# GENDER DISCRIMINATORY SOCIAL NORMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF WOMEN:
A participatory research carried out in the Northern Province

## Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Transgender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaffna</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilinochchi</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullaitivu</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 532

## Data Collection Methods

- **Questionnaires:** 532
  - Key Interviews with:
    - Religious Leaders
    - Academics
    - Social Activists
  - Focus Group Discussions with:
    - Women-Headed Households
    - Victims of Sexual and Gender Based Violence
    - Women with Disabilities
    - Victims of Child Marriage
    - Women Ex-combatants

## Key Social Norms Prevalent in the Northern Province:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Social Norm</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Text Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Women should not talk in public places</td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Confine women's role to the domestic sphere" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wives should sustain their family lives at any cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Only men should engage in labor-intensive work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Childcare is mainly the duty of women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cooking and household chores are mainly women's work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Women should not go to police stations</td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Emphasize the concept of a 'good woman' and 'chastity'" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Women should not complain about their husbands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Family members should not allow women to complain against sexual violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female victims of sexual violence are unchaste</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Women should not complain against sexual violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Strength is measured using the SNAP Framework*
What Ties Women to the Domestic Sphere?

1. Women should not talk in public places

   a. Agreed

   - Female: 30.6%
   - Male: 38.6%

   

2. Wives should sustain their family lives at any cost

   a. Agreed

   - Female: 42.1%
   - Male: 37.3%

  Social response if the woman violates the norm

   - Social Recognition: 18%
   - Social Negligence: 71.8%

Reference Groups

- Mother: 17.8%
- Father: 14%
- Female family member: 13%
- Male family member: 12.4%
- Religious leaders: 5%
- Neighbors: 12.3%
- The whole society: 25.2%
3 Only men should engage in labor-intensive work

a Agreed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b Social response if the woman violates the norm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Female family member</th>
<th>Male family member</th>
<th>Religious leaders</th>
<th>Neighbors</th>
<th>The whole society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Childcare is mainly the duty of women

a. Agreed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>21-30 years</th>
<th>31-40 years</th>
<th>41-50 years</th>
<th>51-60 years</th>
<th>Above 60 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Social response if the woman violates the norm

- Social Recognition: 45.2%
- Social Negligence: 39%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female family member</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male family member</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole society</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Reference Groups

5 Cooking and household chores are mainly women’s work

a. Agreed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>21-30 years</th>
<th>31-40 years</th>
<th>41-50 years</th>
<th>51-60 years</th>
<th>Above 60 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Social response if the woman violates the norm

- Social Recognition: 13.6%
- Social Negligence: 76.2%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female family member</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male family member</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole society</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Reference Groups
### Concept of The ‘Good Woman’ And ‘Chastity’

#### 1 Women should not go to police stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Hindus**: 13.3%
- **Christians**: 14.7%
- **Catholics**: 13.4%
- **Islam**: 31.5%
- **Buddhist**: 14.2%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>21-30 years</th>
<th>31-40 years</th>
<th>41-50 years</th>
<th>51-60 years</th>
<th>Above 60 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2 Social response if the woman violates the norm

- **Social Recognition**
  - Mother: 11.7%
  - Father: 10.6%
  - Female family member: 10.8%
  - Male family member: 11.5%
  - Religious leaders: 3.9%
  - Neighbors: 15.7%
  - The whole society: 35.2%

- **Social Negligence**

#### 3 Reference Groups

- **Female**: 13.7%
- **Male**: 12%

- **Hindus**: 14.2%
- **Christians**: 13.4%
- **Catholics**: 18%
- **Islam**: 17.9%
- **Buddhist**: 5.7%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>21-30 years</th>
<th>31-40 years</th>
<th>41-50 years</th>
<th>51-60 years</th>
<th>Above 60 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Family members should not allow women to complain against sexual violence

A. Agreed

Female 13.2%
Male 13.6%

B. Social response if the woman violates the norm

Social Recognition 14.6%
Social Negligence 75.6%

C. Reference Groups

- Mother 13.7%
- Father 11.7%
- Female family member 13.5%
- Male family member 13.7%
- Religious leaders 3.5%
- Neighbors 14.6%
- The whole society 29%

- Hindus 12.6%
- Christians 19.4%
- Catholics 15.6%
- Islam 15.7%
- Buddhist 9.8%

- 21-30 years 12.6%
- 31-40 years 16.1%
- 41-50 years 12.2%
- 51-60 years 12.9%
- Above 60 years 14.2%
4 Female victims of sexual violence are unchaste

**A. Agreed**

- **Female** 19.8%
- **Male** 20.5%

**B. Social response if the woman violates the norm**

- **Social Recognition**
  - Hindus 18.1%
  - Christians 25.3%
  - Catholics 22%
  - Islam 30.6%
  - Buddhist 16.6%

- **Social Negligence**
  - 21-30 years 20.7%
  - 31-40 years 20.6%
  - 41-50 years 20.3%
  - 51-60 years 17.7%
  - Above 60 Years 22.2%

**C. Reference Groups**

- Mother 4.2%
- Father 5%
- Female family member 7.2%
- Male family member 6.9%
- Religious leaders 3.2%
- Neighbors 20.3%
- The whole society 52.9%

5 Women should not complain against sexual violence

**A. Agreed**

- **Female** 10.2%
- **Male** 13%

**B. Social response if the woman violates the norm**

- **Social Recognition**
  - Hindus 10.2%
  - Christians 16.1%
  - Catholics 9.6%
  - Islam 10.5%
  - Buddhist 12.6%

- **Social Negligence**
  - 21-30 years 10%
  - 31-40 years 16.3%
  - 41-50 years 5.3%
  - 51-60 years 11.6%
  - Above 60 Years 16.6%

**C. Reference Groups**

- Mother 11.3%
- Father 10%
- Female family member 15.4%
- Male family member 15.2%
- Religious leaders 2%
- Neighbors 14.4%
- The whole society 31.4%
### Social Practices That Violate The Religious Freedom Of Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>Religious Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women/ Girls should not go to temple while they are menstruating</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women/ Girls should not play auspicious musical instruments</td>
<td>Christians/Catholics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women/ Girls should not be priests in the temples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuns should not conduct Mass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Sisters Cannot Baptize</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women/girls should not pray when they are menstruating</td>
<td>Islamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should not go to temples when they are menstruating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who go to temples should not touch the feet of the priest while prostrating</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In some Buddhist temples (the upper floor of the Sri Mahabodhi and the place where the sacred tooth relic is kept) women are not permitted to enter.</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should cover their entire body when they go to the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### General Root Causes

- **Male dominance/patriarchal system**
- **Cultural norms**
- **Religious principles/traditions**
- **Security concerns**
- **Cultural value attached to the concept of chastity**
- **Concept of family honor**
- **Increased use of drugs**
- **Increased violence against women and girls**
- **Effects of war**
### General Consequences and Rights violated

| Freedom of speech is denied | Access to justice is prevented | Freedom from torture is denied |
| Freedom of religion, conscience and thought is denied | Freedom of movement is denied | Economic independence of women is denied |
| Violence against women | Women’s talents and knowledge are snubbed | Women’s health is jeopardized |

### How can we TRANSFORM social norms?

#### The legislature can:
- Amend gender discriminatory laws including the Penal Code and the Thesawalamai Law
- Enact new gender-responsive laws, particularly in terms of procedures on sexual violence cases

#### The judiciary can:
- Allow private trials for SGBV cases
- Establish separate and special courts to hear SGBV cases
- Avoid adding the names and other details of the survivors of SGBV in judgment reports

#### The state actors can:
- Review all school text books and remove gender discriminatory texts
- Provide special training to school principals, teachers and other staff on gender discriminatory social norms and their impact
- The importance of economic independence for women and job opportunities for women must be incorporated into the school syllabus
- Plan and implement programs at schools to develop leadership skills among girl children
- Make Practical Technical Skills subject a mandatory subject in all grades after grade Six.
- Train school students to fight against physical violence
- Sensitize all government officers on gender discrimination and gender equality
- Consider gender related aspects when enacting the national action plan
The civil society actors can:

- Conduct awareness programs on gender equality.
- Take initiatives to start wide discussions, discourses and advocacy on gender equality.
- Develop street dramas and short films on gender equality.
- Use social media platforms to record and share the experiences in relation to gender discrimination.
- Facilitate self-employment for women to ensure their economic independence.
- Take an initiative to ensure equal pay for women who do agriculture/cultivation works.

We can:

- Treat our children equally, irrespective of their sex.
- Think before following a norm - many of us follow the social rules without knowing its rationale or consequences.
- Know your rights and speak up for your rights irrespective of your sex.
- Respect all individuals, irrespective of their sex.
- Teach gender equality to children at homes.

Social norms taught at family level are stronger and harder to change.

Therefore, the change needs to be begun at the family level.