

"... discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,..."

United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The vision of CENWOR is to work towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. Its mission is to promote research, engage in advocacy, lobbying and sensitisation for change, and monitor gender related issues.



The Beginnings and the Journey

Eight women from diverse fields came

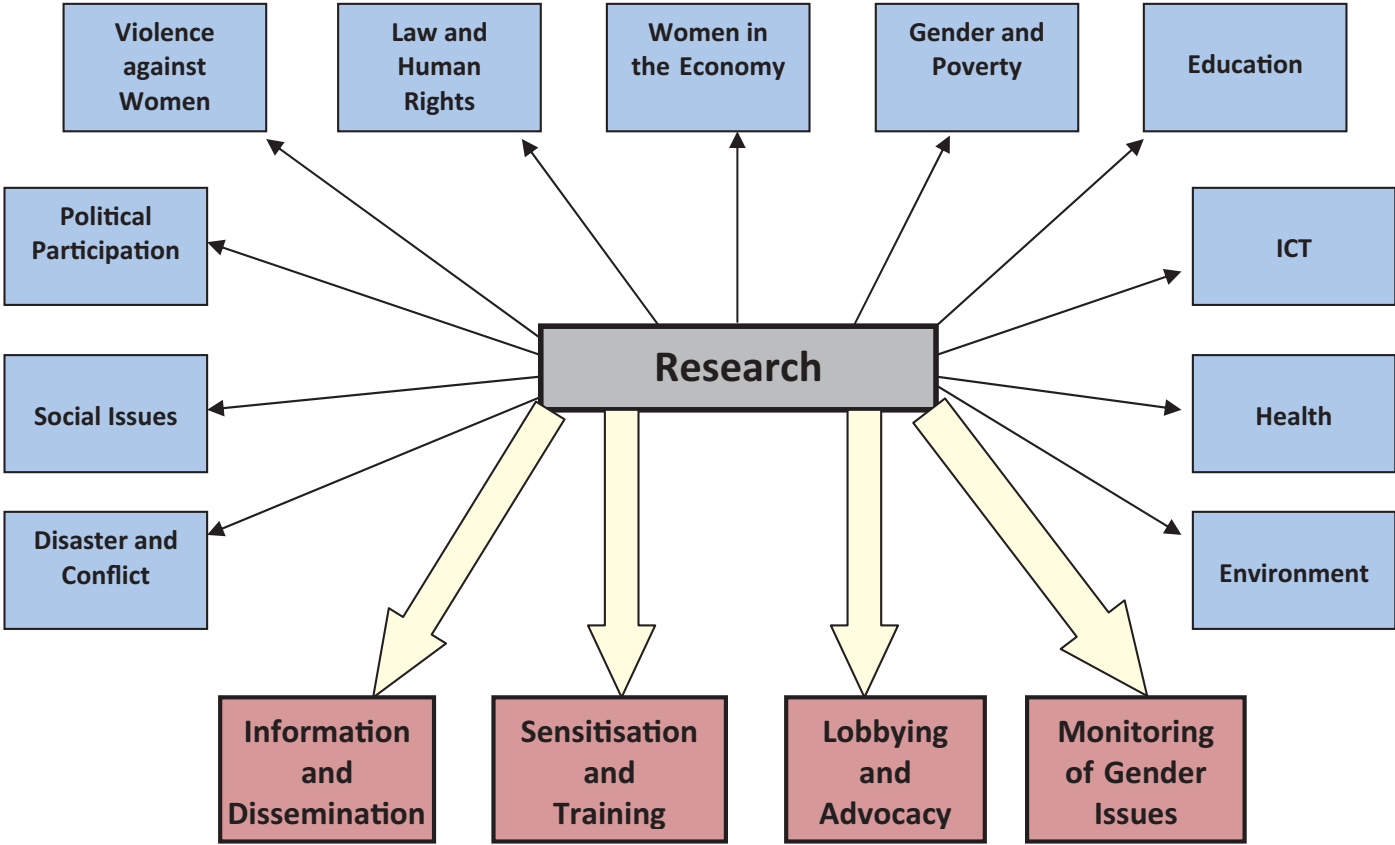
Meeting at one of the members homes, the Group started work in March 1984 and with just Rs. 2,000/- as seed money contributed by the founder members.

together to fill the gap felt by many with regard to women's research in Sri Lanka. They decided to set up a NGO to focus specifically on research on women and gender issues that would lead to positive changes for women in Sri Lanka. The strong research focus of the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) has over the years led to policy changes at the highest level, awareness raising on gender issues as well as information dissemination.

Moving from place to place within Colombo, CENWOR used savings and a generous contribution from NORAD to buy office space at Kirula Road. With a grant from HIVOS and honorary services by architect Ashley de Vos, the existing building was converted into CENWOR headquarters which included a fully-equipped Conference Hall and a Library. CENWOR moved into this new building in 1997.

The Group of Eight comprised academics, researchers and activists involved in research and action-oriented studies and programmes relating to women.

Activities Diagram



CENWOR's Studies have Contributed to

Strengthening International Standards

CEDAW

CEDAW Indicators for South Asia.

CEDAW Manual for South Asia

Inputs into National Reports and Shadow

Reports to UN CEDAW Committee



Millennium Development Goals

Gender Dimensions of MDGs: Baseline

Survey and Policy Recommendations



International Labour Standards

Situational Analysis of Sri Lanka

National Policy Making

Women's Charter – 1993

Engendering Census – 2001, 2011

Information and Communication Technology – National Policy

Decent Work Policy

National Labour Migration Policy

National Plan of Action for Women

Sectoral Reviews from a Gender Perspective

often coinciding with the World Conferences on Women

UN Decade for Women.

1976 – 1985

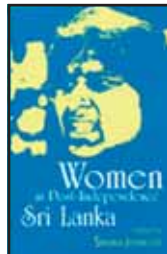


Facets of Change
1986 – 1990



Post-Beijing Reflections

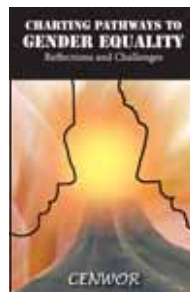
1990 – 1995



Women Since Independence
1948 – 1998



Charting Pathways to Gender Equality
2010



National Convention on Women's Studies

(1989 - 2010)

The National Convention on Women's Studies was initiated to encourage multidisciplinary and indepth research into gender issues and women's rights, to provide a forum for women and men engaged in research in these areas to present their studies in Sinhala, Tamil and English to a wide audience and to obtain feedback on their work.

The Convention which started in 1989 has been an unbroken series of twelve biennial conferences since then and is a much awaited event.

SECTOR STUDIES

Women in the Economy

A joint research project, Women's Work and Family Strategies was conducted in eight countries in 1986, funded by the UN University and coordinated by the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi, India. CENWOR conducted the Sri Lankan component.

Women in the context of industrialisation

CENWOR's study on the issues faced by women workers in the industrial sector was followed by the production of the video titled "Nimble Fingers" in 1987.

Export oriented industrialisation which opened up employment opportunities for women also brought with it issues such as wages, working hours, freedom of association and living conditions.

CENWOR conducted studies on women workers in:
Export Processing Zones
Rural Garment Factories
Industrial Estates

As a result CENWOR was invited to conduct gender audits in factories under the Ethical Trading Initiative programme.

"Gender inequality limits women's full participation in "productive" activities...issues of gender equity are central to growth, development and economic policies ..."



CENWOR also extended its studies to women migrant factory workers in Mauritius and Oman.

Subcontracted Workers - The Invisible Women

Although women in subcontracted industries contributed to the economy their voices were not heard and they did not enjoy the same benefits as women employed in other sectors. CENWOR's study focused on women working in these industries.

The Informal Sector

A large segment of the women workers are in the informal sector.

Studies were conducted in the following areas:

- Home based workers
- Export production villages
- Micro finance

Home Based Workers

CENWOR compiled an inventory of home based women workers leading to the formation of a "home net". The inventory was subsequently handed over to the Siyath Foundation, where it was further developed into a home net policy.

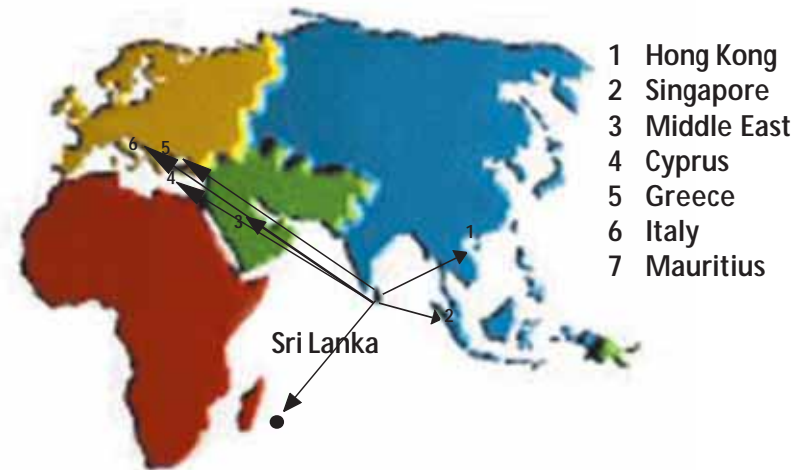


Migration Overseas for Employment

In the late 1970s women began moving overseas for employment primarily as domestic workers. While their contribution to the country's economy was significant and their status within their families changed as a result, various problems that impacted on their lives and that of their families emerged. CENWOR's study of this new form of employment for women focused on diverse areas.

- ☞ Pre-departure
- ☞ Recruitment
- ☞ Returnees
- ☞ Impact on Children and Families
- ☞ Gender Roles and Relations

Studies were conducted in six countries in which Sri Lankan domestic and garment factory workers were employed.



Other Important Research Areas

Plantation Women and their Families



“Beyond the Glass Ceiling”
– Women in Decision Making



Participants at a workshop on women in decision making

Graduate Employment and Unemployment

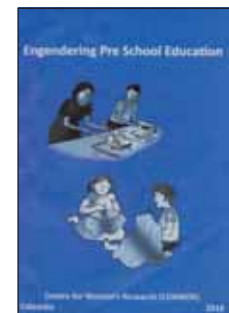
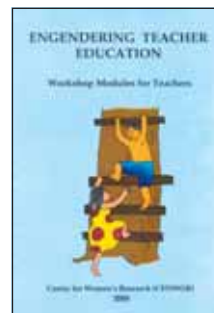
Gender and Poverty

Education- Gender Socialisation

CENWOR’s intervention in education was mainly in curriculum development and focused on changing gender role stereotypes. Women had gender equality in access but CENWOR’s studies found that the curricula in educational Institutions were not being used to change attitudes in society.

In order to promote gender mainstreaming in general education, gender modules in teacher education and general education were developed. These were in

- ☞ Teacher education curricula
- ☞ Secondary education curricula
- ☞ Pre-school curriculum and teacher education



Vocational Education

In the context of the unequal gender division in the labour market a major concern of CENWOR was promoting the development of non-traditional employment oriented skills for women.

Support was provided for

- Training of women in electrical and auto electrical trades by Construction Equipment Training Center (CETRAC)
- Training of women in construction trades in the Kalutara Technical College

- Training of women affected by Tsunami in Tissamaharama in
 - Sewing school uniforms
 - Innovative food processing
 - Electrical wiring



Bakery products



Masonry



Repairing of computer hardware



Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Although ICT was being diffused throughout the country there was a huge disparity in the number of women benefiting from ICT. CENWOR was the first women's NGO to start work on studying why women were not coming forward to use ICT. A study identified the reasons for women's inclusion and exclusion in ICT.

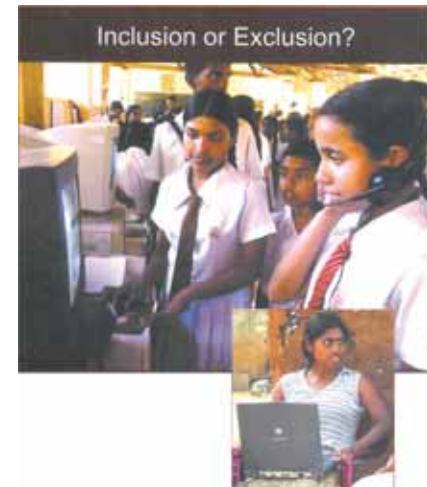
Some of the studies:

- ☞ Gender Dimensions of Information
- ☞ Women's Informatisation
- ☞ Gender and ICT: Inclusion or Exclusion?
- ☞ Public Access to Information and ICTs

These studies were followed by many advocacy programmes on ICT for women.

Electronic Networking and Training

CENWOR was the first to launch the women's electronic information network in 1988 and also set up a web site with space for other women's NGOs. Training was also provided to member organizations of the Sri Lanka Women's NGO Forum and women in CBOs on the use of e-mail and the Internet.



Telecentres

CENWOR set up telecentres in the following areas:

- ☞ Atakalanpanne and Kahawatta in the Ratnapura District
Tissamaharama in the Hambantota District
- ☞ The SOS Children's Village, Piliyandala in the Colombo District
- ☞ Pitiyagama in the Moneragala District

CENWOR also participated in the Virtual Village Project with Sarvodaya and the School of Computing, University of Colombo.

Tissamaharama Telecentre



Electronic Material

CENWOR developed an electronic information resource kit on Violence against Women and Social Harmony



Violence Against Women

Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence — yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned. — UN Secretary-General 8 March 2007.

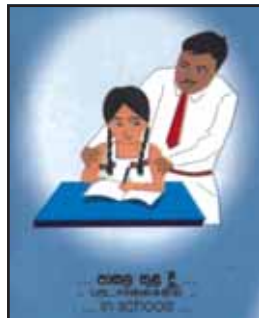
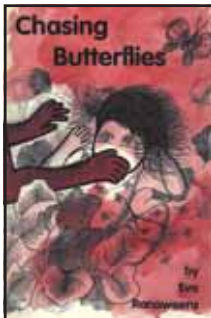
Violence against women remains a central issue and was a major focus of CENWOR's work. Several studies discussed the impact of violence on the life of women and their families.

Studies were on:

- ☞ Rape
- ☞ Sexual Harassment
- ☞ Domestic Violence
- ☞ Incest
- ☞ Trafficking in Children and Adults

Tracer Study on Victims of Trafficking

Evaluation of Women and Children's Police Desks



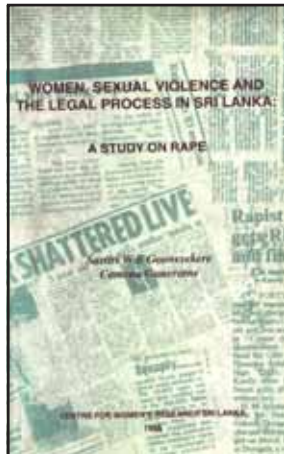
Law

A major focus of CENWOR's activities was legal protection for human rights of women and children. These activities spanned research, advocacy, sensitisation and training.



Among these are:

- Women's Economic and Legal Rights in the Informal Sector
- Use of the Legal System to Combat Violence against Women and Girls
- Property and Inheritance Rights
- Women and Land Rights
- Women's Human Rights: Challenges and the Way Forward



Training Programmes on Legal Literacy



Social Issues

CENWOR also conducted research on other issues that directly impact on the lives of women and their families.

- Ageing
- Vulnerable groups of children– child beggars, street children, child labour, children in institutional homes
- Commercial sex workers
- Adhivasi (Indigenous People)
- Women and Political Participation



Health

- Social Implications of HIV/AIDS
- Reproductive Health Concerns of EPZ Women Workers
- Gender Equality in the Health Services

Environment

- Gender Concerns in Environment Impact Assessment
- Water Professionals

Disaster and Conflict

The country has been severely affected by man made and natural disasters. Women have borne the brunt of the conflict as well as the devastation caused by floods, landslides and the recent tsunami. CENWOR's response has been multi-faceted – humanitarian aid, research, assistance in recovery, and advocacy.

Armed Conflict

Women, children and the aged are always major victims of armed conflict. The 30 year conflict directly impacted on the lives of women and children in all parts of the country. Studies were conducted to assess its impact and identify the needs of women and families living in conflict affected areas as well as the issues faced by them.

- Studies on the impact of armed conflict on women and families in Ampara, Batticaloa, Hambantota, Jaffna, Kebethigollawa, Moneragla, Puttalam, and Vavuniya districts.
- Sexual and gender-based violence in areas affected by armed conflict.

Tsunami

Following the South Asian tsunami that devastated the lives of thousands of people living on the southern and eastern coastal areas of Sri Lanka, several studies were conducted to assess the impact on the lives of the surviving women and their families and their needs.

- Impact of tsunami on women and their families,
- Impact on Land Rights,
- Impact on Water Supply,
- Provision of supplies for schools affected by the tsunami in Galle, Matara, Kamunai and Batticaloa,



- Mapping of Women's Centres
- Psycho – social programmes in schools,
- Child sponsorship programmes
- Livelihood support for tsunami victims in the informal sector



Information Services

CENWOR maintains an information resource centre, provides information outreach, publishes the newsletter, moderates the electronic mailing lists, maintains the web site and participates in information activities especially relating to ICT in the wider community.

It has a specialist collection and statistical and bibliographic data bases on

- Gender, women and development
- Trafficking
- Violence against women
- Labour migration
- Newspaper reports and articles
- Non governmental organizations, resource personnel

Some of the services provided by the resource centre are-

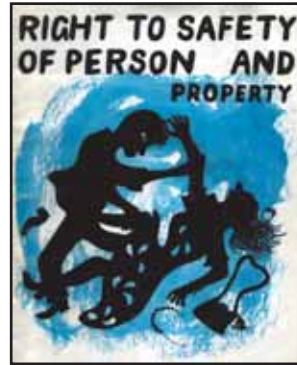
- ☞ Information searches
- ☞ Answering queries
- ☞ Bibliographic services
- ☞ Compiling bibliographies of special interest
- ☞ Compilation of newspaper reports of current news

Publications

- Books – 25
- Study Series – 37
- Working Papers- 16
- Bibliographies – 6
- Workshops and Conference Reports- 80
- Sthree Prabodha, Newsletter in Sinhala, Tamil and English - 19 Volumes

Production of Materials for Gender Sensitisation and Training (Sinhala, Tamil and English)

- ☞ Legal Literacy Booklets
- ☞ Manual for Judiciary on CEDAW
- ☞ Training Manual for Police Training School
- ☞ Resource Book for Teachers and Gender Modules



Modules Produced on

- ☞ Vocational Information
- ☞ Empowerment of Women in the Employment Sectors,
- ☞ Women Development Officers of the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment,
- ☞ Women in Decision Making
- ☞ Political Participation,
- ☞ Environment Awareness, and
- ☞ Functional Literacy Materials.

Videos and CDs

Twenty one videos and CDs were produced on economic issues, gender based violence, health, human rights, environment, non traditional vocational training, media, child adoption, policy making and social issues.



Advocacy and Lobbying

Human Rights –Studies and Lobbying

- ☞ Law Reform - Penal Code, Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, Land and Housing Rights, Amendments to Land Development Ordinance
- ☞ Women's Property and Inheritance Rights
- ☞ Age of Consent for Marriage, Reform of General Marriages Ordinance
- ☞ Women's Rights Bill
- ☞ Water Sector Reform Bill
- ☞ Citizenship Act

Women's Manifesto -1994

Inputs into the Manifesto in 2001, 2005, 2010

Action Programmes

Wherever feasible, CENWOR organised action programmes in study locations. Some of the programmes continue to date and have brought relief to a number of families. Madiwela Women's Group - Revolving Fund and Pre Schools continued from 1987

Action Programmes on Location of Study on Non-Schooling and Child Labour (Kalutara and Moneragala)

- ☞ Re-entry to schools
- ☞ Non formal education
- ☞ Vocational training
- ☞ Preschools
- ☞ Awareness of Children's Rights
- ☞ Revolving fund

- ☞ Functional Literacy Programme for illiterate women - Kalutara
- ☞ Reducing alcoholism and spouses of women migrant workers

Networking

CENWOR has been engaged in policy advocacy as well as in networking among NGOs and women's networks at the national, regional and international level. Among these are:

- ☞ NGO Forum for Women 1995- founder member
- ☞ Ministry of Women's Affairs, National Committee on Women
- ☞ Women's Bureau, relevant line Ministries,
- ☞ School of Computing, University of Colombo.
- ☞ Local NGOs, CBOs
- ☞ UN and bilateral agencies, INGOs

CDWS New Delhi; Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) New Delhi; International Centre on the Rights of Women, (ICRW), Washington; Asia Pacific Women's Information Network (APWINC), One World, Global Knowledge Network

Donors and Partners

CENWOR has been funded by a variety of agencies to carry out its work.

Multi Lateral Agencies

UNESCAP, UNIFEM, United Nations University, ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, WFP, IOM, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank

Bilateral Agencies

NORAD, CIDA, SIDA, HIVOS, Netherlands Development Cooperation, GTZ, Asia Foundation, IDRC Canada, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Universities

University of Manchester, UK, University of Mauritius, Edith Cowan University, Australia, University of Washington, Seattle, USA, University of Leiden, Netherlands, North Illinois University, USA.

International Non Government Agencies

Ford Foundation, Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ICRW, CARE, OXFAM, NCA, Transparency International, Public Services International, Save the Children, Plan International, MATCH International, IWRAW

Board Members

Founder Members

Wimala de Silva
Malsiri Dias
Hema Gunatilake
Kumari Jayawardena
Swarna Jayaweera
Kamala Pieris
Thana Sanmugam
Priyani Soysa

They were joined by

Savitri Goonesekere
Kamalini Wijeyatilaka
Leelangi Wanasundera
Kala Peiris de Costa
Kiran Dhanapala
Gameela Samarasinghe
Camena Guneratne
Chandra Gunawardena
Wijaya Jayatilake
Harini Amarasuriya
Ramanie Jayatiaka
Girty Gamage
Soma K. (Agnes) Mendis

We sadly miss Wimala de Silva and Kamalini Wijeyatilake who have passed away. They have left a void that has never been filled.

Current Staff Members

Vathany Narendran
Siva Sivasubramanium
Chandana Nishantha
Sugandhika Nawana
Wimala Rajapaksha
Savithri Hirimuthugoda
Pramila Sumanadasa
Thanuja Nishadhi
Indika Edirisinghe
Chathuri Kaluarachchi
Ranishka Nadishani
Kamani Perera
Kethakie Nagahawatte
Thakshila Udayangani

Our printers and publishers

Karunaratne and Sons (Pvt) Ltd., Homagama

Our auditors

P. S. Subramaniam Iyer and Co., Chartered Accountants, Colombo

Our caterers

Mrs. P. Chandrasena, Edmonton Road, Kirulapona, Colombo 5.

We thank those who contributed to our 25th anniversary celebration

Hatton National Bank

Commercial Bank

Bank of Ceylon

Sri Lanka Telecom

From small beginnings, CENWOR has come thus far on its journey and looks forward to meeting the emerging challenges in the years to come.