



Human Security of Women and Girls in the context of Poverty and Inequality: LBTQ Women and Girls Pride Tribe Sri Lanka

The Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LBTQ) women in Sri Lanka face discrimination, stigma and violations of human rights due to their minority status, intersectionality and due to criminalization of same-sex relations in Sri Lanka. Same-sex relations is criminalized in Sri Lanka under Section 365 and 365A of the Sri Lankan Penal Code, while Section 399 ('cheating by personation) of the Penal Code is often used against transgender individuals and Section 353 (abduction) is sometimes used by the police to charge women who identify as lesbian or bisexual. Women and girls in Sri Lanka face disparities in a multitude of aspects due to cultural practices, patriarchal tradition, structural barriers and inequalities and being an LBTQ women or a girl in Sri Lanka leads to increased inequalities and discrimination that could even lead up to violence putting their human security at risk.

Sri Lanka is currently going through an economic, energy, fuel and health crisis and there is a looming food crisis at the brink. During disasters inequalities are reinforced and the human security of women and girls, especially LBTQ women and girls are severely affected. They are more vulnerable to a range of human rights violations, including intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and extortion. Due to criminalization and due to the heteronormative lens through which most of these issues are looked at, LBTQ women and girls have no means to seek justice and they are left out of gender equality and women's empowerment programs further being ostracized from society.

The economic security of these LBTQ women are impacted due to work place discrimination, work place harassment and violence. Both physical and mental health security is immensely affected and due to the current crisis situation in the nation these issues have exacerbated. Transgender women are suffering due to the unavailability of hormone replacement therapy and due to the price hike in medication. The disparities faced when accessing healthcare have multiplied for LBTQ women while sexual and reproductive health rights are violated and gender based violence have peaked. LBTQ women living in poverty and living with disabilities are more vulnerable to discrimination. Intersectionality of LBTQ women such as being from minority ethnic groups also increases their vulnerability to discrimination. Conversion therapy is another form of trauma and violence that LBTQ women and especially LBTQ girls face in Sri Lanka. It has been discredited as a pseudoscientific practice by the World Health Organization and yet purported psychologists promote this practice and private hospitals offer their services in conversion therapy.

It is time that these discriminatory, archaic laws that infringe upon human rights are repealed as the first step to build an inclusive, just society that treats all individuals with dignity and respect in Sri Lanka. Work place diversity and inclusion programs and non-discriminatory, inclusive health care services are imperative and age appropriate, inclusive sexual and reproductive health rights programs have to be introduced to the education system. The national policy framework needs to be updated to include all individuals, so that diversity and equality to all is the corner stone of all policies. Furthermore an independent commission has to be established to investigate into reported human rights violations and steps should be taken to protect the human rights of all individuals.