

Acknowledgement

The student intern would like to share the gratitude to the host organization 'EMILY's List Australia' for the opportunity provided for the internship placement. Special thank you to Maree Overall, CEO of EMILY's List Australia for taking me as intern and supporting me with proper guidance, supervision and feedback during my internship period. Additionally, I would like to thank to the staffs of EMILY's List – Australia for their support and input for my project.

Gratitude is also to Ali Reza Yunespour – Internship Coordinator from University of Melbourne for their immense support and guidance from the beginning until completing the internship. The study would not have been possible without the support of key informants of this study who allocated their valuable time to share their opinions and experience which contributed a lot to this study. I would like to thank the key informants from EMILY's List Australia, and special thanks to the respondents from Sri Lanka.

List of Acronyms

ALP – Australian Labour Party

CP – Australian County Party

ELA – EMILY's List Australia

IDEA - International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IPU – Inter-Parliamentary Union

LIB – Liberal Party of Australia

NCP – National Country Party

NP – National Party/ The Nationals

NPA – National Party of Australia

UAP – United Australia Party

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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Towards equal political representation and policy engagement of women in Sri Lanka – Learnings from EMILY's List Australia

*"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms, without distinction of any kind" -
Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Executive Summary

Introduction

Political rights are human rights and human rights should be equal to everyone. Women's political representation is expected to be equal to men as women share the fifty percent of population of the world. The current political representation of women is 24.3% across the world and there are structural, financial and political limitations to women for obtaining their equal political representation.

- Structural limitations are the barriers in society which inhibit women in their political participation and representation.
- Financial limitations are the challenges to women in accessing financial support for their political campaigns
- Political limitations are related to the arrangements for representation of women within the legislation and political parties

Support to address these limitations by creating enabling environments for women to become equally represented are expected and there are many organisations working across the world towards this goal. EMILY's List Australia (ELA) is one of the organisations operating in Australia which was set up following the model of EMILY's List USA.

This report gives an overview of ELA's contribution to increasing the political participation of women in Australia and Australian Labour Party (ALP), learnings and suggestions from ELA towards increasing political representation of women in Sri Lanka, and looking for possibilities and suggestions to setting up a similar organisation in Sri Lanka.

This report aims to provide

- Suggestions for increasing the political representation in Sri Lanka's context based on ELA's best practices and learnings.
- Suggestions on possibilities for setting up a similar organisation in Sri Lanka and learnings from ELA

EMILY's List Australia

EMILY's List Australia is an organisation working to support **progressive** Australian Labor Party women to be elected into parliaments who are supportive of five major principles; choice, equal pay, childcare, equity and diversity. This organisation differs from other organisations in the following aspects:

- Nature of the work – support to address all the mentioned limitations especially financial limitation by fundraising for the candidates directly where other organisations mostly focus on providing educational and training support to women
- Target group and principles – working with specific women who are candidates of ALP and are supportive of organisation principles. Other organisations try to cover all women in general without a reference to principles.

- Partition – while most of the other organisations function as non-governmental and non-partition, ELA works with ALP only, and ELA believes working with an influential party who are in agreement with the principles will best be able to achieve gender equality in political representation

Australia's current women political representation in the Federal Parliament is 33.2% 2019 while Sri Lanka's women representation in the parliament is only 5.3%.

ELA's contribution to overcome the barriers

ELA provides supports to the candidates of ALP to overcome the social, financial and political limitations through training, mentorship, early money and direct donations. ELA also contributed significantly to increase the political representation of women within ALP and in Australia. ALP hold the highest percentage (47%) women political representation in the federal parliament compare to other parties.

These targets assisted in increasing the proportion of Labor women federally from 14.5% in 1994 to 47% in 2019. After 2018 election, the government formed a cabinet with 50% representation of women .

Affirmative Action is an initiative within the ALP to ensure the women candidates are preselected in winnable seats is another major contribution of ELA. It started with 35% in 1994, increased to 40% in 2012 and aiming to achieve 50% by 2025.

By supporting 'progressive' labour women into parliament representation, ELA influenced the policy and legislative changes which are beneficial to women and to address the issues related women.

Next steps and current challenges of ELA

Achieving 50% of winning seat for women candidates within ALP and focusing on the diversity of the women's representation are the next steps. Achieving the equality in women representation across the whole country and promoting women into leadership positions within the ALP at the federal level are the challenges that are on major consideration.

Sri Lanka's context

The challenges to the women in Sri Lanka are similar to other women across the world. The suggestions of what is needed in Sri Lanka can be related to the best practice of ELA.

Suggestions from Sri Lanka	Best Practice from ELA
Training and awareness for candidates	Training and Mentorship
Guidelines and rules within parties on candidate selection procedures	Affirmative Action
Support system for women including legal and financial aspects	Candidate support – Early money, donations
Network	Membership based organisation with larger network

Apart from the mentioned best practises, the support for research and internships can further contribute to increase women's political participation in Sri Lanka.

Possibilities to similar organisation

The recommendations from key persons to setting up similar organisation in Sri Lanka gives a positive outlook with few expected challenges in terms of funding, partition, women charter and principles.

- A self-funded initiative is preferred and the possible methods for self-funding such as membership, crowd-funding and individual donations have been suggested.
- Working as a partition organisation is preferable to working as non-partition organisation and possibly bi-partition or tri-partition is proposed rather than working with one party.
- Affirmative Action initiative and agreeing on a women's charter is important and to carry out this, the electoral quota system in place in Sri Lanka is a proposed avenue.
- There should be basic principles to the organisation that value gender equality and address the challenges relating to women. Four main principles can be suggested -
 - i) childcare ii) employment iii) reproductive health iv) equality

The learnings from ELA in setting up a similar organisation

These key components should be considered

- Establishing groundwork and networks of support before setting up the organisation
- Setting up the principles that may prioritize Gender equality and women's development
- Sustainability and fund management plan to ensure the stability of the organisation
- Partition model and being independent to ensure women are supported to be elected representatives in parliament

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights points out that every individual is entitled to equal rights and every country has the responsibility to ensure accountability of the human rights of its citizens without any discrimination. Human rights are equal to everyone and they are important for bringing about equality, and social and economic development of all the citizens as well as the country. One of the human rights is political rights, which is defined as the rights of citizens to contribute to the state in forming government and supporting the administration. Political rights are the rights of the people to be part of political system of the country with various level of contributions including the equal right to vote, to join in political party on their choice, to stand as candidate in election as well as to contribute in policy procedure and implementation under administration.¹

Political participation and representation

In a democracy, public political participation is considered as a basic principal and representation is a core concept in the political practices (Galligan, 2007). Political participation is the citizens engagement in the way of deciding how they want to be governed and give power to the government. The avoidance of political participation by the citizens will lead to loss of a legitimate function of the social system. (Yoldaş, 2015) To create substantial change in the community, the citizens should exercise their right to their political participation and representation². The political representation gives the power on behalf of the community or group of people, and that can create the change that the community expected.

Why the representation is important?

When rights are not equal and available to everyone and the representation is not diverse, the elected representatives will not reflect the community/or people in the communities they represent. Inequality in representation will have the advantage to the dominant groups who influence the decisions which may affect the others. Therefore, all communities should have representation to allow their voices to be heard and influence the decision makings which can address the problems and concerns. (Delpiano, 2018).

Women's political participation representation

Though human rights are supposed to be equal for men and women, women have had to fight for their entitlements in many aspects including political rights. The equal right of political participation such as voting rights and for standing as candidates were restricted or denied to women in many countries while men were entitled to the rights. New Zealand is the first country recognised the suffrage of women in 1893, but it took 26 more years to grant the entitlement to women to stand as candidate in election, granted in 1919. In Australia, the right for women to vote and to stand as a candidate was first granted in South Australia in 1894. The last country granted both entitlements for women is Saudi Arabia, in 2015.³ Still some countries have restrictions on women, and some communities deny voting rights to women due to cultural and religious limitations.

¹ Political Rights Law and Legal Definition | USLegal, Inc. (2019) Retrieved from <https://definitions.uslegal.com/p/political-rights/>

² The importance of your political participation. (2019), Retrieved from <https://rightforeducation.org/2017/10/political-participation/>

³ Timeline « Women Suffrage and Beyond. (2019), from http://womensuffrage.org/?page_id=69<http://womensuffrage.org>

Current context of political representation of women in the world

Women share nearly 50% of the world population (3.8 billion of 7.7 billion⁴) but the political representation of women is not reflecting the same share of women's representation in the parliaments around the globe. Based on the facts from United Nation Women, worldwide, among all the national parliamentarians the percentage of women is 24.3 as of 2019⁵. There are only three countries that have 50 percent or more of women representation in parliaments among 193 countries, and only six countries have 50% - 60% of women in ministerial positions.⁶

The following table shows the worldwide and regional averages of women parliament representation (in percentage as of 1 January 2019 according to UN Women)

World average	24.3
Nordic Countries	42.5
Australia	33.2
Americas	30.7
Europe including Nordic countries	28.5
Europe excluding Nordic countries	27.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	23.7
Asia	19.6
Middle East and North Africa	18.1
Pacific	18.4
Sri Lanka	5.3

(Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/women-in-politics-2019-map-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3303>)

Common Challenges for Women in their Political Representation

Social structural barrier

These barriers are based on the gender ideologies of the social and political structures despite level educational attainment- or labour participation. (Paxton & Kunowich, 2003). Social structures are the given importance to the value on traditional gender roles such as women's most important goal is marriage and motherhood. The stereotyping on women regarding their political knowledge, leadership and decision-making ability also influence the willingness of political participation. '*women are too emotional to handle the state affairs.*' (IPU, 2000) Though women's education levels have progressed over the years as much as men the traditional belief of society that '*politics is men's business*' (IPU, 2000) created the gap in the political engagement.

Economic Barrier

This is identified as a major barrier for women. When compare to men, women have fewer opportunities to access political finance or have limited financial capacity of their own for campaigning.⁷

Political Structure Barrier

Political barriers are related to the arrangements for women's political rights and representation in the constitution as well as within the political parties' structures. As mentioned, the voting

⁴ World Population Prospects 2019 - <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

⁵ UN WOMEN (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#notes>

⁶ UN WOMEN (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/women-in-politics-2019-map-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3303>

⁷ Which are the barriers for women's participation in politics? (WIP/World Bank Survey) – Women Political Leaders Global Forum. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.womenpoliticalleaders.org/barriers-womens-participation-politics-wipworld-bank-survey/>

rights of women have different timelines related to the historical context of a particular country. According to the statistics on the use of quota systems by countries as documented by the IDEA⁸ (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) there are 127 countries which have quota systems⁹ for women's representation but still the average women's representation with a quota is only 25.6% because not all the countries have an equal quota (50%) for women.

What is needed to overcome the challenges and barriers?

Initiatives to be taken for addressing the challenges and the focus of the work should consider addressing the structural, financial and political challenges of women in their political participation and representation. There are different institutes and organisations working across the world¹⁰ towards empowering women in leadership and addressing the challenges in order to support and increase women into political participation.

EMILY's List is one of the organizations, working towards supporting women into politics by providing necessary resources which can help the candidates to overcome the challenges especially the financial resources issue.

Methodology

To achieve the purpose the study used qualitative methodology with primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data is gathered by desk review of documents, online sources and publications of ELA on related to ELA's activities, organisations work towards women's political representation and related issues. Primary data gathered through semi-structured key informants' interview (KPI)

- ELA's founding members and convenors
- Julia Gillard Next Generation Internship 2019 Intern
- Women political representatives from Sri Lanka
- Key informants from organisations working on women's political participation in Sri Lanka

Telephone or voip interview method is used to conduct the KPI with key informants in Sri Lanka.

Report

The following aspects are covered in the report through the analysis of information gathered based on desk review and KPIs.

- Overview of ELA and how it is differing from other organizations working towards women's political representation
- ELA's contribution and achievements in Australia in increasing women political representation
- The current challenges of women for political representation in Sri Lanka's context
- Suggestions and best practices from ELA to addressing the challenges
- Suggestions for setting up similar organization like ELA in Sri Lanka and Learning from ELA

⁸ Gender Quotas | International IDEA. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/quotas>

⁹ Different quota systems – by constitutional law, electoral law, or parties' quota

¹⁰ Global organizations promoting women in politics - Women For Election. (2019). Retrieved from <https://womenforelection.ie/global-organizations-promoting-women-in-politics/>

1. EMILY's List Australia

EMILY's List Australia was established in 1996 in Australia by adapting the model of EMILY's List USA (see annex 1 for briefing of EMILY's List US), EMILY's List Australia supports **progressive** Australian Labor Party women into political representation who are supportive of five major principles; choice, equal pay, childcare, equity and diversity. (See Annex 2: Values of ELA)

1.1 What made EMILY's List Different from other organisations

a. The nature of work

Most of the organisations who support the empowerment of women's leadership in political representation do so through

- Leadership or education programs and mentorship
 - o Skills – public speaking, budget preparation, fund raising, political campaign
 - o Policy development of procedures and process
- Lobbying or engaging in policy influencing actions towards gender quality
 - o Diversity and equal representation of women
 - o Engaging women in leaderships and policy discussions

Very few organisations supported for the women candidates in campaign funding. ELA is one of the organisations supporting the funding needs of candidates and also includes training, mentorship to the candidates and working towards influencing policy outcomes. ELA is the first organisation in Australia that has created a space for voters to donate to women political candidates who publicly support the five principles. (see Annex 3: table of compared organisation)

b. Target group and basic Principles.

ELA supports **progressive** ALP women (pre-selected as candidates) into political representation who are supportive of five major principles; choice, equal pay, childcare, equity and diversity. EMILY's List US supports **Democratic Pro-Choice women** where most of the other organisations focus on increasing the political participation of women and supports women in general irrespective of their principles.

c. Partition

ELA is a partition organisation, where it works with 'ALP in Australia because it believes that working with a party would be more effective in influencing policy development and implementing legislative change rather than working as non-governmental and non-partition organisation. ELA was founded by women in the ALP. Many organisation function as non-governmental, non-partition organisation and few organisations work with multiple parties.

The reason establishing ELA with ALP women are:

- During the period leading up to the launch of ELA, ALP was in the government for a relatively long period
- The founding members and majority of supporters are from ALP or supportive of ALP policies
- The party and the women in the party are supportive of gender equality and the then Prime Minister Paul Keating was receptive of the principles of ELA.
- When the party leader is supportive, that would influence the policies that are supportive of women and principles of ELA of gender equality are beneficial to everyone. This creates changes in legislation which can contribute to significant impacts in longer term. d. Self – funded and Independent

ELA is self-funded organisation, money is raised through membership and different income generating events and activities. Other organisations mainly have funding source through donor organisations and individual donations. Though the organisation decided to work with ALP, it has been set up as an independent body apart from the party so it has autonomous control of its activities.

- The women who supported the feminist principles of ELA principles believe that women should have the control of the finance and organisational leadership.
- ELA aimed to support the women candidates who are supportive and will promote the principles through their representation and wanted to ensure this was how the funds raised would be used.
- You don't have to be a member of the ALP to be a member of ELA. There are members who are supportive to the gender equality and principles of ELA, but don't want to be a member of a political party. Therefore, the fund management should be with women of ELA, and ELA decided to set up as an independent body.

1.2 EMILY's List Australia's contribution in overcoming the challenges

a. Challenges for women in political representation in Australia

The Australian women also face similar issues as other women face around the world for their political participation and representation.

a 1) Structural Challenges

Structural barriers and challenges arise from everywhere within the society (Delpiano E, 2018) The situations and negative experience of women representatives or candidates are;

- criticisms on personal life and decisions they have made,
- the use of language for such criticisms
- double standards in behaviour of media reporting and public questioning of the women's ability in leadership but not questioning men when they decide to run as a candidate

These all contribute to inhibiting other women to come forward to participate in politics.

"Lack of confident among women to engage in political participation due to the existing social barriers" – ELA's convenor

Generally society is conservative and there was opposition to ELA in different part of the country mainly focused on the ELA principle of reproductive choice. Individual States have separate legislation which only recently decriminalised abortion such as Queensland and New South Wales, campaigning for ALP women candidates has been challenging.

a 2) Financial challenges

The financial barrier is one of the main challenges to the women, even if they are willing to be a candidate. Often their access to financial resources is limited and they have less experience in fundraising and networking skills.

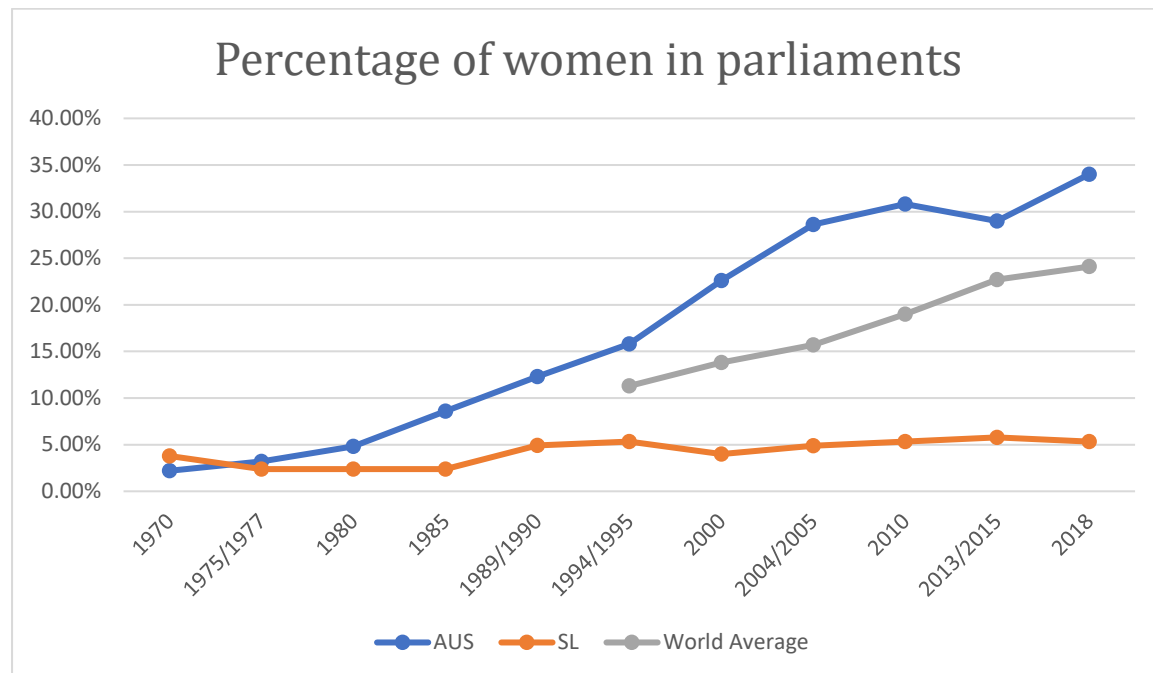
a 3) Political challenges

Politically, Australia does not have a legislative or electoral quota system for women for the country. The pre-selection process for winning safe seats favour men candidates within most political parties.

b. Comparison of Australia and Sri Lanka Context of women political leadership

Australia's current women political representation in the federal parliament is 33.2 percentage in 2019 while Sri Lanka's women representation in the parliament is only 5.3 percentage.

The following graph shows the trend in women's political representation in Australia and Sri Lanka from 1970 to 2018. The trend shows the progress of women's political representation in both countries. Australia's percentage of women's political representation gradually increases from 1970 to 1994 period, showing 13.6% change in twenty-four years. There is a significant increase of 15% which was achieved within the fifteen years from 1995. Sri Lanka's percentage is showing very slow progress and the change is between 3% to 6% throughout the period.



(this chart created through the data retrieved from Inter Parliament Union's Archive Data and report on women in politics (IPU, 2005))

(Note: data on world average is not available for the graph from the data source)

"Switzerland made 15th rank in women political representation with 42% where women got their suffrage 40 years later than Sri Lanka and we are struggling to pass 6%. There is nothing to proud in saying that we had the world's first female prime minister without increasing women's representation" – The independent political candidate Sri Lanka – Key Person Sri Lanka

c. EMILY's List's contributions to address the challenges

The activities of ELA under **Candidate Support** are providing support for addressing financial and personal (social) challenges. The research conducted and other initiatives such as Affirmative Action carried out by ELA contribute to overcome the political challenges.

c 1) Financial support

Early money; Raised through the membership and other income-generation activities of ELA, and **Direct donations;** collected via facilitating with an online platform where the people can directly donate to their preferred candidates, provides some support to manage the financial challenge.

c 2) Social and personal support

Mentoring - Provides support and guidance to the candidates by matching with mentors who are experienced current or former political representatives.

Campaign support – Linking women volunteers with candidates for campaign related support.

Training in different aspects such as public speaking, fundraising, campaigning and media management. These are provided by the ELA members to the candidates in each state or territory.

c 3) Political support

Research – carrying out research to understand the **gender gap** in the election which can gather timely information to influence election strategies in the party. Also providing opportunities to young women to perform research who can be next generation's progressive candidate through 'Julia Gillard's Next Generation Internship'¹¹.

Trainings – **Similar to** the training of candidate, ELA also assists with public training- and professional development and provides the information on how to get elected and influence policy. It covers the different aspects such as political skills, Government lobbying and social change advocacy.¹²

Affirmative Action - Affirmative action is to have rules on quotas for ensuring that women are preselected for winnable within the ALP. Australian parliaments donot have legislative arrangements for quota system for women. ELA has supported the campaign to introduce the Affirmative Action Rules from the very beginning. ELA strongly believed that working without such rules will not support for the increase in women's representation and they took actions towards bringing a change in the party's rule by '**Affirmative Action**'.

The success of Affirmative Action

The party has passed the Affirmative Action rule in 1994 which agrees on pre-selecting 35% of women to winnable seats in states and federal by the year of 2002. This is the major achievement for ELA, as the country does not have such arrangements for women's representation, but the party took the initiative to increase the women's political representation within their party. The Achievement did not stop with 35%, ELA has again campaigned with the ELA supported women representatives to amend the percentage to 50% but agreed upon a change 40-40-20 in 2012, which is 40% for men, 40% for women and 20% would be either men or women candidates would be pre-selected for the winning seats. The 20% most of the time was allocated to men and now the rule change introduced in 2015 has the targetto achieve 50% women representation by 2025.

d. The contribution of EMILY's List in women into Politics and Significant Changes

ELA contributed to increase the number of women as candidates as well as representatives within the ALP through various actions and strategies.

d 1) High number of women candidate support

Since ELA started the supporting to the women candidates from the 1997 elections and it has supported a total of 555 women candidates to run in state and federal election with 267 elected¹³.

¹¹ <https://www.emilyslist.org.au/projects>

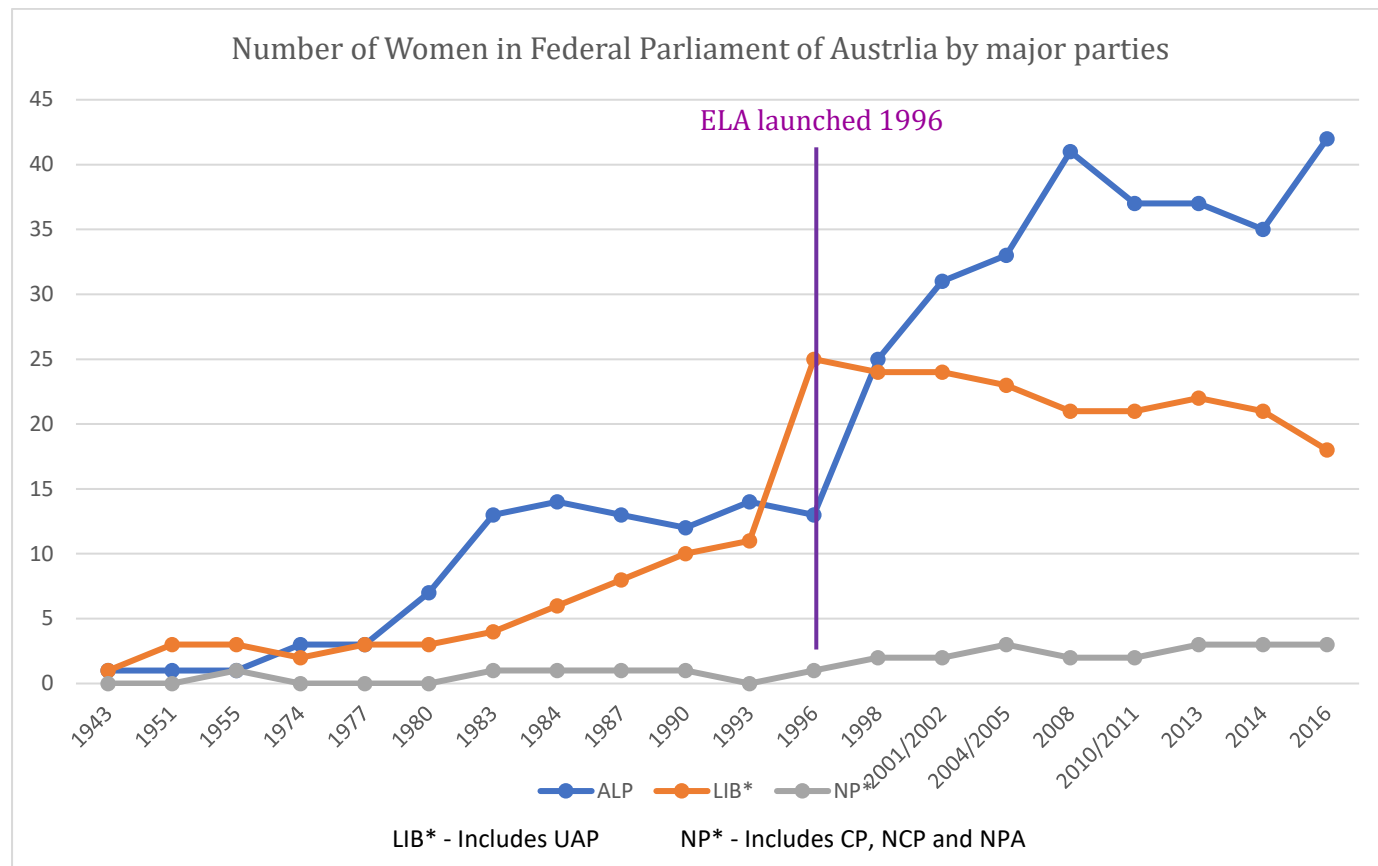
¹² https://www.emilyslist.org.au/candidate_support

¹³ <https://www.emilyslist.org.au/herstory>

d 2) Increased women representation

During the period of ELA launching initiatives in Australia (1992 -1996), the women political representation in Australia was 15.8%¹⁴ in and the percentage of the Labour women the party was 14.5% (EMILY's List Australia, 2015) in 1994.

According to the parliament library data, the total number of women elected to parliament by 2013 are 664 and out of them 350 are from ALP which is 52.7% of total women where other major parties hold 32%. Based on the data provided by the parliament library, the following graph shows the change in the number of women's representation by major parties according to the time period



(Source: this chart created through the data retrieved from Parliamentary Handbook¹⁵)

The above data shows that the drastic change in women's representation during 1996 to 1998 within the ALP, where the EMILY's List supported women candidates in the election held in 1997. Compare to other major parties ALP is showing the progress in women representation within the party. The drop in the number of women's representation is due to the loss of ALP in the election, but still ALP hold the highest percentage (47%) of women representation in parliament which is nearly twice the percentage of other parties.

¹⁴ Women members of Australian Parliaments 1921–2013, by time periods – Parliament of Australia.

(2019). Retrieved from

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1314/WomenParl/WomenParl2

¹⁵ Parliament of Australia. (2017). *45th Parliamentary Handbook* (pp. 511-514) retrieved from

<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=HANDBOOK;id=handbook%2Fnewhandbook%2F2017-06-21%2F0056;query=Id%3A%22handbook%2Fnewhandbook%2F2017-06-21%2F0009%22>

Milestones of ELA supported women candidates in the political history of Australia.

- *Anna Bligh AC – Australia's first popularly elected Premier and Queensland's first woman leader*
- *Clare Martin AO – the Northern Territory's first female Chief Minister*
- *Lara Giddings – Tasmania's first woman Premier*
- *Carol Martin - the first Aboriginal woman to be elected to any Australian parliament*
- *Linda Burney - the first indigenous woman to be elected into the NSW Parliament and then into Australian House of Representatives*
- *Julia Gillard AC, Australia's first woman Prime Minister – who is also one of the founding members of EMILY's List*

(source: <https://www.emilyslist.org.au/herstory>)

d 3) Legislative and Policy changes

The increase of women representatives in numbers is not only the change ELA has created. It has supported policy and legislation changes moving towards gender equality and the advancing the basic principles of ELA through the women they supported. A major consideration of ELA was that endorsed candidate are prochoice and there have been significant changes by reforming the abortion laws. In 1998 Western Australia initiated an amendment in the abortion bill, and it led to the change in other states' abortion laws progressively by the campaigns and efforts by ELA supported women representatives.¹⁶

Reforms in labour laws in federal parliament have been achieved including paid parental leave and equal pay laws which are also the major principles of ELA. There are many other policy related changes and legislative changes which benefiting women, children and families that were supported by the women of ELA who were elected and in power.

- Carer Recognition Act in 2010 which is to fund the grandparents or the carers in the family
- Australian Human Rights Commission Amendment Act of 2012 which is concerned with the human rights of children in Australia including disability support and school funding.
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 and Disability Care Australia Fund Act 2013
- Acts related to the early childhood education and care, equity, health, pay equity, Indigenous women and children, and Families financial Assistance.

There are many other federal and state level legislative changes supported by the women representatives by ELA.¹⁷

e. Next steps of ELA

50% by 2025 – This is the next step of the Affirmative Action Rule, that aims to change the current arrangement of 40-40-20 winning seat proportion to 50-50 within the party by 2025.

Cultural diversity of women representatives - ELA has contributed significantly to increasing women's political representation and support for the legislative and policy changes by supporting ALP women candidates. The representation of women is expected to be diverse to reflect and represent all the cultural communities. Though the women's representation is increased, the diversity could not be maintained as expected within the party. The challenges to culturally

¹⁶ Housebound report – Emily's List 2015

¹⁷ Impact analysis of Federal Parliament (2007-2013) and Impact Analysis Report (2014-2018)

diverse women are also similar as other female candidates (Milione, 2019)¹⁸ and ELA is now prioritizing to increase the diversity in women's representation within the party.

f. Current challenge to ELA

Equal representation in federal level– The number of representatives within the party is increased as expected and marching towards achieving equal representation but as whole the country is not having equal representation of the women. Another challenge is that the women in are not holding leadership or decision-making positions in the state or federal parliaments and within the ALP. (Delpiano, 2018)¹⁹ These challenges can be addressed through ALP structural changes and ELA are advocating strategies to have women decision-making leaders in the party.

2. Sri Lanka's context on women political Representation

2.1 Common Challenges to the women in Sri Lanka

a. Structural barriers:

a 1) Lack of support from family and community

The family and community expect that the women should play the expected gender role of responsibility in the family before stepping into political responsibility. They measure the leadership and management capability by how the women contribute to managing the family responsibility.

"they know that managing the political career with personal life is a challenge. The support and understanding of others are important but they (community) tells that she is not able to manage the family properly, so how can she govern the people and country" – Women political representatives

a 2) Criticisms and stereotyping

Criticizing women's political and personal life in the media and particularly in social media, and double-standards and non-ethical attitude of media towards women are considerable barriers faced by women wanting a political career. The media or political competitors use the personal life incidents from a women's past (marital status or relationships) and create controversies based on cultural values.

"I was not able to face this kind of criticisms and character assassinations when I started my political career. Since I was serving in public sector I was respected and never had the experience like this." – Women Political Representative SL

"The very first strategy the men or community uses against women is degrading and try to attack on individual dignity, but we have to be ready and have the strength to face it in proper way. Then only the use of similar kind cheap strategies against women will be reduced" - Women Political Representative SL

b. Political barriers:

b 1) Lack of support in party level

Politics in Sri Lanka is a male dominant political system; the women politicians are expected to join in the existing parties and be supportive of the male politician's decision making. Community is reluctant to vote for female candidates if they are not belonging to their preferred party.

The opportunity to have discussion with the party leaderships about the women members' and candidates' issues are less and women are not able to communicate properly within party. Lack

¹⁸ Julia Gillard Next Generation Internship Report 2019 published by ELA

¹⁹ Julia Gillard Next Generation Internship Report 2018 published by ELA

of a supportive women's political agenda and the women members' engagement in the discussions are less. This is one of the barriers and discouragement to them to go forward.

"it's hard to open up your ideas and receiving support from the others. On the other hand, we can't blame only the party and male members, because there are women members who are not actively engage in the discussions"

b 2) Partiality and favoritism

Partiality in choosing candidates for nominations and in the appointment of members based on proportional votes such as choosing men over women or nominating known women candidates over promising women candidate is another issue. The members who are in the party for a long term are expecting that the seats should be allocated based on seniority despite of the ability of political leadership or the policy influence.

"As a new member when I asked about a procedure the senior member directed me with wrong procedures, I had to re do all the work and that delayed my proposal" Women Political Representative.

"Long-term membership only shouldn't be the criteria to be selected as a candidate" – Women political representative

b 3) Lack of knowledge on political context

Lack of enough knowledge about the political context is another barrier. The labeling and stereotyping of women on their political ability is always challenged and there is a gap created among women on their knowledge on political processes. The availability of policy documents in the local language also identifies as one of the barriers.

"there are women who are willing to work for community and working in the community level. But they don't have clear direction and knowledge about the country's context, political system and rule of law" – Key Informant from organization working for women's political representation

"most of the policy, procedure documents are not available in Tamil language. Though I can communicate in both official languages, I am not competent in reading in the other language, so how can I understand the system?" – Women Representative

b 4) Ethnic based parties and family politics

The current political parties in Sri Lanka are functioning based on the ethnic and cultural ideologies and mainly targeting the votes of the preferred ethnic group. The majority ethnic parties are having the majority representation where its difficult for minority ethnics parties to be in the government unless they supported a coalition government. The leadership of the party is with the family members or the support is prioritized for the family members of the MPs or Ministers. From top to bottom favoritism is playing a major role and its hard to become a candidate in the main parties.

"If you notice the women member of parliament in Sri Lanka, almost all came to the politics because of their husband or father or brother. You can be member in the party but to become a candidate and winning a seat is not easy as you think unless you have a background or support within the political party." Women organization key person

"Not only in parliament even in local government the favoritism is there." – Women Political Representative

b 5) Electoral quota:

The electoral quota is not legislated in constitution of Sri Lanka, but Sri Lanka has a quota system for the election of women representatives in local government. The Local Authorities Elections Act was amended in 2016, insisting a 25% quota for women in each party. This is calculated by number of votes received by each party and number of seats won, such that 25% of those seats need to be allocated to women in that party. This is a new law, there are challenges as mentioned above in selection of the candidates and allocating 25% of seats to the women. The women have been given the opportunity to fill requirement of 25%. Currently this process is not transparent, and the parties manipulate the priority order of the women candidates. Therefore, the lack of understanding on the system and the less knowledge about the procedures limit their ability to achieve their goals. Therefore the 25% quota allocation and the performance of the women representatives are being criticised by male members of the parties as they claim that there is no use of having women members as they are not capable of performing. It's a challenge now for the organisations and activists who fought for bringing the amendment to the act. Newly elected women need support in their new roles to overcome structural and inherent biases which limit their capacity to do the job.

"They don't understand the structure of politics and process. Women cannot change everything overnight. They expect us to win on the first attempt and if we are not showing a progress, they easily point out that 'this is not suitable for women'" – Women political representatives

"to keep the 25% quota in the local government there is a need for supporting the existing representatives to improve themselves, as well as the parties should select suitable candidates in future. That will only help to move the quota system to province and parliament level" – Head of women organisation

c. Financial and resource challenges

c 1) Lack of access to finance resources:

Lack of **financial** support to conduct election campaigning and women have limitations in accessing financial support for their political campaigns.

"when I approached one of the main parties and expressed my interest in being a candidate, the very first question they asked about is how much money I am able to spend. Even if we have knowledge on the politics and capable of managing political responsibilities, the financial capacity decides everything" – Independent political candidate

There are non-governmental organizations working across Sri Lanka on supporting women into politics, but their effectiveness and sustainability is questionable since these organizations depend on the funding and are time bounded. Most of them are considering providing training focused on skills development related to politics.

"I don't think there are organizations directly provide finance support to candidates. It may be because as they are non-governmental organization and non-partition, they might have the limitation" – Former Political Representative

c 2) Limitations in trainings and other resources:

There are training and workshops conducted by various organizations to support women's political representation but limited in location as the organization must work according to their project location. The information on common trainings and workshops are not shared or outreach properly to all women across the country due to resources and time limitations. Also, the non-government organizations are outcome/ result oriented. Therefore, the same participants are receiving the trainings repeatedly and other women are left out.

2.2 Suggestions to overcome the barriers to women's participation in SL

Empowering women only will not be sufficient to increase the women's political representation. The collective effort of all the stakeholders are important to address these challenges. The following suggestions were provided by the key informants

a. Trainings and awareness

To the women candidates and representatives on relevant laws, policies, and legal framework.

- The training should also include conflict management, strategic planning and communication skills.
- IT skills, media and social media management
- Cover all the locations and be specific to the candidates as each person will be at a different stage of their development

The training should include how to raise awareness of gender equality to the community as well as supporting the women who are interested in political leadership.

b. Guidelines

The establishment of guidelines for the parties on selection criteria for candidates, and mechanisms for transparency in the candidate selection and seat allocation is essential for improving the number of women who can run as candidates.

c. Support system

Some form of structured support system will be needed to assist women candidates to ensure their political representation in order to overcome the discrimination and bias within or outside of the party they wish to represent. This should include a financial support system to back the women candidates.

d. Network:

Creating a women **network** across the country with all levels of professionals including public sector officials.

2.3 Best Practices to adapt from ELA

a. Training and mentorship

EMILY's List provides the training and mentorship to the candidates who are preselected by the ALP; therefore, the trainings can be planned specifically for the candidates. The topics suggested match ELA's training aspects and the outlines can be adapted according to the country context. EMILY's List uses experienced political women to influence the women candidates by connecting them as **mentors**. Gender gap research is conducted prior to elections to assist the candidates and the party with campaigning during elections and with policy discussions..²⁰ This also can be included in community level training and awareness raising, but the structure and topics of the training need to be reviewed and outline according to the situation of Sri Lanka.

b. Affirmative Action

The organization or the women network can be informed by the success of 'Affirmative Action' initiative. As mentioned previously, the party processes for selection of women candidates can be negotiated to amend the party's constitution by agreeing to Affirmative Action which includes

- The criteria for the candidate selection that should be applicable to both men and women candidates.

²⁰ <https://www.emilyslist.org.au/training>

- The law states that each party must nominate their women candidates in order of preference for filling 25% of quota. After winning, the same priority order must be followed while allocating 25% seats. Therefore, the process of candidate selection and the priority list should be made transparent by the party.

c. Role Model influencing

To encourage young women to be politically engaged they are supporting research through the '**Julia Gillard's Next Generation Internship**'. As mentioned, Julia Gillard is one of the founding members of ELA who made history as the first female Prime Minister of Australia. The organization is membership based and the network they created is a major strength for them for their fund-raising activities. As the suggestion of a **support system** mentioned previously, the network can be a resource pool for various activities including legal and financial support for the candidate. The professionals in the specific sector contribute their expertise in training, awareness raising and legal assistance. ELA also supports the candidate with volunteers across the country. The created network utilizes the voluntary support of the members to the candidates in **during an election campaign**.

3. Possibilities of a similar organization to ELA in Sri Lanka

The possibility of setting up a similar organization is assessed as being positive and has an enabling environment with some limitations in terms of funding, partition, women charter and basic principles. The suggestion by the key informants from Sri Lanka are combined based on their opinions.

3.1 Funding:

Self-funding is appreciated by the key informant's idea as most of the organizations are depending on donor organization and have the following limitations:

- Outcome or result oriented
- Mandated to the donor requirement
- Limited in geographical location or target people

a. Membership-based funding

The membership fee cannot be imposed during the initial stage where that may prevent the women to become a member. Also, not all places and people have access to online based funding or are familiar with digital transactions. It may be harder than expected to follow up and collect the money from members in rural communities. It is clear strategy is needed for different memberships, methods of contribution and accountability measures.

b. Crowd-funding

This method is familiar in Sri Lanka with famous cricket players being part of the fund-raising and this happens every year in Sri Lanka. This can be a possible way for fundraising but there may be limitations based on the cause for fundraising. The influencing people (women) can be approached and the interested individuals can be mobilized for this fundraising.

"functioning with self-funding is difficult in initial stage, but that gives you the independence to decide what you want to do, how you want to implement."

c. Donations

The change in the Electoral law was achieved through the women organization and activists in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is a positive situation to have sustainable donors by building a

network with professionals who support the cause. These individuals can be the sustainable and long-term supporters similar to ELA's Angel members.

d. Shop and merchandise

Alternative income-generation activity may be not possible in the initial stages of setting up an organization. Later, this method can be included as one of the activities where it can also provide support for female vendors/ producers. This can give an opportunity to mobilize them as members and volunteers in the community as well as to promote the organization.

Example: The handmade products like earrings, handlooms, palmyra products, the banana fiber notebooks, books signed by famous women politicians, and products with motivating words or phrases.

This shop also can reach out to people who are outside of the country but still wanting to contribute to the country's development and gender equality.

3.2 Partition or non-partition

In Sri Lanka's context, this would be a challenge. The political system of Australia is different to Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka there are multiple parties and the parties are based on the ethnic composition of the locations. At the same time working as a non-partitioned organization will have limitations in initiating Affirmative actions and promoting women into policy influencing positions.

"we provide training and relevant education to the women who are interested in political leadership. These trainings are common for everyone, if they are not part of the party it's their own effort to join in the party and get selected as candidate."

Working with one party would not be a suitable option and that may not benefit the purpose of the organization. Bringing the women's quota to parliament will need agreement by all parties' support since the government is formed with none of the single parties having the majority. To achieve gender equality in representation within the parties, it is better to work with the major influencing parties both in government and opposition.

"in my opinion, working with a party is useful. You can suggest the women to the party or select the women from the party for your actions." – Political Representative, Sri Lanka

3.3 Affirmative action and women charter

The possibility and receptiveness for an affirmative action and women's charter has a positive sign in Sri Lanka as there is already an electoral quota system in-place.

3.4 Basic principals

The women representatives and the organization being considered to support them should begin with a set of values or principles to be agreed between the women and the parties that they will represent. The women candidates will agree to support and influence the policies based upon the agreed principles and ensure that the policies are incorporating the values of the party they represent. Also, the parties should ensure that the women's contribution towards the policy development is included as well as the voices of women from all the communities they represent.

"if we don't have some priorities, we will not be able to negotiate with the party during proposals and projects, definitely we should have some principles" – women political representative.

a. Childcare –

Existing policies²¹ related to childcare and health are not universal to all. Sri Lanka's women labor force participation is limited because of the gaps in childcare (International Labor Organization). If quality childcare facilities or subsidies are provided the contribution to the Sri Lanka's GDP by women would be increased by 20% in long run. (International Finance Group 2018).

b. Employment:

Sri Lanka's women labor force participation is 34.3% and more than half (51%) of them are working in the informal sector (Madurawala, 2019). The benefits or support service for the informal sector is not properly regulated and they have issues in their wage structure including maternal leave benefits (Gunatilaka, 2018). Sri Lanka does not have parental leave or paternity leave regulations and flexible working hours option at the moment.

There is a connection between employment and childcare. Also, proper employment opportunities will give the financial independence to the women that can support them to overcome the challenges of violence against women and domestic violence. Therefore, employment should be one of the principles that the women representatives should be concerned about.

c. Reproductive Rights

"Woman/girl should have the right to decision making on her marital life and her choice on when to have child and how many children should she have".

The existing abortion law has not been reformed since 1883 and the initiative taken to reform the abortion law was not successful in 2011. (Perera L, 2015). The number of unsafe abortions is 600-700 in Sri Lanka and complications after abortion is the second reason for maternal mortality Sri Lanka. Women who have access to abortion are married women (Perera S., 2018) and they access abortion as family planning options (Kumar R., 2013). Lack of awareness on sexual and reproductive rights leads to sexual violence and other social issues like school dropout, teenage pregnancy and early marriages.

d. Equality

The above-mentioned principles are interconnected, and inequality in and access to quality and appropriate services will lead to poverty and structural violence. These are barriers to achieving gender equality and development. Therefore, equality in all aspects should be the overall core value of the organization.

²¹ Shop and Office Employees (Regulation of Employment and Remuneration) Act, 1954 , Maternity Benefits Ordinance, 1939 and Health Services Act of 2000

3.5 Recommendations

Funding : the methods of membership-based funding, crowd-funding and individual donors can be proposed as the funding basis for the organization. Since these methods are rarely used in the non-profit private sector organizations the suitability of these methods should be deeply analyzed in the context of Sri Lanka.

Partition: Bi-partition or tri-partition is a possible option, and this will support the organization as whoever forms Government, they can continue to work with the ruling party and women from the party. Also when deciding on the party/parties there should be a consideration on diversity of the ethnicity, the party which is receptive to include women from all three ethnic communities could be best option to collaborate with. (See appendix 4 for the suggestions for the parties)

Affirmative Action can be focused on

- Increasing the electoral quota for women in local government based on agreed timeline within the party's legislation
- Expanding the electoral quota to provincial government and national legislation

Principles

The principles are interconnected and each principle could be considered in order to influence regulations and policies as suggested.

- **childcare**
 - o Health and early childhood development of the children
 - o 'Rights aspects'²² of the women in all employment sectors: childcare often consider the rights of a child and expecting the responsibility of everyone to contribute in protection, childhood development and care. But it rarely considers the right of women in accessing affordable childcare which supports them enjoying their employment rights. (UNICEF, 2017)
 - o Gender equality aspects as childcare responsibility is equal to all.
- **employment**
 - o Pay structure for the informal²³ sector
 - o Maternity benefits and leave
 - o Parental and paternity leave
- **reproductive rights**
 - o The abortion law reform: Abortion is permitted only if the mother's life in risk. In 2011, a bill drafted for reforming the abortion law proposed for legalize the abortion in the circumstances of sexual violence (rape, incest) and fetal abnormalities. But this bill has not passed in the parliament and all the relevant stakeholders are still working on advocating for the reform. Therefore, the women representatives should understand the importance of the reforming abortion laws.
 - o Access to safe abortion
 - o quality maternal health services
 - o Incorporation of comprehensive sex education in the school system

²³ Informal sector – in Sri Lanka, informal sector identified as the sectors with very few formal procedures, wage regulation. Engaging in production of service and goods using own labour resources. Example: Agriculture non formal sector, Fishery non formal sector. (Sandaratne, 2001)

- Reduction in sexual violence and harassment against women (in schools, workplace and public)
- **Equality**
 - Equality in provision of services – health, education and other basic services
 - Diversity and inclusion of all ethnicities and communities
 - Governance and monitoring mechanisms to track the achievements of gender equality in all of its aspects.

4. Important aspects to consider and Learning from ELA

4.1 Groundwork and Network

The launch of the ELA happened after four years (1992-1996) of groundwork across the country. The founding members and their network had put an immense effort into setting up the organization. Therefore, creating the network with similar minded women who are supportive to women's political representation is important. Also the network and members should be willing to volunteer their time because in the initial stages there are challenges in setting up and running the organization.

- Listing the possible influential women, connect with them and explaining the concept of the organization
- Community outreach to meet the local level community and women leaders
- With institutions – universities, political party/parties – business??

4.2 Defining the Principles

Every organization should have their own principles, and the organization aiming to address women's issues through women's political leadership should consider having principles that prioritize gender equality and development.

*“increasing the numbers of women in parliament will not be effective unless they are **“progressive”** and supporting the values that are benefiting women and others” – ELA Convener*

4.3 Sustainability and Fund Management Plan

The raised fund shouldn't be spent without proper management planning because the sustainability of the funding is important for maintaining the organization's activities into the future.

- Fundraising plan – Number of members targeted, and amount of funding expected
- Possibilities of alternative income generating activities – such as ELA generating funds through merchandise sales.
- Investment plan – deciding on the portion of funding to be invested and that can be a substantial support for the function of the organization.

4.4 Partition and independent

Achieving gender equality in political representation will be helpful in influencing policy changes that support the principles of the organization. The women are to be in a position where they can contribute to policy formation and implementation. Therefore, it is considered to be most successful path if the organization works as a partition organization, but the function of the organization should be independent of the parties like ELA.

4.5 Additional aspect

Training and education

The **Pathways to Politics Program for Women**²⁴ by The University of Melbourne can be taken as a model which supports to the women / female by providing series of sessions including workshops, discussions, practical work and seminars for free cost for women who have attended this University. This will support and motivate the up-coming generation of women and make them engaged in politics and leadership.

²⁴ Pathways to Politics Program for Women. Retrieved from <https://government.unimelb.edu.au/engagement/pathways-to-politics-program-for-women#home>

Appendixes

Appendix 1

EMILY's List USA

EMILY's List was founded in 1985 in US, to fund women candidates financially for their political campaigns. The funds raised through the membership donations and the organization, currently reaches five million people²⁵. It has supported hundreds of pro-choice Democrat women to the house, senate, governor's seat, state and local office with the funding and became one of the largest resource for finance for women to run as candidates.²⁶ EMILY's List US focus is on fundraising and they are partition organization supporting to pro-choice democratic women.

Appendix 2

Values of ELA

CHOICE

ELA believes women must have control over their own bodies and choices in their lives. Reproductive freedom empowers women and men to choose if, when and how to begin the important journey into parenthood, without fear of discrimination, coercion or violence.

EQUAL PAY

ELA believes society needs to increase the value it places on the work of women – both in the paid workforce and in the home. ELA believes in challenging long held perceptions of the inferiority of "women's work", particularly in the provision of care to vulnerable people in our society like children, young people, the disabled and elderly. ELA believes the difference in the nature and way women work, including time out for caring, should not lead to significantly lower wages or superannuation for women.

CHILDCARE

ELA believes work-life balance is crucial to women, men and families. For women and men to achieve fulfilment professionally and personally, they need affordable, quality, flexible childcare for their children.

EQUITY

ELA strongly believes in the right of every woman to enjoy equal rights and privileges before the law, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. This is because equality is a fundamental human right that should be enjoyed by all.

DIVERSITY

ELA believes democracy is enhanced through the diversity of people participating in it. More women in parliament, on corporate boards and in our courts lead to greater diversity of views and therefore better public policy outcomes. Women are a diverse group and considering the needs of all kinds of women is essential.

²⁵ <https://www.emilyslist.org/pages/entry/our-history>

²⁶ <https://www.emilyslist.org/pages/entry/women-we-helped-elect>

Appendix 3

Table of organizations compared

S/No	Organisation name	Partition	Direct finance support to Candidates	Organisation website
1	Political Institute for women	No	No	https://www.aph.gov.au/
2	Akina Mama wa Afrika	No	No	https://www.akinamamawaafrica.org/
3	Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa	No	No	https://moremiinitiative.org/
4	Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW, Australia)	No	No	https://www.wel.org.au
5	Arab Women Leadership Institute	No	No	http://arabwomenleadership.com/
6	International Republican Institute	No	No	https://www.iri.org/
7	The Voice of Libyan Woman	No	No	http://www.vlwlibya.org/
8	Elect women	No	No	https://electwomen.com/
9	National Foundation for Women Legislators	No	No	https://womenlegislators.org
10	Running Start	No	No	https://runningstart.org
11	Women Under Forty Political Action Committee	No	No	http://www.wufpac.org/
12	The National Women's Political Caucus	Multi	Yes	http://www.nwpc.org/
13	EMILY's List US	Yes	Yes	https://www.emilyslist.org/
14	EMILY's List Australia	Yes	Yes	https://www.emilyslist.org.au/
15	Women Campaign Fund	No	Yes	http://www.wcfonline.org
16	Teach A girl to Lead	No	No	http://tag.rutgers.edu/
17	Center for American Women and Politics	No	No	awp.rutgers.edu
18	She should run	No	No	https://www.sheshouldrun.org/

19	Women and Media Collective	No	No	https://womenandmedia.org/
20	21 in 21 initiatives	No	No	https://www.21in21.org/
21	Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment (CAUSE)	No	No	https://www.causeusa.org/

Appendix 4

Suggestion for Parties:

(Note : These suggestions are made based on the current political context of Sri Lanka (October 2019), and there may be changes in the party structures after the presidential election in November 2019)

1. **United National party** – who were supportive of bringing the 25% of quota for local government. Receptive to all three ethnic communities
2. **Sri Lanka Federation Party** – the very first female prime minister of the world is from this party and the first female president of the country is from the party. Currently functioning as United People Freedom Alliance. Currently having five women MPs in the parliament

This two parties are main parties being in the government and influential among Sinhala Ethnic Community but receptive towards other ethnics in respective regions.

3. **Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kads**i – The party is influential among the Tamil ethnic community in North and east part of the country and was the opposition party 2005-2018.
4. **Sri Lanka Muslim Congress** - The party is influential among the Muslim ethnic community in East and west, and part of coalition government.

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