and observations and results were analyzed through quantitative and qualitative approaches.

6. Findings and Discussions

Sample distribution of **unemployed women** in rural and urban settings.

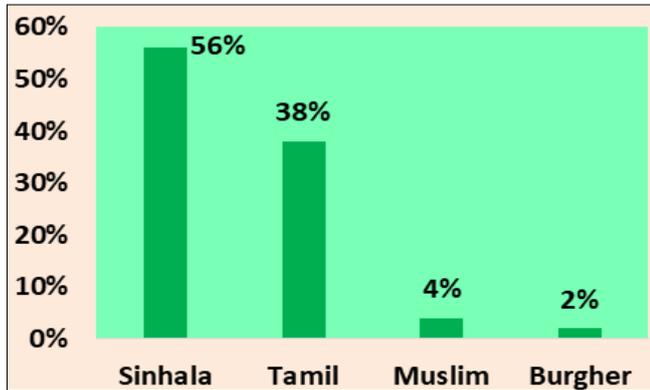
While, studies carried in a premeditated manner 700 unemployed women were included in the study sample to analyze their basic details of community and sociological profile. Also, needed data analysis was attended based on community and social factors so as to assess the obstacles those hindering socio economic empowerment of rural women.



Source: Field Data 2019

Fig 1: Age Structure of Unemployed Respondents (N=700)

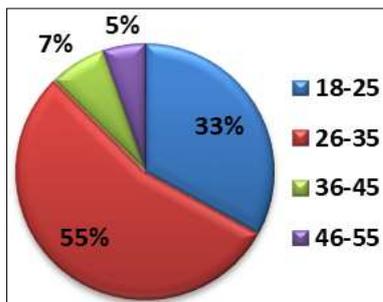
The upper age limit of unemployed women interviewed was in between 36 – 45 years which represents 38%. The lowest age limit of data providers was between 18 – 25 representing 10 % of the total. This reflects that a higher percentage of sample informants are in the middle age limits.



Source: Field Data 2019

Fig 2: Ethnicity of unemployment Respondents (N=700)

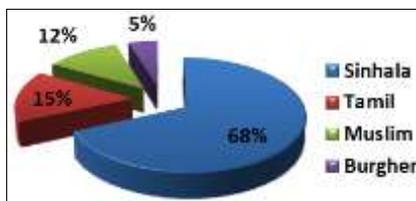
Data gathered reflects that among those unemployed women 56% of higher majority was consisted by Sinhalese women, while 38% represented by the Tamil community. Whereas, minimal percentage of 4% to 2% was represented by Muslim and Burger communities. Also revealed that there was no major influence of ethnic based analysis however, the graph reflects that Sinhalese women represent higher rate of unemployment in these regions.



Source: Field Data 2019

Graph 3: Age structure of employed data providers (N = 700)

Within the sample 55 % of employed data providers represented age range from 26 to 55 years. A minute segment of 5 % represents ages from 46 to 55. Accordingly, it is noticeable that the tendency to get them employed between ages of 18 – 25 is satisfactory. Also, appears that women at their age between 18 to 25 had found whatever a job to link themselves with the contribution for economic cooperation.



Source: Field Data 2019

Graph 4: Ethnicity of the Employed sample of data providers. (N=700)

A segment of 68 % out of data providers are Sinhalese, while, Tamil community represents 15 %, and Muslim community signifies 12 % whereas, Burgher embodies lowest percentage of 5 % revealing that the sample of interviewees represent multi ethnic groups.

Base on the above sample the study focused on the different cognizance on women represented rural and urban

divergences was implemented based on few specific objectives. The key propositions emerged in the process of data analysis, across the research, will be focused in the discussion in this section.

1. Identify the nature of discrimination faced by women and girls from a contemporary society's point of view

Within the family

The inquiries proceeded on the family status of data providers in particular, prior to their marriages, disclosed that more attention had been paid on male children than girl children. Therefore it was notable that more attention had been paid for male children than girl children in rural localities. Paying more emphasis on single male child in the family and also paying higher attention for male children based on socio-cultural factors are subjected for above situation. Yet, it is a general matter within urban communities. Though, 67 % of rural unemployed category of data providers asserted that a satisfactory level of decision making is prevailing at domestic level, yet, in contrast, 40 % of the employed informants uttered that they are not satisfied with the order of decision making in their families. Further they articulated that the decision making space of women has been curtailed in particular events such as; on visits, spending time on leisure actions, participating in the night time social functions, involving on love affairs, moving with friends as well as in the events of decorations and fashion. It was clear that such decision making process had been followed by adults for the abstinence of younger ones.

Similarly, 80 % of unemployed informants had expressed that there is a visible difference in decision making on male and female children whereas, 83 % of employed sample too, had confirmed the same. In this regard, it is unblemished that decision making practice in both rural and urban settings has effects or influence on women comparatively to the male.

Within Education

Also came to light that, entering into education by girl children in rural societies before their marriages exhibits certain underrating compared to the male. Nevertheless, it is distinct that the access for education by females in urban settings is in an equal status in comparison to the male children. A distinctive factor emerged from rural social setting was that 21 % of women had studied only up to 1 – 5 Grades. Herein, numerous factors had affected for above said unfairness in rural sector, such as; intricate geographical milieu, existing socio-cultural background, necessity to assist parents on Agro-based activities, taking care of younger children, moreover, the ideology that females be remained at home to take care children and also the prevailing poverty as a vibrant factor.

The existed pursuance of families to direct children on education is concerned, different levels of prominence had been on girl children compared to the male children. Within the sample, 50 % of data providers asserted that they are satisfied on same. Whereas, 16 % of unemployed informers stated that it happened in a middle level scale, yet, 45% of data providers uttered that it happened in a very satisfactory level. Hence, these two samples illustrate that equal privileges had existed in the past in their families for both

male and female children.

In concern with the achievement of subsequent education after marriages, it was revealed that 75% of respondents had entered into higher education. The persuading factors had been; the need of added qualifications for higher positions and due to the fact that others had followed same. Also the availability of facilities for higher education within their work places, seeking permanency of the jobs and the self-satisfaction had been the factors persuaded them to follow higher education. In concern with married informants 4 % of them had entered into higher education. Ineligible factors affected for an higher percentage to be away from advance studies after marriages as disclosed were; low educational backgrounds, problems within the ratio of child births, business on childcare acts and the domestic affairs, employments of husbands, husbands being away in overseas jobs, dissatisfaction of husband for wife’s wishes on further education, taking care of diseased family members and also due to the difficulties on travel were some of the barriers.

It was a factor disclosed that several blockades are there for women to enter into higher education. A noticeable feature was that more positive support is available for males within the family settings in compared to women. Also prominent that needed assistance for male partners for higher education was available from the whole family including, children and wives, yet, it is not the situation on females. Business of domestic issues and responsibilities is the leading factor for above outcomes.

Within the occupational concerns.

As disclosed there are prominent factors those being considered by women before applying for jobs. Status of the business, whether the duties are entitled for women, ability to reach work place from home so as to manage home based tasks without troubles are some pre-requisites.

Correspondingly, those employed women informers had experienced certain gender discrepancies in the fixed rates of overtime and the assignment of duties on night shifts. Also, the working women had experienced setbacks in private sector employments such as higher salary ranges for male workers.

Furthermore, series of cultural barriers specifically affecting employed women could be identified. The educational

standards, marriages, employment, child births, residency, costume, attendance on socially receptive functions are some of them. These anomalies were noticeable in higher scale in rural settings and no such differences noticed in the urban societies. In contrarily, more democratic and liberal milieu could be noticeable in urban social structure particularly on incidences such as; family relations, sexual relationships, periodical gap within child births, tendencies in joining higher education, aspirations on job promotions etc. Creating higher comfort for women workers.

As per common observations, it was revealed that more limitations were existed on women with lesser education. Yet, those who affected with lesser privileges due to low education did not deliberate that such bearing is a loss of their rights or as a discrimination, which is an eminent factor. These women were in robust attitude that such status is part of their composition and to be extremely obedient and humble for husbands. Whereas, the employed women in urban sector showed a competitive style of relationship affirming that they are not alone responsible for such but husbands too are accountable.

Typically, women are subjected for varied physical and psychological problems in work places due to the problems of monthly menstruation, pregnancy, child births etc., Also, in efforts of advancing positions in work places women are experiencing low propensities from the family as well as within the work places in compared to the males. In similar events, male employees can methodically prepare themselves with needed support from others, however, the research findings have disclosed that when a woman endeavors such avenue, she has to make effort to maintain balance between husband, children, domestic setting, and issues of relatives etc., and hence there is a long recession of their progression. Normally, when the male employees makes attempts on such progressive hopes a friendly surrounding is pursued by other males, but the contribution normally be acknowledged by males on women in similar occurrences is insubstantial.

2. Understand the complexity of gender discrimination in Sri Lanka from a geographic context with specific focus to a set of key select districts

Table 1

Attributed discriminations Based on gender socialism	Specialties of Urban Community	Specialties of Rural Community
Concerning Health and Nutrition	Concern on women too on food and nutrition in comparison to the males	Male partners are considered as land mark. First to serve the food for male and female to take food afterwards, and Specific attention is paid on the nutrition of male children
Discriminations or problems encountered while continuing education	Similar opportunities are available for women to access education equal to the male	When women make effort to join higher education influences are there from the family. Encountering on economic hardships.
	Women possess needed support from the family when further avenues are explored on education and able to focus on required preparations on the employment.	Prevailed low tendency to explore educational opportunities. Business of domestic affairs and difficulties of travel are on the above.
	When to select the flow of subject’s first priority is given for the consent of the parents.	When to select the flow of subjects’ first priority is aligned for autonomous decision.
Discriminations or problems related to the employment	Weaknesses in pertinent to women (21%), Monetary bribes (10%), Political influences (65%), and Sexual bribes (2%) are paid specific attention during interviews.	Educational Qualifications, job related qualifications and the weaknesses of women are paid specific attention.
Discriminations based on marriages	The selection of preferred marriage partner falls in line with independence and democracy.	Refusal of parents, Family background of the marriage partner, Cast, Higher ambitions of bridegroom’s party on the endowment of

		dowry and the ; Possible impact of the influences of parents – elder brothers and sisters of the family which could affect the independence and democracy.
	The moderate attention on factors such as dowries, the emphasis and the preferred factors in selection of the partner can be partly to consider equal status of family economy and also the compatibility with the social class.	Endowment of dowry can be the key factor in marriages, Though, uniformity of economic status is not there yet, and eagerness on the dowry can be a priority.
	Initiatives are pursued allowing newly married couple upon their consent to live separately being away from parents.	Arrangements are made to allow the couple to live at married partners' house.
Disposition of the sexual life pattern	Sexual relationship ensues on the consent of both parties, yet, when the wife reaches her middle-age it happens on the consensus of the husband. Possibly, It may be to avoid unconventional relationships of husband with other women.	Often, the sexual relationships are based on the accord of the husband. Even with the inclination on sexual behavior women use to depress such since, grown children are in the family. Also, a reluctance is there to talk on sexual relationships in public.
Child Births and Background	In reference to the pregnancies often, both parties are to decide the occurrences. Similarly, the number of children, gaps between each child birth and the usage of birth control methods are decided in consensus of both. Yet, these women are reluctant to exceed beyond two childbirths.	Usage of birth control methods are often ensues on the wishes of the woman. Number of children, time gap between each birth, are agreed within both parties, yet, the higher potentiality is on the husband's decision.
Economic Background	While, effective usage of own income and the income derived by husband is in pursuance, the regular savings too are attended methodically.	Effective management of prevailing income is impossible. In certain instances net monthly income is insufficient to maintain family expenses due to Microfinance loan practices.
Political Background	It is common that believing political ideologies and also casting votes are depend on the independent views.	Since inherited voting for political parties is the practice being followed, no independent opinions are in the routine.
Social Relationships	No obstructions for keeping friendships with male or female friends yet, the neighborhood relationships are minimal.	Blockades are there for friendships between male partners mainly due to the dispersion of gossips on women, within the rural community. Yet, friendly behavior with neighborhood families and village members is an enduring practice.
Relaxation and spending time on leisure	Usage of social media during leisure times is a common practice. Evolving Time to be with friends is also visible. Besides, joining social events at night, and participation on pleasure trips too are given higher emphasis.	Leisure time is spent on watching Television, Home gardening or attending floriculture focused work.
Beauty culture and Fashion	Modern day fashions and the beauty-culture is given higher emphasis. On such moves no effectual influences from others.	Irrespective of the involvement on beauty culture and modern day fashions, those are followed within a limit due to the existence of socio-cultural background in the rural sector.

Examine how gender discrimination affect the overall development of Sri Lanka by engaging with employed women of various strata of society, representing various geo-demographic cross segments.

The following outcomes were identified as revealed through the research study being the forceful key factors resulted over gender discrimination, and causing substantial influences on the national development of the country.

1. Existing blockades suppressing the efforts on long term education.

Series of findings disclosed that female respondents after entering into marriages are compelled to be busy on child care activities and numerous work at domestic level hence to reduce time needed for education, relentlessly.

2. Selection of Preferred occupations

When even educated women to apply for jobs they cannot tender their applications for a favored job due to their involvement on domestic work. Next option is to

apply for a job specifically based on the womanhood and such unresolved issues have direct and indirect effects on the national development of the country.

- Absence of a motivatory mechanism for job promotion and the nonappearance of supportive environment for same.
- Increased trends of Non-communicable diseases According to the expressions of informers more women had affected by non-communicable diseases such as; High Blood Pressure, cholesterol, and Diabetic which is a new tendency. Reasons for these tendencies were the High levels of Stress, due to mixed problems emerging at domestic level, habit of the frequent consumption of instant food and the limited time available to take care health and related needs.
- When problematic incidences are emerged at family level the direct impact of such had affected the status and the tasks of women. When disordered family life is prevailed due to depressive incidences such as indecent contacts of husbands with other women, alcoholism,

domestic violence, problems of domestic cash flow management etc., the direct outcome is the weak performance of women in their work places. Although, solutions such as divorce when family setting is not recoverable cannot be practiced due to the social ideology which asserts that women will be affected adversely when such solutions are endeavored. Hence the available option is to bear all such grievances but the risk is that women are subjected for sub disorders, too.

6. Surmounting weaknesses encountered in livelihoods is an extra ordinary action being pursued by a large majority of families in particular those unable to access state driven Banking facilities etc., to start enterprises or to promote agriculture. Yet, due to the unavailability of secured services for savings as well as micro credit many rural, semi urban families are suffering due to credit burdens invented through MFIs. These negative results have curtailed the progress of livelihoods interrupting the sustainability.
7. There can be mechanisms established to surmount varied profiles of problems being faced by the public in the country. Nevertheless, however much disparities being faced by women it is clear that large majority of women are not adequately aware of institutions they must deal with and the procedures to be followed and there is no mechanism established in the country to resolve such impediments. Amongst varied nature of problems and tribulations being faced by women, the legal problems, economic problems, health problems, community based problems, problems of relationships and psychological problems are among those impediments.
8. In respect of women there are statute laws but problems emerge when the affected parties approach such processes to surmount problems thereby creating barriers.

7. Recommendations

In reference to the findings of the research, woman had confronted with varied nature of differences resulting victimization, owing to the deep-rooted gender disparities. The gender based disparities are originated socially, as well as due to cultural attitudes and owing to parent headed authoritative attitudes, inclusive of gender discriminations. Under the above circumstances, set of long term and short term suggestions are bestowed in order to exclude cultural attitudes from the society such as gender based separation evolved on both rural and urban women in Sri Lanka. In this respect, there are series of actions to be initiated by the legal authorities and the society as a whole to freed women from such occurrences.

1. To establish a partnership oriented approach so as to empower women while diagnosing even sensitive problems being faced by them in order to evolve a sustainable empowerment of Rural Women’s Societies (RWSs) at Divisional Secretarial level.
2. Also suggest to interact male persons too, and to implement series of programmes in pursuance of changed attitudes of male partners, policy makers and community leaders to eliminate mythological attitudes based on gender concerns.

3. To formulate systems to strengthen action proceedings which are to be followed in the discriminative actions based on sexuality viz., events of sexual harassments and domestic violence while also, formulating a mechanism at village level to implement such actions.
4. Introductory action be pursued ensuring welfare of women while also initiating annual mobile services having targeted; nutrition, psychological drawbacks etc. of women.
5. Commencing entrepreneurial and self-employment actions added with economic empowering projects.
6. By commencing broader dialogue on women’s rights subjected for challenges emerged due to the gender discrimination of women and to ascertain the strengthened legal framework on women with secured rights.
7. To take actions to avoid cultural barriers existing against sexual education
8. Raise awareness of women on non-infectious diseases while introducing controlling methods to be freed from such diseases.
9. To further strengthen the legal mechanism with adequate transparency for minimizing indecent influences such as sexual bribes and several similar acts when women are actively involved in accessing job market.
10. To instigate a joint mechanism between rural women and the state driven or private Banks to start and to continue specific Savings models in order to assist them to advance their economic property.
11. Also essential to procure a feasible series of action at state level to minimize impediments being faced by women when entering into the processes of statutory law in association with women.
12. The village based partnership approach be recommended to advance from village level to the national level. This can be pursued under the theme of *National Committee for Controlling Gender Based Discrimination (NCCGBD)*. Initial step would be to establish Women’s societies at village level. In subsequent stages those societies to be registered under DS’s office for regular monitoring. The below picture illustrates briefly, the way how it moves from village level to the national level.

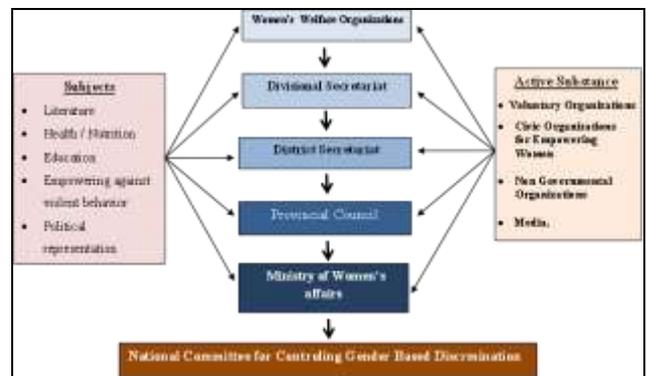


Fig 3

The Partnership process elaborated through above picture is further illustrated through below diagram for further clarity.

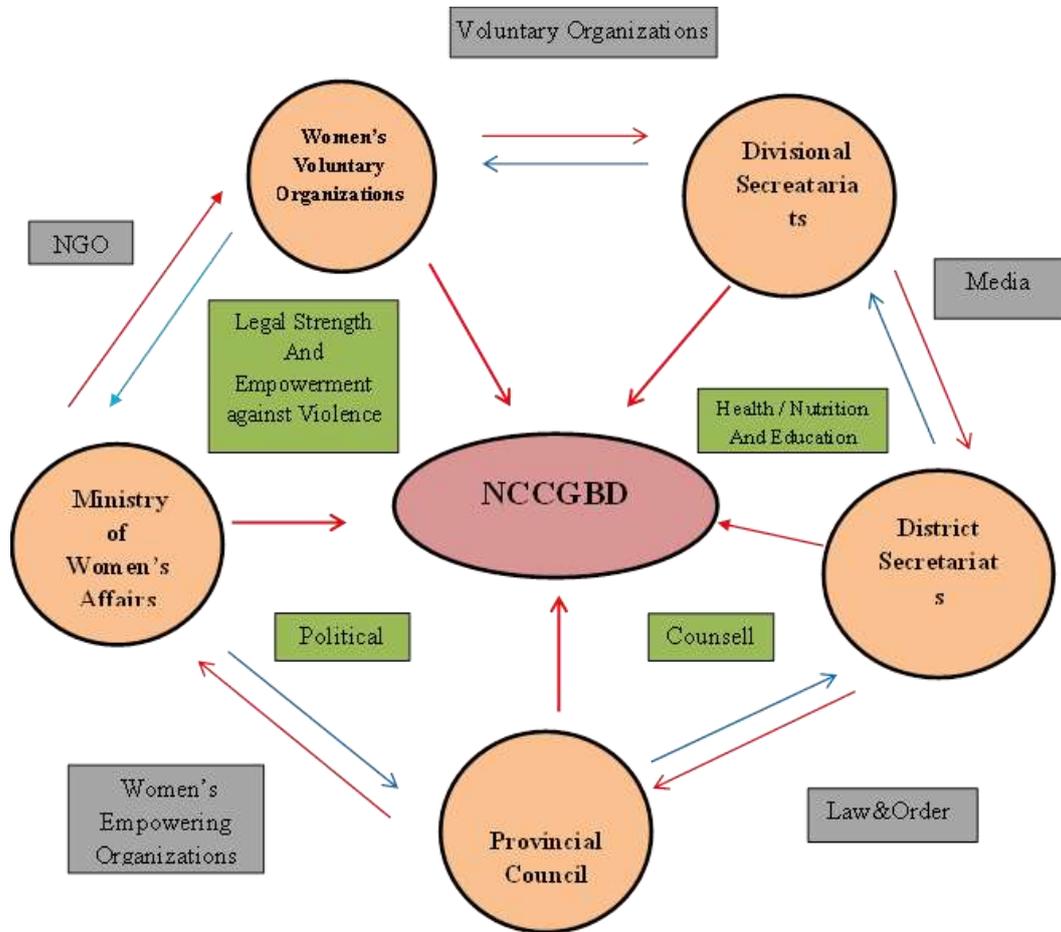


Fig 4

As a substitute the proposed national committee can be named as NCCGBD or else as Integrated Development Project for Gender Based Development (IDPGBD).

The above process can be an exclusive modality to attain overall problem solving mechanism of women yet, this strategic approach be considered as a vibrant move to empower women as a key element of harnessing national development in Sri Lanka. Also be deliberated as a strategy to control discriminative actions against women.

If, unwavering process is launched with broader perspectives of the wellbeing of women through surmounted gender based discriminations it can be imperative for National Development.

9. Acknowledgment

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