

Poverty in Sri Lanka

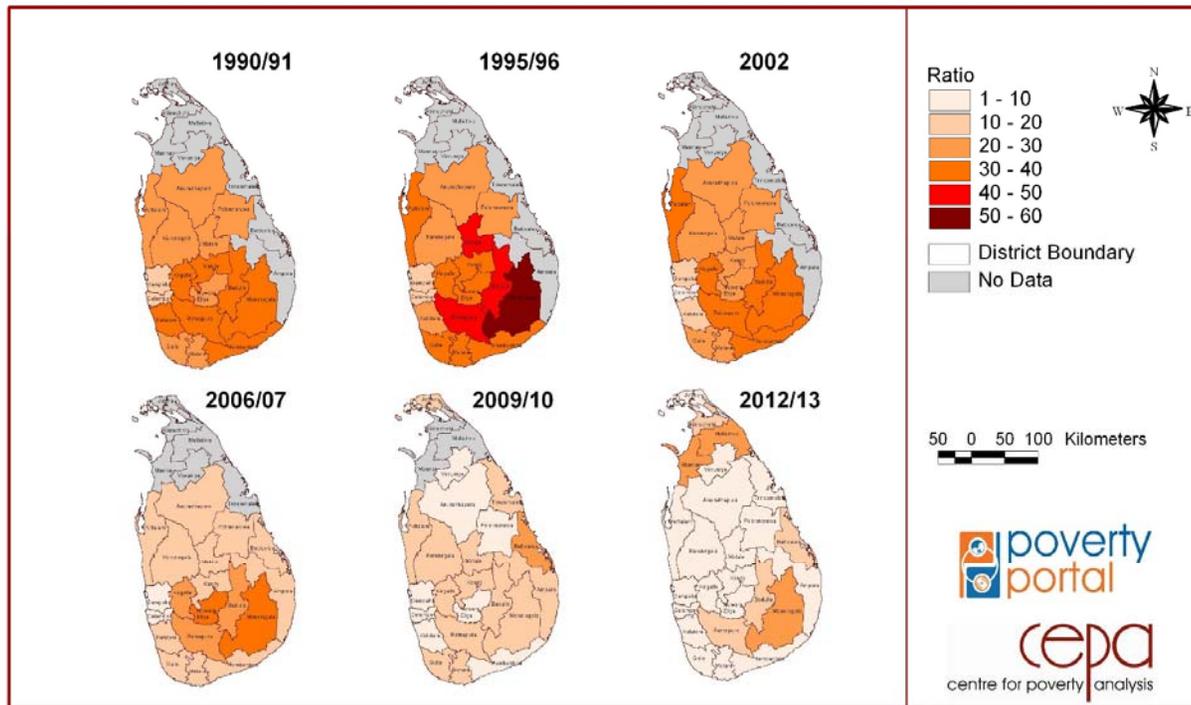
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Poverty measured monetarily has been reducing in Sri Lanka

- The poverty headcount index for 2016 was 4.1 a **reduction** from 6.7 in 2012/13.
- From 2002 to 2016, the long term overall poverty index has shown a **downward trend**.
- In 2016 approximately **843,913** individuals were in poverty, down from **1.3 million** in 2012/13.
- This represents a **0.5 million** decline from 2012/13 to 2016.

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Poverty Headcount Ratio by District - 1990/91 to 2012/13



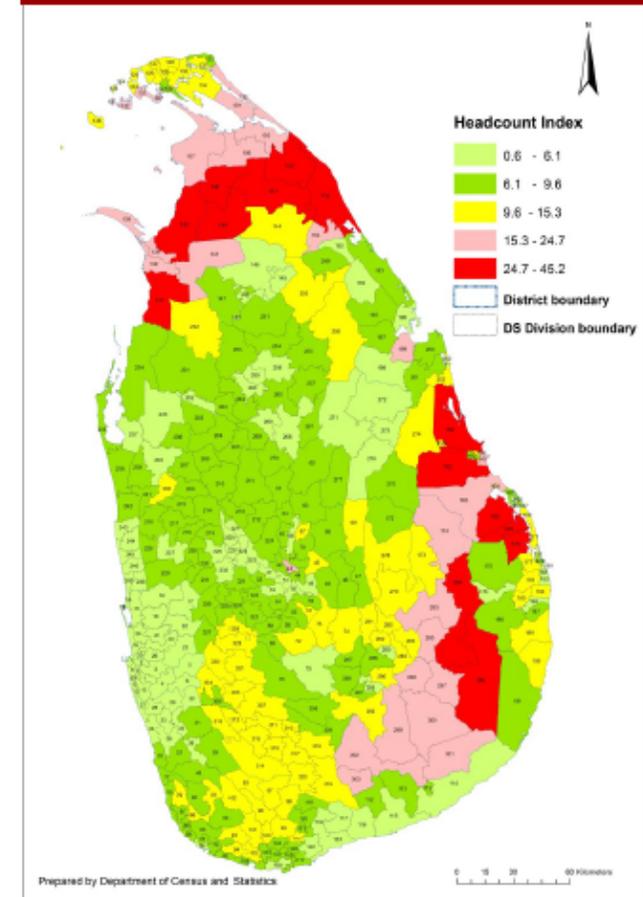
Data source: Poverty Headcount Ratio Brief: Decomposition of Consumption Poverty, Department of Census and Statistics

Map Source: CEPA, 2014. "Poverty Headcount Ratio by District - 1990/91 to 2012/13", Poverty Portal: Maps and Statistics. Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis.

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Figure 1: Distribution of poverty headcount index by DS division - 2012/13



Beyond income - Sustainable Livelihoods

- Our village studies find that Dependence of many for income,
 - Government jobs, including those from the war economy and/ or migration to other countries.
- Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI): Missing Dimensions of Poverty – Uva amongst Samurdhi/ non-Samurdhi households
 - Quality of Work – Temporary employment, lack of social security & No savings in case of loss of job;
 - Subjective wellbeing and Happiness – Housing, income and education
- Coastal communities – environmental issues that impact on the livelihood options
- Debt
 - Poverty Headcount Ratio in Vavuniya – 3.4%
 - 83% of the non-poor households in Vavuniya have loans
 - If people had used the borrowed money to consume, are they above poverty line?

Horizontal inequalities

- Numerical measures are absolute- focusing only on income.
- What of horizontal inequalities? Digging deeper into post –war Sri Lanka, we see subalternity maintained by the structural inequalities predicated by:
 1. Caste
 2. Class
 3. Ethnicity
 4. Religion
 5. Gender

What does it mean to live?

Horizontal inequalities

‘Silencing’ occurs through exclusion from:

- **Politics** (political participation, power, at all levels).
- **Economic resources and outcomes** (access to assets, employment, incomes).
- **Social, including services** (health/education/water..; and social networks).
- **Cultural recognition** (lack of, or traditional hierarchies)

And, an increasingly dependent economy.

“oppressions [that are] interlocking or occurring simultaneously, thus creating new measures of oppression and inequality.”- (Taylor, 2017)

“Widows and disabled are the people that need samurdhi (welfare). Even the family that goes abroad, if they have a widow or disabled because of the war, then they need samurdhi assistance. Those who are poor, they come to the local official with their stories of sadness. Yesterday a lady came to see me, who was war affected. Her husband has gone abroad, she has 6 children. It is hard to find food and drink and basic needs, she says. This gives me great sadness. [this is the status quo, that we cannot even assist with basic needs. the highway is being built but people don’t have money for the bus]. But these people are targets for microfinance companies. Microfinance companies only want to make a profit. Poor people will sign anywhere because they need money. They use the money for everyday things like tuition fees or to buy lunch. These are small amounts. The microfinance companies target female households. There are so many of these companies.” – Local Government Official, Ampara District (Eastern Province)

Recognize Nuances of Poverty

- Going beyond income – looking at other connected aspects such as debt, type of livelihoods
- Bringing aspects of wellbeing – dignity, security, safety nets, networks
- Quality of services - education, health, roads
- Recognizing geographic variations – poverty pockets
- Contextual situations
- Going beyond the economic, looking at the connections to social and environmental aspects

Broaden our frameworks of analysis

- Think of poverty not only at the individual level but in terms of entire communities that are disempowered, deprived, sometimes forced into being passive recipients of donor aid and programming-
dependency economy
- Development that not just builds back but thinks radically about inequality (Najab et al 2017)
- Frameworks that think not only economically, but ethically, epistemically, and politically (Mignolo, 2012).

Thank you