

# WOMEN IN NEED



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## Anti Cyber Violence Initiative

COMBATting TECH FACILITATED  
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA



## Message by Executive Director of Women In Need

Gender Based Violence has been acknowledged as a human rights violation. Statistics from the Global Gender Gap Index indicate that Sri Lanka's gender gap in many respects is below the level of parity. The Global Gender Index for Sri Lanka in 2006 was 0.720 while in 2021 it reduced to 0.670. Accordingly, Sri Lanka is ranked 116 out of the 156 countries.

Women In Need (WIN) has been working on Gender Based Violence for over 30 years and believe that gender equality limits choices for women and men and puts a brake on human development.

Today, WIN is launching a report on Technology Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls. WIN seeks to identify and resolve the issues that emerge as a result of the increasing trends in cyber sexual crimes and Gender Based Violence in Sri Lanka. Women In Need commissioned this report to be done by Social Scientists' Association (SSA).

This report concludes that Technology Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls is a new form but an old threat. Sri Lanka's existing legal framework does not make provisions that is sufficient for complex cases for rapid legal responses. It is important to note that we need to establish victim friendly procedures to seek remedies.

In this report, the research team has strongly recommended that Sri Lanka should take steps to enact laws to protect individual privacy caused by technology empowered abuse in all its forms.

**Ms. Savithri Wijesekera**

*Executive Director  
Women In Need (WIN)*



# Executive Summary

Cyber space and digital technology define the 21st century. However, the rapid expansion of these technologies and the opportunities it affords have also given rise to concerns of increasing hate speech, online harassment and online violence against women on digital platforms.

**Online violence or technology facilitated violence against women (TFVAW) can be understood as a continuum of offline violence against women and is a form of gender-based violence.**

**The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Technology-related violence against women (tech-related VAW) defines violence against women to include acts of gender-based violence that are committed, abetted or aggravated, in part or fully, by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as phones, the internet, social media platforms, and email. Studies show that women are predominantly affected by online harassment, cyber-stalking and insulting comments.**

This study by Women in Need (WIN) is part of a broader project that seeks to address increasing trends in cyber based sexual and gender-based violence in Sri Lanka, and was conducted by the Social Scientists' Association (SSA) with the following objectives:

- **To assess the level of public knowledge and awareness regarding TFVAW**
- **To understand the impact of TFVAW on victim survivors**
- **To identify the role of government and private institutions in preventing and addressing TFVAW violations**

The study included a qualitative component conducted in Colombo, Matara, Anuradhapura, Batticaloa and Jaffna Districts, and a national quantitative survey among 1533 participants, which included **772 men (50.4 percent) and 761 women (49.6 percent).**

# Key Findings: Perception of prevalence

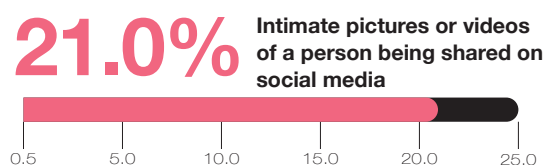
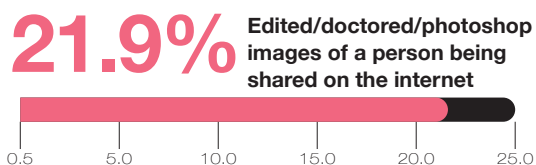
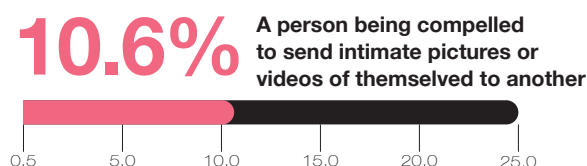
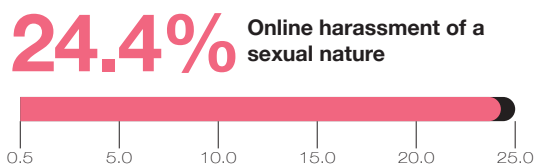
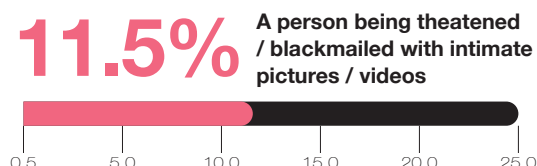
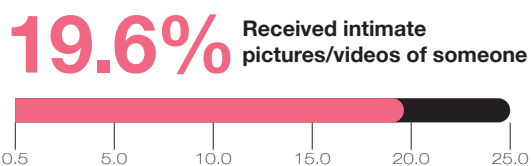


- Survey data reveals that nearly **1 in 4 individuals** knew of a friend who experienced online harassment of a sexual nature.



**1 in 5 individuals** reported knowing of someone who had edited/doctored/photoshopped images of them shared on the internet as well as intimate pictures or videos of themselves shared on social media.

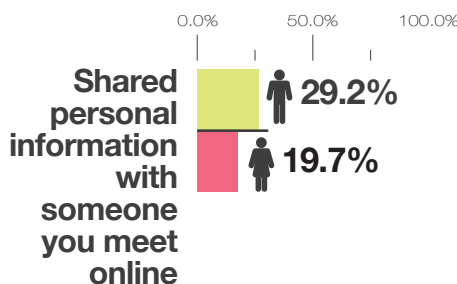
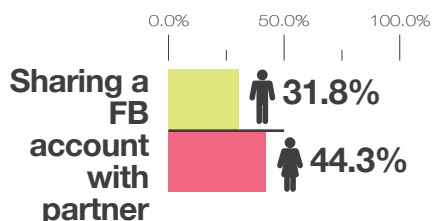
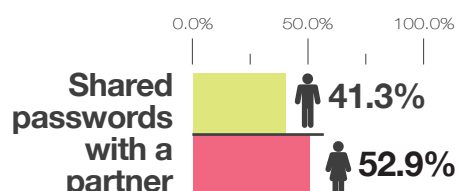
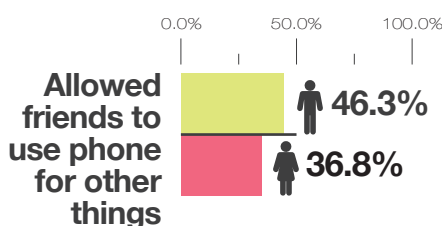
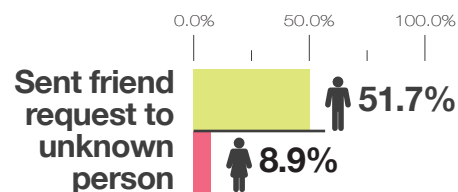
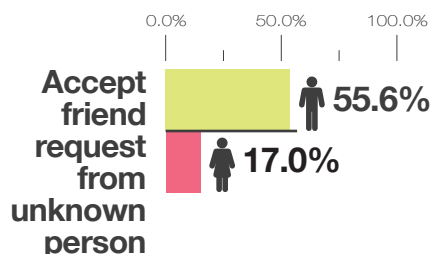
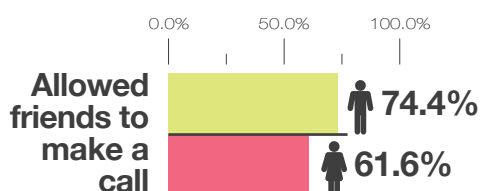
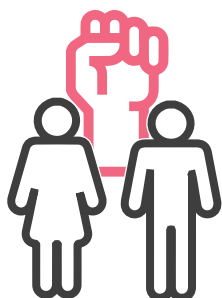
- Overall, the survey data suggests that while certain individuals may not actively share intimate pictures/videos of someone else, they are more likely to ‘view’ such pictures and videos themselves. **Unknowingly such individuals partake in an ongoing violation – collectively.** This can be directly linked to a lack of recognizing a right to privacy or assuming that if something is online – it is no longer private.



*Perceptions of Prevalence of Technology Facilitated Violence Against Women*

- Far more women (32.5 percent) report having friends to whom this has happened compared to men (16.5 percent).
- Around 1 in 3 women from all communities report that they know of instances in which their friends have been a victim of this type of harassment (Sinhalese – 31.6%; Sri Lankan Tamil – 35.8%; Muslim - 30.8%; Up-Country Tamil – 34.9%).
- The prevalence among people known to younger women is higher, as more than a third of young women (18-25 years – 35.1%; 26-35 years – 34.2%) report the same.
- Survey data reveals that the highest reporting of knowledge of instances where intimate pictures or videos of a friend were shared on the internet or social network sites or apps were from Batticaloa (63.9 %), Badulla (58.5 %), Ampara (39.6 %), Trincomalee (37.8 %) and Kalutara (35.6%) Districts.

# Gender Power Relations

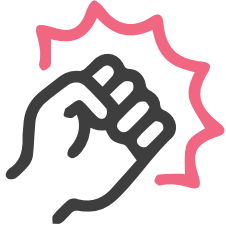


**The study found that gender power relations play a role in actual choices and actions, despite what individuals believe to be acceptable.**

- **Contrary to popular perception, survey data indicates that women are more careful with their interactions online compared to men.**
- However, despite their caution in sharing personal information online, **women share more personal details with their intimate partners compared to men. 52.9% of women report that they have shared their passwords with their intimate partner at least once**, while only 41.3% of men have done the same.
- Similarly, **more women (44.3%) report that they have a shared Facebook account with their intimate partner**, compared to only 31.8% of men.
- Thus, it appears that women are far more trusting in their online interactions with intimate partners, and thereby more at risk of being victims of technology facilitated violence.
- The qualitative study revealed that **5 out of 10 women experienced multiple forms of violence by their intimate partners prior to being subjected to cyber harassment.** Physical violence and emotional abuse preceded the technology facilitated violence.

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# Forms of Violence



**1** Women reported experiencing a range of violence which included **being subject to beating, slapping, choking and death threats, which amount to criminal actions** within the definitions of Sri Lanka's Penal Code.

**2** Emotional violence included use of degrading and/or insulting language with a view to negatively impact the woman's self-worth and self-esteem; **threatening and/or violent telephone calls and messages via social media applications such as WhatsApp, Viber, Imo, Facebook messenger or text messages to the woman** directly, and in-directly to her family. The sharing of intimate pictures, obtained with or without the consent of the **woman in question, and sharing of edited pictures with a view to discredit the woman** can also be understood as emotional violence.

**3** In terms of technology facilitated harassment, women reported **receiving unwanted sexually explicit material via WhatsApp, Viber and Imo; receiving continuous telephone calls threatening and intimidating** the women and/or their close family and relatives; being blackmailed to perform specific actions.

**4** Women also **reported instances of invasion of their privacy, namely intimate pictures being shared on the internet and social media platforms; hacking of their personal social media network pages or accounts; displaying and sharing their home or work address and/or telephone number on social media, often through fake 'imposter' profiles or accounts.**

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# Impact

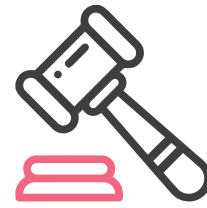


**1** The impact of technology facilitated violence against women is manifold and includes **psychological and emotional harm, reinforcement of prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination against women, damage to reputation and self-esteem, economic loss, self-censorship, damage to family relationships, and restrictions to mobility.**

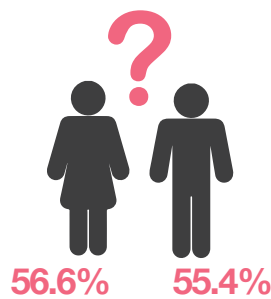
**2** The inflicting of **violence is always intentional**, and the desired outcome or impact is **anticipated and orchestrated.**

**3** Much like the experience of violence, its impact can also be understood as a spectrum that takes a considerable emotional toll – **women navigate the legal processes to report the incident and take down the offending images, as well as withstand the emotional harassment of the perpetrator. In addition, women experience humiliation, self-doubt, self-blame, and undergo a period of tremendous pressure.**

# Reporting and Legal Response to TFVAW



- Both qualitative and survey data revealed that where possible, **individuals reach out to friends and local networks to resolve the issue before they consider reporting the incident to the police.** The social shame and stigma directed towards women who experience violence, especially of a sexual nature, is so strong that it deters many women from reporting.



**Overall, the survey found that the vast majority of respondents (55.4% of men and 56.6 % of women) were not aware of where to report an incident of technology facilitated violence.**

- **Prosecuting technology facilitated violence requires a complex response. Currently, Sri Lanka's legal framework does not allow for such a complex legal response.** For example the Sri Lankan legal system does not recognize the right to privacy and therefore does not provide any legal remedy for breach of privacy.
- This study reiterates that the **right to privacy is an integral part of protecting women against technology facilitated violence.**
- **Sri Lanka should also look at gaps in the current legislation to address some incidents of technology facilitated violence. Many countries have introduced specific legislation to combat technology facilitated violence against women and girls:**
  - State of Victoria, Australia passed a law in 1999 that prohibits the use of surveillance devices outside the scope of law enforcement purposes. To address incidents of voyeurism, in 2007 a new law was passed titled the Summary Offence Amendment (Upskirting) Act 2007 to prosecute actions of upskirting and downblousing; the issue of privacy is dealt with through the application of laws relating to minor misdemeanor or summary offences.
  - For situations where women are photographed without their consent, or when pictures are circulated without the consent of the woman, Anastasia Powell points out that the benefit of a privacy law is that the issue of consent is dealt with and the 'sexual image itself becomes evidence of the crime as long as it was taken in a situation where a reasonable person would expect to be afforded privacy'.
  - In the United Kingdom judges' guidelines have been introduced that call for more severe penalties when the crime is recorded and distributed. As noted by Powell these guidelines establish a formal acknowledgment of the additional harm caused to the victims.



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# Recommendations



## Law Reform

1. Adopt Technology Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls (TFVAWG) as a framework to lobby for legal recognition of the right to privacy and amendments to the Penal Code and to take into account the embodied harm of technology facilitated violence that extends beyond the limited definitions of our current penal code offences.

2. Amend the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act to No.34 of 2005 to include intimate partner violence by non-cohabiting intimate partners.

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## Strengthen Gender Sensitivity and Ensure Adequate Resourcing of Law Enforcement

3. Police Women and Children's Desks, CID and MO Branch officers must be trained on recently introduced Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Cyber Violence. In many police stations it is the Minor Offences (MO) Branch that receive technology related complaints. These officers are not trained in gender sensitive policing, and often fail to take note of important facts. These desks should also be sufficiently resourced. Many respondents stated that they did not wish to report the incident to CID in Colombo due to the distance. They are more familiar with the local police station, and more likely to complain if the local police are able to attend to the issue in a sensitive manner.

4. Specialized training and resourcing for law enforcement is a priority if police are to effectively respond to technology facilitated violence against women and girls. This includes sufficient women police officers with requisite language skills within the Sri Lanka Police.

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## Explore the full potential of the PDVA

5. In instances of intimate partners perpetrating technology facilitated violence, recommend use of the provisions of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 of 2005. It is recommended that awareness is created about the provisions of protection orders, even for instances of online violence where spouses or ex-spouses are concerned.

6. Promote ICT literacy as a preventive strategy. Awareness on the prevalence of technology facilitated violence against women and girls must be coupled with basic tech related literacy, especially with a view to protect privacy.

7. Awareness on tech literacy and privacy should also include basic legal awareness on sexual harassment, criminal intimidation, extortion, criminal breach of trust, and what steps individuals can take to preserve necessary evidence in each instance. In many cases, the women concerned are not aware that they are

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being subjected to multiple crimes. This lack of awareness on rights violations is directly linked to the normalisation of violence against women, especially within intimate relationships, as well as the de-sensitisation of law enforcement officials. Dissemination of knowledge on gender based violence through the mobile application 2six4 for example, will help socialize basic knowledge on rights violations of women and girls, especially among youth.

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## **Awareness among Children, Youth, Adults**

8. Advocate for sex and relationship education for all school children. All participants stated that awareness should start with school children and parents. However, given the data, it is important this awareness includes awareness on relationships and sex. While officials and the community are unwilling to accept that adolescent are sexually active, the lack of awareness leads to more danger than the perceived threat of 'experimentation'. Advocacy must target the Ministry of Education and/or include a national online campaign targeting school children.

9. Awareness should target 'role models' such as teachers, tuition class lecturers, who spend a considerable time with the children, and have been reported to have some influence on their behaviour.

10. Similarly, more awareness must be raised on intimate partner violence, even within schools and parents to ensure zero tolerance of violence within intimate relationships, and the ability for women and communities to take action before further violence is perpetrated.

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## **Empowerment over Protectionism**

11. Awareness should challenge the 'protectionist' mind set and instead promote and recognize the autonomy of women and realities of adolescent and youth lived experiences. Any future campaign could take note of the Feminist Principles for the Internet (<https://feministinternet.org/>)

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## **Promote awareness of WIN App 2six4**

12. Provide broader publicity for the Women In Need 2six4 mobile application through social media, police and local women's rights and human rights organisations. This app was introduced to all participants who stated that they had never heard of the WIN mobile app. Given that less than 10% are aware of free legal aid and counselling services, this app will be immensely useful as a tool for awareness and assistance.

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## **Hold Service Providers Accountable**

13. Advocacy to ensure that intermediaries and/or service providers are accountable for acts perpetrated by their users. Service providers should be required to take necessary steps to prevent violence against women through their services. This has been advocated by the UN HRC Resolution HRC/32/L. 20 on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights as well as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

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# Case Studies:

## Case Study 1 - Colombo



“ඕක මොකක්ද, කාටත් වෙත දේවල් හේ”  
That is nothing, it happens to everyone”

**Shanathi is 22 years old and the youngest of four siblings. She is currently a second year student at university.**

Shanathi never had a profile picture on whatsapp. However, in her first year at University, she put up a picture taken at a University event. A few days later, Shanathi received a whatsapp message from an unknown number with a black cat for a profile picture. This anonymous individual first sent Shanathi her own profile picture, and then sent her edited versions of her profile picture. Some of the edited images had her face edited onto naked female bodies. The individual demanded that Shanathi come to a particular lecture hall at 7.00 p.m. The individual went on to state that Shanathi need not worry about it being late, that this individual would handle any problems with the hostel. When Shanathi refused to comply with the demands, the individual threatened to share these edited images with other University students. This individual also demanded naked pictures from Shanathi. Shanathi was scared and didn't know who to confide in. She went offline. This individual now threatened Shanathi via text messages to her phone. Before entering University, Shanathi had a boyfriend. This individual seemed to know about this past affairs, and kept referencing it and threatening Shanathi. Not knowing what she should do, she confided in senior male friend in University who she knew from school. Shanathi didn't have anyone else she could turn to.

This episode of harassment made Shanathi very anxious and paranoid about moving with strangers. Because the perpetrator was anonymous, Shanathi was constantly suspicious of strangers. Even if someone smiled with her, she would look the other way. She generally avoided moving with people. Shanathi stopped going online. However, it was soon obvious that this would be difficult as most students used whatsapp to communicate for University activities and classes. Shanathi's greatest concern was her family coming to know about this. Shanathi said her father and mother would not be able to bear it. She felt that her life was under threat.

The male friend she confided in convinced Shanathi to report the incident to the police. She was accompanied by three university friends. Unfortunately, Shanathi was very disappointed with the treatment she received from the police. Shanathi had the mobile numbers from which she received these threatening messages, and she also showed these to the police. The police however, did not take the complaint seriously. They told her “ඕක මොකක්ද, කාටත් වෙත දේවල් හේ” (This is nothing, it happens to everyone). She states that only male police officers spoke to her, and that she was never directed to the police women and children's desk. The police only wrote down the complaint after Shanathi showed them the pictures. While taking down the complaint, the policeman told Shanathi that she is also at fault. Shanathi was angry and hurt because she felt they spoke to her as if she was a prostitute. Shanathi didn't speak back to the policeman because she needed them to do their job and investigate her complaint. The police did not call the numbers that she gave them.

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# Case Study 1 (cont.)

After Shanthi insisted, the police finally called the unknown number, but there was no response. The police did not seem interested in pursuing the matter any further.

When asked if she pursued the case, she said she didn't because she didn't have the means to go to court. When asked if the police explained to her that if there was a court case, it would be a police case, and that she would not need to spend on a lawyer per se, she said the police never explained this to her. Shanthi was also reluctant to pursue action because she didn't know who the perpetrator was, and feared it could be someone 'connected', who would cause more trouble for her and her family. It is clear that Shanthi's trust in the police was deeply affected. It is unlikely that she would seek police support in future, she stated that "People go to the police when there is a problem. Seeking assistance. I was not referred to the police women and children's desk. They spoke to me as if I was a prostitute. Why do we need the police if they are going to treat us badly when we seek their help? We might as well solve our problems our way." Shanthi's treatment by the police is demonstrative of the complete lack of sensitivity among certain police officers in dealing with complaints of violence against women.

After making the complaint to the police, Shanthi stopped receiving calls or messages from this number. Through a friend, Shanthi was able to find out the name to which the mobile number was registered. Shanthi reached out to Grassrooted Trust who was very helpful. They in turn also put her in touch with Women In Need who made a complaint to the CID regarding Shanthi's case. However even at the time of the interview in September 2019, there was no further information by the police.

The apathetic response of the police to such complaints serves to discourage women from coming forward and reporting incidents of harassment in a timely manner, making them vulnerable to further aggravated forms of violence. Studies show that sixty percent of incidents of technology facilitated violence against women is not investigated by authorities . Dismissing technology facilitated violence against women as 'ordinary occurrences' in fact normalizes such violence creating an atmosphere of impunity for perpetrators. This casual dismissal of violence against women contributes to further gender based violence. Issues predominantly affecting women are rarely seen as a priority. The insensitivity demonstrated by the police points to the need for continued sensitisation of police officers, and the need for strict protocols in referrals to the relevant police units. Furthermore, it also points to the need for public awareness on their rights when making a police complaint, and the procedure in pursuing a complaint, even to court. Knowledge of their rights may cause more individuals to push back against police apathy.

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# Case Study 9 - Batticaloa

## A cycle of violence

### **Kamala is 38 years old. A mother of two children.**

Kamala's husband Raveendran, is a driver. He spends several days away from home when he is out working. Dinesh is one of Raveendran's friends who occasionally comes to their home to drop off certain parcels for Raveendran. One particular day, Dinesh had visited their home when Kamala was all alone. When Raveendran came to know about this, he became suspicious of Kamala, and in his rage, cut her hair. Kamala became very fearful of what could happen next.

When Dinesh came to know what Raveendran had done, he convinced Kamala to run away with him, with her children. He promised to take her to some place safe, where Raveendran couldn't hurt them. Fearful of her life, Kamala move out of her home and rented a small thatched hut.

While in this new house, one-day when Kamala was changing her clothes, she noticed someone watching her. She immediately covered herself, and shouted out. She saw that it was Dinesh. Dinesh stated that he had come to meet her, and didn't mean to pry.

A few days later, Dinesh approach Kamala and told her that her husband is looking for her and would harm her. Dinesh suggested that as Kamala was living alone without any male to protect her, she shouldn't keep her jewellery with her. Dinesh offered to keep the jewellery for safe keeping. Believing Dinesh, Kamala gave him her jewellery for safe keeping.

A few months later when Kamala demanded her jewellery back, Dinesh evaded her. Kamala threatened to complain to the police. When Kamala kept insisting that Dinesh return her jewellery, Dinesh threatened to send the 'picture' of her to her husband. Dinesh claimed that he had a picture of Kamala half dressed. Kamala recalls that this could have been on the day Dinesh watched her changing her clothes.

Kamala claims that Dinesh showed this alleged picture to other people in the village and began spreading rumours about Kamala. Soon, Kamala could not step out of her home without people speaking ill of her. Her children stopped attending school because their friends would tease them about their mother and the alleged affair she is said to have had with Dinesh. Dinesh has also circulated Kamala's mobile number to other men who keep calling Kamala.

Kamala pursued a civil action against Dinesh to recover the cost of the jewellery she had handed over to him for safe keeping. Dinesh was ordered to pay back the value of the jewellery to Kamala in instalments. These Rs.5000/- instalments are still being paid.

Kamala also made a police complaint against Dinesh regarding the picture which he was threatening her with. However, Kamala states that the police were not one bit interested in pursuing any action in this regard. Kamala further states that the police also treat her in a degrading manner, calling her a woman with loose morals. Kamala states that though the police have not taken any action against Dinesh for taking a picture without her consent, circulating and blackmailing her with a picture of herself, the police filed action against an unknown man for nuisance calls and harassment.

Kamala is now back with her husband Raveendran, who scolds her and blames her for trusting Dinesh with the jewellery. Because of this, Raveendran has refused to support Kamala. When Raveendran eventually came to know about the alleged picture, Kamala became very distressed and attempted to kill herself. She was too ashamed.

These series of incidents have left Kamala quite helpless, with no one she can turn to. Kamala finds herself in a cycle of violence from multiple perpetrators, including law enforcement officers. Kamala's experience demonstrates the repercussions and dangers of re-victimisation that narrows the choices available to victim-survivors, often forcing them to return to the perpetrator or seek to end their life.

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# Case Study 10 - Batticaloa

## When justice fails

### **Roshini is 34 years old, and mother of an eleven (11) year old son. She is married and her husband works abroad.**

Roshini lived with her elderly mother and her only son who is 11 years old. Her husband is currently working abroad. She has a particularly difficult neighbour who runs a small grocery shop across the road from her house. One day in November 2018 Roshini's 11-year-old son was riding his bicycle on the road in front of the neighbour's shop. This presumably annoyed the 55 year- old neighbour, who in turn responded by catching the 11-year-old by his throat. Roshini was very concerned about this incident, and relatives encouraged her to make a police complaint. The police investigated the complaint, summoned the neighbour for an inquiry and had proceeded to keep the neighbour in the police cell for two hours. This took place on 23 November 2018. The neighbour's daughter, who speaks fluent Sinhala, came to the police station to take her father home. The daughter was very angry with Roshini had vowed to take revenge.

By 29th November 2018 there were edited pictures of Roshini circulating on Facebook with her husband's friend. These edited images also indicated Roshini's home address. The images claimed that she was having an affair with her husband's friend. Her husband is working abroad. When she reported this to the police, the police stated that big and powerful Ministers also have such issues, and asked her how they could take action for such a complaint. In other words, the police did not take her complaint seriously, and did not give her any assurances that they would even look into it.

A series of violations followed thereafter. Roshini, her mother, and sister were arrested shortly after her complaint to the police against the 55-year-old neighbour. The neighbour claimed that Roshini together with her mother and sister had assaulted him.

Roshini's mother was arrested in front of her house, put into a police jeep and taken to the police station. When she and her sister had gone to the police to inquire into the issue, they too were arrested. The three of them were remanded for 7 days, but not told of the complaint against them. She only came to know of the charges when she, her mother and sister were produced before a Magistrate, but they were not represented by a Counsel; and therefore were not aware of what was taking place. On a later calling date in Court Roshini was represented by a Counsel. When asked if the Counsel advised her of her options of making a fundamental rights application in the Supreme Court against the unlawful arrest and detention, Roshini said she was not advised of this by the lawyer at that time.

Roshini came to know about Women In Need and approached them only towards mid-2019. When asked if she informed WIN of this arrest, she said she didn't because they were 'ashamed' at having to spend 7 days in remand. The police have not taken any further action regarding the complaint against the 55-year-old neighbour. Roshini states that the neighbour is well connected and has a nephew who is a journalist, and attributes the police bias to these connections.

Roshini stated that she was completely ashamed of having been arrested and detained. With no husband to support her during this time, Roshini felt this would not have happened to her if there was a man at home. She felt that her son would also be affected if people came

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# Case Study 10 (cont.)

to know about his mother's arrest and detention. Since the arrest and detention, Roshini treads very cautiously as she is worried something unexpected could happen. Never in her wildest dreams did she imagine she would be arrested.

With regard to the online harassment and intimidation, Roshini is glad that her husband is understanding and not the type of man to suspect her. But she is worried about the impact this has had on her reputation in the village, and especially the consequences for her son, when he goes to school. Roshini had reported the profile to Facebook and it was taken down, but she says that more fake profiles are opened to replace it. Unfortunately, Roshini has not received any satisfactory response from the police in this regard, and has now lost all respect, regard and faith in the police.

It is clear that the entire justice system has failed Roshini. First, with the police failing to place due importance and consideration of Roshini's complaint of online harassment and intimidation, as well as their failure to pursue action against the neighbour for possible use of criminal force against a 11 year old child; Secondly, the police unlawfully arresting and detaining herself, her mother and sister; and Thirdly, Roshini not being adequately represented in the Magistrate's Court, and furthermore not receiving timely legal advice with regard to possible fundamental rights violations and the time bar in reporting the same.

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# Research Team



## Social Scientists Association

The Social Scientists' Association (SSA) is an organization working to investigate the way in which social change is contouring the multiple realities faced by communities in Sri Lanka and South Asia. The SSA is deeply committed to promoting a culture of knowledge production that informs and undergirds interventions aimed at achieving social emancipation for marginalized communities.

The SSA was founded in 1977 during a period of rapid social, political and economic change in Sri Lanka; among other reasons, the introduction of the open economy and growing tension between ethnic communities. The SSA was formed by a group of academics as a forum for facilitating the critical understanding of these changes and responding to them in a manner that would also promote social and political transformation as well.

Since then the SSA has received global recognition for its commitment to research on issues such as ethnicity, the political-economy of development, gender equity, democracy, conflict resolution, social transformation, labour and human rights.

A few recent research projects that SSA has been conducting recently are *Enhancing the Understanding of the Doctrine of Rule of Law Amongst Civic Teachers in High Schools and Adults in the Southern Province* funded by the Increased Demand and Engagement for Accountability (IDEA), *Using Everyday Peace Indicators to Strengthen Reconciliation Programs* funded by the United States of Peace (USIP), *Feminist Inquiry into Rights and Equality* funded by International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific and SSA is currently carrying out the survey component in Sri Lanka of the collaborative study, *State of Democracy in South Asia (SDSA) Round III*.

Furthermore, SSA has its own journals dedicated to academic and research papers; *Polity*, *Pravada* and *Pravesha*. *Polity* and *Pravada* are primarily a left forum for debate and discussion that advances democracy, state reform, gender and socio-economic equality and justice in Sri Lanka, while interested in South Asia and the world. Similarly, *Pravesha* encourages research papers written by undergraduates.

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## Lead Researcher



**Thiagi Piyadasa**  
*Lead Researcher*

Thiagi has over 15 years' experience in the human rights and development sector as a researcher and development practitioner and is a practicing human rights lawyer. Thiagi has experience in providing technical leadership for gender mainstreaming within economic justice, active citizenship and conflict prevention programming, and in providing overall direction to gender justice programs with a focus on addressing gender-based violence, promoting gender equality, and rights of women and girls in rural and war affected communities. Her research has focused on intimate partner violence, technology facilitated violence against women and girls, underage marriages, and marriage laws in Sri Lanka, and protection and torture. Thiagi holds a BA (Hons) in International Relations from the University of Colombo, an LLB from the Open University of Sri Lanka, and is

currently reading for a MSc in International Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford. Thiagi continues to practice law with a focus on public law, human rights, family law (domestic violence, maintenance and divorce) and criminal law, and also serves as CARE International's global lead to end GBV, based with Chrysalis, Sri Lanka.

## SSA Research Team That Conducted The Survey On Cyber Crime And Sexual Gender Based Violence



**Mr. Shashik Dhanushka Silva:** Shashik Silva obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Kelaniya and Master's degree in Conflict and Peace Studies from the University of Colombo. He has over 16 years of experience as a survey researcher, quantitative analyst, and qualitative researcher. Shashik has previously worked with two eminent social research institutes in Sri Lanka, namely the Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Applied Research Unit of UNOPS, and has over 9 years of experience working with UN and other local agencies on research projects and assignments pertaining to the themes of peacebuilding, reconciliation, gender, and local governance. He is currently a senior researcher and administrative

manager at the Social Scientists' Association in Sri Lanka, where he continues to work on different projects, including, but not limited to areas of gender, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and local governance in Sri Lanka.



**Mr. Mark Schubert:** Obtained his Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree in Sociology from the University of Colombo in 2014. He also completed his Bachelor of Laws from the Open University of Sri Lanka in 2018 and took oaths as a lawyer in 2020. He has more than 5 years of experience in engaging in both quantitative and qualitative research. His research interests include Anthropology of Violence and Anthropology of Law.



**Ms. Rebecca Surenthiraraj:** Ms. Rebecca Surenthiraraj graduated from the University of Colombo in 2017 with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree in English. She has been working with the Social Scientists' Association as a researcher for over 4 years. Her research interests lie in the articulations of identities, especially within Tamil-speaking communities in Sri Lanka.

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**Ms. Taniya Silvapulle:** Ms. Taniya Silvapulle obtained her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree in Economics from the University of Colombo in 2020 and is currently reading for her Masters in Sociology. She works as a researcher at the Social Scientists' Association and has more than 5 years of experience engaging in research projects undertaken by the organization. Her research interests are mainly based on Political Economy.



**Ms. Kaushini Dammalage:** Ms. Kaushini Dammalage received her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree in Political Science and Public Policy from the University of Colombo in 2018 and is currently reading for her Master of Philosophy at the University of Colombo, Department of Political Science and Public Policy. She has been working on research projects undertaken by the Social Scientists' Association for over 2 years. Her primary research interests are in Gender studies, Democracy and Electoral Politics.



**Mr. Nuwan Walasmullage:** Mr. Nuwan Walasmullage obtained his Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree in Political Science and Public Policy from the University of Colombo in 2016. He is currently reading for a Bachelor of Laws Degree from the Open University of Sri Lanka. He has been working as a Field Executive for the Social Scientists' Association since 2014.



**Mr. Suresh Amuhena:** Mr. Suresh Amuhena obtained his Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Colombo in 2015. He has completed a Professional Diploma in Object Oriented Programming in Java and Software Application Development from the Java Institute Sri Lanka. He works as a Data Processing Executive and a Video Editor for the Social Scientists' Association. He has more than 4 years of experience in developing web-based, educational video materials and resources for projects undertaken by the organization. His areas of interest include Online Education Development, Caste and Citizenship.

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*"This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the contractor and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government".*

