

Inclusion Gender and Development Approaches towards Development Policy Making in Post- Independence Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The principle objective of this paper is to examine how gender and development approach inclusion to the country's development projects and examine its awareness of development policymakers in Sri Lanka. Among a wide range of qualitative research approaches, the study mainly based on the interpretive approach. By and large, the interpretive approach covers various knowledge about existing phenomena via understanding. Hence, the researcher intends to collect the data using human investigations and value on human interpretation of the study area. In the 1970s gender and development approach experimented with many parts of the world and a number of countries inclusion recommended gender-sensitive methods to their development projects. However, in the post-independence era, gender and development approach considerably invisible in the Sri Lankan development agenda. It is clear that this blunder largely affected women in the country. After seven decades of independence, Sri Lankan women's achievements are far behind the males. In addition to that, Sri Lanka's main foreign income earning sources are led by women facing many hardships. Nevertheless, the government put less consideration to enhance their other incentives and welfare. However, the government sector recently introduced a number of macros and micro-level development projects, but unfortunately, the concept of gender was not successfully absorbed.

Keywords: Gender, Development, Policy Making, Women

Introduction

The principle objective of this paper is to examine how gender and development approach inclusion to the country's development projects and examine its awareness of development policymakers in Sri Lanka. The economy of Sri Lanka at independence in 1948 was much

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more prosperous compared to most of its Asian neighbors (Abeyrathne, 2004). In fact, all regimes in the post-independence era in Sri Lanka implemented a number of development projects to reach some standards of sustainable development. By and large, those development projects were mainly addressed poverty alleviation, agriculture, irrigation, plantation, infrastructure development, etc., but not directly addressed gender-based development. It is important to note that all these projects directly or indirectly benefited both men and women however Sri Lankan women population still far behind when compared with their male counterparts

Theories towards Gender Development.

A number of specific development approaches made an initial attempt to integrate women into the development process as well as enhance their living standards and wipe out their hardships. Since the 1970s UNO, NGO and other development intuitions are taking part to achieve gender equity, especially in socio-economic and political spheres.

The women in development (WID) concept was introduced in early 1970 by a Washington-based network of female development professionals and its theoretical framework provided by the liberal Feminists (Razavi & Miller 1995). There are five different approaches, namely the welfare approach, equity approach, anti-poverty approach, efficiency approach, and empowerment approach. In addition to that, Ester Boserup (1970) scholarly work on "Women's Role in the Economic Development" pioneering effort to provide an overview of women's role in the development process (Beneria & Sen 1981). Boserup's study made attempt to feature gender imbalances in developing countries and she stated that "women's unemployment is still the main feature of their life" (Boserup 1971). Mainly, the WID approach gave importance to women's productive roles and integration into the economy as a means of improving their status (Razavi and Miller, 1995). It is important to note that the WID is associated with a wide range of activities concerning women in the development domain (Reeves and Baden, 2000). That approach was influenced by the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year at Mexico City and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985). Above remarkable decisions subsequently assisted to institutionalize WID both within the United Nations system and at a national level. In other words, many countries took vast efforts to absorb women's active contribution to the national economy. Although the WID identified as a successful methodology towards women's empowerment, the development practitioners identified that some shortcomings of the WID. There is a number of limitations, for instance, it did not call for changes in the

overall social structure or economic system in which women were to be included and concentrated narrowly on the inequalities between men and women, and ignored the social, cultural, legal and economic factors that give rise to those inequalities in society (Muyoyeta, no date p.06.).

As a result of the limitations of the WID approach, the latter part of the 1970 Women and Development (WAD) approach arose. Its theoretical framework is provided by the Marxist feminist theory and dependency theory. By and large, WAD's main argument was that women had always been part of the development processes (Muyoyeta, n.d). The WAD perspective focuses on the relationship between women and the development process rather than purely on the struggle for the integration of women into the development (Rathgeber, 1989). However, theoretically, WAD recognizes the impact of class but its practical project design and implementation lean towards WID. In fact, it did not address the analytical note of class, race, or ethnicity, all of which may exercise a powerful influence on women's actual social status (Rathgeber, 1989). However, WAD emphasized a more critical view of women's position than WID but, it fails to undertake a full-scale analysis of the relationships between patriarchy differing modes of production and women's subordination and oppression (Rathgeber, 1989).

In fact, the GAD (Gender and Development) originated the lack of progress of the WID and WAD approaches. The concept of Gender and Development was further enriched by three major feminist movements such as the first wave, second wave, and third-wave feminist movements. One of the famous feminist scholar Rosemary Tong, she had a different critical overview of above three women's movements, but in her influential book *Feminist Thought* she pointed out that "they aim to answer the 'Women question, who is she and what does she want?'" (Tong, 2009). Indeed, the GAD focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and emphasizes the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations (Reeves and Baden, 2000). The GAD is considered a more holistic approach by looking at the social construction of gender and its impact on the roles and responsibilities expected from men and women (Kumari, 2013). It is important to note that, the GAD approach stressed that women as agents of change rather than passive recipients of development (Rathgeber, 1989, p. 13). Moreover, the GAD tried to avoid the shortcomings of WID and WAD, not only that, the GAD focuses on the social or gender relations (a division of labor, etc.) between men and women in society and seeks to address issues of access and control over resources and power (Duffy, p.163).

Generally WID, WAD, and GAD taking an effort to avoid gender disparities. Although above all these development concepts came up 1970

and 1980s, decades however clear evidence of gender disparities can be seen in differences in mortality and morbidity, education, employment, politics, resource distribution, and decision making bodies. Hence, some scholars, for instance, Arturo Escobar (1995) and James Ferguson (1991) argued that development discourse is enriched by Northern, modernist assumptions about development. Not only that, they further stressed that undervalued knowledge and experiences of the poor, often leading to tragically inappropriate policies and practices (Parpart, 2000). In addition to that, the dependency scholars blamed the South's underdevelopment on the North (ibid). A similar notion was made by Tucker (1997) as he noted that, "development is the process whereby other people are dominated, and their destinies are shaped according to an essentially western way of conceiving and perceiving the world" (Tucker, 1997). Thus, some expertise on development studies the concept of development seen as a western origin concept as well as a myth. The above argument further discusses the global gender disparities found worldwide. It is clear, according to social indicators, only five countries out of 193 countries have achieved gender equality, including Iceland, Finland, Rwanda, Sweden, and Norway. (The Global Gender Gap Index, 2016, p.10)

Development Policies towards Achieving Gender Equity in Sri Lanka

Julius Nyerere's definition of development can be introduced as one of the Normative Approach to development studies. According to his words; "Development as a process which enables human beings to realize their potential builds self-confidence, and lead lives of dignity and fulfilment. It is a process which frees people from the fear of wants and exploitation". (Rist, 1997). The United Nation identified development as a universal phenomenon, and the UNO charter chapter 01 article 03 explained that "to achieve international co-operation in solving international problem of an economics, social-cultural or humanitarian character and it promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, language, or religion" (UN Charter, 2002). The above two definitions commonly emphasized that development and its benefits equally should distribute among all human beings in the world.

After the Second World War, the concept of development was in its infancy. However, in the early years after the Second World War, the concept of development became first and foremost on the world agenda, and President Truman in 1949 initiated to make a Marshall Plan for the New International Order of Development (Rist, 1997). Moreover, the UN launched 1960 -1970 as the development decade. It is important to note that by today 48 years after the first development decade was initiated; the world still has enormous human and economic challenges to be addressed.

Post World War II era, a number of new actors came into the international political system, and one of the salient features were the long periods they were under colonial rule. After independence, these nations had immediate intentions to build up their own development policies to achieve rapid development of the country. Nevertheless, the post-colonial states incapable of making specific development policies to realize targeted optimistic view of development.

Sri Lanka received dominion type independence from the British colonials in 1948 without a strong national movement like India. By and large, in the post-independence era, it is clear that two major challenges presence of the local leaders. The first and foremost challenge was state-building. Under that, local leaders were concerned about the constitutional system and nation-building of the state. The second challenge was rapid development. The British Westminster System adapted to the new dominion state without deep analysis of cultural and ethnic pluralism of the Sri Lankan society. In fact, nation-building and development still are remaining as a big dilemma in the political mainstream in Sri Lanka. Above prominent two factors of the state building in Sri Lanka inspired by a number of external influences based on their long-term strategy as well as political interests.

It is very clear that in the first 20 years, all governments which came to power after independence the concept of development became a considerable place in their political agenda. Therefore, they all attempted to achieve it through a specific development project for instance 1951-1957 six-year development plan 1953-1959 World Bank plan, 1954-1960 six-year plan, and 1959-1968 ten-year plan. In all these projects, a large proportion was reserved for agriculture subsequently paid attention to industry and services (Ibid). At that period WID, WAD and GAD approaches did not originate; therefore gender sensitivity approaches were not inclusive in the development in many countries, and Sri Lanka also went down the same path with the other newly independent countries. President J.R. Jayawardana assumed his duties and passed a new constitution on 31st August 1978 enforcing the executive presidency system and liberal economic policies. He largely trusted on privatizing and opening the economy to international competition to achieve rapid development. Jayawardana's regime had an optimistic overview of the growth-oriented development approach and based on that; the government launched three major projects to achieve expected development outcomes. The prominent project was the accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme and the project mainly targeted agricultural production and enhance hydroelectricity. The other lead projects were an urban renewal program, development of economic

infrastructure, and establishment of a Free Trade Zone. The Mahaweli Development Programme is known as the largest multipurpose national development program, and its main objectives were alienation of land among landless people, resettlement process, agriculture expansion and increase of income generation, generation of employment opportunities, and generation of hydro-electricity. Although the above objectives covered an optimistic overview of the country's development, gender goals, and sensitivity weren't a part of their set objectives and goals. It is important to note that the Mahaweli Project is also the largest ever undertaken human settlement program involving 166,269 farmer families. (Weerasinghe, Lareef ,n.d) On the other hand, most of the reselected families were poor landless peasants, and they left their native places with the dream of becoming permanent landowners in the future. Each settler family was entitled to 1 ha irrigated lowland for paddy rice cultivation and 0.2 ha rainfed highland for a homestead (Perera and Sennema, 2002). The government provided land ownership only to male peasants and subsequent ownership inherited by the eldest son. Thus, the women were not recognized as strong contenders in the project. Not only that, financial assistance was provided for the project by Great Britain, Canada, Sweden, and Germany, respectively. Downstream development activities were funded by the World Bank, European Economic Community, Japan, and Kuwait (Annual Report 2014).

At that time most of the above countries and intuitions were highly keen and looking at gender sensitiveness in development. Nevertheless, before funding the project, they did not investigate gender sensitiveness as a main requirement of the project.

1970 was a remarkable decade and in the western world and international and no-governmental organizations largely considered gender-sensitive approaches inclusion to development. Meanwhile, the United Nations Decade for Women took place 1975–1985 and began with the International Women's Year (1975). In addition to that, the western part of the world started huge gender-sensitive discourse with GAD, WAD, and GAD. Notwithstanding, Sri Lankan policymakers missed gender sensitivity; hence automatically women became passive agents in the Mahaweli Development project.

Therefore in 1978 UNP (United National Party) regime experimented with the Free Trade Zones concept for accomplishing a number of government exceptions on the Sri Lanka economy. The newly elected government had several intentions on the FTZs, and all were shown the path towards economic liberalization. On the other hand, the government wished to stimulate economic growth, provide employment, and eliminate the black market through FTZs. In addition to that, the

government largely trusted on newly industrialized economies (NIEs) of Singapore, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan which had successfully promoted export led growth and open economic policies. Moreover, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the momentary international fund emphasized that economic liberation is one of the essential prerequisites to obtain loans under the Structural Adjustments Programmes. Eventually, the government believed that the development of export-oriented industries would contribute significantly to an improvement in the quality of products and the diversification of exports (Alwis, 1994).

Thus, as a part of its wider policy of export diversification and expansion, the first FTZ was established in Katunayake in August 1978, under the authority of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC). Afterwards, further zones became operational: one at Biyagama in 1986 and the other at Koggala in 1991 (Jayanthakumaran and Weiss, 1997).

The surface of the FTZ project shows it is going towards a gender-balanced policy and a quick remedy for the increased unemployment issue in the country. At the operational level, it vastly exploited local labor, and the government also created a foreign investor-friendly working environment rather than the workers friendly one. In this process, the government wanted to promote Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), and its institutional structure for promoting FDI was formed by creating by the Greater Colombo Economic Commission and the Foreign Investment Advisory Committee (Wijesinha et al., 2013). Thus, both institutions, based on their enthusiastic interest in FDI, offered a number of foreign investors friendly incentives. For instance, 99-year lease basis on the tax payment, provided adequate modern infrastructure facilities, five year tax holiday and all imports of equipment, construction materials and other materials and other imports free of import duty, etc. (Economic Review, 1978).

The total employment in the sector as of 31st December 2013 was 284,258 approximately. The major export income earner of the country is apparel. The apparel export income for the year 2013 was US\$ 4.5 bn. which is 43.4% of the total national exports and 38% of the Industrial exports (Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, 2013). One of the salient features FTZs is the predominance of women in their workforce approximately 88% of factory workers and 10% of executive or non-executive staff (Jayaweera, et al 1994). That tendency demonstrated in the early stages of the FTZs established, but today women's representation among Free Trade Zone workers has continued to drop over the years. Nevertheless, women workers are still the majority and stand at 58.5 percent of the workforce in 2013 (The Sri Lankan Women, 2014).

The next noticeable attribute is 86% of those who are working in FTZs between the ages of 16 and 26 (ibid). Most women workers are unskilled and received very low wages (Peebles, 2006*The History of Sri Lanka*). Amongst the number of reasons influenced to offering low wages; the foremost factor is their educational level. In many cases, factory workers are from rural areas, and having acquired the job their work satisfaction levels gradually declined. As Kelegama stated that, ‘there are a number of factors which influence this situation, they are, poor interpersonal relationships in the workplace, shift work, an autocratic management style, lack of variety, low use of skills, poor pay and low value given in the society mainly for the female garment labor (Kelegama,2004). Besides, their daily recommended workload is highly stressful, and factory administration always uses to distribute incomplete targets per hour. Therefore, when the work becomes too difficult as they grow older and struggle to meet their production targets the women workers leave the jobs and return to their villages (CEDAW report under article 11, 2017).In addition to that, FTZs established apart from the government common labor law, and in some cases, they struggle against poor working conditions. Indeed, FTZs are keeping the country labor laws away from foreign investor’s attraction for their investments. In fact, Sri Lanka is continually competing with other FDI destinations in the South and South-East Asian region,especially Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Myanmar (Wijesinha et al., 2013). If Sri Lanka needs to defeat other markets, Sri Lanka should offer more than the investor’s expectations. Like many other developing countries, Sri Lanka has offered low wages and poor working conditions for workers, if not foreign investors will move out of the country. Under that, most of them are not organized into trade unions, and the factory administration environment has been established reluctantly to collectively unionization. As Sri Lanka CEDAW Report Under Article 11 On Employment Submitted to OHCHR stressed that “the demands for a living wage better living and working conditions and the fundamental human right for freedom of association still have not been achieved ” (CEDAW report under article 11 2017).

It is important to note that the FTZs were mainly established to absorb rural and urban women’s labor. However, in the given context FTZs women’s labor vastly exploited in many ways especially offering low wages, hard-working conditions, poor incentives, long working hours, compulsory overtime, and lack of facilities in the factories. From the Investors' side, they are usually seeking paths to upgrade their profit. On the other hand, labor cost and other facilities in their mother country is very high cost, and hence they attracted South Asia and South-East Asian countries. Meanwhile, from the government side, their main intention is making investors friendly environment to receive their capital to the country and in the end, assist in meeting investors’ endeavors.

Sri Lanka experience is the most women workers in FTZs are from rural areas, and their education is not up to the expected level. They find it impossible to find quality jobs from the labor market, and FTZs are seemingly the only solution to avoid their joblessness. Thus, after 1977 Sri Lankan women with the above conditions vastly constellated around FTZs. In fact, from the government side, their main effort was rapid development to the country via getting foreign direct investments. Although the FTZs largely addressed unskilled women labor, it also exploited women labor immensely.

In Sri Lanka, since the late 1970s, labor migration has considerably increased and both male and female migrants contributed key foreign exchange earnings. In 1996, 92.5 percent of the female departures for foreign employment consisted of housemaids. The percentage has declined steadily to 80 by 2015. In contrast, during the year 2016, the total departures of female workers were 34 percent, and out of that 28 percent of recorded as housemaids. The increase in other categories of employment by females is extremely slow (Different Perspectives of Departure Details, 2015). There are a number of reasons that demoralize women workers enough to want to migrate—the major cause of insecurity and poor coordination of the job. The government is presently not establishing a proper mechanism to investigate its security in the host country. On the other hand, reported a number of female housemaid murder cases, disabilities, and cruel punishments inflicted by the employers. However, the FTZs workers and migrant female housemaids' are the key foreign exchange earners for the country.

It is very clear that still, a number of gender disparities are remaining in Sri Lankan society. According to the below, table 82.6 percent of Sri Lankan women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 83.1 percent of Sri Lankan males. Nevertheless, the only 5.8 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, and Sri Lanka shows the least percentage among the other south Asian countries. Not only that, women labor market participation is 35.1 percent and it shows unequal distribution compared to 74.1 percent of their male counterparts.

Table 01: Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update

	Female seats in the Parliament	population with at least some secondary Education (%)		Labour force participation rate(%)	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
Sri Lanka	5.8	82.6	83.1	35.1	74.1
India	11.6	39.0	63.5	27.2	78.8

Pakistan	20.0.	27.0	47.3	24.9	82.7
South Asia	17.5	39.8	60.8	27.9	79.1
High HDI	22.3	69.5	75.7	55.0	75.5

Source: (UNDP)

In labor economics studies, the theory of job search developed a number of approaches based on labor market reactions of both employed and unemployed. The Department of Census and Statistics in 2018 revealed that the unemployment rate for women is estimated at 7.4% percent, and 3.1% percent for men in 2018. In addition to that, the unemployment rate of women is high among those who passed GCE A/L (12, 7%).

According to labor economic studies places a considerable emphasis on the job search behavior of the people. Both theoretical and empirical literature emphasizes the significant positive effect of education on job search behavior (Mowla, 2011). Not only that, Smirnova, 2003; Hinnosaar, 2004; Bergin, 2009; Boheim and Taylor, 2002 defined that “people with higher education levels and they tend to be more active in their job search than those with lower education levels” (Mowla, 2011). Moreover, Smith, 2003; Koning, van den Berg and Ridder, 1997; Chapple, 2006; Sackey and Osei, 2006; Marquez and Ruiz-Tagle, 2004; Boheim and Taylor, 2002; Tasci, 2008; Ponzio and Scoppa, 2008 their studies illustrated that employers also tend to recruit through informal referrals for unskilled jobs which are more likely to be filled by the lower educated (job 16). Besides, Theodossiou and Zangelidies (2009) emphasized that job mobility and job searching behavior differ based on gender (Alp. et al., 2013). In fact, men and women demonstrate differences in personality characteristics in search behavior. Orazem, Werbel, and Mcelroy, 2003 discussed that education has a more significant positive effect on women’s search intensity than men’s, women tend to be less educated and less confident in their abilities having unusually high perceptions of discrimination relative to actual measures of market discrimination (Mowla, 2011).

In the Sri Lankan context, especially both rural and urban unemployed women are very immediately attracted by FTZs jobs and Middle-East housemaid jobs. The main reason for that above job opportunity available at any time and no required a higher level of education and skills. Moreover, their job bargaining power is at a minimum because of their low education level and skills. Hence, they are not taking much time to seek jobs like those who are skilled. It is clear that a huge gap exists in the female labor force participation rate at 30% in comparison to male labor force participation at 75.8% in 2012. Only 8.8% of the firms in the country have females in their top management.

In fact, even recently unskilled and uneducated women workers are mostly employed in FTZs, housemaids, and in the estate sector. On the other hand, a large amount of foreign exchange coming into the country through the above sectors. Nevertheless, the government is still incapable of making a national policy or action plan to produce skilled women workers. It is important to note that, day by day, the government moves away from the concept of gender sensitivity in national projects.

As a developing country Sri Lanka, in the late 80s and 90s established two mega poverty alleviation projects, namely Janasaviya and Samurdhi. The major objective of Janasaviya was to alleviate poverty amongst the poorest segment of the population (Fernando, 1993). At the core of the Janasaviya Programme was a payment of 2,500 rupees per month, per family for a total period of 24 months (Marasinghe, 1993) The Samurdhi programme also had the same intention as the Janasaviya— its mission was to build a prosperous Sri Lanka with minimized poverty. Those two mega poverty alleviation programs were initiated for family units and each recipient family registered under the male head of the household. Where there was no husband and family, food stamps, and compulsory savings, granted in the name of the head of the household, according to its main objectives, both men and women benefited from the projects but that two poverty alleviation projects far away from gender development.

Three decades-long ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka came to an end with the military defeat of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) in 2009. Thereafter, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) focused on post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) and development in the North and East. In fact, the outbreak of the conflict mostly affected the northern and eastern provinces rather than the other parts of the country. The GoSL initiated the reconstruction process in the eastern province just after the end of Eelam War IV, Mavil Aru incident in 2006. The first mega development project is Negenahira Navodaya (Eastern Rising) commenced immediately after the government forces achieved a clear victory over the LTTE on the eastern battleground. Subsequently, Uthuru Wasanthaya (Northern Spring) came up after the LTTE's stronghold in Vanni was captured. The activities such as the clearance of land mines, establishment of law and order, civil administration, reconstruction and rehabilitation of destroyed infrastructure facilities, development livelihoods of resettled people are implemented as a part of regional development (Performance Report, 2010).

It is clear that there are a number of gender issues that emerged during the conflict period; however, among the government addressed activities gender sensitiveness is missed. Conversely, the GoSL did not examine different post-conflict experiences in other post-conflict countries. Moreover, post-conflict policymakers did not study successful post-

conflict models in other parts of the world. In fact, the government announced its agenda immediately after the end of conflict without a deep study of the nature of the area, people's basic needs, people's core values, and shared values. Therefore, there are a number of omissions accompanied by governmental post-conflict reconstruction policies.

Conclusion

Since the 1970s, the concept of gender is vastly discussed within the development discourse. Many countries took the effort to avoid gender inequalities and the initiated programs as well as projects to mitigate gender imbalances in various fields. As we know, although some developing countries have enforced reforms to achieve rapid development, it has most often than not exploited women workers. After 1977 women in Sri Lanka came forward to enter into the job market; however, most of them were unskilled, and that trend still seems to remain in the Sri Lankan female labor force. In the labor market, women became economic agents and receiving wages less than even though the economy depends on export earnings of tea, garments as well as migrant workers' earnings. It is clear that women propel the above three sectors despite poor working conditions, inadequate job security, inadequate job satisfaction, low to no incentives, and unsatisfactory social indicator level.

According to the survey done by the Department of Census and Statistics, 84.7% of women and 86.5% of men educational level below the G.C.E (A/L). On the other hand, when they move to the job market, their labor considers unskilled and offer low wages or no demand for them. Eventually, they experience depression and leave the labor market, thereby increasing the country's unemployment rate. In fact, government development policies do not properly address them, and indeed, gender concept is invisible among the development policymakers. Besides, in the Sri Lankan context, there are a number of gender disparities, and their shortcomings largely affect women. The prime factor is women's low percentage in decision-making bodies, for instance, parliament, provincial councils, and the local government. After independence, women's participation in the following institutions were not exceeded at least 15%. Hence, the women's voice is very low and less power towards policy-making; today, the impact of this has come to affect all working women. Sri Lanka signed the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) in 1981 and agreed to ensure women's rights and wipe out gender discrimination from society. Not only that, in 1993 Sri Lankan government set up a women's charter as a national action to end such discrimination. Although the government promptly accepted the Women's Charter-based on CEDAW, it did not legalize it. The charter was only approved by the cabinet as it did not receive the two-thirds majority of the parliament.

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