

This month's highlights:

- IPS Research Economist Sunimalee Madurawala, writing for the IPS blogsite Talking Economics (TE), explores the implications of the economic crisis on Sri Lanka's health system, focusing on non-communicable diseases prevention and financing.
- In a TE blog, IPS Research Economist Dilani Hirimuthugodage discusses the state of women's innovations in Sri Lanka and suggests strategies to promote better IP protection for women's creativity and innovations.
- IPS Research Officer Lakshila Wanigasinghe contributes to World Economic Forum's Sustainable Development Transformation Map on Food Security.
- World Health Day 2022 Infographic highlighting the implications of rising out-of-pocket health expenditure in achieving Universal Health Coverage in Sri Lanka.
- In the 'Inside IPS' segment, IPS Research Assistant Piyumi Ranadewa speaks on the importance of building trust as a nation and promoting formal remittances as key factors to increase foreign remittances to Sri Lanka.

We hope you find this issue insightful. Your feedback is, as always, welcome!

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Blogs

Battling Disease and Debt: Financing Non-Communicable Diseases Amidst Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis

By Sunimalee Madurawala



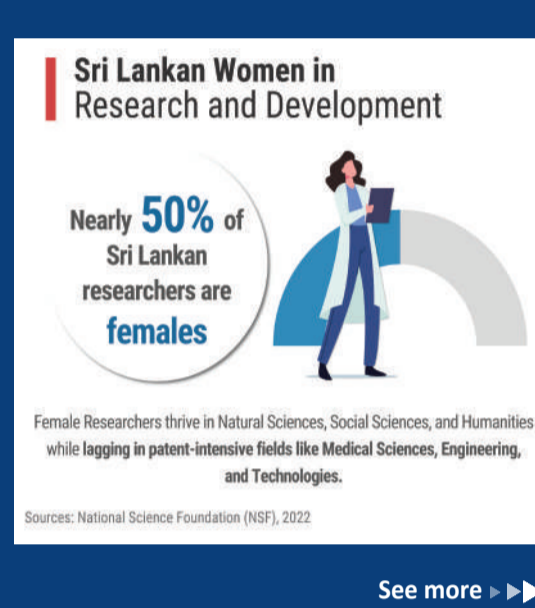
Over the last few decades, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have become a critical health challenge in Sri Lanka, accounting for over 80% of total deaths and 38% of health expenditure in 2019. The economic impact is particularly challenging for households affected by chronic NCDs as they bear higher costs of medicines, pharmaceutical products, medical laboratory tests, and other ancillary services. With the current economic downturn, preventing and financing NCDs has become even more challenging for Sri Lanka. An ongoing IPS study delves into the implications of the economic crisis on the country's health system, with a specific focus on NCD prevention and financing. The study conducted an extensive analysis by gathering perspectives from various stakeholders. This blog is based on the information collected from these stakeholders.

[See more >>>](#)

Cracking the Code: Why Women's Innovations are Lagging Behind in Sri Lanka

By Dilani Hirimuthugodage

Many female innovators are unwilling to obtain Intellectual Property (IP) protection and commercialise their innovations for various reasons. One of the significant issues is the insufficient understanding of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and their application. Given that this year's World IP Day, observed on April 26, focuses on "Women and IP: Accelerating Innovation and Creativity", it is timely to explore the state of women's innovations in Sri Lanka and consider possible strategies to promote better IP protection for women's creativity and innovations.



[See more >>>](#)

"In the short-term, existing food insecurity needs to be addressed, particularly for the most vulnerable. In the medium to long-term, greater focus should be placed on building resilient food systems."

Lakshila Wanigasinghe, Research Officer, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

Lakshila Wanigasinghe Contributes to World Economic Forum's Sustainable Development Transformation Map on Food Security

IPS Research Officer Lakshila Wanigasinghe was part of a diverse group of experts who worked together with Southern Voice as they co-curated the Sustainable Development Transformation Map by the Strategic Intelligence platform of the World Economic Forum (WEF). Wanigasinghe contributed to the Sustainable Development Transformation Map on Food Security.

The Strategic Intelligence platform supports informed decision-making by contextualising topics across 290+ dynamic visualisations, known as the Transformation Maps. Each map combines the Forums Expert Network inputs with machine intelligence to tag the latest content and insights against each topic, using natural language processing and artificial intelligence.

[See more >>>](#)

Out-of-Pocket (OOP) Expenditure on Health

Source: Author's calculation based on HIES 2019 microdata.

Despite free healthcare services in Sri Lanka, households still spend around 38% of their health out-of-pocket (OOP) expenditure on doctors' fees.

The current economic crisis has created challenges in progressing toward Universal Health Coverage in Sri Lanka, including:

- ➔ Lack of essential medication
- ➔ Disruptions to surgeries and hospital functions
- ➔ Higher OOP due to the depreciation of the LKR

IPS' State of the Economy Report 2022 stresses the importance of addressing supply-side constraints of public healthcare services, including coordination issues within government institutions and financial mismanagement, to reduce OOP expenditure and ensure equal access to quality healthcare for all.

[See more >>>](#)

World Health Day 2023

Inside IPS

Special interview featuring:

Piyumi Ranadewa
Research Assistant at IPS

Q: Tell us about yourself and your role at IPS:

I am a Research Assistant working on migration and urbanisation policy research at IPS. I hold a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture, specialising in Agriculture Economics and Business and a Master of Agri Enterprise and Technology Management from the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka.

Q: What are you currently researching?

I am currently working on projects that focus on the impact of climate change on migration in Sri Lanka and examining remittance patterns in Sri Lanka and South Asia. Additionally, I am also working on a project that addresses the reintegration of migrant workers who have returned to their home country, with a particular emphasis on their skills and aspirations.

Q: As a researcher working on migration policy, how do you assess the current wave of individuals seeking work overseas from previous migration waves?

In Sri Lanka, many people view migration as a promising path towards better job opportunities, particularly among the youth and even fresh graduates. This migratory mindset has become prevalent among Sri Lankans today, as evidenced by the long queues outside the passport office.

Q: In your opinion, what steps should Sri Lanka take to address the issue of brain drain and retain its talented workforce?

Skilled migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by various conditions. When skilled professionals migrate from their home country, it can be seen as a loss to their home country, which invested time and money into their education and training.

Q: What immediate steps should be taken to increase foreign remittances to Sri Lanka?

Firstly, we should review and improve labour policies to facilitate safe migration. We also need to analyse the global labour market, identify countries with potential opportunities for Sri Lankan workers, and then provide appropriate training and support to meet those demands. Further, we can engage with young people through networks such as school or university alumni associations and educational institutions in collaboration with government and non-government bodies. Providing attractive solutions to encourage overseas Sri Lankan communities to invest in the country is also a viable option. Ultimately building trust as a nation and promoting formal remittances is crucial.

Q: What do you enjoy most in your work?

One of the things I enjoy the most about my job is the opportunity to constantly learn and discover new things. I find research is an excellent way to embrace every opportunity to engage in it. Another aspect I value most about my job is the freedom to work on many topics. I enjoy conducting research in various areas, which can ultimately have an impact on policy decisions, improving people's lives.

Q: What are some challenging aspects of working as a researcher?

The inadequacy of data is a challenge, particularly in the context of surveys where individuals tend to be hesitant to share information.

Q: Apart from your current field of research, what are your other pursuits?

Travelling and exploring new parts of the world. I find it to be a great way to broaden my perspective and appreciate the beauty of the world around us.

The recent budget has increased taxation as the main revenue source for the government, with anyone earning over 100,000 rupees per month now required to pay tax. This sudden tax hike and high inflation could trigger the migration of professional and educated individuals, leading to a shortage of skilled human resources that could hamper the country's recovery process. The media often reports on the lack of professionals in hospitals, highlighting the urgency of this issue. Additionally, the lack of social freedom and unstable political governance contributes to the need for better opportunities abroad as individuals seek to provide for themselves and their families.

Skilled job categories are high in demand for foreign employment in recent years, with 7,283 skilled workers departing in January 2023. The deteriorating economic situation in the country has recently compelled hundreds of professionals in sectors like healthcare, and IT to migrate in search of better opportunities.