

# National Consultation on Sustainable Recovery and Inclusive Development

Colombo, Sri Lanka  
July 31, 2024



NATIONAL  
SCIENCE  
FOUNDATION



Association of  
Asian Social Science  
Research Councils

National Science Foundation  
Sri Lanka





Association of  
Asian Social Science  
Research Councils

# **National Consultation on Sustainable Recovery and Inclusive Development**

**Colombo, Sri Lanka  
July 31, 2024**

## **Organized by**

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## Message from the Secretary, Ministry of Education

Ms J.M.Thilaka Jayasundara



It is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt thanks to the National Science Foundation for identifying the timely need of forming a platform for multidisciplinary expert personnel to discourse among themselves to share expertise and experiences they have to find sustainable solutions to the present crisis.

Currently, Sri Lanka is undergoing a significant socio-economic transformation due to this crisis. Therefore, sustainable development plans should be in place which are generated based on evidences. I am pleased to mentioned that the NSF has utilized its mandate precisely giving multidisciplinary approach to finding evidence-based policy recommendations to this scorching issue.

Due to the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the issue that is dealing with obviously it is laborious to finding the priority areas. Reflecting on the considerable impact that gives to uplifting the wellbeing of the people, five priority areas have been selected by the NSF.

I came to know that five thematic experts have produced five executive summaries which encompass profound and insightful ideas. Undoubtedly your innovative ideas will catalyze the discussion at the event and will set new standards for excellence. Your hard work and dedication should be greatly acknowledged. I have no doubt that the stakeholders who will be joining at the forum would actively engage in the discourse for refining the policy directives further.

This national consultative forum with a wider engagement of academia along with the policy practitioners, relevant government officials, experts, etc. will create constructive outcomes which then can be used by policy-formulating and practicing entities for implementation. It is pleased to hear that the NSF has partnered with the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC) to bring foreign expertise into the context.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have worked hard for their invaluable contribution rendered. I am confident that this initiative will make a positive impact and its benefits will be felt for many years to come. I wish you all a very successful and fruitful forum.



**Message from the Chairman,**  
National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka

**Prof. Ranjith Senaratne**



Achieving a swift recovery from the ongoing, debilitating economic crisis is one of the highest priorities for Sri Lanka today. This effort represents the most significant challenge confronting the nation. This crisis, which has not arisen suddenly but is the culmination of prolonged socio-economic trends, demands more than an immediate fix. A comprehensive strategy involving the swift formulation and implementation of effective national policies is essential for fostering a sustainable recovery and establishing the foundation for inclusive development in the aftermath.

Recognizing that many of the underlying social and economic issues contributing to the crisis fall within the realm of social sciences, it is crucial for both social and natural scientists in the country to offer innovative solutions and develop appropriate policy recommendations. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, integrating insights from all scientific fields, we can develop effective policies that support inclusive and sustainable development in the post-crisis landscape.

The national consultation on 'sustainable recovery and inclusive post-crisis development', organized by the NSF is therefore, timely and essential. It provides a valuable opportunity to shape effective recovery and inclusivity policies through the collaborative efforts of both social and natural sciences.

We are honored to have esteemed experts from India, Malaysia, and Australia at this important forum, backed by a competent group of national experts. Their expertise and insights will greatly enhance our understanding of the current crisis and provide valuable perspectives on sustainable recovery strategies. I am confident that this forum will attract significant engagement, and I invite all stakeholders to actively participate in the discussions throughout the event.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC), our esteemed partner, for their steadfast

support in partnering with us for this forum. I also extend my sincere thanks to Emeritus Professor Siri Hettige, the Chairman of the Working Committee on Social Sciences for their invaluable guidance and assistance. Additionally, I am grateful to Dr Sepalika Sudasinghe, Director General, and the dedicated team at the Science and Technology Policy Research Division (STPRD) for their tireless efforts and commitment to the successful coordination of this national-level forum.

I wish you all a very successful and fruitful forum.



## **Message from the Director General,** National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka

**Dr Sepalika Sudasinghe**



The Sri Lankan economy is re-emerging from the worst socio-economic crisis. In this process, strong public policies in practice are vital. Public policy is considered to be strong when it solves problems efficiently and effectively whilst serving and supporting governmental institutions and encourages active citizenship. Evidence based policy making approach is important as it advocates for policy decisions to be grounded on, or influenced by, rigorously established objective evidence.

Since National Science Foundation is the premier organization by its mandate devoted to crystallizing and dissemination of evidence-based policy recommendations towards fostering science, technology and innovation, it understands the significant role social sciences could play there. Accordingly, NSF, Sri Lanka recognizes the critical role that transdisciplinary research approach could play in shaping effective policies crosscutting all the sciences together to generate effective policies for recovery and inclusive development.

With the aforementioned objective, NSF today unfolds the national consultative forum under the theme “Sustainable Recovery and Inclusive Development” as a hybrid event enabling a wider engagement of academia along with the policy formulators, policy practitioners, relevant policy experts, locally and internationally, and importantly representatives from media. Mass media plays a crucial and vital role in information dissemination and ultimately in the political market and in the process of public policy making.

Five theme papers will be presented at the forum which are developed by five expert groups addressing themes having a substantial influence on the wellbeing of the people namely, economic development, social security, health, education, and agriculture and food security. These papers are opened for wider stakeholder views at this forum ensuring the bottom-up approach of policy making. Subsequently, the forum will generate evidence-based policy recommendations under these five themes to be forwarded to policy-formulating and practicing entities for implementation.

Importantly, the NSF is pleased to announce that Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC) has partnered with NSF in making this important event a success by mobilizing expert resource persons from some of the AASSREC member States who will be sharing experience from the region. Conclusions and recommendations to be surfaced from this national level event will also be shared among AASSREC member States.

The unstinted role played by the Science and Technology Policy Research Division (STPRD) of the NSF jointly with the NSF Working Committee on Social Sciences in making this forum a success is greatly acknowledged.

Together we can deliver the vision of an integrated, sustainable and inclusive future.

**Message from the Chairman,**  
Working Committee on Social Sciences,  
National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka

**Prof. S. T. Hettige**



It gives me great pleasure to send this message on the occasion of the launching of policy initiative entitled: Policy Development for Sustainable Recovery and Inclusive Post-Recovery Development.

The launch of the above policy initiative that is taking place in Colombo on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 2024 is the outcome of deliberations that we had at the NSF Working Committee on Social Sciences at several of its regular meetings in early 2024. Having taken into account the debilitating impact that COVID-19 Pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis had on almost all aspects of Sri Lankan society, in particular, the economy, vital public services and the day to day lives of a majority of the people, the Committee felt that the Social Scientists in the country can play a catalytic role in mobilizing experts in their own and other related fields to develop a series of policy papers that can provide some guidance to policy makers to work towards a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the multifaceted crisis. Our invitation to some of the distinguished academics and researchers in the relevant fields to come forward to engage in this nationally important and timely initiative was positively and enthusiastically responded to by almost all of them.

The work involved in accomplishing the task in a timely fashion on a voluntary basis has been painstaking and time consuming. Some of us at NSF who observed their work over the last two months were highly impressed by their dedication and commitment to the task at hand. Many working sessions, both physical and virtual, demanded so much time and effort from our expert panels as well as highly motivated NSF staff providing logistical and other services.

The policy papers that are scheduled to be presented and deliberated on, at the national event on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2024 are a testimony to what I already mentioned in my message earlier. As the Chairman of the NSF Working Committee on Social Sciences, I am delighted to have had the opportunity to closely interact with highly dedicated experts drawn from our universities and other state and non-state institutions. This is particularly so in view of the fact that this work has been done at a time when

their services are very much needed by the people in the country who are eager to see an end to the crisis and get on with their normal lives in a stable and inclusive socio-economic environment that ensures equitable life chances to all.

Finally, I sincerely hope that the great effort made by all those who actively contributed to this national endeavor would considerably help the country to overcome present and future challenges in a range of areas. I wish to end this message by acknowledging the support and solidarity extended to us by the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC). NSF, Sri Lanka has been an active member of this regional association for many years. Active participation of its President, Secretary General and several other resource persons representing a few Asian countries at this event, virtually, is greatly appreciated.

## Message from the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils

Prof. Dhananjay Singh  
President, AASSREC



Sri Lanka is navigating a challenging economic situation influenced by long-standing socio-economic factors. Appropriate and effective policy measures and their timely implementation is crucial for the nation to recover and get back on track of development. At this crucial time, social sciences and social scientists must play the important role of understanding and addressing the evident and underlying causes and contribute to their solutions.

The Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC) recognizes the significant impact of social and economic factors on this crisis. Social scientists are uniquely positioned to analyse these factors, providing insights and formulating policies for sustainable recovery and development. In response, the National Science Foundation (NSF) of Sri Lanka has initiated a high-level consultation, leveraging the expertise of social scientists from Sri Lanka and the Asia-Pacific region.

AASSREC is honoured to collaborate in this initiative by identifying experts and facilitating the exchange of knowledge. The forum in Colombo aims to bring together a diverse group of social scientists and resource persons experienced in managing significant socio-economic challenges. The primary objective is to uncover the root causes and critical issues essential for comprehending the full extent of the problem. This engagement is vital for exploring various recovery pathways and ensure that a wide range of perspectives are considered in the discussions. The forum aims to generate actionable proposals that national institutions can adopt to drive effective recovery initiatives.

AASSREC believes that effective recovery efforts must transcend academic discussions and involve active collaboration with national and international stakeholders. The NSF's intent to partner with organizations such as the Department of National Planning, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, National Institute of Social Development, Sri Lanka Social Security Board, and various ministries underscores the importance of a coordinated approach. Involving international development agencies will provide broader perspectives and support.

In addition to develop the policy recommendations, the forum provides an opportunity to strengthen networks among social scientists, regional associations, and national institutions. This enhanced collaboration will facilitate ongoing dialogue and foster cooperative efforts, thereby creating a robust framework for continued engagement and collective action.

Moreover, the forum will ensure the dissemination of outcomes by sharing insights, developments, and progress with our networks and members. This commitment to keeping everyone informed and engaged is crucial for maintaining momentum and facilitating ongoing information exchange within the academic and policy-making communities.

AASSREC is committed to supporting this initiative, recognizing the moral responsibility of the social science community in addressing Sri Lanka's crisis. The active participation of national institutions and international partners is crucial for success. We hope this forum will result in tangible, actionable proposals that can drive Sri Lanka towards a sustainable and inclusive recovery.

We extend our gratitude to all participants and look forward to productive deliberations and impactful outcomes. Together, we can contribute to resolving Sri Lanka's socio-economic challenges and support its journey towards a brighter future.

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# Overview

As the National Science Foundation (NSF) of Sri Lanka, we acknowledge our responsibility to contribute towards knowledge creation and foster discourses that shape effective policies for post-crisis recovery and inclusive development of our country. This initiative, led by the NSF Working Committee on Social Sciences, underscores the vital role of social sciences where a transdisciplinary approach is adopted in bridging evidence and decision-making.

A range of stakeholders, from knowledge creators to adopters, including academia, subject experts, policy practitioners, and government officials, are involved in each step of this exercise. The Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC) has partnered with the NSF, Sri Lanka, in this endeavour to further knowledge sharing across borders.

This initiative intends,

1

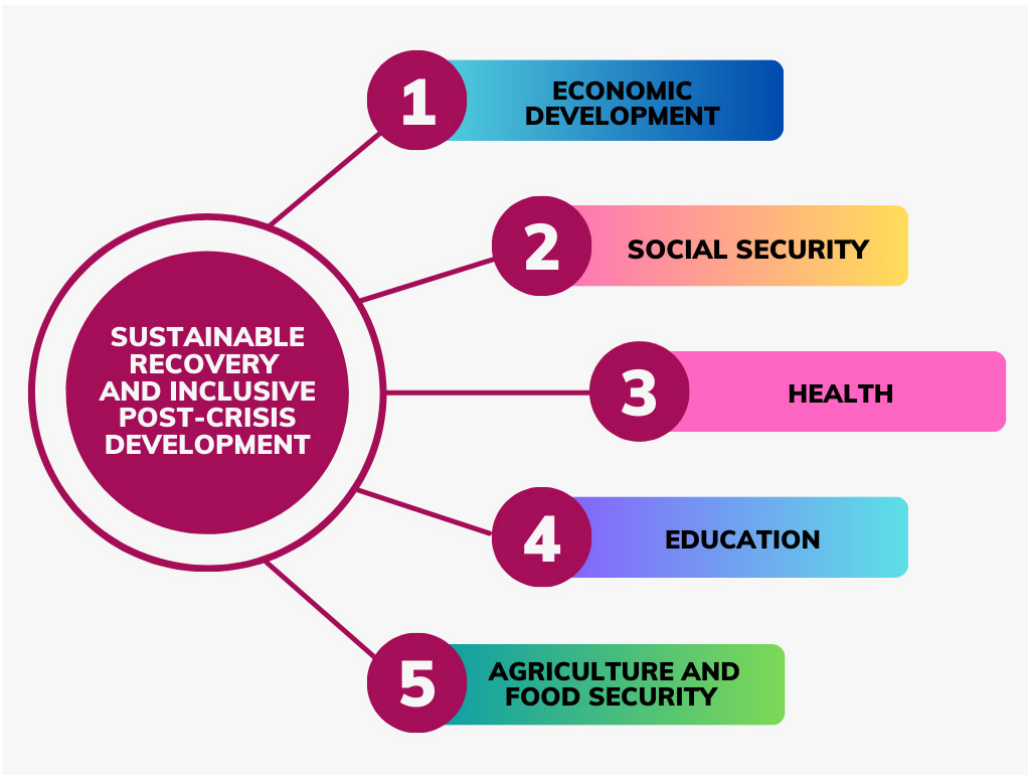
To conduct a comprehensive analysis from a social science perspective to identify root causes and socio-economic trends that have contributed to the current crisis in the country.

2

To promote dynamic engagement among stakeholders through shared experience to gain a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing crisis and to explore diverse avenues for sustainable recovery.

3

To collaboratively formulate well-informed policy recommendations aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable recovery.



Theme papers on these critical sectors were developed by invited interdisciplinary expert panels. These Theme Papers will be presented at the National Consultation on Sustainable Recovery and Inclusive Development, on 31st July 2024 for broader engagement. This compendium contains the executive summaries of the presented Theme Papers.



## **Theme I: Economic Development**

# **Sri Lanka's economic recovery and inclusive development: prospects and challenges**

## PANEL OF EXPERTS



**Prof. Sirimevan Colombage - Theme Lead**  
**Emeritus Professor of Economics,**  
**Open University of Sri Lanka**

Professor Sirimevan Colombage, Emeritus Professor of Economics at the Open University of Sri Lanka, holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Manchester, UK. He was the Director of Economic Research and Statistics, Central Bank of Sri Lanka and Senior Chair Professor of Social Studies, The Open University of Sri Lanka. His research interests focus on macroeconomic policies, monetary and fiscal policies, international trade and finance, econometric modeling, and financial inclusion. He has substantial research contributions including books, monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles. His most recent book is 'Reforming Macroeconomic Policies for Stability and Growth: Road to Sri Lanka's Economic Recovery', published in 2024. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and a member of the review panels of several refereed journals.



**Dr Ahilan Kadirgamar**  
**Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology,**  
**University of Jaffna**

Dr Ahilan Kadirgamar is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from the Graduate Center, City University of New York, a MA in Economics from the New School for Social Research and a BS in Electrical Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology. He is a fortnightly columnist in the Daily Mirror and an Editorial Board Member of the Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences. His research interests include agrarian change, co-operatives and economic alternatives, and he regularly writes on the political economy of Sri Lanka in forums such as The Hindu and the Economic and Political Weekly in India. He is currently the Honorary Chair of the Northern Co-operative Development Bank and an Executive Committee member of the International Development Economics Associates (IDEAs). He served on the Central Bank of Sri Lanka appointed committee to draft the Economic Development Framework for a Northern Province Master Plan (August 2018).



**Mr S. Ranugge**  
**Former Secretary, Ministry of Export Development & International Trade**

Mr Sugath Ranugge is a Visiting Lecturer at the Universities of Colombo, Sri Jayewardenepura, and The Open University of Sri Lanka. He teaches public administration, public policy and public finance at Master's degree programmes. He is a retired senior officer from the Sri Lanka Administrative

Service and was the Secretary to several ministries including the Ministry of Public Administration. He was the Chairman of the Salaries and Cadres Commission, Welfare Benefits Board and was a member of the Public Service Commission of Sri Lanka. He was the Executive Director of Transparency International Sri Lanka. He received his Bachelor's Degree with honors in Sociology from the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya and Master's Degree in Public Policy and Administration from the International Institute of Social Studies, the Netherlands. He is a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow.

# **Sri Lanka's economic recovery and inclusive development: prospects and challenges**

## **Executive summary**

**Sirimevan Colombage, Ahilan Kadirgamar, and Sugath Ranugge**

Currently, Sri Lanka is undergoing a severe economic crisis with multiple setbacks, including negative GDP growth, twin deficits in the fiscal and current account of the balance of payments, foreign exchange shortage, debt unsustainability, inflation volatility, exchange rate and interest rate misalignments, excessive monetary expansion, low savings and investment, and tremendous economic contraction. Per capita GDP declined from US\$ 4,082 in 2019 to US\$ 3,851 in 2020 and to US\$ 3,830 in 2023. As a result, Sri Lanka has been downgraded from upper middle-income status to lower middle-income status since 2021. Sri Lanka became a debt-default country for the first time in its history in April 2022.

The objective of this study is to diagnose the current policy gaps in recovering the economy in tandem with inclusive development and to present actionable policy recommendations. Inclusive development, defined as economic development that creates opportunities for all segments of the population and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity fairly across society, is central to this analysis. Simultaneous achievement of economic recovery and inclusive development is a tough policy dilemma facing the country today.

The economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, have had devastating effects on the well-being of the people, reversing the declining trend of poverty experienced over a decade. Poverty has risen for four consecutive years due to the economic contraction that led to losses in employment, wages, and income. Approximately, 60% of households reported a loss in their income in 2023. The poverty headcount index (at the US\$ 3.65 per capita per day level, 2017 PPP) more than doubled from the pre-crisis level of 11.3% in 2019 to 25.9% in 2023. Poverty levels are higher in destitute areas, which do not have adequate income-generating opportunities. Reflecting a rise in income inequality, the Gini coefficient rose from 37.7 in 2019 to 38.5 in 2023. High inflation resulted in a deterioration of the purchasing power of household income. The decline in foreign remittances also had negative effects on household income.

The Labour Force Participation (LFP) declined consecutively for four years from 52.3 % in 2019 to 48.6 % in 2023, as a result of the closure of 20 % of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In 2023, female LFP remained much lower at 31.3 %, compared to male LFP at 68.6 percent. Spatial-wise, LFP in urban areas at 46.0 % was lower than rural LFP at 49.1 %. The youth unemployment rate (20-29 years) increased from 15.3 % in 2019 to 17.0 % in 2023. The highest unemployment rate of 8.0 % was recorded for the educated group (G.C.E. A/L) in 2023.

The current economic crisis is the culmination of imprudent economic policies adopted by successive governments over decades. Macroeconomic policy decisions have been mostly taken at the discretion of political authorities, in the form of political budget cycles, to gain election victory, without longer-term planning and consistent policies. Sri Lanka's debt stock had been increasing to unsustainable levels, particularly after the end of the civil war, which coincided with the Global Financial Crisis. The Government began a binge of commercial borrowings particularly by floating International Sovereign Bonds (ISBs) at very high interest rates, when interest rates in the West were close to zero leading to supply-side push of global finance capital into the emerging markets.

A series of ill-advised policy decisions taken by the Government and the Central Bank during 2019-2022 triggered the economic crisis. They included abrupt tax cuts, monetary financing of the fiscal deficit, money printing, interest rate and exchange rate fixing, import and foreign exchange controls, and a sudden ban on agrochemicals.

Following the default on its external debt, the Government signed onto a 4-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the IMF in March 2023, towards restructuring external debt based on the IMF's Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) and reforms toward economic revival. The IMF reform programme seeking to bring economic stability involves severe austerity measures impacting the social and economic conditions of the people. Furthermore, GDP growth is projected to remain only at 3.0 % per annum during the period 2026-2028, even after making the policy adjustments. This indicates extremely limited prospects for inclusive development.

The macroeconomic imbalances and the economic downturn have frustrated Sri Lanka's development efforts and therefore, attempts to promote inclusive development must go hand in hand with the economic recovery process. Accordingly, a broad-based policy framework is proposed in this study to achieve the ultimate goals of economic recovery and inclusive development, as illustrated in Figure 1. It entails intermediate goals of (a) economic stability and debt restructuring, (b) economic growth and job creation, (c) poverty reduction and equity, and (d) environmental sustainability.



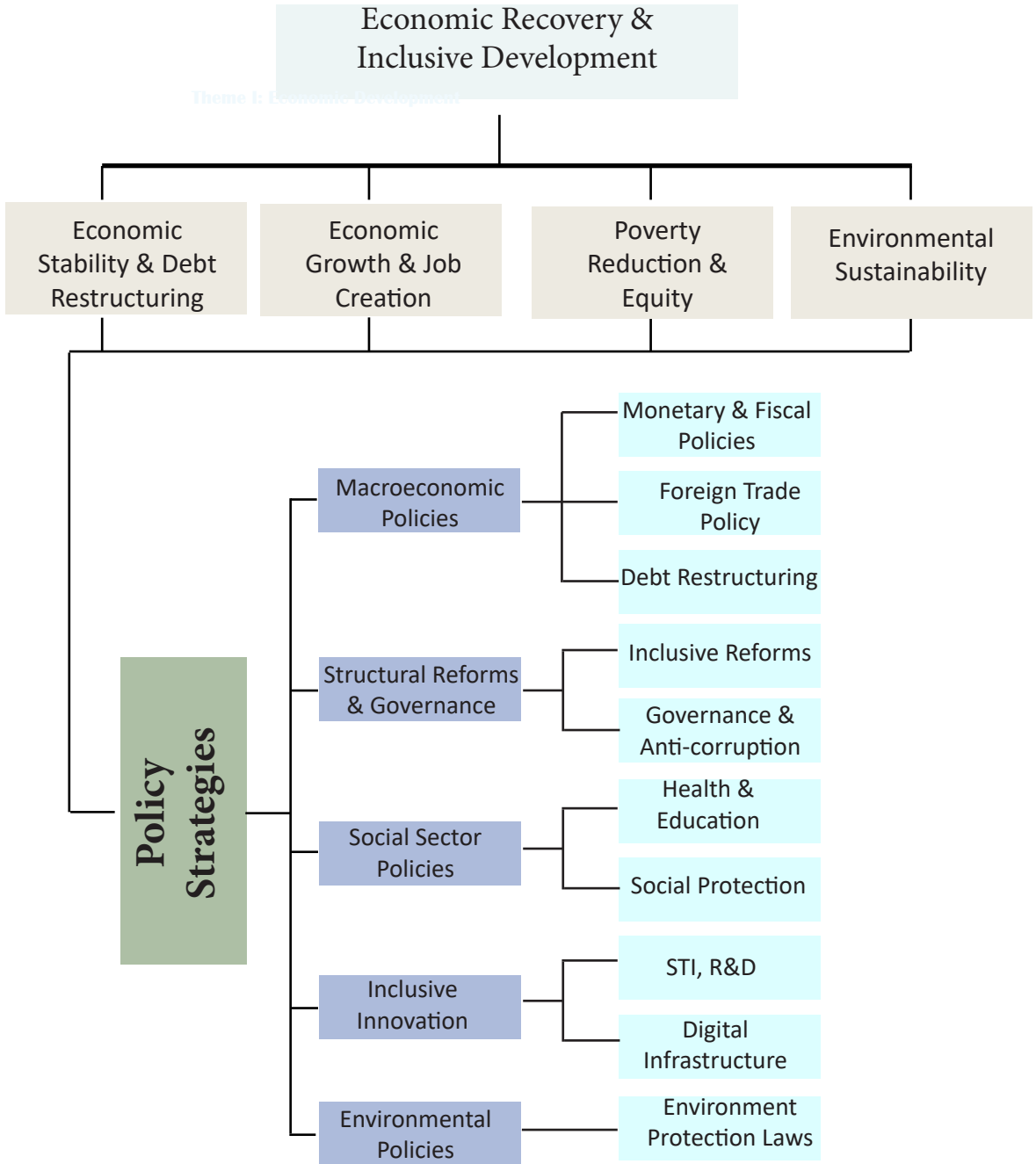


Figure 1: proposed policy framework

Source: Developed by the Authors



In the backdrop of the economic catastrophe, the highest priority should be given to macroeconomic policy reforms to restore economic stability, supporting those affected by the crisis. Furthermore, the ongoing demand-oriented policy adjustments need to be balanced with supply-side policy reforms aimed at reorienting the production system for the benefit of all.

The policy strategies proposed in this study are five-fold, namely (a) macroeconomic policies, (b) structural reforms and governance, (c) social sector policies, (d) inclusive innovation, and (e) environmental policies, as discussed below.

- (a) **Macroeconomic Policies:** Prudent macroeconomic policies, mainly fiscal and monetary policies, are required to achieve low inflation, external balance, and debt sustainability, creating a conducive environment for private saving and investment, facilitating economic growth. For this purpose, fiscal policies need to be counter-cyclical by raising government expenditure and curtailing taxes during a recession and vice-versa. Fiscal operations should promote efficient resource allocation and minimize the distortionary effects including arbitrary incentives and concessions. Action needs to be taken to reduce the tax burden on the poor and to provide sufficient funding for the social sector. With the flow of incomes declining during the crisis, redistribution of wealth is necessary through measures such as wealth taxes. The Central Bank has the responsibility to adopt counter-cyclical monetary policy for price stability.
- (b) **Structural Reforms and Governance:** It is necessary to do away with stop-go type policies adopted by successive governments. Governance should be rule-based, ensuring corruption is brought to an end, addressing state procurement and expenditure processes. Structural reforms should have a spatially inclusive orientation with investment reaching all regions of the country and weighted towards the rural and excluded sections of society, and not concentrated in the Western Province. Priority should be given to land reforms to strengthen rural communities, and development focused on value addition and agro-based industries utilizing local resources. Clarity with reforms on the sectors and the purview is critical; some sectors such as utilities and transport should remain public, production and export-oriented sectors can be private, and rural livelihoods can come under the cooperative sector. Parliamentary oversight over debt management including approval for foreign borrowings and agreements with the multi-lateral institutions, including the IMF, prior to such agreements is essential to ensure democratic responsibility and transparency. Institutional reforms in economic management are needed to prevent politically-biased policy decisions.

- (c) **Social Sector Policies:** Social welfare and services including health, education, and social protection over the decades have seen a secular decline in funding and the situation has worsened in recent years due to the economic crisis. In 2023, the government's recurrent and capital expenditure to GDP ratio was only 1.50 % for health and 1.61 % for education. In contrast, the government's interest payments on public debt amounted to 8.89 % of GDP in 2023. This reflects the limited fiscal space available to raise expenditure for the social sector. Higher expenditure on defence and security services, which amounted to 1.70 % of GDP in 2023, is another factor that constrains social sector spending. There is worldwide evidence that corruption, particularly associated with higher military spending, shrinks government expenditure on healthcare and education. Hence, action should be taken to reallocate fiscal resources from less-priority sectors to health and education, which are instrumental in advancing human resource development.
- (d) **Inclusive Innovation:** Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) should be outreached to low-income earners and excluded groups, particularly in rural areas to enhance productivity of their economic activities. In the current policy reforms, there is hardly any emphasis on inclusive innovation. Government expenditure on Research and Development (R&D) is only 0.12 % of GDP. In this context, the National Science Foundation (NSF) could take the lead in formulating a national inclusive innovation policy framework for Sri Lanka.
- (e) **Environmental Sustainability:** Economic policies geared to achieve economic development should not be compromised with environmental sustainability. The people with livelihoods dependent on natural resources such as fisherfolk and farmers should be mobilized to ensure sustainable development through a participatory process, even as they prepare to face the shifting landscape with climate change. Finally, it is necessary to identify and promote economic reforms matched with environmental goals.

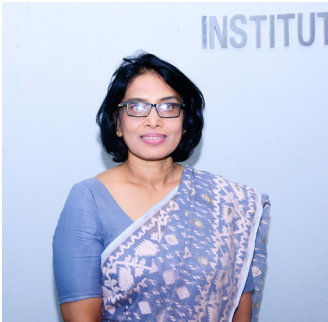
Greater political commitment is essential to vigorously pursue the above policy framework to resolve the policy dilemma of economic recovery vis-à-vis inclusive development so as to assure no one is left behind during this difficult period. More importantly, economic management should be based on rule-based procedures, instead of politically-favourable arbitrary decisions.



## **Theme II - Social Security**

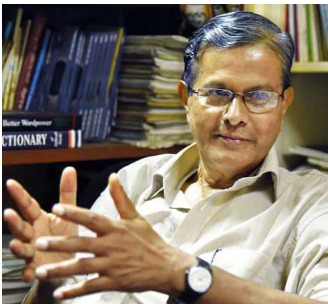
# **Minimum inclusive social security for all**

## PANEL OF EXPERTS



**Dr Nisha Arunatilake - Theme Lead**  
**Research Fellow & Director of Research,**  
**Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka**

Nisha Arunatilake is a Research Fellow and the Director of Research at the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), and a Research Fellow of the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP). She has contributed to numerous national, regional, and global economic policy documents, research collaborations, and publications. She holds a BSc in Computer Science and Mathematics with summa cum laude from the University of the South, the USA, and an MA and PhD in Economics from Duke University, USA. All three of her degrees were fully funded through university grants.



**Prof. Siri Hettige**  
**Emeritus Professor of Sociology,**  
**University of Colombo**

Prof. Siri Hettige is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Colombo. He holds a BA (Hons) and BPhil in Sociology from the University of Colombo and a PhD in Sociology from Monash University, Australia. He was a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania and has held visiting academic appointments in the USA, Australia, Germany, the UK, Finland, and Switzerland.

Prof. Hettige has served as Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Senior Student Counselor at the University of Colombo. He was also the founding Chair of Sri Lanka Studies at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany (2016-17) and was an Adjunct Professor at RMIT University, Melbourne. Prof. Hettige also served as the Honorary President of the Association of Sri Lankan Sociologists. He has chaired the Steering Committee on Social Innovations and currently chairs the Working Committee on Social Sciences at the National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka.

Prof. Hettige has an extensive publication record, focusing on themes such as youth, education, social and political conflict, social policy, governance, and development.



**Prof. W. Indralal De Silva**  
Emeritus Professor of Demography,  
University of Colombo

He obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Development Studies (Statistics) from the University of Colombo (UoC) in 1977, joined the Department of Demography in 1979, and served four decades at the UoC. He received an MA and a PhD from the Australian National University (ANU) in 1985 and 1990 respectively, with scholarships from the same university. He was the Founder Chair Professor of Demography (2001-17) and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, UOC (2009-11). He served as the Head of the Department of Demography for six years and was also a Senior Research Fellow at the National Centre for Advanced Studies in Humanities & Social Sciences (NCAS) in 2015-18. He received several prestigious fellowships, including the Senior Fulbright, Takemi, Rockefeller and the NUS. He has functioned as a Research Fellow at the National University of Singapore in 2004, Harvard School of Public Health during 1996-98 and the ANU during 1990-91. He has authored many books and published over 100 articles in local and international journals achieving over 1100 Google Scholar Citations at present, which boost the status and the recognition of the UoC.



**Prof. Sanath Wijesinghe**  
Professor in Legal Studies & Head, Department of Legal  
Studies, The Open University of Sri Lanka

Professor Sanath Sameera Wijesinghe is a Professor in Legal Studies and the current Head of the Department of Legal Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka. He obtained a Bachelor of Laws Honours (LLB) (Hons) in 2012 and a Master of Law (Merit) in 2017 from the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo. He completed his PhD in 2021 in the School of Law, Faculty of Business and Law, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. Professor Wijesinghe is also an Associate Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy and is an Attorney-at-Law in the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.

Professor Wijesinghe is the Editor-in-Chief of the Sri Lanka Journal of Information and Communication Technology Law. He has also published book chapters, journal articles

and conference papers on health justice and intellectual property rights, tobacco plain packaging and global health law, graphic health warning regulations, and intellectual property rights in international and national law journals.

He was a sessional academic and research assistant of the Australian Centre for Health Law Research at the Queensland University of Technology, School of Law. He also works as a visiting lecturer, examiner, and research supervisor in several state universities and institutions in Sri Lanka.



# Minimum inclusive social security for all

## Executive summary

**Nisha Arunatilake, W. Indralal De Silva, Siri Hettige, and Sanath Wijesinghe**

Well-thought-out and effectively executed social security (SS) and social protection (SP) programmes can assist nations in altering their course of development, enhancing human capital and productivity, eradicating poverty, lowering inequality, and promoting peace. Furthermore, sustainable development and equitable growth may result from these outcomes. The shortcomings of the social protection system and the necessity for reform have been brought to light by the recent crises in Sri Lanka. This article evaluates the shortcomings in the country's social security programmes for the working-age and senior populations and offers suggestions for increasing social protection coverage to all individuals while guaranteeing that everyone has access to at least a minimum level of social protection.

The World Bank (WB) and the International Labour Organization (2016) define social protection as a comprehensive collection of laws and initiatives designed to give individuals access to resources, assistance, and services they require throughout their lives. To determine whether Sri Lankans have access to a minimal degree of social protection, we employ the Social Protection Floor (SPF) framework. With time, the SPF seeks to gradually expand access to greater degrees of security while establishing and preserving a basic level of social protection.

Given the time and resources available, this policy report will focus on providing basic income security for the active-age population and older people. When should such basic income security be available to individuals? The ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) – the flagship of all ILO Social Security Conventions specifies nine different types of risks against which workers should be provided social security.<sup>1</sup> Of these, seven are on providing income security. These include old age benefits, sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, employment injury benefits, maternity benefits, invalidity benefits, survivor's benefits, and family benefits for individuals or their families. This report will examine the adequacy and coverage of income support available for workers during the first seven of the above vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities will be assessed in two main strands. First, income security during old-age and second income-security during working-ages. The second strand will look at sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, employment injury benefits, maternity benefits, invalidity benefits and survivor's benefits.

<sup>1</sup> (ILO Social Security Convention No.102, 1952).

## Retirement benefit coverage<sup>2</sup>

One main problem in determining the retirement benefit coverage is the definition of elderly persons. Different legislation defines different groups as elderly. The retirement benefits for public sector workers, formal private sector workers, and informal workers are available from age 60, while the senior citizen's allowance is available from age 70. Also, available data does not provide information on the sizes of these different population groups.

The working-age population was protected by several employment-based retirement plans. Out of these, the employees in the public sector received three different kinds of retirement benefits. The Public Sector Pensions Scheme (PSPS) was available to public sector employees with more than ten years of service in pensionable occupations. A unique programme called the Armed Forces Pension (AFP) is available to those who serve in the military. Everybody else makes contributions to the Department of Pensions' Public Servants Provident Fund (PSPF). The PSPS is a non-contributory pension scheme, which provides a monthly income at retirement that is equivalent to 85-90% of the salary drawn before retirement. The AFP is also a non-contributory pension scheme funded by taxes. The design of AFP is similar to the PSPS, but members can retire at the age of 55. Those in the formal private sector are not eligible for a pension, but they receive a lump-sum payment at retirement from the **Employees' Provident Fund (EPF)**. Certain employees in the unorganized sector are protected by various pension plans. The Agriculture and Agrarian Insurance Board (AAIB)<sup>3</sup> provides pension schemes for fisherman (Fishermen's Pension Scheme (FSHPS)) and for farmers (Farmers' Pension Scheme (FMPS)). The Sri Lanka Social Security Board (SSSB)<sup>4</sup> also has several pension schemes for the self-employed, migrant workers, sea farers, and artists. These pension plans are contributory plans that occasionally receive tax subsidies. Informal workers are entitled to a pension under the FMPS and FSHPS, which ranges from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 4167 per month. Certain pensions are also available to some unemployed individuals. For instance, the Senior Citizens Allowance<sup>5</sup> is available to people over 70 who make less than Rs. 3000 a month. Under this system, individuals between the ages of 70 and 100 receive Rs. 2000, and those over 100 receive Rs. 5000. Additionally, the Widows' and Orphans' Pension Scheme (WOPS) allows widows and family members of dead public personnel to receive pension payments. Additionally, the government provides support to low-income households that include an older person (Rs. 400 to Rs. 1000 per month).

<sup>2</sup> This section draws on (United Nations Children's Fund, 2023)

<sup>3</sup> (Agriculture and Agrarian Insurance Board (AAIB), 2024)

<sup>4</sup> (Sri Lanka Social Security Board, 2024)

<sup>5</sup> (Ministry of Women Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, 2024)



## Working-age benefit coverage<sup>6</sup>

Here again defining the population that should be covered by working-age benefits is difficult. According to the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) the working age population (i.e., those above 15 years or older) was 17.1 million people in 2021. But this also include elderly population. Also, as education is compulsory till age 16, sixteen-year-olds should not be included when defining working-age population. As per the DCS definition 1.4 million worked in the formal private sector, 1.2 million in the public sector, and 5.5 million in the informal sector. Nine million people did not have a job.

Paid **maternity leave** is available to employees in both the formal private sector and the governmental sector. However, these vary in duration. The employer is responsible for funding this leave.

Employees in the public sector, even temporary and casual ones, are entitled to up to six months of paid **sick leave** following a year of employment. The type of disease determines how long the leave will last. The Shop and Office Employees Act, No. 19 of 1954, provides up to seven days of sick leave to both formal and informal workers employed in formal organizations. Moreover, employees in the formal sector who make contributions to the Employees' Trust Fund (ETF) are eligible to withdraw their whole balance in the event that a chronic disease or disability prevents them from working. Employees in the public sector are entitled to up to six months of paid emergency leave due to **disability**. Employees receive their full pay throughout this time. If any public employee gets hurt or has an accident while doing their duties, they are all entitled to disability compensation for a maximum of six months. Additionally, the worker is qualified for early retirement if they are permanently handicapped.

Employees of the public sector are eligible to make pension contributions to the Widows'/Widowers' and Orphans' pension, which provides **Survivor Benefits** to the survivors of these workers. If a formal private sector worker passes away, their spouse or children may take out their accumulated EPF balance.

Employees in the public sector also don't really need an **unemployment benefit** programme because they are hardly ever forced home. Official employees in the private sector who quit their jobs are paid under the workmen's compensation provisions of the Payment of Gratuity Act and the ETF Act. Every payment is made in one flat sum. There are no survivors' benefits available for workers in the unorganized industry, other than the allowances given to the destitute.

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<sup>6</sup> (Arunatilake, 2022)

The Workmen’s Compensation Ordinance (WCO) of 1934 states that employers are exclusively liable for injuries sustained on the job. Both the public and private formal sectors are covered by the WCO. If a worker passes away under the WCO, their family may be entitled to a lump sum payout. The WCO states that a worker may be entitled to income or a lump sum payout in the event of disability. A maximum of Rs. 5500 may be given per half-month.

### **Gaps in social protection**

Not everyone is eligible for retirement benefits. About 26% of people are eligible for assistance indirectly, whereas just 9% of people receive benefits directly.<sup>7</sup> For people of working age, the availability of social security benefits varies greatly and is particularly low in certain demographic groups. The most generous benefits were given to public employees, then to formal private sector employees. There aren’t many perks offered to informal sector workers. Furthermore, eligibility for social security benefits is not universal outside of the public and formal private sectors. Only those who contribute are eligible for benefits. For instance, not all eligible participants contribute to contributory systems like the FMPS and the FSHPS. Apart from the public sector, the benefits obtained are likewise insufficient. For instance, payments in the private formal sector are paid out in lump sums, which is insufficient to guarantee a steady stream of income in old age or during illness and incapacity. Additionally, despite the fact that the majority of workers are in the unorganized sector, they receive very little or no social security. Before retiring, they receive relatively little in the way of social benefits. Their retirement benefits only provide a meager allowance that falls below Sri Lanka’s poverty line (e.g., the official poverty line in 2022 was Rs. 5972 per person).<sup>8</sup>

### **Conclusion**

There is a discrepancy between the numbers available to determine the population covered by social security and the appropriate legislation in Sri Lanka. As a result, evaluating the population’s coverage by the current social security programmes is challenging. We recommend streamlining the different legislations available for providing social security. Additionally, information about the working-age population and the elderly and how they are covered by social security must be routinely supplied in order to evaluate the population’s progress toward social security coverage. One main need of the social security scheme is to extend working-age social-security coverage to all. Those outside the formal sector are not covered by worker-age or

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<sup>7</sup> (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2023)

<sup>8</sup> (Department of Census and Statistics, 2024)

retirement benefits. As an immediate measure these individuals need to be provided with social security.

The retirement benefits are also only adequately available to the public sector workers. Although the formal private sector workers receive only a lump-sum payment at retirement. For some types of workers, the amount received is not sufficient for adequate old-age coverage. Large benefits funded by taxes are provided to public sector employees, while other demographic groups get inadequate benefits. Further, social protection available for those outside the public sector are contributory. Further funds maintained for providing social security are taxed, further eroding their size. We advise utilizing tax-funded social security to provide the bare minimum in benefits to everyone, while collecting contributions to provide more than minimal benefits to others. What is evident from the above is that the existing employment based social security benefits in the country are highly inequitable across different population groups.

## **Recommendations**

What is outlined above shows that the present state of social protection in Sri Lanka is not satisfactory and demands serious attention of the policy makers. Yet, the possibilities for change and further expansion depend not only on the desire for policy change based on evidence, but also on how the Sri Lankan economy, employment structure and social sectors are transformed in the coming years. What is also necessary is the need to recognize that the country needs to move away from the present disjointed social protection schemes and interventions and progress towards a life cycle based, universal, and integrated system of social protection.

Sri Lanka has already adopted a considerable number of national laws to recognize, respect and fulfil social security systems. Even with an absence of a fundamental right to social security, these laws have created a fertile ground for achieving the social security goals. However, the shortcomings of prevailing laws, including textual, financial, institutional, and administration-related issues seem to create barriers in offering a fair and effective social security system in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is a pressing need to address these issues in a comprehensive manner by expanding the existing law and adopting a new social protection policy and a road map to reach the target.

In summary, to ensure a minimum level of social security to all, the government needs to have a uniform and integrated social security scheme for all, funded by taxes. Additional social security can be provided based on contributory schemes.

## **Theme III - Health**

## PANEL OF EXPERTS



### **Prof. Saroj Jayasinghe - Theme Lead** **Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Colombo**

Professor Saroj Jayasinghe is a practicing consultant Physician in Sri Lanka and former Chair Professor of Medicine at the University of Colombo. He is an Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the same institution and has served as one of the longest-standing consultant physicians at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka until his retirement in 2021.

Prof. Jayasinghe holds numerous qualifications, including MBBS (Hons), MD (Colombo), MD (Bristol), and PhD (Colombo). He is a Fellow of the Ceylon College of Physicians, the Royal College of Physicians (London), and the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka (NASSL).

Prof. Jayasinghe has published extensively in clinical medicine, medical education, and medical humanities. His recent research focuses on complexity science and systems thinking applied to urban health, pandemics, and clinical medicine. He chairs the Research Arm of National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka, fostering transdisciplinary research, and has initiated significant collaborations to advance science advice to governments. He is a fellow of the International Science Council.

As a pioneer in medical curriculum reforms, he introduced medical humanities to education and leads a regional WHO initiative integrating humanities into health professional training.



### **Dr Palitha Abeykoon** **Advisor to the World Health Organization & the Ministry** **of Health, Sri Lanka**

Dr Palitha Abeykoon is a distinguished medical professional and advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka and is a Member of the WHO-WB Global Pandemic Monitoring Board. He received his medical degree from the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya and completed postgraduate studies at the University of Southern California and the Harvard School of Public Health, where he was a Takemi Fellow.

Dr Abeykoon was the WHO Regional Advisor in Human Resources for Health and later the Director of Health Systems for South-East Asia. He was also the WHO Representative to India.

He has been recognized globally, serving on various high-level committees and has received the Dr Fred Katz Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Asia Pacific Academic Consortium of Public Health, the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) and the University of Peradeniya. He is also a Fellow of the International Science Council.



**Prof. Amala de Silva**  
Senior Professor, Department of Economics,  
University of Colombo

Professor Amala de Silva is a Senior Professor in the Department of Economics, University of Colombo with 38 years of service. Her Masters and DPhil are from the University of Sussex, UK. During her sabbatical, she was a Rockefeller Global Health Leadership Mid-Career Fellow at WHO, Geneva in 1999/2000. She has undertaken many Health Economics research projects, with the Ministry of Health, WHO, World Bank Country Office, UNDP and JAICA. In 2023, she was made an Honorary Fellow of the College of Medical Administrators of Sri Lanka. Her other areas of research interest are gender, migration, equity, and poverty.



**Prof. Chandani Liyanage**  
Professor of Medical Sociology,  
Department of Sociology, University of Colombo

Professor Chandani Liyanage is a Professor of Medical Sociology, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. She obtained her doctoral degree from the University of Delhi (2007). Prof. Liyanage was a recipient of Fulbright Advanced Research & Lecturing Award (2011). She has been a Visiting Faculty at University of Ljubljana, Slovenia (2013). She works on Medical systems, ethnomedicine, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), disability, contemporary social issues, and social policies. She has published her work



in journals of repute and number of book chapters covering issues related to disability, social epidemiology of CKDu, community-centered approach for prevention of NCDs, traditional medicine and primary healthcare, non-western knowledge systems, and utilization of traditional healing practices in contemporary Sri Lanka and currently, involved in an ethnographic study on 'Empowering Cutaneous Leishmaniasis patients in the North Central Province in collaboration with the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, University of Kent and Keele University, UK.



## **Dr Ravi Rannan-Eliya**

**Executive Director, Institute for Health Policy, Sri Lanka**

Dr Ravi Rannan-Eliya is the Executive Director of the Institute for Health Policy, Sri Lanka. He trained as a physician and in political science at Cambridge, before specializing in public health and earning a doctoral degree in health economics at Harvard. He has worked as a researcher and analyst throughout the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere, with a focus on health equity, health systems and financing, and the emerging challenges of ageing and NCDs. His recent work includes, managing the Sri Lanka Health and Ageing Study, which is tracking the health experience of the Sri Lankan population and conducting the only regular national public opinion poll.

# Health

## Executive summary

**Palitha Abeykoon, Amala de Silva, Saroj Jayasinghe, Chandani Liyanage, and Ravi Rannan-Eliya**

### Introduction

Good health is essential for national development due to its role in wellbeing and its positive impact on economic growth. Ensuring good health is challenging, particularly in the context of an aging population and rising noncommunicable diseases that demand higher healthcare costs and the need for long-term care, particularly given the limited fiscal space of the country.

### Situational Analysis

Sri Lanka's health system, developed in response to voters' priorities since the 1930s, has achieved exceptional health outcomes and high service coverage with low expenditure levels, making it one of the most cost-efficient systems globally. Despite the system's achievements, including the elimination of diseases like polio, measles, and malaria, and health outcomes that are comparable to high-income nations, recent challenges such as fiscal constraints, the COVID-19 pandemic, the demographic transition, and increased NCDs threaten its sustainability. Climate change and environmental pollution are becoming major concerns in relation to the health sector.

### Priority issue 1 – NCDs

Alongside rising cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and other NCDs, the impacts on health are exacerbated by the suboptimal control of hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidemia, despite relatively high levels of diagnosis and treatment coverage.

### Priority issue 2 – Long-term care

With increasing life expectancy and the declining traditional family care structures, Sri Lanka faces a growing need for organized and publicly financed long-term care to support the elderly, the infirm, and the disabled persons, requiring significant investments in social care services and human resource developments.



### **Priority issue 3 – Responsiveness of the health system**

Even if the public healthcare system in Sri Lanka achieves high levels of clinical quality and access, it faces challenges in meeting the consumer quality attributes, such as patient responsiveness and empathy, which have suffered because of resource limitations. This need necessitates a shift towards a more people-centered approach that addresses social, cultural, and spiritual needs which in turn will contribute to rebuilding public trust regarding public healthcare, underpinned by increased financing.

### **Priority issue 4 - Out-of-pocket expenses (OOP)**

Sri Lanka's hybrid public and private healthcare systems rely on substantial out-of-pocket financing due to limited public funding. Government financing faces increasing pressure as economic crises drive more patients to an already underfunded public service. This has resulted in dissatisfaction among the middle income earners and repeated calls for alternate financing mechanisms, highlighting the urgent need for increased government health spending, through greater resource generation via more efficient, effective and comprehensive taxation.

### **Priority issue 5 - Governance, management and equity issues**

Governance in Sri Lanka's health sector is hindered by blurring of roles between the Ministry and the Department, limited institutional autonomy, lack of clear job descriptions, and significant health worker migration. The latter has led to gaps in specialized services and also poses a severe impediment to improving healthcare quality.

## **Actionable Recommendations**

As an overarching proposal we wish to propose that the government, civil society, and professional groups explore the place of health as a fundamental human right in the Constitution, whilst appropriate safeguards are taken to protect the state, institutions, and health professionals from unfair litigations.

The fundamental right to health implies obligations on part of the state and society, and this right cannot be fully attained without a genuine commitment to taxation as an expression of social solidarity in financing healthcare services and addressing the social determinants of health inequalities.

## 1 Financing of Health

1. **Raising Taxes to Create Fiscal Space for Health:** There is a clear need to lobby for raising tax revenue: through comprehensive tax revisions and efficiency in ensuring tax compliance. Mechanisms for increasing taxes and ensuring its progressive nature have to be resolved.
2. **Increase Government Funding for Health:** Health sector stakeholders must emphasize the efficiency and effectiveness of tax-funded government delivery of health services in improving health status and ensuring equity and actively lobby, emphasize the political benefits of responding to voters' desire for increased government health spending, and pressure the Treasury and decision makers to increase government allocations for health.
3. **Reduce Out-of-Pocket Expenses:** Increasing government health funding and quality of services will help reduce out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare seekers.
4. **Highlight Health System Efficiency:** Counter arguments that more funding is not needed but solely increasing efficiency, by showcasing the existing high efficiency of Sri Lanka's health system compared to other countries.
5. **Reconsider the Relevance of Social Insurance:** Social insurance is not feasible due to the high proportion of the labour force in non-formal employment, making it difficult to implement a contributory insurance scheme.

## 2 Comprehensive Health System Based on Primary Care

1. **Accelerate Primary Care Implementation:** Rapidly implement a network of primary care centers and a cluster system to enhance treatment outcomes and follow-up for chronic disorders. This includes patient registration with designated doctors, basic screening facilities, a defined package of services, and a steady supply of essential medicines and lab tests.
2. **Focus on Chronic Disease Management:** Improve care for chronic diseases by interventions at the community and through primary care centers and curative facilities. Focus efforts on understanding why NCD treatment often fails to achieve control and developing interventions to improve clinical practices. Consider innovations for mainstreaming screening across the health services, providing screening options for younger populations (e.g., lipid profile, BMI, blood pressure, fasting blood glucose during employment recruitment), and region-specific screenings (e.g., Thalassemia in high-risk provinces, CKD in areas where CKDu prevalence is high).

- 3. Human Resource Planning and Training:** Determine HR requirements, composition of staff, and competencies for each service level and deploy staff accordingly. Organize regular need-based in-service training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities, preferably linked to a regulatory and reward system, for the health workforce.
- 4. Develop a Functional Referral System:** Establish a referral system linking primary care to higher levels of care (secondary, tertiary, specialized) in a two-way relationship, while maintaining patients' right to choose their provider. Monitor and modify the referral system as needed over time.
- 5. Adopt a Life-Course Approach to Health and Ageing:** Implement strategies that consider health and aging across the life course, addressing the evolving health needs of the population from birth to old age.
- 6. Addressing Issues Related to Climate Change:** Addressing effects of climate change through adaptation, mitigation and reduction in emissions from the sector.

### 3 Long-Term / Intermediate Care

- 1. Develop a Comprehensive Social-Support Policy Framework:** Develop a policy framework to finance and provide long-term care for physically dependent and cognitively impaired elders and others, ensuring access to people-centered and integrated services.
- 2. Create a New Organizational Structure:** Establish a new social care directorate or agency for the care of older adults, the frail and disabled persons to facilitate related interventions.
- 3. Service Model Based on Needs:** Develop a service model that addresses the needs of the elderly and frail, which integrates care of the elderly, rehabilitation and palliative care services, and strengthens community engagement.
- 4. Appointment of Specialists and other Cadres:** Appoint geriatricians and other categories (e.g. Diplomates in Geriatric Medicine) to both hospitals and community settings to provide appropriate care.
- 5. Provision of Education and Training:** Integrate appropriate education and training on elderly care and frailty into the curriculum of all health and social care professionals.
- 6. Strengthen Community-Based Services:** Enhance community-based services, such as Elders' Committees, to support the elderly, and community nursing services (Public Health Nurses).

- 7. Link Social Support to Community Care:** Connect social support services to community care for the elderly, mobilizing community-level staff for engagement.
- 8. Establish an Information System:** Implement an online information system to monitor long-term care services and ensure accountability.
- 9. Increase Public Financing:** Increase awareness of policymakers and society, of the need for public financing for long-term care and secure increased public financing to support the implementation and sustainability of these long-term care services.

#### 4 Improve Responsiveness of The Health System

- 1. Formulate a Program to Improve Responsiveness of the Health System:** Establish a technical committee under the Ministry of Health (MoH) to discuss, formulate plans, implement and monitor a people-centered care health system. Issues related to people-centered care and responsiveness have to be addressed at multiple levels, including those at the levels of Ministry of Health, healthcare institutions, and individual healthcare providers.
- 2. Develop Core Curriculum for Healthcare Education:** Develop and implement an appropriate core curriculum focusing on people-centered care for nursing, medical, physiotherapy, and other healthcare staff trained at training institutes including National Institute of Health Sciences (NIHS) in Kalutara and private sector education/training institutes.
- 3. Establish Feedback and Grievance Mechanisms:** Implement a feedback and grievance mechanism at each healthcare institution to allow patients to express their concerns or complaints, ensuring that responses and necessary interventions are communicated back to the patients.
- 4. Conduct Social Audits:** Perform social audits to evaluate and improve the responsiveness and quality of healthcare services.

#### 5 Governance And Management Issues Including HRH

- 1. Engage with Public and Community:** Develop effective mechanisms to involve the public and community in policy formulation and management of healthcare institutions.
- 2. Modernize Management Systems:** Update job descriptions, skill sets, performance appraisals, and indicators to reflect modern management practices and enhance accountability.

3. **Establish Clinical and Institutional Audits:** Implement clinical audits at all levels and institutional audits to assess performance and ensure accountability.
4. **Annual Reports:** Require each institution to produce an annual report, including specific parameters, to enhance transparency and accountability.
5. **Public Involvement in Management:** Collaborate with the public in the management committees of healthcare institutions; hold mandatory staff meetings for designated categories of employees.
6. **Ward and Clinic Reviews:** Conduct death reviews in selected cases, hold multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings, and organize regular ward meetings to improve clinical outcomes.
7. **Administrator Audits:** Perform audits of healthcare administrators to ensure effective management practices.
8. **Link Clinical Audits to Research Allowances:** Connect clinical audits to the eligibility for research allowances to encourage participation and improve clinical standards.
9. **Accreditation and Revalidation:** Implement accreditation and revalidation processes for individual clinicians and other health professionals to maintain high standards of care.
10. **Address Human Resources for Health (HRH) Crisis:** Develop projections of demand and supply for the health workforce to meet medium and long-term service needs.
  - a) Increase the bond payment for health professionals who leave, reduce the waiting period for internships, streamline internship appointments, and allow medical officers to enter postgraduate programmes soon after internships.
  - b) Establish an effective organizational structure for HRH management in the Ministry of Health.
  - c) Develop an occupational directorate dedicated to health issues of the workforce in the health sector.

## **Theme IV - Education**



## PANEL OF EXPERTS



### **Prof. Marie Perera - Theme Lead**

**Emeritus Professor of Humanities Education, University of Colombo**

Professor Marie Perera is the Professor Emeritus of Humanities Education of the University of Colombo.

She has held the positions as the Director of the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre, Dean of the Faculty of Education, Head of the Department of Humanities Education, and Director of the Staff Development Centre of the University of Colombo.

Professor Perera has contributed to many areas in education such as teaching of English as a second language, teaching the second national language, bilingual education, and on student learning outcomes. She has over seventy research publications and several book chapters in internationally recognized publications. Latest publication was as a co-author of the Sri Lanka Country Report (2023) of the midterm review of the Sustainable Development Goal 4- Education. She also delivered the thirty third J. E. Jayasuriya Memorial oration on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 on the theme “Reimagining of the Humanities: Towards a new panorama in Humanities Education”.



### **Prof. Siri Hettige**

**Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Colombo**

Professor Siri Hettige is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Colombo. He holds a BA (Hons) and BPhil in Sociology from the University of Colombo and a PhD in Sociology from Monash University, Australia. He was a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania and has held visiting academic appointments in the USA, Australia, Germany, the UK, Finland, and Switzerland.

Prof. Hettige has served as Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Senior Student Counselor at the University of Colombo. He was also the founding Chair of Sri Lanka Studies at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany (2016-17) and was an Adjunct Professor at RMIT University,

Melbourne. Prof. Hettige also served as the Honorary President of the Association of Sri Lankan Sociologists. He has chaired the Steering Committee on Social Innovations and currently chairs the Working Committee on Social Sciences at the National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka.

Prof. Hettige has an extensive publication record, focusing on themes such as youth, education, social and political conflict, social policy, governance, and development.



**Ms Dileepa M. Endagamage**  
**Senior Lecturer, Department of Decision Sciences,**  
**University of Sri Jayewardenepura**

Ms Dileepa M. Endagamage is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Decision Sciences, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. She graduated from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in 1994 with a Second Class Upper Division in BSc (Special) in Mathematics. She completed her MSc in Applied Statistics in 2001 and is currently reading for her doctoral degree at the IIC University of Technology, Cambodia. Since 1995, she works as an academic in the fields of Business Mathematics, Business Statistics, Operations Research, Computer Based Data Analysis, and Research Methodology. She has sound knowledge in using various statistical software. She has served for many government and private sector educational and other institutions as a Lecturer and as a resource person for their training and development programmes. Further, she has rendered her service to the Department, Faculty and the University by holding several administrative positions in the institution.



## Education

### Executive summary

Dileepa M. Endagama, Siri Hettige, and Marie Perera

#### INTRODUCTION

Education system plays a very crucial role in any country towards achieving sustainable development and strengthening social, economic, cultural, and integral development, and is often called as the backbone of the society. Realizing the importance of education, successive governments that came to power since independence, have taken a keen interest in developing and improving the education system in Sri Lanka. However, as the introduction to the ongoing development of a National Education Policy Framework for Sri Lanka indicates, still there is no coherent and long-term National Policy on Education for Sri Lanka, according to the National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) for Sri Lanka (2023-2033)(p.10).

The education sector in Sri Lanka has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and the subsequent economic crisis. Hence the objective of this paper is to recommend some concrete policy initiatives to relevant stakeholders to address the problems identified.

However, to pursue a vision of a holistic education for Sri Lanka, it is necessary to examine the issues relevant to all the sub sectors of education. Yet in this paper only issues related to general education are examined as it is the general education that provides the basis for the other subsectors such as Technical, Vocational, Higher education and Early Childhood Education.

A brief situation analysis of the past initiatives was undertaken to provide a backdrop for the recommended policy initiatives in this paper.

#### SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

In this section, policy proposals pertaining to education from pre-independent Sri Lanka up to the present were briefly reviewed. One of the main features of pre- independence education system in the country was its dual structure with a minority of English medium fee-levying schools for the elite and free vernacular schools, in Sinhala and Tamil for the masses.

The Kannangara Report (SP XXIV of 1943) projected a vision of social change from the inequalities created by colonial education policy. Some of the reforms proposed were the establishment of 54 Central Schools to extend modern secondary education, hitherto confined to urban centers to rural areas, a scheme of Grade 5 scholarship to enable talented students in rural primary schools to have access to the Central Schools, the provision of free primary, secondary, and tertiary education, the change of medium of instruction to mother tongue in all primary schools, and English language to be taught in all schools as a second language.

The new orientation in education policy was also accompanied by a “social policy package” of free education, free health services, free mid-day meals and free textbooks.

Through these reforms, education was expected to contribute to the promotion of social equity, economic efficiency, national harmony, personality development, and character building, in a context of holistic development (NEC, 2003).

The commitment to the extension of educational opportunities declined in the late 1960s. The high unemployment rate due to falling commodity prices and decline in economic growth rates resulted in a shift in priorities. Enrolment and literacy rates stagnated with reduction in social sector expenditure as a percentage of GDP from 4.7% in the late 1960s to just about 2% of GDP. Government allocation further declined in recent years to about 1.5% of the GDP.

From the late 1960s up to the present, several policy proposals pertaining to education have been proposed by successive governments to restructure the education system in the country. Yet, they have failed. The National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) for Sri Lanka (2023-2033)(p.10) claims, Sri Lanka needs to transform its curriculum, teaching, and evaluation methods to foster holistic and lifelong learning.

Based on the brief overview, it can be discerned that certain challenges run through all policy proposals:

- Lack of a long term National Policy on Education
- Inequalities in educational opportunities-access and equity
- Inadequate public financing of education
- Issues related to curriculum renewal, quality and relevance
- Medium of instruction and teaching of languages
- Recruitment, deployment and promotion of teachers and principals
- Education governance and management

## Root Cause Analysis

Against the above background, a range of issues can be identified that militate against the prospects of achieving widely shared objectives of education in the country.

As the situational analysis indicates, since the 1940s, there had been policy proposals but they have never become a long term national policy sustained over an extended period. The absence of such national regulatory framework has resulted in certain persisting issues over the years that unresolved to-date.

General education is presently governed by the provision of the Education Ordinance No. 39 of 1939 as well as certain other laws enacted thereafter. Many of these laws are now out dated(NEC,2003).

The quantitative expansion of the education system was accompanied only with a few qualitative improvements. This resulted in a decline in educational standards and widening disparities in the performance of schools and the achievement levels of the students.

Inadequate public financing for education is a major bottleneck for expanding quality educational services in the country. Government expenditure on education, as a percentage of GDP was reported at 1.52 % in 2022.

Curriculum reforms so far introduced have failed in varying degrees to transform learning-teaching methodologies, so that learning nurtures human values and becomes a creative process that stimulates the development of generic skills and contribute to holistic human development. At present, school curriculum is heavily content based and encourage rote learning and competition due to the high reliance on examinations.

A perennial problem in Sri Lanka has been the recruitment and distribution of teachers to meet the needs of schools and the promotion of teachers without political bias. This issue is of critical importance as it affects the quality of education.

## Key Recommendations

1. A clear National Policy encompassing all aspects of Education should be developed.
2. Formulation and enactment of a new Education Act.
3. Effective measures should be implemented to reduce inequalities in access to educational opportunities to ensure equity and excellence. Priority should be given to increase the number of schools in districts in which GCE A/L science stream is not available, regularize monitoring and supervision of private/ international school education, and minimize the Digital Divide in order for the entire student population in the country to reap the benefits of Information Technology.

4. A significant increase in public financing is recommended over a reasonable period of time.

Further, in the allocation of resources, properly computed unit costs should be employed for each category of school.

5. Formulating a national policy on teaching of languages including the mother tongue, English, and second national language is recommended.

English was supposed to have been taught in all schools as a second language for over seven decades. Yet, the expected “English for all” has still not been achieved. Therefore, identifying the root causes for the inability to achieve the objective of “English for All” and formulating a well-structured teaching programme based on a language policy is essential. Priority should be given to teaching of English before changing the medium of instruction to English. Further, in raising the standard of English competency, the teaching of the mother tongue, and the teaching of the second national language –Sinhala to Tamil speakers and Tamil to Sinhala speakers should also be promoted.

6. In view of the need to make education holistic, it is recommended to review and renew the school curriculum and improve its quality and relevance.
7. Rationalize and streamline the processes of recruitment, deployment, and promotion of teachers and principals.
8. Improve governance and management of education by developing and institutionalizing a well-structured supervision and monitoring system at the national and provincial levels.

This paper highlighted the fact that most of the issues in the education sector in Sri Lanka are recurrent problems for which root causes have not been identified and addressed. Hence, the proposed policy proposals are meant to initiate a wider discussion involving diverse stakeholders and provide guidance to relevant authorities to formulate appropriate interventions for each of the policy proposals, considering the underlying root causes of the problems identified.



## **Theme V – Agriculture and Food Security**

# **Policy and regulatory interventions for agriculture and food security**

## PANEL OF EXPERTS



### **Dr Manoj Thibbotuwawa - Theme Lead** **Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka**

Dr Manoj Thibbotuwawa is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) with research interests in Agriculture, Agribusiness Value Chains, Food Security, Climate Change, and Environmental and Natural Resource Economics. He has more than 20 years of research experience at IPS.

He has collaborated and served as a consultant to several international organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union (EU), and the World Bank.

Dr Thibbotuwawa holds a BSc (Agriculture) with Honours from the University of Peradeniya, an MSc (Agricultural Economics) from the Post-Graduate Institute of Agriculture at the University of Peradeniya, and a PhD from the University of Western Australia.



### **Dr Nihal Atapattu** **Independent Consultant, Agriculture, Environment, and Project Evaluation Research**

Dr Nihal Atapattu has over 20 years of experience leading innovative, multi-sector development projects focused on economic growth, particularly in Food and Agriculture, Natural Resource Management, and private sector development. His extensive background includes designing and managing programs in various countries, collaborating with bilateral donors, UN agencies, international financial institutions, consulting organizations, and INGOs.

With 13 years of experience implementing Canada-funded programs in conflict, post-conflict, and post-disaster environments in South Asia, Dr Atapattu has demonstrated the ability to deliver results in challenging contexts. He holds a Doctoral degree in Agriculture and Applied Economics and an MS degree in Agricultural Economics from the Virginia Tech University.



Dr Atapattu specializes in program and project development, project management, grant writing, monitoring and evaluation, procurement, technical training, food policy, food security, and women's economic empowerment with significant contributions to economic growth through research and analyses in agricultural resource management, technology policy and innovation, sector modernization, and policy reform.



**Dr Herath Gunatilake**  
**Executive Director, Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)**

Dr Gunatilake has a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture (Sri Lanka), Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture (Norway), Masters in Natural Resources Management (Norway), and PhD in Resource Economics (United States). He has served at the University of Peradeniya (1986-2004) in various positions including Professor and the Head, Department of Agricultural Economics. Notable trainings he has undergone includes, training on Environmental Economics and Policy Analysis at the Harvard University, USA, in 1993, and a Programme on Leadership for Sustainable Development at the Cambridge University, UK, in 2011. He joined the ADB as an Environment Specialist and served as Natural Resource Economist, Economist, and Energy Economist in different departments. He was also the Director of the Environment and Safeguards Division in the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department of ADB. He has published more than 50 journal articles; about 25 ADB publications; and five books on energy, natural resources, and environmental economics. His recent publications are on economics of biofuel, hydropower development and economic growth, impact evaluation of energy sector investments, private sector participation in infrastructure provisions, assessing and unbundling demand for water and electricity, energy trade and regional cooperation, transport sector investments, economic growth and poverty reduction, and agricultural land consolidation for poverty reduction.

Dr Gunatilake was a former member of the Board of South Asia Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE). He is a Fellow of the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Visiting Professor at Kelaniya and Peradeniya Universities, member of Sri Lanka Agriculture Economics Association, and a member of Research and Training Committee in Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute. Dr Gunatilake currently serves as the Executive Director at the Center for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka.





## **Prof. G.A.S. Ginigaddara**

**Vice Chancellor, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka**

Professor G.A.S. Ginigaddara is a professor in Agricultural Systems and has been serving as the Vice Chancellor of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL) since 2021. With an extensive academic and administrative career, Professor Ginigaddara has been instrumental in advancing the university's mission of academic excellence and innovation. She has obtained her first degree in BSc Agricultural Sciences

from the University of Peradeniya and completed her PhD in Agricultural Systems at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. Professor Ginigaddara has a robust educational background that has underpinned her professional journey. Before her current role, she served as a professor in Agricultural Systems at the Faculty of Agriculture, RUSL. In addition, she has held several administrative positions in the university, such as the Director of the University Business Linkage Cell (UBL), Director of Career Guidance Unit, and many more. Through those positions, she has spearheaded significant projects towards the success of the university.



## **Dr Liwan Liyanage-Hansen**

**Senior Lecturer in Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences, School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences, Western Sydney University**

Dr Liwan Liyanage-Hansen began her academic journey earning First Class honours in BSc (Mathematics and Physics) in 1976 from the University of Colombo, followed by an MSc in 1978 and a PhD in 1983 from the University of Wollongong, Australia. With over 48 years in academia,

she has held esteemed positions at multiple universities and is currently at the Western Sydney University (WSU).

As the founding leader of WSU's Data-Driven and Accountable Solutions for Social Good and Sustainability Research Lab, she champions digital technology to address global challenges, particularly climate change and sustainable development. Dr Liyanage has pioneered "Data Pre-Processing for Imputing Data with Large Gaps", revolutionizing environmental sensor data analysis.

As a member of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), Climate Change Digital Technology Taskforce, she represents Australia and Sri Lanka. Her research and contributions focus on data-driven adaptive modelling, decision-making, and integration of UN SDGs, with over 50 publications, numerous grants and PhD completions, one with the National Gold Medal Award in 2019 from Institute of Applied Statistics. She is also the Workstream Lead of the multi award winning OPENAIR project, securing the Healthy Planet, Healthy People National Award, and IoT Research National Award in 2024.

## Policy and regulatory interventions for agriculture and food security

### Executive summary

**Nihal Atapattu, Sanjeewanie Ginigaddara, Herath Gunatilake, Liwan Liyanage,  
and Manoj Thibbotuwawa**

Agriculture is a crucial sector in Sri Lanka's socio-economy, contributing to economic growth, exports, and livelihoods of a significant portion of the population. In 2022, the agriculture sector accounted for 7.5% of the GDP, 21.8 percent of national export earnings, and employed 26.5% of the labour force. Agriculture plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty and food security in rural areas, where it employs over half the workforce. The sector produces over three-fourths of the country's annual food requirement, with fresh food imports accounting for less than a quarter. This paper focuses on the transformation of the food crop sub-sector in Sri Lanka, out of the two distinct subsectors (food crop sector and plantation sector) with different characteristics and issues. Sri Lanka's agricultural sector is experiencing a fast-shrinking share of the economy and a slow decline in the labour force. The sector's performance has been disappointing due to long-standing structural issues, such as small land holdings, low mechanization, poor technology adoption, high production costs, information and coordination failures, and incomplete property rights. The crises caused by these issues in the food crop production sector for decades are further exacerbated by climate change impacts.

The agriculture sector in Sri Lanka has been severely impacted by four shocks: the COVID-19 pandemic; the government's misguided action of banning fertilizer imports in response to the Balance of Payment and external reserves crisis; the Russia-Ukraine conflict; and the economic crisis precipitated by the mismanagement of debt ended with sovereign default. The pandemic has ended, and the import ban has been corrected. The effects of Russia-Ukraine conflict have also eased. However, the economic foundation of the agricultural sector and farmer livelihoods remain significantly impacted. Sri Lanka's food security crisis has been worsened by the lack of foreign exchange to import key inputs like fertilizer, agrochemicals, and energy for food production, particularly rice. The economic crisis has caused a sharp currency depreciation, sharply increasing the prices of inputs. While some relief was provided to farmers through emergency assistance, this has ended, with farmers now having to procure inputs including mechanization services, labour, seed, fertilizer, and transportation at higher market price. The decline in domestic rice production and the inability to import food products have led to a sharp increase in food prices.

This paper suggests a two-pronged approach for Sri Lankan agriculture: a near-term strategy to recover from multiple shocks and a long-term strategy to transform and position the sector on a sustainable growth trajectory. It advocates for an economic rationale that prioritizes market fundamentals and fosters structural transformation to create a conducive environment for market operations. The paper also highlights the failure of past government interventions, such as subsidies for fertilizer and seed and government procurement at above-market prices, worsening the economic crisis without strengthening sector fundamentals. The end or limitation of such practices should be seen as a blessing and not repeated. In the near term, the focus should be on supporting farmers as they recover from the economic downturn and increase food production, particularly in rice, poultry, and animal feed. Due to budgetary constraints, it is crucial to repurpose committed expenditures and revise current budget allocations. These could involve eliminating input subsidy budgets, improving input use efficiency by promoting precision application techniques, and directing R&D budgets to address failures in the information markets. Addressing the lack of a reliable crop forecasting and production advisory system can prevent wasteful gluts and deficits, reduce post-harvest losses, and strengthen climate resilience. Investing in such a system will yield high dividends.

The short-term recovery policies should not sacrifice long-term competitiveness and sustainability in agriculture. In this regard, improving labour and management productivity is crucial. The Green Revolution technology, which increased labour and land productivity, has ended. To increase returns to labour and management further, farmers need larger farms and adopt mechanization and modern technology. Larger farms are more productive, especially in terms of labour productivity, which is closely linked to farm family income. Land consolidation is an effective instrument in rural development, enabling farmers to have larger, better-shaped farms and expand their investments. Technological parks in Sri Lanka are a strategic approach to agriculture modernization, allowing farmers to gain hands-on experience in various technological aspects. Encouraging robust investment and innovation in agribusinesses is crucial for value addition and farmer integration into high-value chains. A supportive policy and regulatory environment that considers economic fundamentals and evidence-based decision-making should reinforce this modernization drive.

The state's role in the agriculture and food industry has evolved, with services provided by private-sector agribusinesses and producer organizations becoming more efficient. The state needs to explore public-private partnerships for R&D and marketing, while ensuring transparency and competitiveness. Agricultural extension and advisory services have become specialized, with customized messages tailored to clients' needs. State institutions must adapt agricultural education and training to meet these needs. The politicization of Sri Lanka's agriculture policies hinders attracting investments due to operational risk and government involvement in input and output markets. Policy

choices should consider cross-product effects and the entire value chain, acknowledge sub-national institutions, and streamline public-sector organizations to offer public goods and services. Current national and subnational institutions often function at odds, making coordination difficult. Results-oriented management should assess state organizations' performance to remove barriers to technology adoption, diffusion, and coordination. The state should play the role of regulator and facilitator which has proven successful in advanced economies.

Middlemen are providing an important economic function of aggregation necessary under small farm conditions. However, their involvement also comes with challenges, particularly regarding the equitable sharing of profits. Efforts to balance these roles and mitigate negative impacts through cooperative models and improved market access for farmers can enhance the overall effectiveness of the agricultural marketing system. Direct marketing can shorten long value chains by removing excessive handling by middlemen. Direct marketing involving established supermarket chains, benefits farmers by providing a stable market and reducing price risk.

The ongoing economic crisis in Sri Lanka has significantly burdened smallholder farmers who are facing significant financial burdens. Increasing access to finance would help develop agricultural enterprises and support new entrepreneurs. These credit assistantships could attract new agro entrepreneurs and motivate existing ones. Additionally, policies should be designed to implement affordable crop insurance schemes to protect farmers from losses due to natural disasters or market fluctuations. These policies can strengthen smallholder farmers' livelihoods, contribute to agricultural productivity, and improve food security in Sri Lanka. The state must facilitate national food and nutrition security policies considering domestic economic conditions and trade's role. Stronger policy focus should include promoting products that increase the farmer incomes through diversification of agricultural production systems, changing food habits through nutrition education, and improving food safety and post-harvest handling to encourage domestic production growth and competition from imported substitutes.

The sustainability of agricultural production systems is crucial due to the depleting quality of natural resources and the impact of climate change. To protect the integrity of the resource base, Sri Lanka needs to implement adaptation and mitigation measures, such as promoting renewable energy, protecting forest cover, and advancing climate-resilient agricultural methods. Sustainable agroforestry, which integrates trees with crops and cattle, preserves soil health and biodiversity. A comprehensive strategy involving policy implementation, infrastructure development, community engagement, and technological breakthroughs is needed to build resilience to climate disasters. Inclusive policies, social safety nets, and economic diversification are also essential for supporting vulnerable populations.

Sri Lanka is aiming to revolutionize agricultural development by utilizing data and digital technology. Precision farming, remote sensing, satellite imagery, and agricultural data analytics can optimize input use schedules and crop yields. Mobile agriculture services provide weather forecasts and market pricing, while blockchain ensures supply chain transparency. E-commerce sites boost revenue and supply, while intelligent irrigation systems and automated gear increase farm productivity. Knowledge-sharing platforms and farm management software could simplify farm operations and maximize outputs. By addressing the structural challenges and leveraging technological advancements, these interventions can create a resilient agricultural sector capable of withstanding both immediate crises and long-term challenges.

# **Sharing Regional Experiences**

**Invited Presentations through the**

**Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC)**



## India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership for Sustainable Recovery and Inclusive Development



### **Prof. Nagesh Kumar**

**Director, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development  
(ISID),**

**New Delhi**

This presentation will focus on the role that regional cooperation in general, and the India-Sri Lanka economic partnership in particular, could play in sustainable recovery and inclusive development. The external context has turned less benign since the global financial crisis of 2008/09. The global economy has entered a phase of prolonged slowdown. World trade growth has been rather flat and has been further aggravated by the disruption of global supply chains in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, the Red Sea crisis, and geopolitical tensions in different parts of the world. These shocks have caused liquidity challenges and debt crises affecting the economic performance of many developing economies around the world including those in South Asia. In this context, it is argued that regional cooperation can be an important factor in assisting recovery and inclusive and sustainable development. It will focus on the India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership as an example of such cooperation and highlight its potential.

# The Role of Social Science in Shaping Malaysia's Public Policy on Good Governance, Integrity, and Anti-Corruption: Addressing Economic Crises and Promoting Sustainable Growth (2004-2024)



**Dr Anis Yusal Yusoff**  
**Executive Director,**  
**International Institute of Public Policy & Management**  
**(INPUMA),**  
**Universiti Malaya**

This presentation delves into the pivotal role social science has played in shaping Malaysia's public policies concerning good governance, integrity, and anti-corruption from 2004 to 2024, particularly in addressing economic crises and fostering sustainable growth. Over these two decades, Malaysia has navigated complex political, economic, and social challenges and social science insights have been crucial in developing effective policy responses. The presentation starts by contextualizing the governance and corruption issues Malaysia faced in the early 2000s, including systemic corruption and institutional weaknesses that undermined economic stability and growth. Social science disciplines, such as Political Science, Economics, and Sociology, have been instrumental in diagnosing these issues and proposing evidence based solutions. One significant contribution of social science has been in analyzing governance structures and public administration. Researchers have employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess institutional performance, identify corruption hotspots, and understand the impact of governance practices on economic stability. These insights have driven reforms to enhance transparency and accountability, which are essential for mitigating corruption and building a stable economic environment. In response to economic crises, social science research has been critical in developing targeted interventions. Insights from behavioural economics have informed policies designed to address both systemic and individual factors contributing to economic instability and corruption. Additionally, sociological studies have provided a deeper understanding of cultural and social dynamics that impact governance and economic behaviour, leading to more effective and culturally relevant anti-corruption strategies. Public opinion research has also played a key role in shaping policies that address the economic crises. Surveys and focus groups have offered valuable feedback on public perceptions of governance and corruption, helping policymakers design solutions that are not only effective but also align with public expectations. This engagement has been crucial in ensuring that

reforms are practical and widely supported. The presentation will highlight specific policy initiatives, such as the establishment of the Malaysian Institute of Integrity, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), the National Integrity Plan, the National Anti-Corruption Plan, the National Centre for Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption (GIACC), and various legislative reforms, examining their role in stabilizing the economy and promoting sustainable growth. It will assess how social science research has influenced these initiatives and their effectiveness in tackling corruption and enhancing governance. Looking toward the future, the presentation will discuss emerging trends and challenges, emphasizing the need for continuous social science input to adapt policies to evolving economic and governance issues. Advanced analytical techniques and interdisciplinary approaches will be highlighted as essential for developing sustainable solutions that ensure long-term growth and stability. In summary, this presentation demonstrates how social science has been integral in shaping Malaysia's approach to good governance, integrity, and anti-corruption, providing critical insights and solutions for overcoming economic crises and promoting sustainable growth. More importantly, this presentation illustrates how social science has been vital in developing Malaysia's governance policies, demonstrating its role in ensuring growth and sustainability through informed and effective policy-making.

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