

Service Delivery and Infrastructure for Promoting Pro-Poor Growth and Development in Sri Lanka

Concept Note

Although Sri Lanka has achieved per capita income growth of about 3 per cent per year over the past two decades, poverty reduction has been slow while inequality has risen in recent years. Headcount poverty declined only from 26 per cent to 23 per cent between 1990-91 and 2002. Further, national poverty measures mask widening disparities between urban, rural and estate poverty, as well as across geographic districts across the country.

Consequently, there has been an urgency to push for broad-based growth, and many policy documents articulate pro-poor growth strategies. The policy direction of the GOSL is detailed in the Ministry of Finance's Framework for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction and the Medium-term Expenditure Framework, and expanded in the 2005 and 2006 Budgets. Additionally, the Central Bank published its Annual Report 2004, Recent Economic Developments and the Consumer Finance Survey in 2005. The World Bank issued the Sri Lanka Development Policy Review (DPR), Sri Lanka: Improving the Urban and Rural Investment Climate, the Education Report and the Updated Poverty Profile and Map. The Institute of Policy Studies released its State of the Economy Report 2005, Impact of Trade Liberalization on Poverty and Household Welfare, Regulatory Impact Assessment: A Tool for Better Regulatory Governance in Sri Lanka, Decentralization and Provincial Finance, and Governance Issues in Poverty Reduction.

Now it is important to take an integrated view of Sri Lanka's long term development challenges, so that the vision of reduced poverty and more equitable, balanced growth is achieved. The workshop "Service delivery and Infrastructure for Promoting Pro-Poor Growth and Development in Sri Lanka" intends to tackle the key issues that would spur pro-poor growth. The focus is on highlighting implementation strategies that will achieve national goals, and are feasible from a resource and political economy perspective. Further, national policies will have to be nuanced to incorporate important differences across geographic districts. The workshop aims to contribute towards developing policy innovations which will effectively address the economic disparities across the country, reduce poverty and generate robust economic growth.