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Monday January 22nd, 2024

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ECONOMY

Only 7.7 pct of Sri Lanka's working-age women in formal employment: IPS



Monday November 6, 2023 12:05 pm

A promotional poster for 'Turning Point 2023'. The poster has a blue and yellow background. It features a small video player at the top with a man speaking. Below the video, the text reads 'Turning Point 2023' in large white letters. Underneath, it says 'Sri Lanka is at a critical juncture in its economic evolution'. To the right, a black circle contains the text 'A festival of Ideas and provocative conversations on Igniting growth, and disrupting Industries and the economy'. At the bottom, it says 'Powered by mastercard' with the Mastercard logo.

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ECONOMYNEXT – Only 7.7 percent of working-age women are engaged in formal employment with decent wages and decent working hours, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) said, noting that household and caregiving responsibilities and limited availability of jobs compound Sri Lanka’s low levels of female labour force participation.

“Decent work is multifaceted, incorporating productive work that delivers a fair income in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity (ILO, 1999). Due to the heavier household and caregiving responsibilities falling on women, they face challenges when participating in the labour force and securing decent work,” the IPS said in a statement on Monday November 06, authored by researchers Kimuthu Kiringoda and Himani Vithanage.

Noting that Sri Lanka’s labour market is characterised by several gender-specific challenges, IPS Director of Research Nisha Arunatilake was quoted as saying that employers consider women’s additional household and caregiving responsibilities when hiring workers, affecting the demand for female workers. Sri Lankan legislation

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recruited, said Arunatilake, they face constraints and disadvantages in opportunities for promotions and career development owing to their household duties.

A separate survey by Sri Lanka's Women and Media Collective found in July 2023 that 54.7 percent women respondents had said they could not get a job as there was no one to take care of their children, while another 11.9 percent had said there was no one to take care of their parents.

Notably, no man gave the two reasons for not being in paid work.

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outside the western province.

As noted by Arunatilake, “about 30 percent of the jobs in these areas are in the agriculture sector,” which mostly comprises vulnerable jobs with low income. This, she said, combined with employers’ preference for recruiting males, further restricts women’s access to decent work opportunities.

A recent IPS [study](#) revealed that only 8 percent of Sri Lanka’s working-age population is engaged in formal employment with decent wages and decent working hours. For females, the percentage is 7.7 percent, lower than the male percentage of 8.3 percent. The study also emphasised that access to decent work improves when women are English literate and have higher levels of education. Additionally, households with male members in formal work increase prospects for women to enter decent work.

Unfortunately, the presence of school-going children decreases their chances of decent work, as women shoulder increased responsibility for their children’s education, the IPS said in its statement.

The IPS went on to say that outdated labour laws still retain provisions that are discriminatory to women. The lack

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A conference organised by the IPS in collaboration with Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP) and Co-Impact, hosted the National Policy Conference on Women's Access to Decent Work in Sri Lanka on October 31 saw policymakers and key stakeholders discuss means of improving women's access to decent work, focusing on the importance of creating decent jobs for women and the role of childcare facilities in enhancing women's access to decent work.

Executive Director at the Industrial Service Bureau Neelakanth Wanninayake was quoted as saying at the conference that a majority of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka struggle with issues like poor quality consciousness, low productivity, limited innovation, and diversification. Some of the major barriers to industrialisation, including policy issues, lack of access to finance and credit, inefficient infrastructure, lack of innovation and technology transfer, and poor entrepreneurial culture, need to be addressed to generate decent job opportunities in the country, she said.

Transforming precarious jobs to decent jobs in addition to the creation of

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regional level was also stressed.

Gender segregation in the labour market in Sri Lanka is another persistent issue, according to the IPS, with women often confined to certain types of professions, such as teaching and low-skilled service sector jobs.

First Vice Chairperson of the Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce (WCIC) Gayani Herath de Alwissaid that, [in the transport and logistics sector in Sri Lanka, female representation is only 3.4% compared to 96.6% of male representation](#). A significant factor contributing to this is the limited awareness of job prospects within specific industries that offer decent job opportunities, De Alwis said, noting the importance of raising awareness to attract women to decent jobs and ensuring their retainment in the workforce once entered.

Programme Manager, Gender and Economic Inclusion, International Finance Corporation Sri Lanka (IFC) Aarthy Arunasalam who also spoke at the event had highlighted the significance of having strong male advocates to promote women's engagement in decent work, access to financial and non-financial services, and strengthening the linkages in the

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Empowerment, Advocacy and Code of Conduct at MAS Holdings Thanuja Jayawardene, meanwhile, highlighted challenges faced by the private sector in implementing childcare policies in the absence of a coherent national policy.

According to the statement, all panellists at the conference had agreed it is a societal responsibility to protect children and ensure their sound development in their early years.

Jayawardene noted that two issues regarding creches at the workplace are the cost for the business and the different requirements of varied classes of employees. In the apparel sector, she said, the factory floor and office cadre have different requirements and shifts. It was, however, reiterated that the apparel sector was built on the backbone of women to whom extensive care and attention should be given, according to the IPS statement.

Parental responsibility and parental care was also discussed.

“All the experts agreed that child-rearing responsibility should shift from the mother to both parents, reaffirming the need for provisions for paternal

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COMES, Citing examples from the free trade zones.

“Director (Planning and Information), Child Protection Authority, Shanika Malalgoda highlighted the National Guidelines for Day Care Centres in the discussion as a sound tool to maintain standards of care, along with the five-year action plan introduced by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs.

Arguments were raised by the audience against the policy, stating that there are too many bodies involved, making the implementation complex. Malalgoda said they cannot avoid multi-sectoral engagement and are working with limited resources in the ministry,” the IPS said. (Colombo/Nov06/2023)

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MARKETS

Sri Lanka's Softlogic Finance to raise Rs2.5bn from shareholders

Monday January 22, 2024 11:14 am

ECONOMYNEXT – Softlogic Finance Plc, a publicly traded unit of Sri Lanka’s Softlogic Capital Plc, said it was seeking shareholder approval to raise 2.5 billion rupees in equity

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POLITICS

Sri Lanka minor opposition party leader among five shot dead

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Crime scene. Caution

Monday January 22, 2024 11:13 am

ECONOMYNEXT — Leader of the ‘Ape Jana Bala’ (Our People’s Force) party Saman Perera was among five people shot dead in the southern town of Beliatta, media reports

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BONDS & FOREX

Sri Lanka rupee opens at 320.00/25 to the US dollar

Monday January 22, 2024 10:07 am

ECONOMYNEXT – Sri Lanka’s rupee opened at 320.00/25 to the US dollar on Monday, from 320.20/40 Friday, dealers said.

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