

3rd International Research Symposium on Gender Equity and Equality- (IRSGEE 2026) – VIYOMAM 2026

Organized by the Centre for Gender Equity and Equality (CGEE), University of Jaffna, in collaboration with the Department of Christian and Islamic Civilization, University of Jaffna, and the Student Christian Movement of Sri Lanka, the 3rd International Research Symposium on Gender Equity and Equality (IRSGEE 2026) – VIYOMAM 2026 was successfully held on 06 August 2026 at the Kailasapathy Auditorium, University of Jaffna. Centered around the theme *"From Policy to Practice: Making Gender Equity and Equality a Lived Reality,"* the symposium brought together academics, researchers, policymakers, development practitioners, students, and civil society representatives from Sri Lanka and abroad to foster interdisciplinary dialogue, critically reflect on contemporary gender issues, and examine practical pathways for translating gender equality policies into meaningful action through keynote and plenary addresses, panel discussions, and technical sessions.

The event commenced with participant registration, followed by the traditional lighting of the oil lamp and a silent prayer, after which the organizing committee welcomed the gathering and the Conference Chair delivered opening remarks emphasizing sustained research, advocacy, and institutional action to address gender inequalities. During the inaugural session, the official conference proceedings were released, and the General Chair, Senior Professor T. Velnamby (Vice Chancellor of the University of Jaffna), delivered an address highlighting the university's commitment to creating inclusive, equitable academic environments and supporting research that drives social transformation. The keynote address was delivered by Senior Professor P. Anuruddhi S. Edirisinghe (Department of Forensic Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya), who offered insights into the practical challenges and opportunities in advancing gender equity while underscoring the need for evidence-based approaches, institutional commitment, and collaborative action.

The inaugural programme featured four plenary presentations by distinguished speakers: Professor Prabha Manuratne (Director, Centre for Gender Equity and Equality, University Grants Commission), who reflected on national perspectives and institutional mechanisms in higher education; Professor C. S. Wickramagamage (Retired Senior Professor, Department of English, University of Peradeniya), who shared critical reflections on gender, culture, and social transformation; Mr. Timothy Kumarathunga (Treasurer, Student Christian Movement of Sri Lanka), who highlighted the role of faith-based and community organizations in promoting gender justice and social inclusion; and Ms. Shanthi Bhagirathan (Founder and Chief Executive Officer), who discussed practical experiences and community-based initiatives aimed at empowering marginalized groups and fostering inclusive development.

A central highlight of the symposium was a panel discussion titled *"Between Policy and Practice: Where Does Gender Equality Break Down? – Perspectives from Diverse Contexts,"* moderated by Prof. Shivany Shanmugathas (Professor of Marketing and Former Director of CGEE, University of Jaffna). The panel featured Dr. Manoj Fernando

(Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion and Gender Focal Point, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka) discussing higher education institutions; Ms. Chathini Uduwana (Vice President - People at Typefi, Country Head – Sri Lanka, and Ambassador for Women in Tech Sri Lanka) examining gender equality in technology and cybercrimes against women; Prof. A. Sarwesvaran (Senior Lecturer, Department of Private and Comparative Law, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo) exploring legal perspectives and implementation challenges; Dr. M. C. Rasmin (Chief Executive Officer, International Foundation for Digital Child) addressing gender representation and challenges in media and digital spaces; and Dr. Shanthi Elizabeth Senthe (Associate Professor, Windsor Law, University of Windsor, Canada) discussing gender equity in relation to finance and economic participation. This engaging panel illuminated the structural, cultural, legal, technological, and institutional barriers hindering gender equality while identifying practical strategies for accountability, inclusion, and gender-responsive practices across sectors.

Following the inaugural session, parallel technical sessions took place at the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna, where 44 researchers and academics alongside 66 undergraduates presented papers and poster presentations across 13 diverse themes—including education, governance, law, media, technology, community development, health, and social justice—fostering scholarly exchange, constructive feedback, and networking. Ultimately, IRSGEE 2026 achieved its core objective of creating a multidisciplinary platform to bridge policy commitments and lived realities, strengthening professional networks, promoting evidence-based dialogue, and reaffirming the collective responsibility of universities, policymakers, civil society organizations, and communities. The Centre for Gender Equity and Equality, University of Jaffna, extended its sincere appreciation to all keynote and plenary speakers, panelists, presenters, session chairs, reviewers, collaborators, sponsors, volunteers, and participants whose contributions ensured the success of VIYOMAM 2026, which concluded with a renewed commitment to fostering inclusive, equitable, and just societies where gender equality is realized both in policy and everyday practice.











