

## The Importance of Social Work as a Practising Profession to Enhance Gender Mainstreaming in Sustainable Development in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

This research paper delves into the applicability of gender mainstreaming in the context of Sri Lanka and its crucial role in sustainable development, particularly within the field of social work. Employing content analysis, the study examines secondary data to shed light on this topic. Gender mainstreaming, which seeks to incorporate gender perspectives and foster equality in decision-making and development initiatives, is explored through the lens of the UNESCO's guiding principles, including recognition, diversity, equality, empowerment, participation, partnership, and social justice. The paper highlights the necessity for gender mainstreaming within the Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative and assesses the existing policies in Sri Lanka. Although existing policies acknowledge the significance of gender perspectives, the paper underscores the need for heightened awareness and sensitivity in development programmes to prevent the perpetuation of gender disparities. Despite high literacy rates, various challenges, such as social norms and limited economic participation, may impede the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in sustainable development. The study emphasises the pivotal role of social work in addressing gender-based issues aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and advocating for inclusivity and empowerment. Additionally, the research addresses the challenges encountered by local social workers, such as non-indigenous education, limited agency support, the self-determination of service users, and the influence of cultural and religious factors. Recognising and addressing these challenges necessitates greater acknowledgment and support for the social work profession and ethical decision-making. Ultimately, the paper concludes by underscoring the significance of gender mainstreaming in social work as a means to achieve inclusivity, equality, and empowerment. It calls for the integration of gender perspectives in policies, programmes, and practises to advance social justice and ensure a more equitable society.

**Keywords:** *Social Work, Sustainable development, Gender mainstreaming, Gender inclusivity*