

Monthly Bulletin | January 2021

The first issue of IPS' *Monthly Bulletin* brings to you our work across an array of research themes. This issue contains articles on global trade, health, education, labour and migration. It also presents our latest publication and featured videos. We hope this bulletin is informative and insightful.

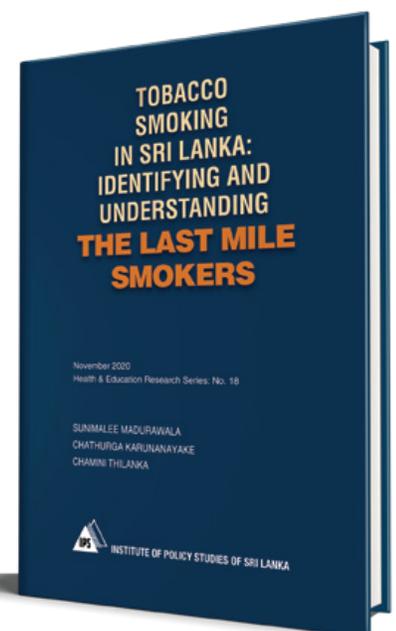
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New Publication

Tobacco Smoking in Sri Lanka: Identifying and Understanding the Last Mile Smokers By Sunimalee Madurawala, Chathurga Karunanayaka and Chamini Thilanka

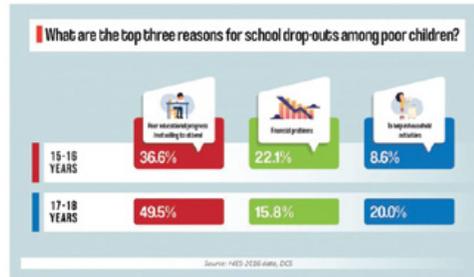
Secondary data analysis shows that smoking prevalence is higher among certain groups. 'Tobacco Smoking in Sri Lanka: Identifying and Understanding the Last Mile Smokers' focuses on these groups – referred to as 'Last Mile Smokers' (LMS) in the report. The report is based on a study which identifies LMS, examines reasons behind their smoking initiation and continuation, their efforts to quit smoking, and their awareness on the adverse effects of smoking. The challenge for Sri Lanka now is to 'go the last mile' and reduce smoking prevalence among the LMS.

[See more >>>](#)



Education Equity in Sri Lanka: A Pathway out of Poverty

By Wimal Nanayakkara

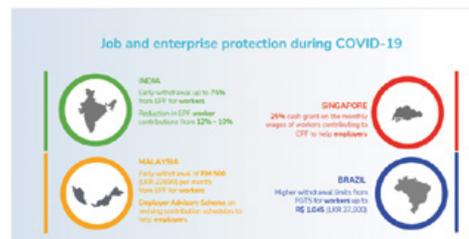


Although Sri Lanka has provided universal free education since 1939, around one-fifth of poor children drop out of school after the age of 14 years and another two thirds after the age of 16 years. Comparison of estimates based on the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)-2012/2013 and HIES-2016, conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), show only a marginal improvement. With the closure of schools following the COVID-19 outbreak and the sudden shift to online learning, poor children with no access to e-learning opportunities risk falling even further behind. In this context, some proposals made in Budget 2021 to improve the education system and reduce poverty will benefit poor children who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

[See more >>>](#)

Protecting Jobs and Enterprises during Crises: How can Sri Lanka Respond Better?

By Ashani Abayasekara



The policy proposal in Sri Lanka's 2021 Budget to impose a 0.25% tax on the revenue of companies to set up a 'COVID-19 Insurance Fund' has raised concerns among many private sector industry stakeholders. They argue that this is a big blow to industries already suffering in the wake of the pandemic, and warn that mandating payment of an additional tax can push them to reverse current measures taken to retain staff, amidst dampened business activity and customer demand.

[See more >>>](#)



RCEP: Sri Lanka's Latest Asia-centric Conundrum

By Dushni Weerakoon and Kithmina Hewage

The formation of the world's largest regional trade bloc – the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in November 2020 – on Sri Lanka's doorstep raises fresh questions about how the country will navigate its most recent Asia-centric re-positioning. Balancing Sri Lanka's India-China interests while seeking engagement with a wider spectrum of economic opportunities in Asia will not be easy.

[See more >>>](#)

Sri Lanka's Tobacco-Smoking Challenge: Going the Last Mile

By Sunimalee Madurawala

It is a sobering reminder that while Sri Lanka has made notable strides in reducing the overall smoking rate from 38.1% to 28.4% between 2009 and 2018, smoking remains a significant health threat. The challenge for Sri Lanka now is to identify the groups where smoking prevalence is highly concentrated - what we term as the 'Last Mile Smokers' (LMS) - and implement policy measures that are specifically designed to reduce smoking among the LMS.



[See more >>>](#)

Blogs

Taxing Tobacco: What Did Budget 2021 Miss? By Harini Weerasekera



In a series of blog articles on taxing tobacco, IPS has maintained that increasing tobacco taxation has undeniable health and fiscal benefits. At a juncture when government finances are tight, policy solutions such as taxing tobacco which can be leveraged to boost government revenue, without threatening economic growth, are essential. Such measures can be used to support additional pandemic-related spending in the coming years. However, Sri Lanka's 2021 Budget does not specify any tax increases on cigarettes. Instead, it proposes a simplification of taxes across a variety of sin goods and other goods. Details on how such a complex proposal is to be implemented across an array of industries are yet to be revealed.

[See more >>>](#)

COVID-19 and Migrant Workers: The Economics of Repatriation By Bilesha Weeraratne



Sri Lanka's migrant workers are an integral part of our economy, with their remittances traditionally accounting for the second largest share of the country's foreign exchange earnings (8% of GDP in 2019) after merchandise exports. After the COVID-19 outbreak and resultant difficulties, a sizeable proportion of migrants looked forward to a safe return home. Sri Lanka has found the process of repatriating vast numbers of Sri Lankans abroad since the closure of international airports for inward travel hugely challenging.

[See more >>>](#)

Virtual Dialogue on 'Building Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems in the Age of Pandemics'



[Click here >>>](#)

Dr. Dushni Weerakoon highlights the need for powerful health interventions



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Featured Videos

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