

SRI LANKA NATIONAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2014



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NATIONAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

NHDR 2014

YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT



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YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT: *TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE*



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Sri Lanka National Human Development Reports 1998–2014

1998 *Regional Dimensions of Human Development*

2012 *Bridging Regional Disparities for Human Development*

2014 *Youth and Development: Towards a More Inclusive Future*

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FOREWORD

Human Development Reports have been commissioned and published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1990 as intellectually independent, empirically grounded analyses of development issues, trends, progress and policies. The ultimate goal of the reports is to help advance human development. This means placing as much emphasis on health, education, and the expansion of human freedoms and choices, as on economic growth. As the first global Human Development Report in 1990 asserted, “The real wealth of a nation is its people.”

UNDP Sri Lanka produced its first National Human Development Report in 1998. A second report issued in 2012, *Bridging Regional Disparities for Human Development*, focused on spatial disparities across population groups. Since human development is concerned as much with the needs of the future as with those of the present, Sri Lanka’s third National Human Development Report in 2014 examines the pivotal role of Sri Lankan youth. *Youth and Development: Towards a More Inclusive Future* considers the opportunities and challenges youth face as the nation progresses through the 21st century. This has been the year for youth in Sri Lanka, highlighted by the launch of the first National Youth Policy and the hosting of the World Conference on Youth, which led to an outcome statement that for the first time was jointly signed by the Government and youth delegates.

Sri Lanka has 4.64 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 years, constituting 23.2 percent of the population. Though the country has made steady progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and reaching lower middle-income country status, it continues to face a number of challenges, with youth being one of the most affected groups, contending with issues in the areas of education, employment, health, post-war reconciliation and social integration, and civic engagement and political participation. There are, however, opportunities to address these and constructively engage youth as equal stakeholders and important assets for the development of their communities and the country as a whole. This National Human Development Report, based on stakeholder consultations, the conduct of a nationally representative sample survey of youth and on qualitative research undertaken, considers the opinions and perspectives of youth on key opportunities and challenges they face, as well as what they think are the most appropriate steps forward.

We believe this report will serve as a platform for strengthening collaboration between the Government and non-governmental actors, and importantly youth themselves, towards revitalizing and prioritizing the implementation of key existing policies that benefit youth and the country at large. We hope that Sri Lankan youth will take ownership of the report, and realize their full potential as catalytic agents of change.

UNDP stands fully committed to supporting, in partnership with the Government, such an inclusive process, with this National Human Development Report constituting a major vehicle for policy development and implementation in Sri Lanka.



Subinay Nandy

UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative

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The Sri Lanka National Human Development Report 2014 titled *Youth and Development: Towards a More Inclusive Future* would not have been possible without the assistance and support received from various individuals and organizations. We take this opportunity to thank them for their valuable contributions.

National Steering and Advisory Committee

The National Steering and Advisory Committee deserves special thanks for its guidance throughout the preparation of the report. The committee was co-chaired by Ms. Razina Bilgrami, Country Director, a.i., UNDP and Dr. Suren Batagoda, Deputy Secretary to the Treasury. The members consisted of Ms. Chandani Wijewardena, Director General of the National Planning Department, Ministry of Finance and Planning; Ms. Nilanthi Sugathadasa, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development; Mr. Anura Dissanayake, Secretary, Ministry of Education; Dr. Sunil Jayantha Navaratne, Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education; Mr. Donglin Li, Country Director, International Labour Organization (ILO); Ms. Antonia De Meo, Deputy Representative, United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF); Mr. Senel Wanniarachchi and Ms. Dulanjalee Iluksooriya, Representatives of the Sri Lanka Youth Parliament; and Dr. Ganga Tilakaratne, Research Fellow and Head of Poverty and Social Welfare Policy Research, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka. In particular, we wish to acknowledge the speedy assistance provided by Mr. T.M.J. Bandara, Director, National Planning Department in facilitating the work of the National Steering and Advisory Committee.

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Contributors

We greatly appreciate the excellent work done by the members of our National Human Development Report 2014 research team, including in undertaking a nation-wide representative sample survey on youth as well as qualitative research around the country. The team was drawn from two national universities and a research institution, and comprised:

- Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, lead researcher, and Senior Lecturer, Social Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka;
- Dr. Nalaka Wickramasinghe, co-researcher, and Senior Lecturer, Commerce and Financial Management Department, University of Kelaniya;
- Dr. Shantha Abeysinghe, co-researcher, and Senior Lecturer, Social Studies Department, Open University of Sri Lanka;
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- Dr. Udan Fernando, co-researcher, and Team Leader, Communications and Policy Programme, Centre for Poverty Analysis; and
- Ms. Rishana Haniffa, Independent Development Consultant.

The research team was ably assisted by Ms. Hasitha Rathnasiri. The provincial coordinators drawn from universities around the country for the National Youth Survey 2013 were Mr. Binara Angammana, Mr. Harshaka Hettiarachchi, Mr. Saman Jayarathne, Mr. Asitha Kumara, Dr. T. Mangaleswaran, Mr. N.A.A.P. Nissanka, Mr. Upali Pannilage, Ms. H.D.P. Premarathne and Dr. S. Sathananthan, who ensured the accurate collection of data in the field. We also wish to acknowledge the tireless effort put in by over 100 university students who were appointed as enumerators for collecting data.

Contributions from youth and other stakeholders

We wish to express our gratitude to the youth of Sri Lanka and to all those who participated in the National Youth Survey 2013, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. We hope that this report does justice to the views expressed by youth, and contributes to addressing their issues and aspirations.

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of all of those who participated in various stakeholder consultations, including from government institutions, non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions, development partners and the private sector.

Readers' Group and additional contributors

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The UNDP team

UNDP Sri Lanka Resident Representative Mr. Subinay Nandy and Country Director, a.i., Ms. Razina Bilgrami were instrumental in initiating the preparation of Sri Lanka's third National Human Development Report, on youth and development. They remained fully behind the team, guiding it in defining areas of focus and taking the country context into account. Ms. Sonali Dayaratne, Policy Specialist, in her capacity as task manager for the report, steered the preparation through all stages, and provided substantive inputs to the research team. Dr. Fredrick Abeyratne, Consultant, provided guidance and substantive feedback on successive drafts.

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Executive Summary

Human development from a youth perspective

Sustainable, equitable human development is not possible without youth. And yet younger people, worldwide, are not as prominent on public policy agendas as they could be. Where policies are in place, implementation may fall short.

These issues in Sri Lanka make the topic of youth a highly appropriate theme for the 2014 National Human Development Report. It examines the diverse conditions in which different groups of youth live, exploring the opportunities, constraints and freedoms available to them. These will determine if they will thrive in the present as well as their prospects for a successful transition to adulthood. The report considers various approaches to youth by state and non-state agencies, and provides an opportunity to assess the status of youth in relation to existing policies, institutions and actions to advance their human development. It uses the Sri Lankan definition of youth as a person between 15 and 29 years old. Youth currently comprise just over 23 percent of the total population.¹

The 2014 National Human Development Report comes at an opportune moment. Sri Lanka has reached a point of transition in its economy, with high aspirations that depend in part on the energy and productivity of youth. Only a few years past the end of a protracted civil war, where many youth took up arms against the state, it faces new opportunities to significantly engage youth in reconciliation. For this, youth must no longer feel excluded from development, or shut off from their hopes for the future. Finally, there is gathering political momentum and commitment to youth, as reflected in the 2014 agreement on the first National Youth Policy, and Sri Lanka's hosting of the 2014 World Conference on Youth and 2013 Commonwealth Youth Forum in conjunction with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

In looking at the status of youth in Sri Lanka, this report is grounded in a human development

perspective, which recognizes that people's quality of life is more than just income and economic growth. Human development involves asking questions about what people can actually do and be. It emphasizes expanding choices and enlarging human freedom, in a manner that is equitable and empowering.

Behind this report: what young people think

The starting point for the 2014 National Human Development Report was young people themselves, through a National Youth Survey that in 2013 reached a representative sample of nearly 3,100 youth from every district of Sri Lanka. Their perspectives, captured in questionnaires and 15 focus groups, are used as the basis for assessing the current situation of young people across varying socio-economic and cultural contexts, and their participation in development.

The survey was conducted since most national data are not disaggregated for youth, and do not cover areas such as social integration, and civic and political participation. Two previous youth surveys took place in 1999-2000 and in 2009; data from these were compared with that generated in 2013 to track trends among youth. The Focus Group Discussions included special efforts to reach marginalized youth, institutionalised youth and former combatants. The report also drew on qualitative material gathered for developing the National Youth Policy.

A National Steering and Advisory Committee consisting of members of the government, UN agencies, research institutions and youth representatives provided guidance and input throughout the preparation of the report. An initial consultation process validated five critically important themes, with gender cutting across them, around which the report is structured: education, employment, health, civic and political participation, and post-war reconciliation and social integration. Initial research findings were discussed with various stakeholders, and a consultative meeting held prior to finalizing the report.

Impressive human development gains, and disparities

Sri Lanka is notable for its human development achievements, despite a legacy of violent conflict. This is due in part to consistent investments in health and education. Sri Lanka's score on the 2013 Human Development Index (HDI), a composite measure of income, health and education, was 0.750, placing it in the high human development category. It ranked at 73 out of 187 countries and territories, higher than other South Asia countries and even some East Asia states.² Sri Lanka has either achieved the indicators and targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or is very much on track to achieve them before or by 2015.³

Currently defined as a lower middle-income country, Sri Lanka aspires to become a knowledge-based, high-value economy. It aims to increase its per capita GDP from \$3,280 in 2013 to \$4,000 by 2016.⁴ Economic prospects have been strong, with relatively high 6 to 8 percent growth rates in recent years⁵, despite the global economic downturn. The economy is shifting towards the service sector, with enhanced performance in industry and a slight decline in agriculture.

On other aspects of human development, Sri Lanka's health sector has performed remarkably, achieving low levels of infant and maternal mortality, high immunization coverage and a life expectancy of 74 years. Education achievements are also substantial, with a literacy rate of 91 percent reached through free education.⁶

Sri Lanka's key development challenge today is a tendency towards increased inequality, despite a strong economy. In 2012, the poorest 20 percent of Sri Lankan citizens received only 4.5 percent of total household income, while the richest 20 percent enjoyed 54.1 percent.⁷ More than 80 percent of the poor live in rural areas,⁸ and people on estates and former war-affected areas are still more likely to be impoverished than in other parts of the country.

While there is almost universal enrolment in primary education, at higher levels, those with

better incomes stay longer in school.⁹ In terms of gender equality, Sri Lanka compares favourably with other countries in South Asia, especially in education, but far fewer women end up in the workforce, and their participation rate in politics is one of the lowest in the region.

Disparities affect young people in distinct ways, including in access to higher education opportunities, the availability of decent work, the responsiveness of the health care system and their ability to participate in decisions affecting them. Further, the consequences of disparities are particularly important for youth, who are highly sensitive to them. Disparities are generally believed to have contributed to Sri Lanka's protracted civil war as well as youth insurrections in 1971, and in 1988 to 1989. This underlines the urgency of closing gaps. Cutting the roots of conflict is central to meaningful reconciliation that can both hasten economic revival and form the basis of long-lasting peace.

In this process, it is important to recognize that youth respond to disparities in various ways. These need to be considered not in isolation, as a 'problem' only of youth, but in terms of the families and communities in which youth live, and the socio-cultural influences at work. The focus in Sri Lanka has primarily been on youth who responded through rebellion, but other responses, such as withdrawal from mainstream society or increasingly cynical attitudes, also deserve attention.

Youth and education

Education is a human right. It is also one of the most important means of achieving broader development goals such as reducing poverty, improving health, strengthening social justice, and sustaining peace and development.

One of the most significant issues Sri Lanka faces is the uneven quality of and access to education, despite its commitment to universal provision. Well-resourced schools are concentrated in the Western Province; facilities are fewer and of poor quality in rural areas across the country, where

close to 70 percent of Sri Lankans live.¹⁰ Regions with a high concentration of plantation communities or that have been affected by war have found it hard to catch up with national educational achievements. The National Youth Survey 2013 found that 44 percent of youth in the Western Province had attained the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level (A/L), but only 15 percent had done so in Uva Province, which has many estates and a high poverty rate.

Disparities in education have been highlighted over the years, and initiatives taken to redress them, including increases in top-level 1AB schools. Disparities are not simply in infrastructure, however, but also in the learning experience. The education system places excessive focus on competitive examinations, while giving far less attention to the quality of teaching and education administration. Poor quality is also reflected in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes through teaching methods as well as textbooks, despite a laudable record on educating girls.



PHOTO CREDIT: JANAKA THILAKARATNE/WORLD BANK SRI LANKA

Extra tuition classes, typically focused on coaching to pass examinations, have become an accepted part of schooling. In the National Youth Survey 2013, 56 percent of youth had participated in these; 33 percent of those taking the classes did so during school hours. They described this as due to the competitiveness in the education system. This has serious consequences for the quality of education. Training mainly to pass examinations does not include critical, analytical, problem-solving or independent thinking skills beneficial for employment, higher levels of education and ultimately the achievement of a knowledge-based, higher value economy.

Despite impressively high rates of enrolment at primary level, Sri Lanka's education system is unable to retain youth at the higher levels. A relatively high 37 percent of youth do not proceed beyond upper secondary level, even though education is highly valued in Sri Lankan society.¹¹ The National Youth Survey 2013 revealed disappointment with what schools could offer, with 23 percent of respondents saying they dropped out 'because they didn't find school useful'.

A concerted focus on higher education will be imperative for Sri Lanka to reach its development aims, including by building on a skilled workforce. Survey respondents said they think that university education, especially in the state university system, does not guarantee employment, however. Only 2 percent of survey respondents reported being engaged in higher education. Among Sri Lanka's many public and private technical and vocational education and training institutions, the quality is not high enough to satisfy demands from either domestic industry or the changing world economic environment.

Youth and employment

Access to employment is a vital determinant of youth well-being. Sri Lanka has been grappling with the issue of youth employment for several decades—their labour force participation rates lag behind those of older groups.¹² Unemployment for people aged 20 to 24 years has been around 40 percent for the past decade, with only a slight decline in the last year to 36 percent.¹³

Youth unemployment stems from a range of factors, such as mismatched skills, limited employment creation in the formal private sector, youth aspirations misaligned with actual job opportunities, a lack of entrepreneurship, and deeply entrenched social factors of class, ethnicity and caste. There are sharp regional disparities. Unemployment is particularly high in areas directly affected by the armed conflict.

Young women face additional barriers related to gender, as evidenced by workforce participation rates dramatically lower than their educational

achievements. While gender stereotyping confines women to certain types of jobs, their participation is affected by a multitude of other factors, from employer preferences for men to family choices to their own limited confidence in moving outside the home.

Youth said that qualifications, skills in Information and Communications Technology, English language fluency and training experience are important in securing employment. Yet for public sector jobs, they listed other factors—54.4 percent of respondents to the National Youth Survey 2013 pointed to political connections, 34 percent to recommendations from professionals and 30 percent to family connections, which young people often do not have. The situation is similar for the private sector. The lack of a level playing field fosters a sense of discrimination.

Survey respondents acknowledged that vocational education can be important in securing a job, but described it as an unattractive option; 62 percent had not undertaken any vocational courses. Many youth said they preferred higher skilled, professional employment, and viewed the economic return from vocational education as limited.

Self-employment comes with other challenges, including the inability of youth to access finance, and their lack of business skills and basic financial literacy. Youth who are self-employed have little to show in terms of income and market access, particularly in rural areas, which discourages other young people from pursuing this path.



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Youth at large tend to limit their career choices within traditionally popular categories. About 52 percent of respondents to the National Youth Survey 2013, mostly young women, reported they preferred to work for the Government, especially in education. Respondents were mostly not interested in agriculture or self-employment, largely because of irregular patterns of income and a lack of confidence in taking risks. Some youth consider migration a serious option for improving their lives, but are not always informed of potential consequences.

Since many factors feed into the problems youth have in transitioning into the workplace, Sri Lanka may need to consider comprehensive reforms, moving beyond the conventional emphasis on balancing the demand and supply of skills. These reforms may need to operate across educational, societal and macroeconomic arenas.

Health and well-being of youth

Health and well-being are crucial for youth, both now and later as they establish a foundation for adulthood. For decades, Sri Lanka has had an impressive record of health care provision. New challenges have come, however, from recent demographic, epidemiological and socio-economic shifts. Rapid declines in fertility and increased life expectancy have resulted in a growing number of people over the age of 60.¹⁴

Currently, nearly 60 percent of Sri Lankans turn to public services for health care. State spending on health accounted for 45.8 percent of the total as of 2009; the rest comes from private sources.¹⁵ Given increases in non-communicable illnesses such as heart disease and cancer, and an ageing population, chances are that public funds for youth could decline if public health care spending remains within current limits.

The increase in non-communicable diseases is in part linked to lifestyle shifts, such as changing eating habits and decreased physical activity. The National Youth Survey 2013 found, for example, that only about a quarter of respondents were actively involved in sports.

Youth face a number of barriers to accessing health care, particularly cost. Youth spending on health care despite free public services could indicate that services have failed to keep up with demand, due to insufficient investment and the inability to cater to youth-specific needs.

Around 80 percent of survey respondents had a fair knowledge of nearby general health care services, but knowledge of available sexual and reproductive health and mental health services was poor: 55 percent and 59 percent, respectively, said that they did not know about these services close to where they live.

Shame and legal barriers were among the major obstacles preventing youth from accessing sexual and reproductive health services. This points to dominant cultural norms and values that consider sexual relations only for married people, leading youth to assume that there are legal barriers to services if they are unmarried. These norms are contradicted by the reality that a significant portion of youth and adolescents seem to be sexually active.¹⁶

Over half the National Youth Survey 2013 respondents were unaware of contraceptive methods. While the incident of teenage pregnancy appears low by international standards, it is higher on estates, a special concern, owing to the risk of complications for young mothers. Socio-cultural pressures and a lack of opportunities appear to push many unmarried teenagers with unwanted pregnancies to have abortions,¹⁷ which are both illegal and frequently unsafe.

Youth are vulnerable to patterns of abuse and violence, although in terms of gender-based violence, 92 percent of National Youth Survey 2013 respondents said that they did not know any young person who had experienced it. Stigma and low awareness may explain this tendency. Homicides, other purposely inflicted injuries and suicides are major causes of death among youth,¹⁸ but 14 percent of National Youth Survey 2013 respondents were afraid of accessing mental health care, and 8 percent felt ashamed by the idea. Many stated that mental health care is not sensitive to their needs, and expressed a lack of confidence in it.

Smoking and alcohol use among youth are significant,¹⁹ which could be due to factors besides peer pressure, including high stress related to uncertainties about the future, and the lack of jobs, education and other opportunities.



PHOTO CREDIT: WHO SRI LANKA

Civic and political participation of youth

Youth should be part of finding solutions to the difficulties they face, rather than simply being passive recipients of support identified and prioritized by adults. This notion is gaining ground around the world, including through the process to define the global post-2015 development agenda. Political participation and the concept of citizenship are closely interrelated, and express the extent to which youth feel a sense of belonging to their society.

Sri Lanka's history is a testament to how suppressing or ignoring youth interest in their society and the world around them can end in tense and violent stand-offs, with tragic consequences for all concerned, especially young people. Past youth-led insurrections were largely influenced by youth disappointment with the inability of the post-independence state to address inequalities and overcome the dominance of elite groups.

Political participation in conventional electoral politics is guaranteed for all citizens through the Constitution of Sri Lanka. A youth quota of 30 percent applies to candidates in each political party. Apart from exercising their right to vote, however, very few youth take part in political

decision-making. According to the National Youth Survey 2013, 72 percent of respondents indicated that their primary choice of engagement was through voting. Only a much smaller 5 percent appeared to be involved in direct political activism.

Trust in most public institutions was alarmingly low among survey respondents. Eighty-nine percent said they had little trust in political parties, a much higher portion than in the 1999-2000 National Youth Survey, where only 47 percent of youth stated that they did not trust political parties or elected representatives.



PHOTO CREDIT : NYSC SRI LANKA

On a more positive note, 88 percent of youth affirmed that they are interested in what is happening immediately around them. Many stressed the importance of youth learning more about their role in civic and political engagement and decision-making. They felt that their peers were not knowledgeable and empowered enough to influence civic and political outcomes.

When asked about gender in politics, 74 percent of survey respondents agreed more women should be in politics, and 68 percent said women had adequate opportunities to be in leadership positions, despite very low actual participation rates. Evidently, youth are unaware of the challenges faced by women in leadership positions, or of how gender shapes identity in ways that can constrain what a person can or cannot do. The lack of interest among young women in decision-making and political activism was notable, with some women in the Focus Group

Discussions stating that politics is not their domain. Many stereotypical notions about the 'right' place of women in society have apparently been internalized.

Student politics can be one important avenue to encourage new leaders, but the country's political system at large has long been hostile to this notion, in part through the association of student-led youth movements with risks of violence. Adults in general typically do not encourage youth to be active in their communities, consistent with social norms where adults dominate decision-making.

Voluntary work can bring youth into civic activities, and many youth say they are interested in volunteering. The education system, however, with its emphasis on time-consuming exam preparation and lack of attention to broader civic values, does not effectively support them.

Youth and post-war reconciliation and social integration

Making the transition from war to peace is a complex undertaking for any society. While the end of violent conflict prepares the ground, transforming the underlying social, economic, political and cultural causes of conflict requires sustained and focused attention.

Many Sri Lankan youth who have grown up over the past 30 years are experiencing life without war for the first time. For most of their lives, they have been exposed to ideologies teaching them to be suspicious, fearful and mistrustful of each other. They have been separated spatially, linguistically, politically and culturally. Today, they have an opportunity to not only enjoy the dividends of peace, but also to be active in finding non-violent and peaceful ways of expressing their idealism and their quest for social justice. Youth need to be central to post-war reconciliation and help lead the transition from conflict to peace.

Sri Lanka's civil war has often been described as an ethnic conflict, with a profound effect on youth not only in terms of the direct costs of war, but also in how nationalist ideologies have shaped their



identities. While early youth mobilization was primarily around issues of class inequality, over time, ethnic lines hardened and nationalist ideologies took precedence.

Unsurprisingly, youth in the National Youth Survey 2013 showed a strong awareness of ethnic identity; 46 percent said that their sense of belonging to their ethnic identity in fact intensified after the war. Young people also saw ethnic politics as deeply divisive in Sri Lankan society, but they highlighted as well structural divisions around class, caste and power relations. Language remains a volatile issue, with youth still largely mono-lingual, despite the Official Language Policy and concerted efforts to teach the national languages and English as a link language in schools.

Youth in Focus Group Discussions were highly critical of parents and families for encouraging selfishness, characterized by the pursuit of individual success and material well-being, which they considered barriers to social integration. They referred to an awareness of and sensitivity to other people as essential to ensuring that people bridge differences. Youth said they have high ideals about the kind of society they want to live in, but felt that adults and social institutions, in their pursuit of selfish interest, do not encourage these, and in fact contradict youth ideals.

The National Youth Survey 2013 showed that youth recognized the need for specific measures to strengthen social integration. Among respondents, 68.5 percent stated that young people were more

aware now about the right to be treated equally and without discrimination. This is a positive signal, showing that youth see equality as key to social integration and their role in promoting it.

They also demonstrated awareness of how challenging it can be to bridge differences in a pluralistic society. More than 50 percent of survey respondents agreed that strengthening development activities in areas lagging behind was important, but emphasized sustained interactions among groups as among the other requirements for reconciliation. Sri Lankan youth clearly want to move beyond identity politics and towards equitable development.

Future directions: a call to action

In many ways, Sri Lanka today is at a crucial moment, with the end of its prolonged war five years ago, and the transition of its development strategies and trajectories. For many decades since independence, Sri Lanka was hailed for its welfare state model, where publicly funded health and education services became basic entitlements of citizens. This was largely responsible for a strong showing on certain key development indicators such as literacy and life expectancy. Progress on social indicators, however, has not been matched in the economy or in terms of political reforms.

Understanding the broader development context is important when analysing the situation of youth. Many issues discussed in this report have arisen not necessarily because 'youth-specific' interventions have been ineffective. Instead, limitations in larger institutional, political, economic and cultural processes and structures have curtailed the potential for change. For any intervention or policy to be effective, broader institutional structures and processes need to be properly aligned. Youth issues cannot be isolated from larger social concerns, even where they may have specific consequences for youth. While youth insurrections have challenged society and social structures as a whole, they never asked for more youth-specific policies and interventions, but broader social, economic and political transformations.

From a human development perspective, Sri Lanka's early investment in health and education was right on track. Given impressive returns, Sri Lanka now needs to carefully consider how to build on progress already made and ensure it is not reversed. Future development trajectories also need to be considered in light of past conflicts, which arose from the keen sense of social injustice felt by many youth. Development initiatives thus need to respond to injustice and otherwise take the concerns of young people seriously.

Building on the achievements of the past does not mean that innovations are unnecessary. Existing structures and provisions need to be assessed for relevance and responsiveness to new conditions, such as those related to disparities, service quality, and changes in lifestyle and demography.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

This report affirms that disparities in development persist, and are multidimensional and interrelated. They are not shaped simply by income inequalities, but also by factors such as gender, ethnicity, language and political affiliation. Reversing this trend calls for a return to some of the values and ideals expressed in the earliest global Human Development Reports from over 20 years ago. These recognized that true wealth lies in a happy, contented and capable citizenry. Achieving that goal depends in large part on investing in enhancing the capabilities and freedoms of youth, and placing confidence in their energy, enthusiasm and idealism. Rhetoric and policy need to be coupled with specific action and interventions providing youth with the space to realize their hopes and create their futures.

Sri Lanka does not need to look too far for inspiration; it lies in the courage and vision of its early policy makers, who invested in people long before the Human Development Reports had been thought of. As shown in this report, there are several excellent policies in place. Many important—and still highly relevant—policy recommendations on youth are in the 1990 report of the Presidential Commission on Youth.

The challenge is to transform policies into action, and link them to sustainable national goals rather than just immediate political aims. What Sri Lanka needs today are not more policies, more frameworks and more action plans; rather, it needs leadership to transform existing policies and frameworks into actions that benefit people.

One way forward is to strengthen governance structures and processes, including transparency and accountability in policy- and decision-making. More effective mechanisms are needed to evaluate and assess the performance of those in political leadership positions. Policy makers, bureaucrats and other officials in the public, private and non-state sectors also need to be more accountable. Appointment of officials to important bodies should be through independent mechanisms. Public trust in institutions should be strengthened, since the loss of confidence can create a dangerous situation where individuals rather than public interest drive actions.

The National Youth Policy has proposed a mechanism for monitoring implementation: a high-level Youth Commission. Instead of focusing only on the National Youth Policy, however, the Commission could be responsible for monitoring and tracking the implementation of all policies relevant to youth. Integrating a mechanism directly into policy development and implementation would encourage regular reviews.

The proposed Youth Commission would benefit from the representation of different stakeholders, such as from the non-governmental and private sectors, in addition to the currently designated ex-officio members of the public sector. An independent, youth-led watchdog body would

allow youth to have more oversight and influence over policy implementation.

This National Human Development Report 2014 presents some policy perspectives in the following chapters. A few key points are reiterated here as a call for action.

Make education about more than just a job

There is a major lack of education policies. A transparent and consultative policy development process could start with dialogues among different stakeholders and the larger community to build clearer consensus on the role and relevance of education in contemporary society. The national discourse as a whole needs to move beyond the current emphasis on examinations and employability, and towards broader, more humanistic education. Necessary steps forward could include a comprehensive review of curricula at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary; an assessment of the pedagogy employed in educational institutions; and an emphasis on the process of teaching and learning. Interventions for the educational empowerment of youth also need to consider gender, age, civil status, norms, societal structures, geographical location and economic status in order to understand how these may present obstacles for particular groups.

Improve employment choices

A lack of information on the job market is a serious impediment. This could be addressed by surveying enterprises to determine which economic sectors are growing, which occupations and skills are needed, and what kinds of training are warranted. Detailed mapping of regional challenges and opportunities could back specific strategies to improve the employability of young people, in terms of appropriate skills and the development of enterprises that can readily absorb youth. Tertiary education reforms could include diversifying academic programmes and aiming at higher order skills to make the workforce globally competitive. Internships and mentoring at the higher secondary level could foster the transition to work. Minimum wage provisions need to be implemented.

Uphold sexual and reproductive health rights

Legal concepts such as the age of discretion, evolving capacity and the right to information should be embedded in legal and policy documents to ensure young people realize their right to sexual and reproductive health information and services. There is also an urgent need to sensitize parents, religious groups, teachers and the society at large on the sexual activity of youth, and the importance of access to family planning services. Youth themselves need comprehensive sexual and reproductive health knowledge to make informed decisions.

Take youth participation seriously by dropping barriers

Institutions have a central role in the lives of youth, particularly those in law enforcement, education and health care. They need to be youth friendly, and facilitate youth participation and leadership. While many state and non-state institutions have mechanisms for youth participation, they need to be more proactive in overcoming barriers related to language, class, gender and ethnicity. Youth need to assume leadership roles and have a voice in shaping their own agendas. Access to information at all levels will help young people make more informed, meaningful contributions. Educational institutions, especially at higher levels, need to encourage independent, self-reflective and mutually respectful student activism.

Embrace everyday values that cut the roots of conflict

Peace and development in Sri Lanka will depend on a careful, continued examination of and response to the root causes of conflict. Values of mutual respect, tolerance and appreciation of diversity need to become part of the everyday experiences of Sri Lankan youth. Basic institutions, particularly in education, public administration, law enforcement and the justice system, need to be examined for how they can foster values of reconciliation and social integration, particularly social justice, equity, non-discrimination and respect for the rule of law.

Shift gender norms to advance gender equality

Norms and values around gender clearly need to shift if progress towards gender equality is to continue. All young women and men need to be encouraged to explore their full potential and express themselves without fear of humiliation, stigma, or loss of respectability and status. This requires a close examination and questioning of the subtle ways in which gender identities and barriers are institutionalized within education, the legal system, religious bodies, the family, and the broader political and social environment.

Social justice and inclusion: now is the time

Sri Lankan youth have often been the focus of public attention for their violence and political extremism. But a close analysis shows that they have also been at the forefront of highlighting some serious flaws in the post-colonial Sri Lankan state, its polity and society.

While successive Sri Lankan governments have attempted to respond to the issues raised by youth, many of these well-intentioned initiatives have not always had desired outcomes. It is not enough to have good policies to bring about change. Change requires fundamental transformations in political, social and economic structures. To bring about such transformations requires leadership and genuine commitment.

Sri Lankan youth have always yearned for social justice. They have made great sacrifices while endeavouring to attain it. Surely, now is the time to take the opportunity to address shortcomings of the past.

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FROM A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE





Sustainable, equitable human development is not possible without youth. And yet younger people, worldwide, are not as prominent on public policy agendas as they could be. Where policies are in place, implementation may fall short.

These issues in Sri Lanka make the topic of youth a highly appropriate theme for the 2014 National Human Development Report. It examines the diverse conditions in which different groups of youth live, exploring the opportunities, constraints and freedoms available to them. These will determine if they will thrive in the present as well as their prospects for a successful transition to adulthood. The report considers various approaches to youth by state and non-state agencies, and provides an opportunity to assess the status of youth in relation to existing policies, institutions and actions to advance their human development.

The 2014 National Human Development Report comes at an opportune moment. Sri Lanka has reached a point of transition in its economy, with high aspirations that depend in part on the energy and productivity of youth. Only a few years past the end of a protracted civil war, where many youth took up arms against the state, it faces new opportunities to significantly engage youth in reconciliation. For this, youth must no longer feel excluded from development, or shut off from their hopes for the future. Finally, there is gathering political momentum and commitment to youth, as reflected in the 2014 agreement on the first National Youth Policy, and Sri Lanka's hosting of the 2014 World Conference on Youth and the 2013 Commonwealth Youth Forum in conjunction with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

A brief overview of the report

The starting point for the 2014 National Human Development Report was young people themselves, through a National Youth Survey conducted in 2013 that reached nearly 3,100 youth from every district of Sri Lanka (see also appendix 1.1). Their perspectives, captured in questionnaires and 15 focus groups, are used as the basis for

assessing the current situation of young people across varying socio-economic and cultural contexts, and their participation in development.

The survey was conducted since most national data are not disaggregated for youth, and do not cover areas such as social integration, and civic and political participation. Two previous youth surveys took place in 1999-2000 and in 2009; data from these were compared with that generated in 2013 to track trends among youth. The focus group discussions included special efforts to reach marginalized youth, institutionalised youth and former combatants. The report also drew on qualitative material gathered for developing the National Youth Policy in 2013.

A National Steering and Advisory Committee consisting of members of the government, UN agencies, research institutions and youth representatives provided input throughout the preparation of the report. An initial consultation process validated five critically important themes, around which the report is structured: education, employment, health, civic and political participation, and post-war reconciliation and social integration. Initial research findings were discussed with various stakeholders, and a consultative meeting held prior to finalizing it.

The report delves into pressing issues such as access to tertiary and higher education opportunities, the availability and accessibility of decent work and necessary skills, the ability of the health care system to provide youth-friendly services, and post-war social and political orders shaping young people's attitudes and participation.

Analysing youth perceptions, as was done through the survey, is important, because they drive youth action and engagement with development. This analysis can provide impetus for reflection, debate and dialogue, including on current gaps between policies intended to benefit youth and actual implementation. A more nuanced understanding of youth today may help policy makers and development practitioners move towards policies and programmatic actions closely attuned to youth

expectations, aspirations and attitudes, and are more likely to make a meaningful contribution to human development for youth and the country at large.

This first chapter offers a brief look at Sri Lanka's human development achievements and gaps in general, and is specifically related to youth, including their particular problems resulting from disparities and exclusion. It maps basic demographic details, defines some common approaches to youth issues, and provides a summary of Sri Lanka's existing youth-related policy and institutional measures.



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Towards human well-being

In looking at the status of youth in Sri Lanka, this report is grounded in a human development perspective, which recognizes that people's quality of life is more than just income and economic growth. Human development involves asking questions about what people can actually do and be. It emphasizes expanding choices and enlarging human freedom, in a manner that is equitable and empowering. Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, whose work greatly influenced the conceptualization of human development, argues that development goals need to improve people's 'capabilities'—their ability to act and reach their full human potential.¹ Human development therefore requires attention to both development processes and outcomes, towards the overall aim of human well-being.²

Well-being has many definitions. It may be subjectively defined, psychologically assessed or evaluated in terms of people's quality of life. A range of factors affect well-being, varying across socio-economic and cultural contexts. Some factors may seem to contradict each other, as when enhancing economic growth compromises universal welfare. Which factors are more important? What is the ideal level of provision or entitlement? How do we account for the fact that individuals or groups may need different resources to achieve satisfactory capabilities? What is the ideal level of education, for instance? How do we ensure that both young men and women or youth from differing socio-economic situations access education equitably?

Setting development goals and deciding how to reach them are both critical in determining the well-being of diverse individuals and communities. These choices define how capabilities and freedoms are prioritized and made accessible, and thus what different groups can be and do. This process affects the general population, and groups within it like youth, who can be highly heterogeneous. It is highly pertinent to examine how and which choices have been made in Sri Lanka, given its history of disparities and the consequences, including conflict, that have arisen accordingly.

A turbulent history

Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948, after being both a Portuguese and then a Dutch colony. Colonial experiences had a significant influence on socio-cultural patterns, such as in terms of religion and language, and on political and economic systems. The transition to independence was relatively smooth, marked by great hopes for the new nation. Universal franchise had been granted in 1931, and a multi-party democracy was soon in place. Sri Lanka adopted strong welfare policies early on, ensuring consistently strong performance on core development indicators, particularly in health and education.

Economic and employment opportunities grew, but so did certain divisions. Sinhala and Tamil nationalism emerged and generated ethnic tensions.³ More youth gained an education, but felt frustrated due to limited options to advance economically, and to participate in political and social spheres.⁴

In 1971, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front), a primarily youth-driven Marxist group, launched an insurrection, largely attributed to educated youth frustrated by the inability to fulfil their aspirations.⁵ By the 1980s, there were several Tamil militant groups fighting to establish a separate homeland for the Tamil community, and by the mid-1980s, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had established itself as the dominant military group, and systematically either absorbed into its own wings or eliminated other Tamil militant groups.

The period from 1988 to around 1990 was one of the most violent in the country's history. In the North and East, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam battled the Sri Lankan military as well as the Indian Peace Keeping Force. In the south, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna launched a second insurrection. By the early 1990s, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna had been brutally suppressed. In 2009, the military defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Today, for the first time in several decades, there is no civil war.

These conflicts have taken a tremendous toll on youth as both agents and victims of violence. Many thousands were killed, disappeared and maimed. Many more thousands of families have been affected. Since independence, youth in general have had a tense relationship with the Sri Lankan state, expressing, sometimes violently, their disappointment with the failure of mainstream political institutions to address their grievances⁶ and their exclusion from the development process.

With Sri Lankans now finally enjoying a period without war, deep reflection and thought are necessary to understand the multiple factors driving so many young people to take up arms against the state. Sri Lanka has an opportunity to put in place mechanisms, systems and processes to

ensure that youth no longer feel left out. It is the best possible moment to act so that the tragedies of the past may never again be repeated.

Social investment leads to high human development

Over the years, Sri Lanka's consistent investments in health and education have allowed it to perform relatively well on the Human Development Index (HDI), a composite of health, education and income indicators. On the 2014 global HDI, Sri Lanka achieved a score of 0.750, placing it in the high human development category (figure 1.1). It ranked 73 out of 187 countries and territories on the index,⁷ and ranked highest among countries in South Asia and higher than some East Asian countries (table 1.2).

Most countries ranking close to Sri Lanka have significantly higher per capita gross national income (GNI), such as \$20,150 for Saint Kitts and Nevis, which ranks at 71, and \$13,451 for Iran at 75, compared to \$9,250 for Sri Lanka.⁸ Sri Lanka's strong performance in health and education also make it well positioned to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by their 2015 endpoint.⁹

Figure 1.1: Sri Lanka is now in the HDI's high human development category



Source: UNDP 2014

Table 1.1: The national HDI score has continuously improved from 1980 to 2013

Year	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	Gross national income per capita (2005 purchasing power parity \$)	HDI
1980	68.2	10	7.1	2,475	0.569
1985	69.1	10.5	7.7	3,085	0.598
1990	69.5	11.3	8.4	3,316	0.620
1995	69.3	11.9	9.1	4,035	0.645
2000	71.1	12.5	10	4,859	0.679
2005	73.6	13	10.4	5,772	0.710
2010	73.8	13.6	10.8	7,476	0.736
2011	73.9	13.6	10.8	8,023	0.740
2012	74.1	13.6	10.8	8,689	0.745
2013	74.3	13.6	10.8	9,250	0.750

Source: UNDP 2014

Table 1.2: Among Asian countries, Sri Lanka ranks relatively high on the HDI

2013 HDI rank	Country name	1980 HDI	1990 HDI	2000 HDI	2005 HDI	2010 HDI	2011 HDI	2012 HDI	2013 HDI
9	Singapore	--	0.744	0.800	0.840	0.894	0.896	0.899	0.901
62	Malaysia	0.577	0.641	0.717	0.747	0.766	0.768	0.770	0.773
73	Sri Lanka	0.569	0.620	0.679	0.710	0.736	0.740	0.745	0.750
89	Thailand	0.503	0.572	0.649	0.685	0.715	0.716	0.720	0.722
103	Maldives	--	--	0.599	0.659	0.688	0.692	0.695	0.698
108	Indonesia	0.470	0.528	0.609	0.640	0.671	0.673	0.681	0.684
117	Philippines	0.566	0.591	0.619	0.638	0.651	0.652	0.656	0.660
135	India	0.369	0.431	0.483	0.527	0.570	0.581	0.583	0.586
142	Bangladesh	0.336	0.382	0.453	0.494	0.539	0.549	0.554	0.558
145	Nepal	0.286	0.388	0.449	0.477	0.527	0.533	0.537	0.540
146	Pakistan	0.356	0.402	0.454	0.504	0.526	0.531	0.535	0.537
169	Afghanistan	0.230	0.296	0.341	0.396	0.453	0.458	0.466	0.468

Source: UNDP 2013

Currently defined as a lower middle-income country, Sri Lanka aims to increase its per capita GDP from \$3,280 in 2013 to \$4,000 by 2016.¹⁰ Economic prospects have been strong, as Sri Lanka has maintained relatively high 6 to 8 percent growth rates in recent years, despite the global economic downturn. The economy is shifting towards the services sector, with enhanced performance in industry and a slight decline in agriculture. Transformation is further encouraged by an educated labour force of around 15 million people.

Economic policy tends towards liberalization, although the public sector remains large, and dominates the financial, utilities, health and education sectors. Open economic policies have spurred growth and trade, yet greater productivity and employment generation remain imperatives for translating growth into development. Dependence on remittances from migrants abroad

to meet foreign exchange requirements, a weak manufacturing base and high levels of national debt make Sri Lanka vulnerable to instability.

On other aspects of human development, Sri Lanka's health sector has performed remarkably, achieving low levels of infant and maternal mortality, high immunization coverage and a life expectancy of 74 years. Education achievements are also substantial, with a literacy rate of 91 percent reached through free education. Decades of health and education investments have allowed Sri Lanka to deal with basic development problems that continue to plague many countries in its region and at a similar income level. For instance, literacy rates in neighbouring South Asian countries are far lower, such as 62.8 percent in India, 54.9 percent in Pakistan and 56.8 percent in Bangladesh, compared to 91.2 percent in Sri Lanka. The maternal mortality ratio in India is 200 deaths per 100,000 live births;

the ratio in Sri Lanka is 35 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹¹

Globally, Sri Lanka compares favourably on the HDI-related Gender Inequality Index, particularly in South Asia. In 2013, Sri Lanka ranked at 75, compared to Bangladesh at 115, Nepal at 98 and Pakistan at 126. Algeria and Colombia, ranked close to Sri Lanka on the HDI, placed at 81 and 92, respectively.¹² Sri Lanka has virtually achieved the MDG targets of eliminating gender disparities in primary, secondary and tertiary education.¹³

Today, in a time of greater stability, Sri Lanka has a strong foundation for progress (see appendix 1.5). Prospects for accelerated growth and development fuel aspirations for a knowledge-based, high-value economy. This vision, however, will require broad-based reforms, and long-term social, political and economic commitments, including to youth.

Disparities persist: no room for complacency

Despite its significant achievements, Sri Lanka still has manifold development challenges; it cannot afford to be complacent. Human development disparities have been a particularly troubling issue, as chronicled in earlier National Human Development Reports in 1998 and 2012. In 2012, for example, the poorest 20 percent of Sri Lankan citizens received only 4.5 percent of total household income, while the richest 20 percent enjoyed 54.1 percent.¹⁴ The fact that disparities are generally believed to have contributed to the protracted civil war as well as the youth insurrections in 1971, and in 1988 to 1989, underlines the urgency of closing gaps. Cutting the roots of conflict is central to meaningful reconciliation that can both hasten economic revival and form the basis of long-lasting peace.

Strong economic growth has helped Sri Lanka meet the MDG on poverty. But greater prosperity has failed to reach certain areas, particularly conflict-affected regions, the estate sector and some rural communities.¹⁵ The portion of the population under the national poverty line fell from 15 percent in 2006 to 6.5 percent in 2012,¹⁶ but more

than 80 percent of the poor live in rural areas. Uva Province, with a substantial estate sector, and areas formerly affected by war, remains particularly vulnerable to poverty, although rates in the estate sector in general have sharply declined from 32 percent in 2006 to 6.2 percent in 2012.¹⁷ The Western Province, with the highest level of economic growth and strong performance in all areas of human development, is home to 14 percent of poor Sri Lankans. A large proportion of people who have recently emerged from poverty are vulnerable to shocks that might push them back into it.¹⁸

Traditionally, people in the estate sector have been considered a vulnerable group, despite years of targeted interventions. They lag behind on all human development indicators. The majority are from the Indian Tamil ethnic group, who arrived in Sri Lanka as part of its colonial history, and whose status as full citizens was debated for many decades. This combined with the particular circumstances of the estate sector, which ties their livelihood and living arrangements closely with a specific industry, mainly tea manufacturing, shapes how their choices and freedoms have been understood and realized.

Specific social, cultural and political processes similarly define prospects for women, youth, populations in conflict-affected or rural areas, or those raised speaking Sinhala or Tamil. Approximately 14.6 percent of youth were below



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

the poverty line in 2006 to 2007, falling to 8.9 percent by 2009 to 2010, and reflecting an overall decline in poverty rates. Youth in the estate sector are still the poorest, while poverty is lowest among urban youth.¹⁹ Youth in all categories who remain close to the poverty line risk falling back below it.²⁰

Among women, labour force participation rates are much lower than those for males, and the participation rate of women in politics is one of the lowest in the South Asian region – puzzling for a country where female participation in education is equal to if not better than that of men. Women’s representation in the national Parliament has never exceeded 6 percent. In local government in 2006 it was a mere 1.8 percent.²¹ The disparity is not simply about women not being successfully elected: Only 6.2 percent of political party nominees were women for the 2004 parliamentary elections and 7.5 percent for the 2008/2009 provincial council elections respectively, thereby creating inequality at the point of nomination itself.²²

On other dimensions of human development, Sri Lanka faces serious shortfalls in tertiary education. The education system is not equipped to produce an adequately skilled workforce and capable citizenry, both requirements for moving towards a knowledge-based economy and global competitiveness. While at primary levels there is almost universal enrolment, at higher levels disparities appear; those with better incomes stay in school longer.²³

For both health and education, gaps in service quality are leading an increasing number of Sri Lankans to rely on private provision. Over time, this will compromise the long cherished non-discriminatory nature of these services. Already, with some families, for example, able to spend on extra tuition to make up for inadequate facilities in state schools, educational achievements are beginning to mirror socio-economic inequalities. The excellent public health network has managed to deal with many health issues, but demographic and lifestyle changes have increased non-communicable diseases, and a shift to private care for these will likely affect equal access to health services.²⁴

Human development disparities are not always immediately obvious in Sri Lanka. National figures and statistics often mask pockets of vulnerability and marginalization. Even considering district level variations in measures such as the HDI or its companion Inequality-adjusted HDI may not reveal disparities, since the lowest value in the HDI, for example, is higher than that of other South Asian countries, with the exception of the Maldives.²⁵ Examining development indicators in conflict-affected areas in the North and East, or predominantly rural districts such as Moneragela, or districts such as Nuwara Eliya and Badulla with large estate populations, reveals some gaps. This shows how certain population groups, due to a combination of social, cultural and political reasons, lag behind the rest of the population.

The 2012 National Human Development Report, which focused attention on regional disparities in Sri Lanka’s development, states that this is a concern because “...inequalities in a democratic, multi-ethnic society can feed discontent, and are incompatible with peace, as the country’s past has demonstrated. Where social, political and economic inequalities grow among culturally or spatially distinct groups, they can provide the basis for dissatisfied people to garner political support that can then spill over into conflict.”²⁶

The global post-2015 Development Agenda, currently under discussion to follow the MDGs, has as one potential aim the concept of ‘not leaving anyone behind’. This kind of thinking encourages commitment to rapid, equitable growth, not at any cost, but sustained for the long term, and inclusive enough to overcome development challenges such as unemployment and resource scarcity.

Exclusion falls heavily on youth

The consequences of disparities are particularly important for youth. These not only result in the exclusion of certain groups and constraints on human development, but have added impact since youth are particularly sensitive to exclusion. They respond in various ways, and it plays an important role in how they contest, negotiate and challenge social contexts. Much attention in Sri Lanka has

gone to youth who have turned to rebellion, but there are other responses, such as withdrawal from mainstream society or increasingly cynical attitudes, that also deserve examination.

Looking at the concerns articulated by youth can reveal issues overlooked by adults. Slogans of youth rebels in insurrections in 1971 and 1988 to 1989 reflected their perceptions of the sources of oppression. *Colombata kiri, apita kekiri*, loosely translated as 'Colombo gets the cream while the rest of us get the dregs', was a vivid expression of the resentment youth felt about disparities between the centre and the periphery. This phrase continues to reverberate today. The term *kaduwa*, used especially by university students to refer to the English language, denotes its power to cut down to size those who do not speak it, and reflects the elitism and system of privileges constructed around the use of the language and its associated culture.



PHOTO CREDIT : WHO SRI LANKA

National Youth Surveys conducted in 1999-2000 and in 2009 revealed that many youth consider Sri Lankan society to be 'unjust'. The Presidential Commission on Youth in its 1990 report documented how youth described the lack of justice in terms of social and political patronage networks that institutionalize discrimination within society and polity.

Youth: some definitions and demographics

Global recognition of the importance of youth as a broad category with its own prerogatives extends

back to 1965, when Member States of the United Nations endorsed the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding among People. In 1995, Member States committed to a World Programme of Action for Youth.

Psychological and developmental theories have deeply influenced the demarcation of youth as a distinct stage of human development. These suggest that youth is a particular life stage between childhood and adulthood marked by specific characteristics. Many theories, based on experiences of youth in the West, propose that youth move through relatively linear development process, progressively achieving greater autonomy and the ability to exercise choice as they reach adulthood. This doesn't account, however, for the diverse ways that cultures differentiate between stages of human development, even in basic terms such as the boundaries of age (box 1.1).

The United Nations defines youth as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years, as generally the time when a person may leave compulsory education and obtain his or her first employment. In Sri Lanka, a youth is categorized as someone between the ages of 15 and 29 years, which is the definition applied in this report. Informal criteria marking the transition from youth to adulthood include obtaining employment and entering marriage. For many Sri Lankans, these steps allow them to establish themselves as independent individuals, not simply their biological age.

BOX 1.1: VARYING DEFINITIONS OF YOUTH

The definition of youth varies widely around the world. Compared to the Sri Lankan definition spanning ages 15 to 29 years, for example, the African Youth Charter specifies the ages of 15 to 35 years. Socio-cultural, demographic and economic reasons can influence these definitions.

United Nations agencies such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund denote different age categories within youth. For instance, those between the ages of 10 and 19 are adolescents, between 10 and 24 are young people, and between 15 and 24 are youth. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as someone up to 18 years old.

Table 1.3: A profile of Sri Lankan youth: most still live in rural areas

(%)	Total Population			Children			Youth			Mid age			Elders		
				Age 5-14			Age 15-29			Age 30-44			45 and above		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Percentage,															
total population	48.4	51.6	100	26.4	24.2	25.2	23.4	23.0	23.2	21.7	21.8	21.7	28.5	31.1	29.8
Urban	18.4	18.2	18.3	24.1	22.5	23.3	24.5	23.4	23.9	22.6	21.9	22.2	28.8	32.2	30.5
Rural	77.3	77.4	77.3	26.6	24.3	25.4	23.2	22.9	23.1	21.6	21.8	21.7	28.6	30.9	29.8
Estate	4.4	4.4	4.4	31.5	28.7	30.0	21.7	22.2	21.9	20.3	19.5	19.9	26.5	29.6	28.1
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Western	48.7	51.3	100	23.4	21.8	22.6	23.8	22.5	23.1	23.5	22.7	23.1	29.3	33.0	31.2
Central	47.5	52.5	100	28.3	25.5	26.8	22.9	22.1	22.5	22.7	22.3	22.9	26.1	30.1	27.9
Southern	48.2	51.8	100	26.5	23.7	25.1	21.6	21.7	21.6	21.5	21.7	20.6	30.4	32.9	32.7
North	47.9	52.1	100	28.6	25.8	27.1	21.5	21.7	21.6	20.3	21.2	21.6	29.5	31.3	29.6
East	48.2	51.8	100	31.7	29.1	30.4	25.9	26.1	26.0	20.2	21.0	20.6	22.2	23.7	23.0
North West	48.2	51.8	100	26.8	24.0	25.3	22.4	22.1	22.2	21.7	21.9	21.8	29.1	32.1	30.6
North Central	48.6	51.4	100	28.1	26.3	27.2	23.1	23.4	23.3	22.8	23.3	23.0	26.0	27.0	26.5
Uva	49.0	51.0	100	27.0	26.0	26.5	24.6	24.1	24.4	21.2	21.3	21.3	27.2	28.6	27.9
Sabaragamuwa	48.7	51.3	100	25.1	23.2	24.1	22.4	22.7	22.5	21.9	21.4	21.6	30.7	32.6	31.7

Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2012.

Table 1.4: The youth population is shrinking over time

Year	Age								
	15-19		20-24		25-29		15-29		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
2001	5.0	4.8	4.5	4.6	3.8	4.0	13.3	13.5	26.8
2006	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.7	3.9	4.0	13.6	13.5	27.1
2012	4.0	4.1	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.9	11.3	11.9	23.2

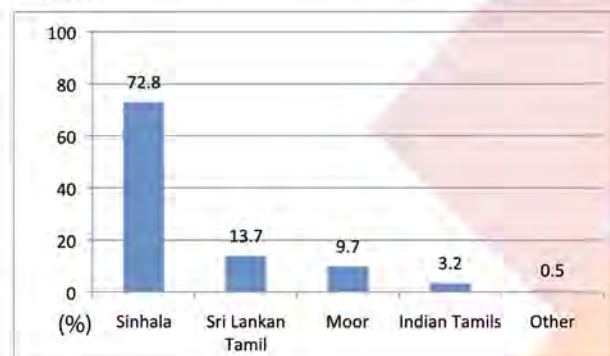
Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2012.

According to Sri Lanka's 2012 Census (table 1.3), 23.2 percent of its population is between the ages of 15 and 29 years.²⁷ The portion of youth declined from 26.8 percent in 2001, with decreases for both men and women (table 1.4). The female-male ratio is almost the same. The distribution of youth at the provincial level is around 23 percent, except in the Eastern Province, where youth are 26.1 percent of the population. The majority of youth, almost 77 percent, are in rural areas,²⁸ corresponding to overall population distribution.

The National Youth Survey 2013 found that for age categories within youth, distribution across the provinces is somewhat uneven. The Northern Province has the lowest concentration of youth aged 15 to 19 years at 4.7 percent. North Central and Uva Provinces have the lowest concentration of youth over 20 years. The Western Province has

the highest concentration of youth in all age categories. Figure 1.2 shows the ethnic breakdown of youth, which corresponds approximately to the national distribution.

Figure 1.2: The ethnic composition of youth tracks the broader population



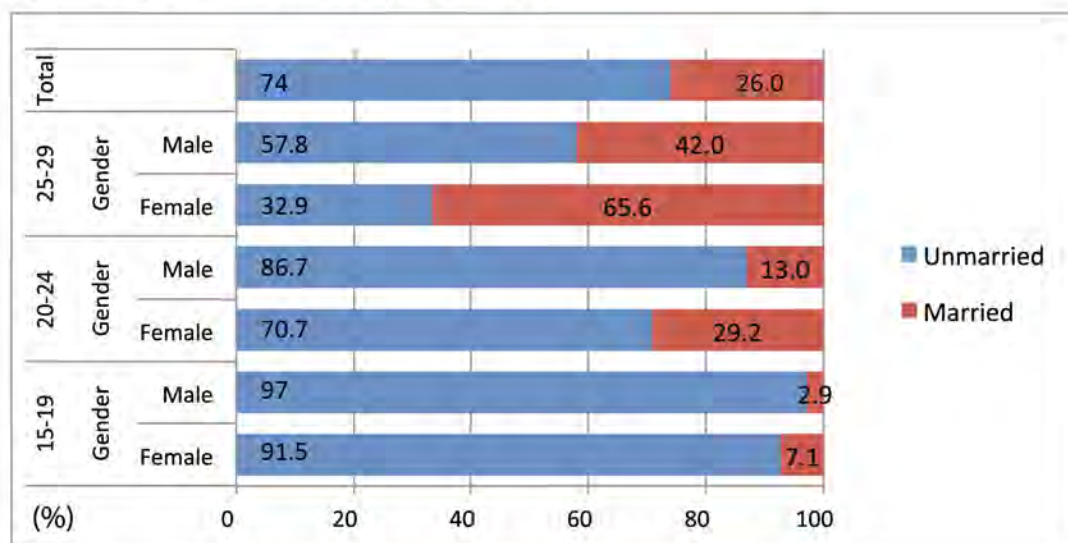
Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

In the National Youth Survey 2013, 26 percent of respondents were married (figure 1.3), and among them, 66.5 percent were women. Around 56 percent of married youth were aged 25 to 29 years old. Six percent in the 15 to 19 year old age group were also married, 71 percent of whom were women. While the overall age of marriage has increased, marriages at an early age still occur among young women. A United Nations Children's Fund supported study pointed out that this was influenced by the fact that marriage is seen as a means of managing teenage sexuality, especially among young women. Those who experience sexual relationships outside of marriage

are demeaned, and marriage is viewed as a means of protecting their 'respectability'.²⁹

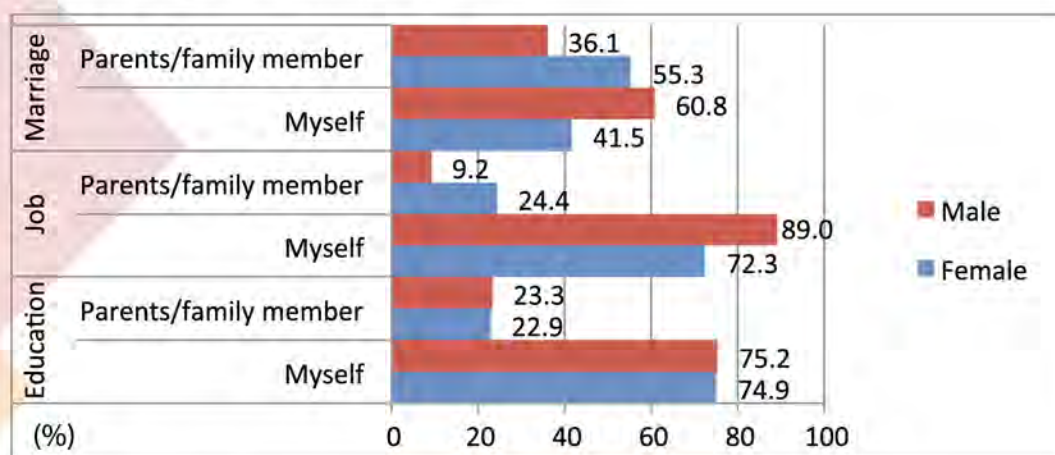
Parents appear to wield considerable influence when it comes to decision-making about marriage. In the National Youth Survey 2013, 47.5 percent of respondents said their marriage decisions were influenced by their parents; a rate that rose to 55 for women (figure 1.4). While marriage is an important cultural criterion in determining the transition from youth to adulthood, the decision to marry is influenced quite significantly by an individual's family.

Figure 1.3: Young women are more likely to be married



Source: National Youth Survey 2013

Figure 1.4: Differing influences on key life decisions



Source: National Youth Survey 2013

Beyond the youth bulge

In much of the world today, demographic and socio-economic changes have cast a spotlight on youth. Many countries are experiencing a 'youth bulge', where younger people constitute a high proportion of the general population. This is generally seen as an advantage, since youth can be a highly productive group. But it is also viewed as potentially disruptive and challenging, given the unpredictable volatility when large numbers of youth confront poverty, high unemployment and rapid urbanization.³⁰ The relationship between youth and violence needs to be further investigated, however, since it cannot be assumed or considered inevitable.³¹

Sri Lanka experienced a youth bulge some years ago. Today, the percentage of those between the ages of 15 and 29 is declining.³² As a result, Sri Lanka faces different issues than many other developing countries, such as the declining influence of youth as a constituency and lost productive advantages associated with high numbers of young people.

Further, a growing elderly population is a concern. Sri Lanka's development successes have allowed fertility to decline and life expectancy to rise, so its population is ageing. By 2030, within South Asia, Sri Lanka will probably have the highest proportion of people over 60 years old.³³ A shrinking workforce and an increase in the dependent population could adversely affect the welfare of young working people. Welfare reforms will be needed to take care of the ageing population.

Changes in socio-economic circumstances, where youth are staying longer in education, and delaying the ages of marriage and childbearing, have meant that youth today are different compared to earlier generations. The 'youthful' phase has extended, whereas earlier the transition from childhood to adulthood happened more quickly. Global economic challenges have resulted in many waiting longer for their first employment. Unstable economic situations and the global financial crisis have meant that now young people depend on

parents and the state for longer periods. Difficulties in finding jobs or not being able to get jobs that give them financial independence have meant that youth are not able to set up their own homes like they did before.

Globally, attempts to respond to issues youth face typically draw on either the problem/prevention model or the positive youth development model.³⁴ The first is influenced by psychological theories of human development. It attempts to identify 'youth at risk', and seeks to prevent problems of delinquency, violence, early sexual activity, etc. It identifies certain behaviours as problematic and inimical to healthy development, and intervenes to prevent them. The second model tries to move away from identifying youth as 'problems' to focusing on their assets. It aims to develop skills and opportunities for young people. Both models look at youth as individuals and assume that youth need to change to improve their situation.³⁵

Youth interventions in Sri Lanka contain elements of both models. The recent history of violent attempts by youth to capture the state has influenced a view of them as potentially 'violent'. These 'anti-system' actions have been largely attributed to 'frustration' as a result of employment opportunities not matching the high education levels and aspirations of young people. Youth have also been described as 'emotional' and easily manipulated by political parties.³⁶



PHOTO CREDIT : UNDP SRI LANKA

A number of interventions, including by the National Youth Services Council, the National

Youth Corps and other youth-focused organizations, have attempted to identify 'at risk' youth, and channel their energy and initiative towards 'safe' activities such as education, training, art, drama and sports. Influenced by the positive youth development model, these interventions are usually described in terms of empowering youth and increasing their participation and agency.

A third approach to working with youth is to recognize the multiple social, cultural, economic and political influences on them. These encompass the complex facets of youth identity – such as class, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Taking this more comprehensive view allows understanding of all the forces that can constrain and empower youth, and that determine, in human development terms, what they can be and do, or their capabilities and freedoms.

This report takes this third approach in exploring how Sri Lankan youth can build their capabilities and participate in development. It looks at how the identity of youth is constructed, and how this process influences understanding of youth, and the definition of problems and opportunities.

Sound policies need implementation

As background to the coming chapters, Sri Lanka has several policies directly or indirectly targeting youth. The Mahinda Chinthana, the Government's development policy framework, contains specific references to youth, especially in relation to expanding education and job opportunities.

The 2014 National Youth Policy's vision is "to develop the full potential of young people to enable their active participation in national development for a just and equitable society."³⁷ It is organized around three pillars of enabling, empowering and ensuring youth, and takes a multisectoral approach capturing links among different sectors that affect youth well-being. An important aspect is the recognition that youth are not a homogenous category; their experiences differ for various socio-economic and cultural reasons. The policy highlights the need to target specific youth groups to address their unique situations, defining 10 priority groups:

- Unemployed youth
- Youth from war-affected communities
- Youth who are excluded, discriminated against and exploited
- Youth at different education levels
- Young women
- Rural youth
- Low-income urban youth
- Youth in conflict with the law
- Youth on estates
- Differently abled youth

The National Youth Policy identifies several strategic policy intervention areas, including education and skills development, employment, health and well-being, civic engagement, social exclusion and discrimination, and peace and reconciliation. It has recommended a high-powered Presidential Youth Development Commission to implement and monitor the policy, and the appointment of a Youth Ombudsperson to respond to the grievances of young people. The Presidential Commission on Youth established in 1990 also recommended the latter, but the position has yet to be established.

A 2007 Action Plan for Youth Employment, a 2011 draft National Policy and Strategy on the Health of Young Persons and a National Strategic Plan on Adolescent Health (2013-2017) are other policy tools.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development, the National Youth Services Council and the National Youth Corps are the key state institutions responsible for youth development. Many other institutions come under their purview, such as the Vocational Training Authority, the Tertiary and Vocational Training Commission, and the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority. The National Youth Services Council is one of the largest youth organizations in the country, with 11,235 youth clubs and a membership of about 443,912 as of 2014. Its goal is to reach 1 million members by 2016. Numerous non-governmental agencies work with youth, especially on vocational training and skills development.

In 2011, Sri Lanka launched the Youth Parliament to build leadership skills among youth and facilitate

dialogue. The 2nd Youth Parliament was constituted in 2013, and its debates and recommendations made public and shared with the national Parliament for the first time. But the Youth Parliament still faces challenges in being more representative and influential in advocating on behalf of youth.

An enduring challenge for Sri Lanka has been difficulties in implementing policy, despite a reasonably well-developed policy framework. Very few policies have actually been implemented through actions improving the lives of young people. One of the most important policy interventions involved the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Youth established in 1990 after the 1988-1989 youth insurrection. The Commission called for addressing the strong sense of injustice expressed by youth who testified before it. It noted this sense of injustice was primarily due to political patronage, especially with regard to discarding merit as a condition for employment; the use of English to oppress those from rural backgrounds; corruption; and bureaucratic apathy³⁸. Introducing examinations to the selection process for public sector jobs was one subsequent attempt to reduce discrimination in employment, yet youth continue to perceive public sector employment as highly politicized.

Many of the Commission's findings and recommendations are echoed in other policy documents, such as the 2007 Action Plan for Youth Employment and the 2014 National Youth Policy. The fact that the same recommendations are being suggested 24 years later reflects the serious gap in implementation. During the focus group discussions conducted as part of the National Youth Survey 2013, a consistent complaint from youth was the lack of policy implementation. They expressed disillusionment and cynicism regarding the possibility of change or transformation—a dangerous attitude, since it leads to both alienation and mistrust of the possibility of change through peaceful and democratic means.

One reason for non-implementation of policy in Sri Lanka is that policies are generally linked with a political party or ministerial leadership. With a change of power, the new government feels compelled to disassociate itself with the past and stamp its own identity on new initiatives. This tendency does not augur well for policy.



A more independent policy development mechanism would be one way to contend with the lack of implementation. Public institutions need to have a degree of autonomy from political party manoeuvrings so that policies are developed and implemented with a long-term vision in mind. Policies are also sometimes developed without accounting for local contexts and needs, or a proper assessment of the implementation capacity of institutions. Consequently, at the local level, there is little support for the structures and people who are expected to translate often complex initiatives into meaningful actions.

The 2014 National Human Development Report provides a unique opportunity to examine the situation of youth in relation to existing policies. In analysing youth perspectives on their own situations, and the systems in place to facilitate their development, it recognizes that what youth think, drives their actions and willingness to engage constructively in the world around them. The report's analysis could provide impetus for reflection, debate and dialogue on the gap between policy and practice, as well as a more nuanced understanding of youth. This would help policy makers and practitioners more closely respond to the realities that youth face today, as well as their expectations, aspirations and attitudes.

While in the past youth in Sri Lanka have been associated with participation in violent politics, the human development approach used in this report locates youth within a broader context, taking into account the political, social, economic and cultural influences shaping their lives. With multiple policy initiatives in place, the report details some of the gaps in and constraints on implementation. It provides fresh viewpoints on longstanding policy issues and flags emerging concerns.

EDUCATION

YOUTH AND
DEVELOPMENT





Education is a human right. It is also one of the most important means of achieving broader development goals such as reducing poverty, improving health, strengthening social justice, peace and sustainable development. Even with a narrow focus on improving economic growth and increasing efficiency, education plays a crucial role.¹

Almost 70 years ago, policy makers in Sri Lanka recognized the importance of equitable access to quality education. They put in place extensive education reforms that guaranteed publicly funded education for all citizens up to the university level. The challenge today is to ensure that this goal continues to be prioritized, and that education meets the challenges of contemporary society. This chapter examines achievements as well as current shortfalls and disparities, highlighting youth perceptions of the state of education. It proposes some priority measures to improve quality and alignment with long-term development goals.

A mix of schools

Sri Lanka has 9,905 state-funded and 36 private schools, as well as 734 *pirivena* schools.² The 15 state universities include the Open University of Sri Lanka; the University Grants Commission recognizes 18 other higher education institutions as degree awarding institutions. Exact figures are not available for the large number of 'international schools',³ which are registered as companies and not captured in Ministry of Education data. Private degree-awarding institutes are largely unregulated, although the Ministry of Higher Education is attempting to set up an accreditation and quality control mechanism. Both university academics and student communities have questioned the potential impact on state-funded higher education. Concerns have been raised that these are attempts to 'privatise' higher education and also that the measures that have been introduced so far have not followed proper procedures and go against the principles of the existing regulatory framework for universities.

Among state schools, 97 percent are administered by provincial councils. The remaining 3 percent are national schools administered by the central

Government. From 1995 to 2005, education spending was over 3 percent of GDP. Since then, although expenditure has been increasing, it has fallen to 1.72 percent of GDP.⁴ This anomaly needs to be corrected with more investment in education in order to improve equity in access to quality education for all in Sri Lanka and to reduce the alarming regional disparities.

Schools are divided into four types: 1AB with classes up to General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level (A/L) in all subjects, science, commerce and arts; 1C schools, which only have up to GCE A/L in arts and commerce; Type 2 schools, which only have classes up to GCE Ordinary Level (O/L); and Type 3 schools, which are only up to grade 5. Only 8 percent of schools are in the 1AB category; 20 percent are 1C schools. This means that only a few schools offer all the A/L streams. Youth sit for GCE exams at 16 years for the O/L and 19 years for the A/L. Both exams play a significant role in determining career paths, employment opportunities and higher education options.

Uneven quality and access

One of the most significant issues in education in Sri Lanka is uneven quality and access, despite the goal of universal access. This mirrors other development disparities, including those linked to rural and conflict-affected areas, and to concentrations of marginalized communities, such as the Indian Tamils.⁵ Multiple factors that influence deprivation and exclusion coalesce, making it difficult to separate one from the other. That is, many of the areas that lag behind in education are areas that have struggled due to other development issues such as poverty, marginalization and exclusion.

The Ministry of Education divides schools into 5 categories based on their level of difficulty in terms of facilities and accessibility. These categories are 'very congenial', 'congenial', 'not congenial', 'difficult', and 'very difficult'.⁶ According to this categorization, 3,607 schools are either very congenial or congenial, while 3,406 schools or 49 percent of the total are difficult or very difficult.

A geographical bias means the Western Province has the fewest difficult or very difficult schools, and the most very congenial and congenial schools. In the conflict-affected Kilinochchi district in the Northern Province, 89 schools are either difficult or very difficult. Only 1 school is very congenial and 3 are congenial. In Nuwara Eliya, where most of the population is from the estate sector and poverty rates are high, 237 of the 538 schools are either difficult or very difficult, while only 82 are very congenial or congenial. In the Anuradhapura district, which is primarily a rural area, 272 out of 540 schools are difficult or very difficult.⁷

The Western Province has the highest number of 1AB schools, and within this, Colombo district has the greatest concentration, with 68 of 402 schools classified as 1AB.⁸ Certain districts, especially in the North, have very few 1AB schools. Kilinochchi, for instance, has only 7; Vavuniya and Mullativu have 6 each. The uneven distribution of 1AB schools with their wider subject offering means A/L opportunities are restricted for many students. More qualify for admission to universities in the arts and humanities than other disciplines, since this track is offered at both 1AB and 1C schools. In 2011, 41 percent of graduates of universities were in arts disciplines.⁹



PHOTO CREDIT : BILL RYAN/UNFPA SRI LANKA

Since rural areas have the fewest 1AB schools, the majority of those entering arts and humanities disciplines in universities are from rural areas. While some may choose these courses of study, for many, there are no other options. This results in an oversupply of arts graduates and high unemployment among them as they compete for a limited number of jobs. Recognizing disparities among schools, a grade 5 scholarship examination has been introduced, enabling those who perform well to gain entry to more prestigious schools with comprehensive course offerings. Educators have criticized this move, however, since the highly competitive examination has put huge pressures on primary school students preparing for it.

The National Youth Survey 2013 confirmed the persistence of educational disparities (figure 2.1). While 44 percent of youth in the Western Province had attained the GCE A/L, only 15 percent had done so in Uva Province, where poverty rates are high. The Southern Province, also poor, had the highest percentage of those who had only gone to primary school, at 4.5 percent, while the Central Province, with a large proportion of people from the estate sector, had the highest percentage of those who had only completed lower secondary school, at 8.5 percent.

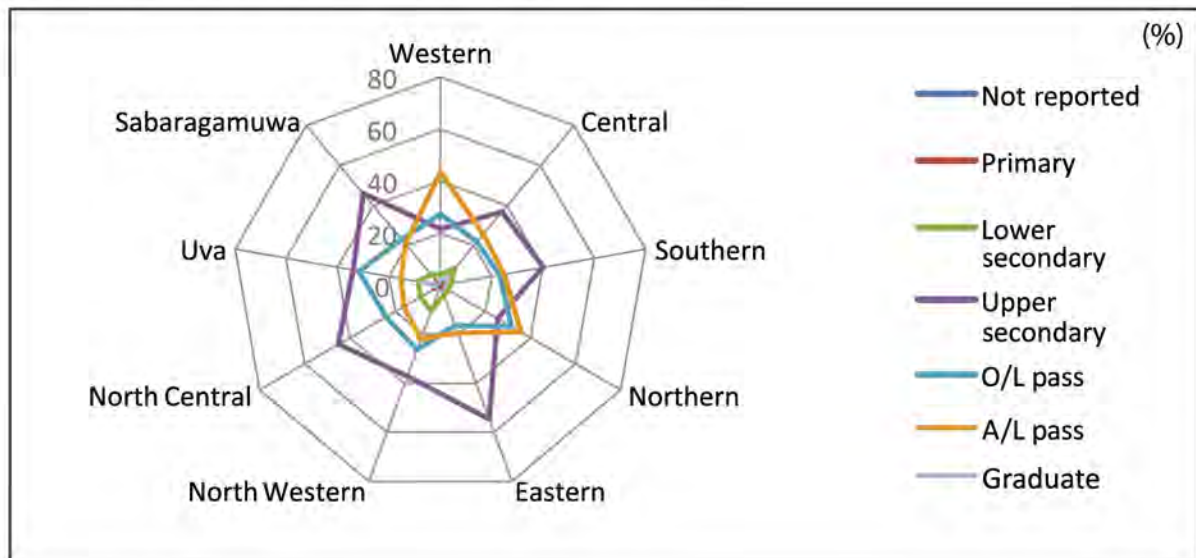
Rich people can get education however they want, but poor students who study well cannot do what they like because they don't have money.

The education system is okay. The problem is uneven distribution of resources. Urban areas have lots of facilities but students from rural areas do not have many facilities. I think that is the problem with education. Urban schools even have swimming pools but not in schools in rural areas.

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Central Province*

In the Eastern Province, 55 percent of survey respondents had completed only upper secondary school, an indicator of the impact of conflict. But war is not the only driver of disparities, as confirmed by fairly good educational achievements in the Northern Province—remarkably, it scored the second highest in terms of the percentage of students passing the GCE A/L. The Northern Province has traditionally performed well in education and this has long been attributed to the

Figure 2.1: Highest educational achievement varies sharply by province



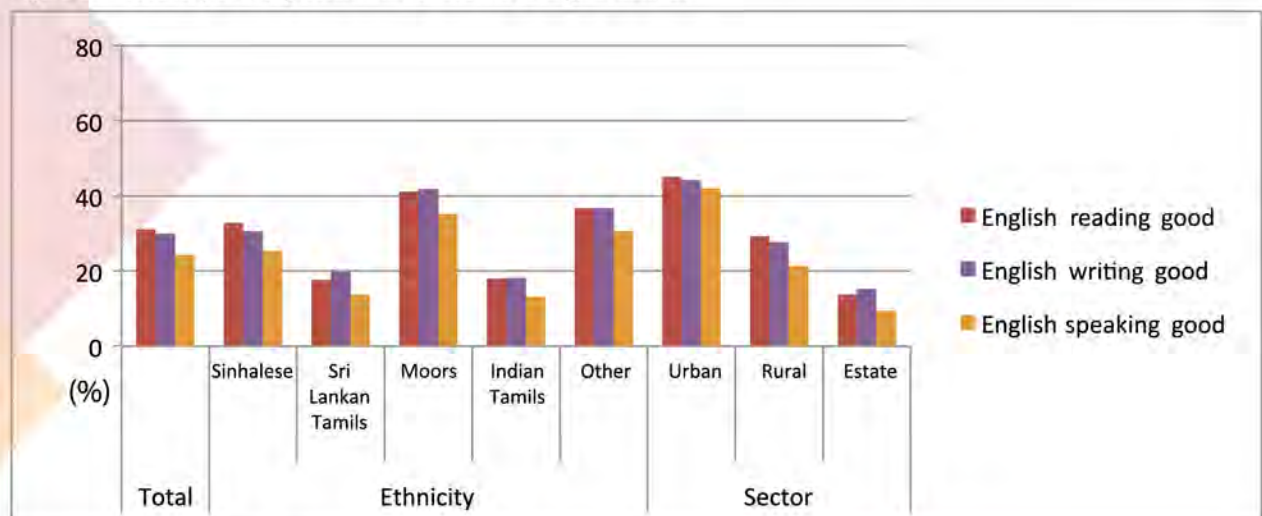
Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

culture of the area which gives a high value for education. It is remarkable that this value appears to have survived the traumas of war as well.

Educational disparities can also be traced by performance in individual subject areas. Achievements in Mathematics, for example, are higher in more developed areas. In O/L Mathematics, the Western Province has the best pass rate, at 60 percent, while the Uva and North Central provinces had 42 percent pass rates in 2009. The Central and Eastern provinces also have pass rates below 50 percent. The pass rate in combined mathematics at the A/L in 2009 island wide was 44.9 percent showing that in areas such as Mathematics achievement has been poor.¹⁰

English language skills follow the lines of geography and ethnicity. In the National Youth Survey 2013, 38 percent of urban youth said their English speaking skills were good, compared to a staggeringly low 20 percent of rural youth and 10 percent of youth from the estate sector. In Focus Group Discussions, youth said that the general quality of English teaching in schools was poor, and that there were few opportunities to speak English. One of the most important barriers, however, was the fear of speaking English incorrectly. This fear stems from cultural associations with the elite and a 'posh' demeanour and behaviours. Poor English reflects a person's social background and status, and can fuel a lack of confidence. Despite English being taught as a 'Link Language' from Grade 1,

Figure 2.2: Location, ethnicity determine confidence in English abilities



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

not enough has been done in the educational system to address the cultural and social barriers associated with English.

When survey respondents were asked to rate their abilities in English writing, speaking and reading, 70 percent ranked their writing skills, 76 percent their speaking skills and 69 percent their reading skills as poor. Moor and Sinhala youth had relatively higher levels of confidence in their ability to speak English, at 30 percent and 26 percent, respectively, compared to only 15 percent of Sri Lankan Tamil youth and 13 percent of Indian Tamil youth (figure 2.2). In recent decades, Sri Lanka has made some efforts to ease disparities in education, including by improving primary and secondary facilities. In 1994, for instance, there were only 566 1AB schools; by 2005 there were 646, and 753 by 2012. Teacher/student ratios have declined, from 1 to 22 in 1994 to 1 to 17 in 2011. The number of schools with A/L classes that also have information and communication technology facilities dramatically improved from 10 percent in 1994 to 80 percent in 2005.

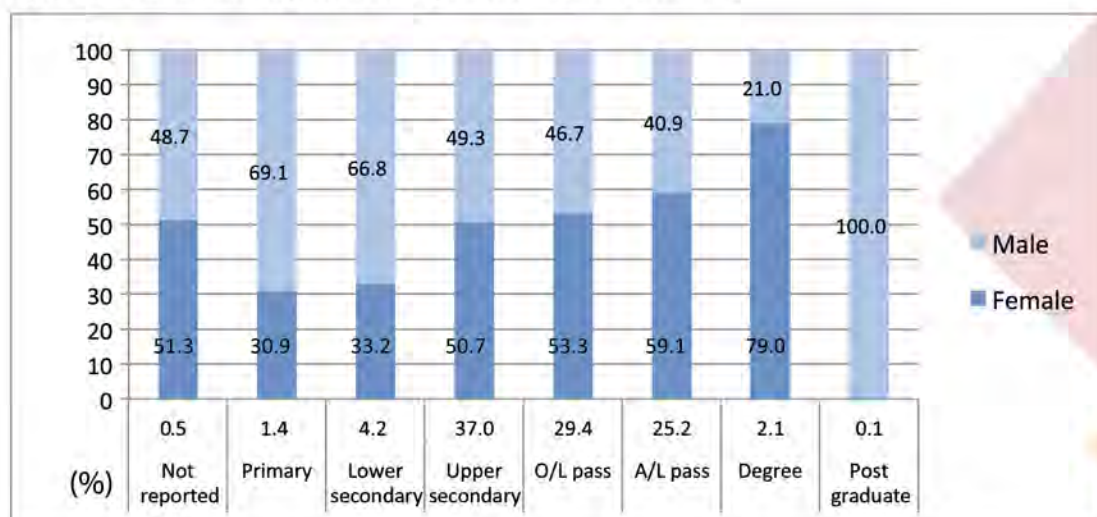
The Ministry of Education intends to ensure that at least 3 schools in each divisional secretariat area or local government unit, will be uplifted to 1AB status.¹¹ This is an important move, since the majority of students are in rural areas and have fewer choices due to the current uneven distribution of schools. When the lack of schools is combined with limited transport in rural

communities, the dearth of options becomes even more acute. Other plans call for introducing compulsory teacher training and the continuous professional development of teachers, and a technology stream in A/L schools. The latter is a popular and welcome advance, although only 4 state universities offer engineering and technology degrees, limiting their capacity to absorb an influx of technology students. Furthermore, professionalization of teacher educators, counsellors, advisors, text book writers and curriculum developers, whose inputs are closely linked to teaching approaches and methodologies, are a prerequisite to improving teaching and teacher qualities.

Girls are more likely to stay in school

One disparity that Sri Lanka does not face is in educating girls. While many countries globally still need to do much to improve their education, Sri Lankan girls perform better than boys. In 2012, there were 591,087 youth at the O/L, of whom close to 51 percent were female and 49 percent male. Among 468,880 youth at the A/L, the portion of young women rose to 56.4 percent of the total.¹² The National Youth Survey 2013 confirmed this trend of more women than men advancing to higher education (figure 2.3). While Sri Lanka can be rightly satisfied with its achievements in educating girls, it now needs to address the factors allowing boys to fall behind. Another concern is

Figure 2.3: Women often surpass men in highest educational achievement



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

that education does not necessarily empower girls, as they will later face greater restrictions in choice of employment.

Sri Lanka is not alone in the dominance of girls and young women in both school admissions and performance. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), girls outperform boys in most areas except Mathematics in most countries globally.¹³ Universities in the United States of America and other developed countries are dominated by young women. Studies in the United States of America have shown that unlike in the past, young women perform better than young men across different social groups, and daughters of single women and from less educated backgrounds have higher educational aspirations than young men from similar backgrounds.¹⁴

There are generally two explanations for the shift towards more gender equal patterns in education access and performance. One is that the sustained focus on improving girls' access to education has been successful. Another tries to understand why boys are moving away from education and often cites the lack of male role models. It refers to a 'female' learning culture influenced by the fact that the vast majority of teachers are women. Primary and lower secondary education is almost completely dominated by female teachers, which may provide more motivation for girls than for boys to be successful there.¹⁵ A serious limitation in applying these explanations to Sri Lanka, however, is that most studies are based on data gathered in Western societies.

Studies in Sri Lanka have shown that the education system, while providing opportunities for girls, continues to reproduce gender stereotypes through teaching methods as well as textbooks. An analysis of books has shown, for instance, that the illustrations and examples largely mirror existing gender stereotypes. Gendered toys in preschools start the formation of gender identity early.¹⁶ While the majority of teachers are female, the learning environment reflects gendered notions of roles and responsibilities in society, making schools among

the primary places where girls are socialized into 'appropriate' gender roles and responsibilities.

A lack of positive male role models is not immediately obvious, since at the higher secondary school level there are many male teachers as well as school principals and administrators. Within universities, while women dominate lower positions, many senior teaching and administrative positions continue to be held by men. Only recently have universities seen female vice-chancellors or women holding high positions within the administrative system. It cannot be assumed that males lack role models or are subjected to a 'feminine' learning environment in Sri Lanka.



PHOTO CREDIT: JANAKA THILAKARATNE/ WORLD BANK SRI LANKA

More important is to consider perceptions and experiences related to returns on education, and how these link to gender. Education continues to be valued in Sri Lanka, and an 'educated' person is respected in society. The fact that parents do not have to make economic choices about whether to educate boys or girls has helped establish a culture valuing the education of both.

Yet the belief that university education, especially in the state system, does not guarantee employment has taken strong root. This is something often repeated by policy makers and politicians, and regularly discussed in the media.¹⁷ Doubts about the worth and outcomes of schooling may mean young men and their families find it more profitable to look for options outside education. By contrast, girls continue to stay in

school since they have a harder time finding employment and are also more restricted in their choices. Keeping girls in a safe environment is another key consideration. Poorer families in particular prefer to keep girls in school while allowing young boys to drop out to contribute to family income. Even when it comes to valued marriage attributes, while education is a plus factor for young women, employment is typically the key consideration for young men.

In the National Youth Survey 2013, among those who said they do not find school useful, 59 percent were male, even though they have more options than female youth in the labour market. While they may feel it is more useful to enter the labour market than to remain in an education system that does not guarantee employment, education is nonetheless crucial for gaining skills required for the kinds of careers many youth aspire to pursue.

Higher education is often out of reach

Higher education in Sri Lanka has come under significant criticism recently, with the quality of undergraduate education deemed inadequate given the lack of employability among graduates.

Student unrest has generated an image of higher educational institutions, particularly national universities, as hotbeds of violence and unrest. The longstanding practice of 'ragging' or hazing new university entrants has fostered negative perceptions.

Those in school do not have information about university education. The media only talks about the 'rag' so young people are scared. Many think universities are a bad place. There are some who would not go to university even if they are selected. It is important that school children have a good awareness about universities and the kind of place it is.

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Central Province*

Table 2.1: Universities can accommodate only a small portion of qualified students

Year of GCE (A/L)		2007			2008			2009			2010		
Year of admission		2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010			2010/2011		
Stream		Q	A	%	Q	A	%	Q	A	%	Q	A	%
Arts	T	56,917	6,307	11.0	65,235	6,693	10.3	62,676	6,841	10.9	72,800	7,064	9.7
	M	15,057	1,453	9.6	17,279	1,514	8.8	16,430	1,481	9.0	18,518	1,477	7.9
	F	41,860	4,854	11.6	47,956	5,179	10.8	46,246	5,360	11.6	54,282	5,587	10.3
Commerce	T	37,861	4,357	11.5	36,707	4,337	11.8	33,202	4,583	13.8	35,581	4,876	13.7
	M	16,535	1,928	11.7	16,492	1,949	11.8	15,054	2,062	13.7	15,984	2,086	13.1
	F	21,326	2,429	11.4	20,215	2,388	11.8	18,148	2,521	13.9	19,597	2,790	14.2
Physical sciences	T	10,018	4,241	42.3	10,408	4,493	43.8	10,164	4,467	43.9	12,657	4,455	35.2
	M	6,962	3,151	45.3	7,372	3,382	45.9	7,095	3,376	47.6	8,775	3,277	37.3
	F	3,056	1,090	35.7	3,036	1,111	36.6	3,069	1,091	35.6	3,882	1,178	30.4
Biological sciences	T	16,625	5,164	31.1	17,886	5,323	29.8	19,242	5,656	29.4	21,478	5,621	26.2
	M	5,799	1,953	33.7	6,231	1,984	31.8	6,506	2,097	32.2	6,877	1,961	28.5
	F	10,826	3,211	29.7	11,655	3,339	28.6	12,736	3,559	27.9	14,601	3,660	25.1
Total	T	121,421	20,069	16.5	130,236	20,846	16.0	125,284	21,547	17.2	142,516	22,016	15.2
	M	44,353	8,485	19.1	47,374	8,829	18.6	45,085	9,016	20.0	50,154	8,801	17.6
	F	77,068	11,584	15.0	82,862	12,017	14.5	80,199	12,531	15.6	92,362	13,215	14.3

T: Total; M: Male; F: Female; Q: Qualified for university admission; A: Admitted to university

Source: University Grants Commission 2012

One of the main problems is the inability of higher education to absorb those who qualify for it. Table 2.1 shows the often large disparities between students who qualify for university admission and those who are actually admitted, more so in areas like the arts, where students are concentrated because of the lack of other choices. Only 2 percent of respondents in the National Youth Survey 2013 reported being engaged in higher education.

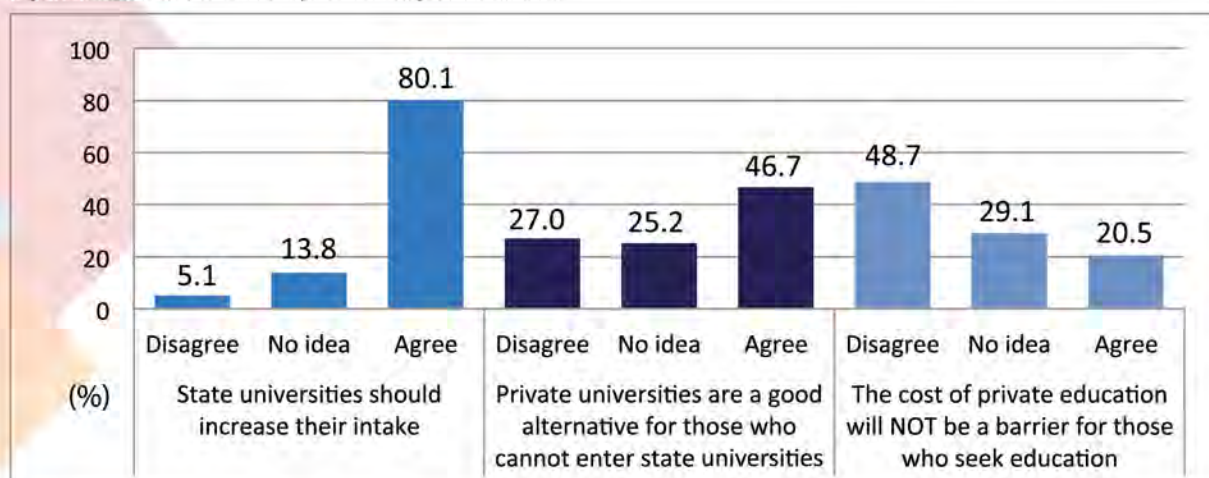
The shortage of capacity has encouraged the introduction of private universities and higher education institutes. In the survey, over 80 percent of youth stated that universities need to expand opportunities and admit more students, and nearly 47 percent agreed that private universities would be a good alternative to state universities (figure 2.4). Yet 49 percent also said that the cost of private universities would be a barrier to accessing higher education, suggesting that the state higher education system may still be the most important means of accessing higher education for most young people. Private higher education institutions, while improving access for some people, will affect equality of opportunities, a highly valued aspect of the Sri Lankan education system.

Another constraint on entry into higher education is poor educational performance at secondary levels. Despite free education, a relatively high 37 percent of youth do not proceed beyond the upper secondary level. On the 2013 O/L examinations, the pass rate was only 57.2 percent for mathematics

and 67.5 for science.¹⁸ The pass rate in English was just over 45 percent, a figure that drops to 28 percent for the A/L exams. A national assessment of learning outcomes in English at grade 10 in 2010 found that 47 percent of students scored abysmally, between 10 and 39 percent.¹⁹ And even though a credit pass is required to enter the mathematics stream at the A/L, a high failure rate there shows that competencies acquired at lower levels are insufficient to perform well at higher ones. Given this situation, it is imperative for the Government to ensure that properly trained and qualified teachers in the core subjects of Mathematics, Sciences, English and Information Technology are deployed and retained in the rural and disadvantaged areas. To achieve this, proper school infrastructure and facilities (including appropriate living quarters for teachers and their families) as well as recognition for teachers who serve in such areas, must be ensured within the system.

Both quality and access to education have been identified as key strategic areas in global discussions on the post-2015 development framework, which have also emphasized improving access to all types of education, not only at the primary level. Given that Sri Lanka already has a head start in access at lower levels of schooling, the focus could now shift to higher levels as part of advancing overall development. The 2005 *Mahinda Chinthana* Policy targets an annual GDP growth rate of 8 percent, and stipulates the development of science and technology fields and promotion of industries.²⁰ All these aims require a

Figure 2.4: Youth want more options for higher education



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

tremendous increase in human capital that can only be achieved through improving education, particularly at higher levels.

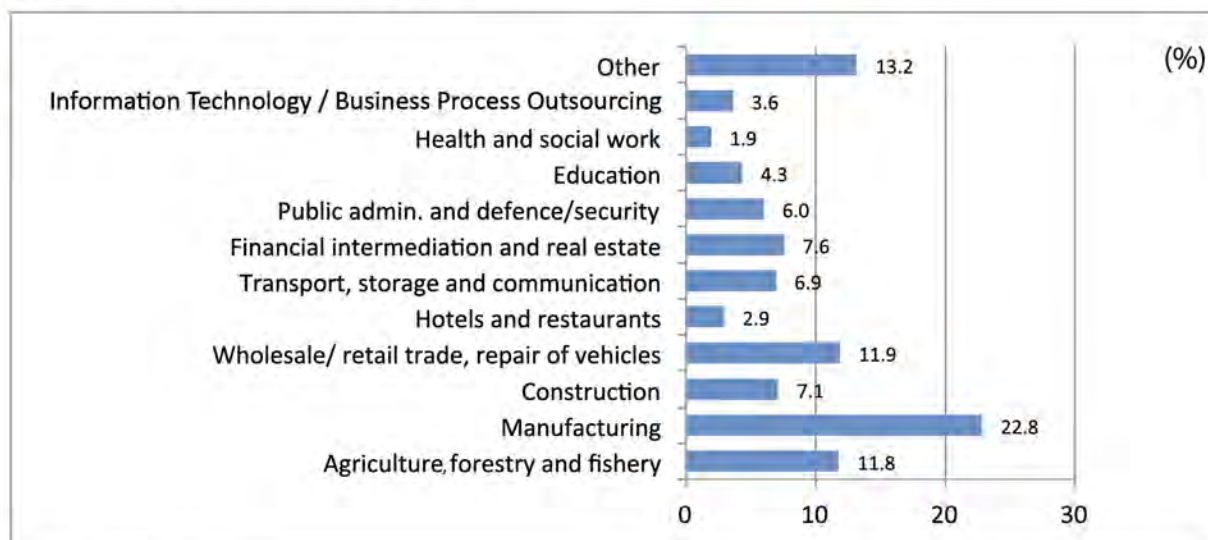
Technical and vocational training: available but inadequate

Despite Sri Lanka's wide array of vocational training institutes, the National Youth Survey 2013 found that youth continue to be concentrated in low-skill employment, posing another obstacle to aspirations for economic transition. While 22.8 percent of survey respondents said they were in

manufacturing, 11.9 percent were in wholesale or retail occupations. Only 7.6 percent were in the financial and real estate sectors, and 3.6 percent in information technology/Business Process Outsourcing (figure 2.5).

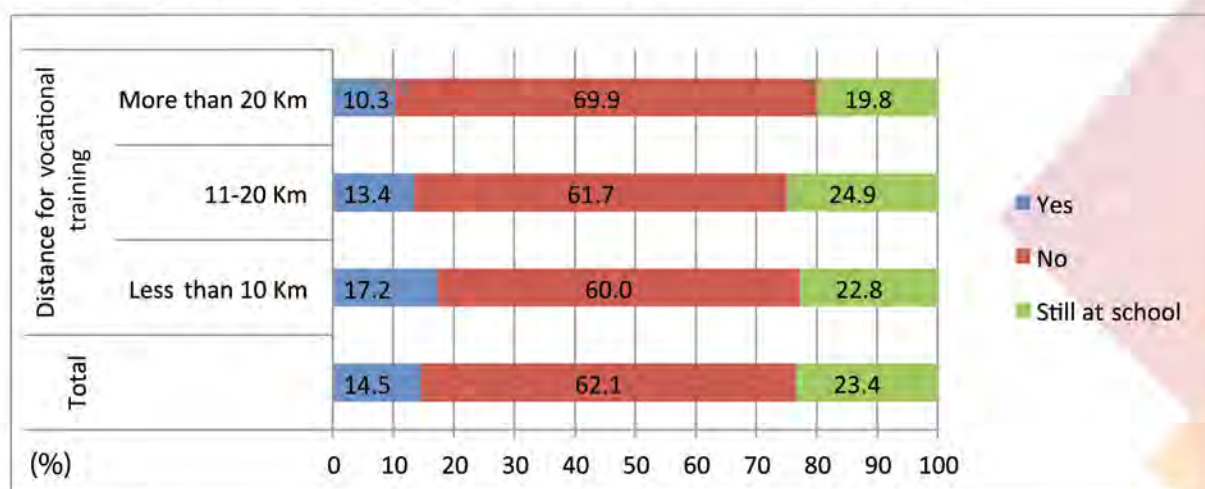
Only about 16 percent of the labour force as a whole has received formal vocational or technical training.²¹ Approximately 25 percent of those with vocational training are unemployed, which shows that training alone does not lead to a job.

Figure 2.5: Many youth remain in low-skill jobs



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 2.6: Despite availability, the majority of youth do not seek out technical and vocational training



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

As of the end of 2010, 2,077 training institutes were registered and 711 courses accredited. Among the institutes, 291 were state run, 898 were private, 240 were managed by non-governmental organizations and 648 were administered by statutory boards. The quality of most institutions and courses is not high enough, however, to satisfy the needs of industry and other employers in a changing world economic environment. Studies of technical and vocational education and training find it is not based on demand.²² It lacks outreach, human and physical resources, and funding, and often offers substandard training.²³

Low levels of participation in technical and vocational education and training were evident in the National Youth Survey 2013, where 85 percent of youth had not been involved in any type of training (figure 2.6), despite ready availability within 10 to 20 kilometres of their homes. In focus group discussions, youth expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of programmes and types of courses, stating that more professional courses are only offered in Colombo.

enough to find a job. There are friends of mine who stay at home without doing anything. This is a huge difference from students who are following courses such as NAITA (National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority) and other similar courses. They also face a problem choosing suitable courses. In these areas we don't have many opportunities.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Central Province*

Young women enrol more often in vocational courses such as cosmetology, sewing and cookery that do not train them for formal employment. This limits their economic independence, and leaves them outside labour and social protection networks. Women who choose 'non-traditional' courses often face difficulties getting placements for on-the-job training, apprenticeships or employment.²⁴ They lack role models and face concerns related to security and protection.

Recent national policy directives have identified the need to refocus technical and vocational education and training to meet demands, including through more involvement of the private sector.

Table 2.2: Tertiary level training courses

	College of technology	Technical colleges	Total
Advance diploma (National Vocational Qualification levels 5 and 6)	883	-	883
National diploma	117	218	335
National certificate	4,873	9,056	13,929
National craft (trade) certificate	1,386	2,434	3,820
Short courses for self-employment	1,420	2,586	4,006
Short courses offered to other organizations	-	29	29
Total	8,679	14,323	23,002

Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2012.

If I think of my friends, those who are on campus don't have problems. They will engage in some sort of job. But there are lots of my other friends who couldn't attend campus even after attempting the A/L three times. They feel hopeless. Now they are about 23/24 years but still they don't have a target. There are no vocational training courses in our areas, which is one of the reasons for this feeling of hopelessness. In areas like Colombo, there are institutions such as NIBM (National Institute of Business Management) but those are very rare in areas like Nuwara Eliya. Sometimes following a course is not

The expansion of the economy and the end of the war open up new avenues and opportunities for youth and all citizens.²⁵ As outlined by the President of Sri Lanka in the 2012 Budget Speech, technical and vocational education and training is now expected to meet the training needs of all young people not proceeding to university, as well as fulfilling lifelong learning needs of the existing workforce.²⁶

Valuing education: youth have mixed perceptions



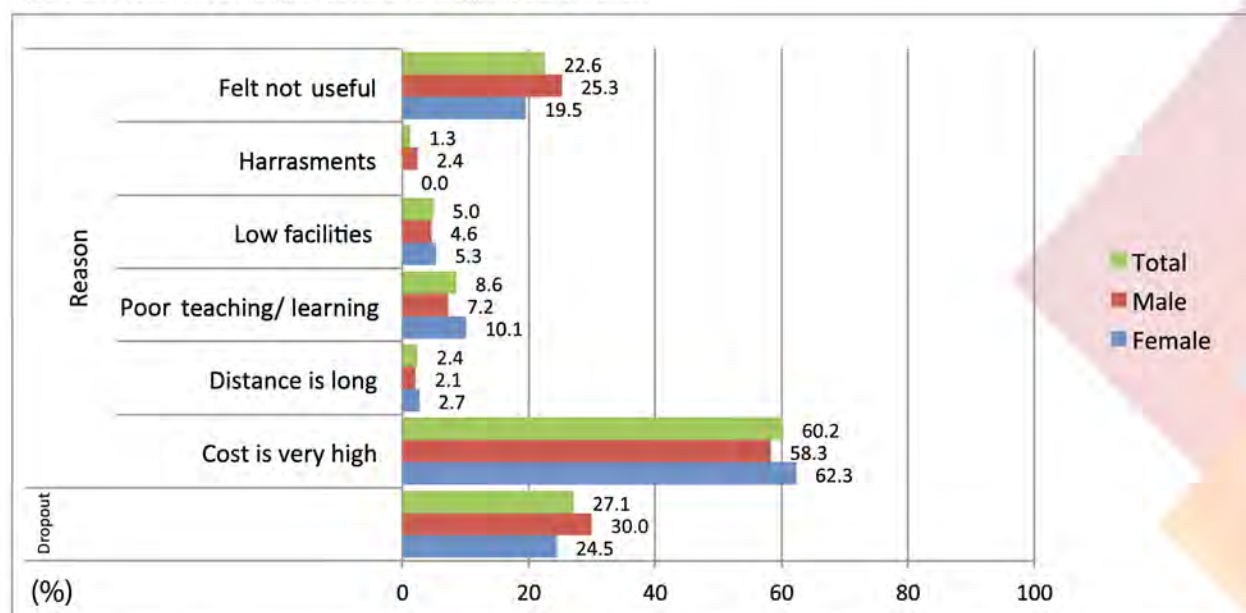
PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

The National Youth Survey 2013 captured a number of perceptions that youth have about the quality and value of education. When it explored reasons for discontinuing school, for example, 27 percent of respondents highlighted various difficulties (see figure 2.7). Sixty percent of drop-outs specified the cost of education as a barrier. Despite free education policies, families increasingly have to shoulder a financial burden, such as for costs related to school maintenance, extracurricular activities, and most importantly, extra tuition classes. Moving from Type 3 schools to Type 2 schools and later to 1C or 1AB schools often

imposes transport costs that discourage poor households. Additional expenses come from travelling to urban centres for special tuition classes, and when these classes are inaccessible, the tendency is to leave school. Financial constraints do not, however, affect the participation of girls, as is the case in other parts of the world.

Nearly 23 percent of drop-outs said they didn't find school useful, a puzzling finding since expectations for education are generally extremely high. It is considered one of the primary means for achieving economic and social mobility. But this view has been countered by the public debate on youth unemployment and its link to the education system, now more and more regarded as having failed to train young people for the labour market.²⁷ The system and the curriculum are mostly examinations oriented and provide less room for creative learning and thinking for students, whilst increasing the need for costly private tuition. In Focus Group Discussions, youth echoed the perception that education does not guaranteed employment. Their disappointment threatens the dividends from years of investment in education, including to address structural inequalities through policies such as the provision of free textbooks and uniforms, and efforts to establish good quality schools within reasonable distances of communities. Hence, evidence-based paradigm

Figure 2.7: Youth have multiple reasons for dropping out of school



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

shifts in curriculum design and educational systems would be deemed necessary and important at this juncture.

In making choices about education, parental influence is generally seen as high, but the National Youth Survey 2013 showed young people are involved too. As shown in table 2.3, 75 percent stated that they made their own decisions on education. Girls appear to be slightly more influenced by families: Of those who said their education decisions were influenced by their parents, 54 percent were girls. Choice is important, because it helps ensure that youth have an interest in their education and develop career aspirations accordingly.

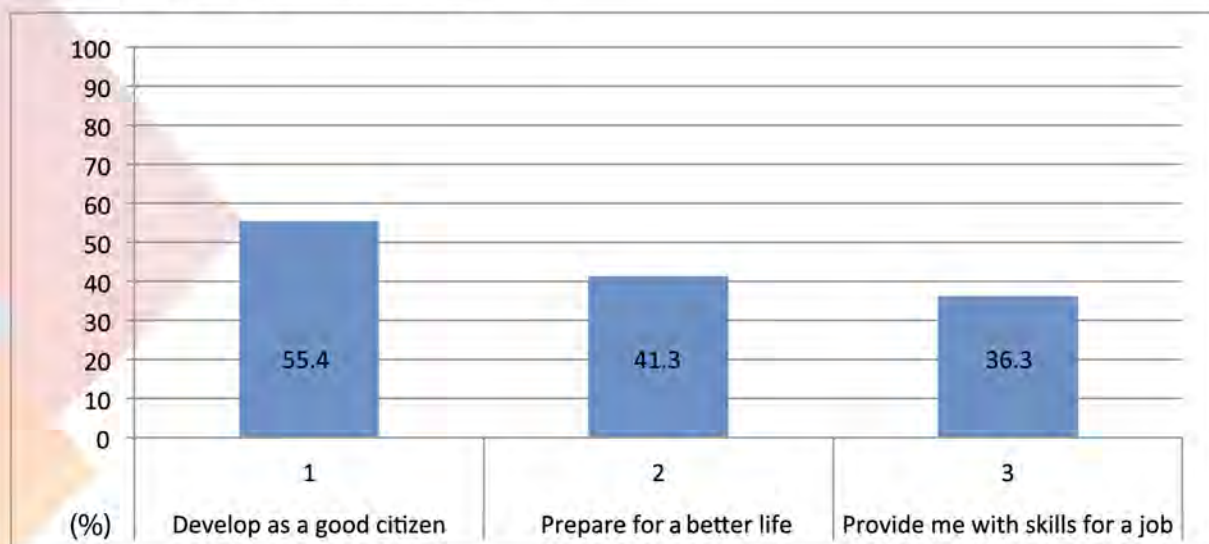
The survey found that youth value the moral and humanistic purposes of education, with 55 percent of respondents saying the goal of education is to produce good citizens, more than to provide skills for employment (figure 2.8). They have high expectations that education will prepare them for a better life, even as they worry that the investment made by their families in their schooling may not provide economic returns.

Table 2.3: Who makes major life decisions?

Domain	Main decision maker	Gender		
		Female %	Male %	Total %
Education	Myself	74.9	75.2	75.1
	Parents/family member	22.9	23.3	23.1
	Friends	.3	.1	.2
	Other	.9	.5	.7
Job	Myself	72.3	89.0	80.2
	Parents/family member	24.4	9.2	17.3
	Friends	.3	.1	.2
	Other	1.3	.2	.8
Marriage	Myself	41.5	60.8	50.6
	Parents/family member	55.3	36.1	46.3
	Friends	.7	.1	.4
	Other	1.2	.8	1.0

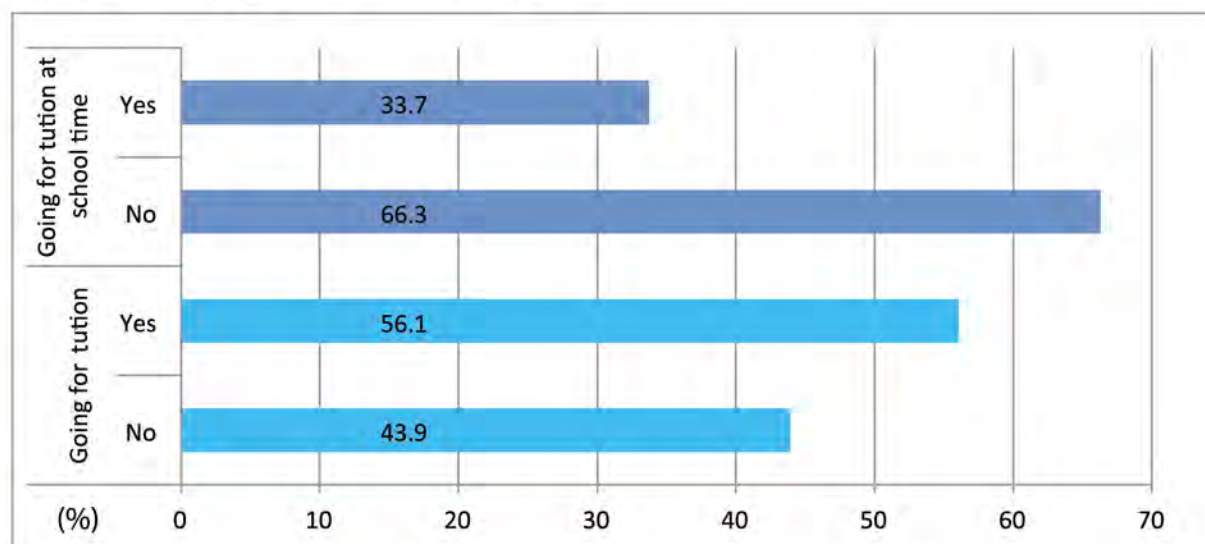
Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 2.8: The top goals of education according to youth



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 2.9: Youth may go to tuition classes instead of school



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Increasing competitiveness in education, more than the lack of facilities and teachers, has produced a heavy reliance on extra tuition classes, with 56 percent of survey respondents saying they attend these; 33 percent do so during school hours (figure 2.9). Intense competition seems to place high pressure on youth, who indicated in focus group discussions that they resent this. That some choose tuition classes over going to school means that parents and even the schools do not discourage this practice, and that the classes in some sense have become an accepted part of the education system.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

Competitiveness in education reflects an increasing focus on examinations. Consequences for the quality of education can be serious, since training to pass examinations does not include critical,

analytical, problem-solving or independent thinking skills, which are the higher learning outcomes necessary for employment, advanced education and ultimately a knowledge-based, higher value economy. The relative lack of analytical and critical thinking was captured in the survey, where responses on political participation and social integration suggested a lack of awareness of current issues. Beyond examination results, youth need to be able to examine and reflect on what is happening around them.

From a human development perspective, education is not merely an instrumental tool for producing the next generation of the labour force. It is about equipping individuals with the capabilities to create a good society, a goal undercut by heavy dependence on tuition classes and competitiveness. The practical realities of passing examinations and obtaining jobs mean that many are forced to become 'strategic learners' who forego higher aims. The survey found very few young people participating in extracurricular activities or community work, with most citing lack of time as the reason. Further, the high reliance on tuition classes cannot be considered effective even on the higher pass rates on examinations or more youth continuing to higher levels of education.

Many of the perceptions and aspirations of youth appear to be contradictory, such as an affirmation

of the value of private universities even though cost is a constraint, and competitiveness mixed with high ideals. This suggests that youth are somewhat confused about the goals, means and outcomes of education, perhaps because they are receiving mixed messages. While education ideally remains the primary means of economic and social mobility, and a moral and humanizing force, actual experiences suggest a harsh reality of unequal or absent opportunities, competitiveness and frustration.

When you tell anyone your O/L or A/L results, they immediately ask you which school you went to. Even if you go for a job, it is the same. Every school covers the same syllabus! So why is this important?

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Central Province*

Policy perspectives: improving quality, reducing disparities

Unlike many other countries in its region, Sri Lanka has infrastructure and systems in place for high-quality education, but disparities remain. Serious and critical reflection is needed on recent directions in education policy. Since the 1980s, successive governments have attempted to leave their stamp through reforms. These could be better driven by a sustained, in-depth analysis of the current situation of education, combined with a vision for where the country is heading in the next several decades. More attention is necessary to improve quality in terms of curricula, teacher skills and the learning environment, so that youth are able to perform better, remain in education for a longer period and see the value of schooling in securing employment.

Particularly critical concerns include disparities in educational access and performance across regions and demographic groups, the failure to retain youth at higher levels of education, the trend of male youth dropping out after completing upper secondary education, weak achievements in essential subjects such as mathematics and

languages, and low participation in technical and vocational education and training. These issues must be considered together and within the broader context of the education needs of youth and the country. What is not needed at this juncture is *ad hoc* policy or programmatic interventions without a long-term commitment. One starting point would be for the Government to develop a plan to gradually increase investment in education from the current 1.72 percent of GDP to at least the minimum of 6 percent of GDP recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Disparities in education have been a well-chronicled concern, manifesting both in infrastructure, and the quality of teaching and learning. While those with higher income levels have more choices about the type and quality of teaching, those who are poorer and socially marginalized have no such options. This means that the education system is producing graduates with the same qualifications but distinctly different skills. As noted by youth, there is social capital attached to types of school or higher education institution. A youth from a small, rural school, although having the same qualification as a youth from a bigger, urban school, is not regarded as having the same quality of education.



PHOTO CREDIT : UNDP SRI LANKA

Improving quality rests on a clearer focus on what is taught and how it is taught, and increased emphasis on subjects such as Mathematics and better teacher training, addressing teachers' concerns about low salaries and the declining prestige of the job, and improving education management and administration. In the planned expansion of technology education, consistent access to competent teachers, appropriate equipment and other resources to teach technology subjects will avoid reproducing the same disparities that already privilege more prestigious schools.

Interventions focusing on the educational empowerment of youth have to not only take into consideration the quality and relevance of the educational systems at various levels, but also gender, age, civil status, norms, societal structures, geographical location and economic status in order to understand how these may present obstacles for particular groups. Working with these issues towards the goal of equitable access will require concerted efforts over the long term, but could result in more sustainable improvements and address issues of fairness in the access to education. It could also unleash the capacities of all population groups for the greater good of the country. A priority could be more research into the low participation of boys in higher education, since there is not enough information on what young men are choosing over education, or on reasons as to why young men are making these choices.

The public perception that education is mainly important to provide employment has some negative consequences, such as increased competition and neglect of humanistic goals. Policy makers should realize that if students have a holistic and positive educational experience, which focuses on strengthening critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills, they can transfer these skills to the workplace. The how of teaching and learning calls for as much focus as the what. This requires a comprehensive review of curricula at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary; an assessment of the pedagogy employed in educational institutions; and an emphasis on the process of teaching and learning rather than just

examination results. It again depends on considerable investment in teacher training, support, job satisfaction and social recognition.

A change in the discourse about education could move it beyond the current emphasis on examinations and employability. Families influenced by this discourse face choices in an education system that may not deliver on high expectations. Even though youth seem to have broader expectations of education, these are not reflected in the focus on instrumental returns such as jobs. Stressing the value of a broader humanistic education could better align with youth expectations and change societal perspectives. The ultimate objective should be to enable youth to experience learning that allows them to grow and develop, and contribute to the long-term development of the country as a whole.

EMPLOYMENT
YOUTH AND
DEVELOPMENT





Youth who can find decent jobs have a far better chance of realizing well-being and the full potential of their lives. They gain a source of income, as well as dignity and self-respect.¹ Overall, a productive workforce and high employment rates among all working-age groups are key to national human development.²

Sri Lanka has grappled with youth unemployment for several decades, with the portion of youth out of work persistently higher than the national average. Labour statistics, the National Policy on Decent Work, the National Human Resources and Employment Policy, and consultations to formulate the new National Youth Policy have all highlighted youth unemployment as a significant development gap. Concerns among educators and businesses invariably focus on the quality of the labour force. From a human development perspective, unemployment undermines capabilities and limits choices.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's efforts to boost youth employability, including through technical and vocational education, have had some positive outcomes, but have not made a substantial impact overall. A continued mismatch between education and labour market requirements sidelines many youth,³ even as post-war economic recovery has resulted in labour shortages in some services and industries.⁴ Deeply entrenched social and cultural patterns of exclusion and discrimination deny some Sri Lankan youth access to both education and jobs.⁵ In some cases, they have turned to the streets to

express their discontent, including through violent means.

Understanding youth and employment needs to go beyond just a discussion about skills to explore broader factors. These issues call for fresh insights.

More workers, fewer jobs

Sri Lanka's population growth rate has fallen from 4 percent in the 1950s to around 1 percent currently and is expected to further decline, as birth and death rates both have diminished. Consequences include a shrinking portion of economically active people in the labour force and an increased dependency ratio⁶ since there are more elderly citizens.⁷ Labour force growth has already slowed; youth participation in the labour market has been low or stagnant. From 2011 to 2013, the labour force participation rate increased only marginally from 53 to 53.8 percent. The portion of employed people in all youth age groups slightly declined.⁸

The private sector continues to be the dominant source of jobs, absorbing nearly 40 percent of the employed, although its share has declined in the past decade from 46 percent. Employment generation has risen only in the public sector and among the self-employed, though marginally. A major question is whether or not the economy, particularly its formal sectors, is generating enough jobs. While unemployment is officially only 4.4 percent, the current national definition of employment is very broad. It includes those working a minimum of one hour during the reference week, meaning there is a strong possibility that widespread under-employment could be undermining prospects for many workers. More than 20 percent of employed persons who are willing to work 35 hours or more in a week do not have opportunities to do so.⁹

Persons available and/or looking for work, and who did not work and have taken steps to find a job during [the] last four weeks and are ready to accept a job given a work opportunity within [the] next two weeks are said to be unemployed

- Department of Census and Statistics 2012 -

Declining youth participation in the labour market and consistently high youth unemployment have occurred despite increased investments in education, and technical and vocational facilities, as well as measures such as the 2007 National Action Plan on Youth Employment, the 2014 National Youth Policy, the 2006 National Policy on Decent Work, and the 2009 National Policy Framework on Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education. There is a need to critically examine why youth are losing out, including by analysing the challenges they face through their own perspectives, as captured in the National Youth Survey 2013.

youth aged 15 to 19 years, a sizeable 16.6 percent leave school early in search of employment. Most are young men with poor vocational skills. The lack of schools, increased educational costs, being unsuccessful in lower secondary education, and the need to contribute to family income are some of the reasons young people abandon their education.

All over the world, countries struggle to get young people into jobs. Globally, of the estimated 1.2 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years, around 73 million were unemployed in 2013. ¹⁰Nearly 600 million new jobs need to be generated in the next 10 years to absorb those who

Table 3.1: Women participate in the labour force at lower rates than men

Age group (years)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Sri Lanka	53.8	74.8	35.8
15-19	16.6	23.6	10.1
20-24	56.0	72.6	39.4
25-29	65.9	92.2	46.2

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2013, third quarter.

Youth confront considerable obstacles

Young people face considerable obstacles in the labour market, especially young women, whose participation rates are particularly low (table 3.1). The national labour force participation rates for youth aged 20 to 24 years and 25 to 29 years are 56 percent and 65.9 percent, respectively, compared to around 70 percent for older age groups. Among

are currently unemployed and the 40 million estimated entrants to job markets. The Asia-Pacific region, with 60 percent of the world's youth population,¹¹ has an average youth unemployment rate of around 11 percent, more than double the rate of the total working-age population. Bangladesh alone may need to generate at least 2.25 million jobs per year to accommodate new labour market entrants.¹²

Table 3.2: Youth are more likely to be unemployed

YEAR	15-19 years(%)	20-24 years(%)	25-29 years(%)	30-39 years(%)	40+ years(%)
2006 1	17.5	39.3	21.5	11.9	9.8
2007 1	15.7	41.2	19.7	13.1	10.4
2008 2	15.8	38.4	21.5	13.6	10.6
2009 2	14.5	37.5	21.3	15.1	11.6
2010 2	14.8	38.7	21.2	14.7	10.6
2011 3	12.8	42.5	20.6	15.6	8.5
2012 3	14.2	40.6	18.8	15.6	10.7
2013Q1 3	12.9	42.0	17.7	13.9	13.4
2013Q2 3	15.7	42.3	15.8	16.8	9.5
2013Q3 3	14.6	36.4	18.4	16.1	14.5

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2013.

1: Excluding Northern and Eastern provinces 2: Including Eastern Province but excluding Northern Province 3: All districts included

Table 3.3: Sri Lanka has reduced youth unemployment faster than its neighbours

Youth aged 15 to 24 years, latest available estimates (%)				
Country	1991	2001	2011	2012
Nepal	3.4	6.2	4.5	4.5
Bangladesh	8.1	9.0	8.2	8.9
India	9.0	9.0	10.2	9.7
Pakistan	10.2	13.6	8.0	8.2
Afghanistan	18.5	18.1	19.5	19.5
Maldives	21.1	23.8	25.4	25.1
Sri Lanka	42.8	24.9	18.8	18.5

Source: World Development Indicators 2014.

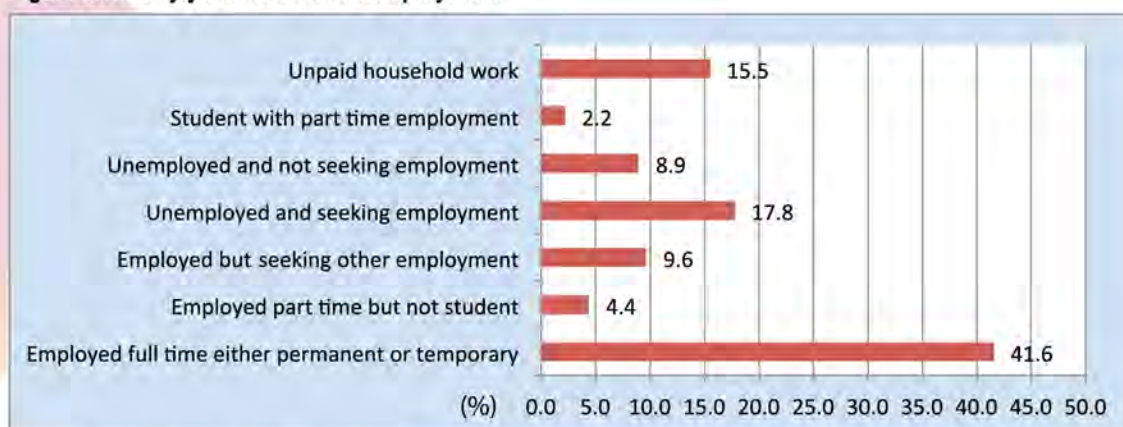
Labour statistics indicate that Sri Lanka's unemployment rate for youth aged 20 to 24 years has been around 40 percent since 2006, showing a slight decline in the last year to 36 percent¹³ (table 3.2). By contrast, overall unemployment declined by 50 percent in the past eight years. Despite higher rates of youth unemployment than its South Asian neighbours, Sri Lanka has a better record of reducing it over the past two decades. Afghanistan, India and the Maldives have experienced slight increases in unemployment, while Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan have achieved marginal improvements¹⁴ (table 3.3).

Data from the National Youth Survey 2013 presented in figure 3.1 show that, among respondents, only 41.6 percent, excluding full-time students, have full-time employment, either temporary or permanent. The portion of youth

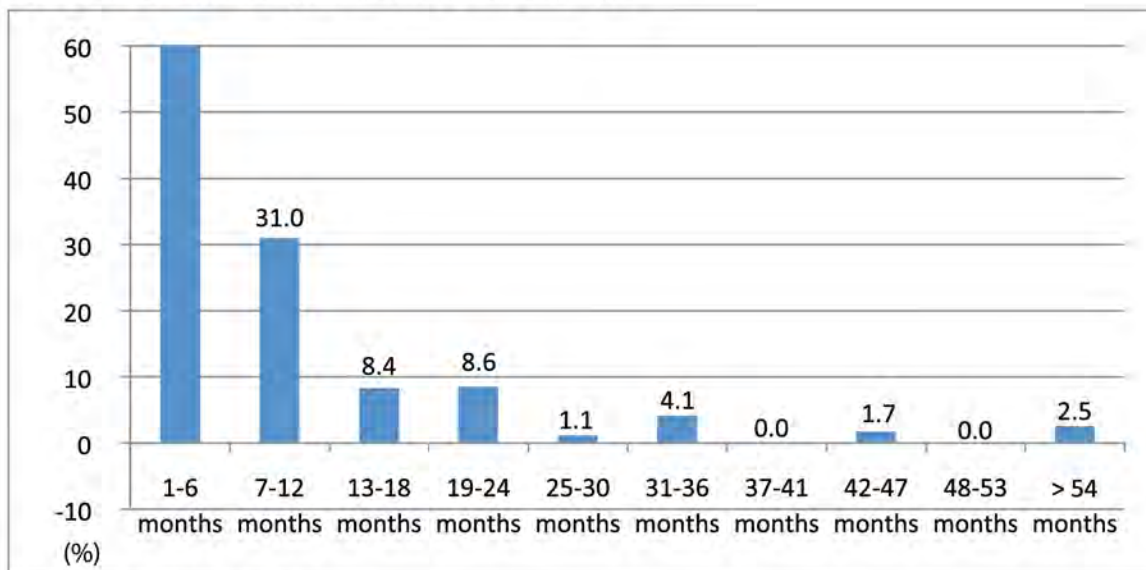
seeking employment was 17.8 percent. A further 10 percent of employed youth were also looking for work, signifying the possibility of under-employment. Around 19 percent of respondents were not satisfied with their current jobs, and a further 15.5 percent engaged exclusively in unpaid household work. These findings indicate that young people in significant numbers may be vulnerable to the lack of stable employment.

For youth to find their first jobs, earlier studies showed it took over 50 percent of youth a year.¹⁵ According to the National Youth Survey 2013, this situation has improved. Nearly 73 percent of respondents said they found employment within 12 months. Almost 43 percent did so within six months (figure 3.2). Among those who found employment within a year, nearly 85 percent had vocational training, reinforcing the rationale to promote this kind of education.

Figure 3.1: Many youth lack stable employment



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 3.2: The majority of youth find jobs in less than a year

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

In general, however, the transition from school to work continues to be a rocky one, for a variety of reasons. As discussed in this chapter, they include a lack of marketable skills, inadequate formal private sector jobs, youth aspirations that exceed actual capabilities, low levels of entrepreneurship, and deeply entrenched social factors of class, ethnicity and caste.¹⁶ Other reasons include a reluctance among youth to choose certain jobs due to low social status, high expectations

that lead youth to wait until preferred jobs appear, the unavailability of labour market information, insufficient skills to develop self-employment and prolonged family support. These problems need a concerted response involving both educational and macroeconomic reforms, and changes in labour market institutions to better align skills and employment creation. See box 3.1 for a successful experience in Peru.

BOX 3.1: PERU'S ACTION PLAN FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Despite significant economic expansion between 2000 and 2010, two out of every three unemployed persons in Peru in 2010 were young people, four of every five young employed persons worked in precarious jobs, and 56 percent of youth would have left the country if given the chance. The government responded by adopting a national employment policy (2010–2014) that assigns priority to youth employment. More than 390,000 young people were assisted by the end of 2012.

Building on the findings of national surveys, the government introduced several reforms: a reduction in 'red tape' and costs relating to job applications through a free single certificate that contains all required information; skills training and work experience programmes; modernization of career guidance services; establishment of a training programme targeting young entrepreneurs; development of an information system that simplifies market assessments; and creation of an information and orientation service for young people working (or planning to work) abroad.

Source: Adapted from ILO 2012h.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

A persistent gender gap

Young women's participation in the labour market is less than half that of young men, a gender gap (table 3.4) that persists despite young women's higher levels of education. Low involvement in the older age cohort of 25 to 29 years implies that young women face difficulty getting jobs even after completing their studies. Among National Youth Survey 2013 respondents, close to 60 percent of unemployed youth were women (figure 3.3). While gender stereotyping confines women to certain types of jobs, their participation is affected by a multitude of other factors that include lack of understanding of or exposure to different employment options, employer preference for males, the choices of their family or spouse, or the need to balance work and family responsibilities.¹⁷ Safety concerns linked to moving outside the home environment are widespread among young women and their families. For foreign employment, however, the determination to overcome poverty releases women to make choices outside normal socio-cultural tendencies, away from the inhibitions of their own country.

...I have heard about some vocational courses in the town, but my parents don't allow me to go there; we don't have frequent bus service; I have to go in the morning and can get back only in the evening; I have no place to stay in the town...

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Northern Province*

Table 3.4: In rural and urban areas, men dominate the workforce

Age group	Labour force participation rate		
	Total(%)	Male(%)	Female(%)
Total	47.2	66.8	29.9
15-19	14.8	20.8	8.7
20-24	54.7	73.6	37.7
25-29	64.6	94.0	39.4
Urban	43.7	63.4	26.4
15-19	10.9	14.8	6.7
20-24	54.0	67.2	40.5
25-29	61.0	92.6	36.3
Rural	48.0	67.5	30.6
15-19	15.7	22.2	9.1
20-24	54.9	5.2	37.1
25-29	65.3	94.3	40.1

Source: Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey 2012.

Figure 3.3: Women's unemployment rates far exceed those of men



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Since much of what defines women's low labour force participation is deeply cultural, changes in gender relations are necessary over the long run, supported through appropriate programmes in educational institutions and workplaces. In the short and medium term, other initiatives are needed to meet young women's financial and protection needs, and boost their confidence and willingness to pursue education and employment choices. More targeted interventions could improve skills. Training with job placement assistance, and business development skills matched by greater access to microfinance are proven strategies, as found, for instance, in Liberia (box 3.2).

BOX 3.2 : ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN LIBERIA

The Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women project aims to increase employment and income among 2,500 Liberian women aged 16 to 27 years. It provides six months of training and six months of follow-up activities under two different curricula: skills training for wage employment, combined with job placement assistance; and business development skills combined with links to microfinance. Mentorship is provided from the third month of training, which encompasses technical, professional and behavioural skills, as well as life skills to reduce social vulnerability. The training is market driven, and training providers are hired under performance-based contracts.

An evaluation found that the programme had significantly improved labour market outcomes, particularly employment rates. The likelihood of working after the training was 67 percent, compared to 45 percent for young women who did not take part. The impacts were even greater for girls trained on business development compared to wage employment. The experience provides strong evidence that skills training can be an effective policy option for increasing employment among young women.

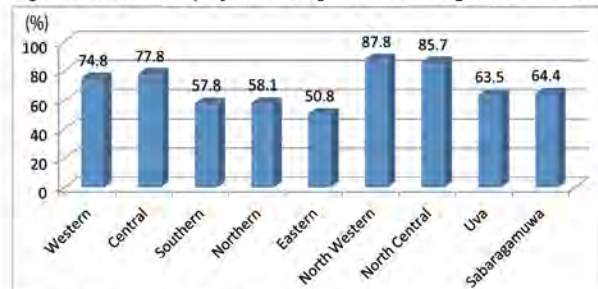
Source: www.youth-employment-inventory.org/inventory/view/474/.

Job options vary by location

Regional disparities in Sri Lanka mean some youth have more job options than others. Unemployment and under-employment have traditionally been widespread across provinces except the Western and Central ones, which have a high concentration of economic activities. Low labour force participation, poor skills and a dwindling agricultural sector, which dominates the economy in many regions, are some of the reasons for regional disparities.¹⁸ Conflict plays a role as well.

Among National Youth Survey 2013 respondents, 44 percent of the employed came from the Western and Central provinces (figure 3.4). Youth were more likely to be out of the workforce in the Uva, North and Eastern provinces, affected by poverty and conflict. In the North, the overall unemployment rate may be as high as 20 percent, with under-employment hovering at around 30 percent.¹⁹

Figure 3.4: Youth employment is higher in some regions than others



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Unemployment is particularly severe in certain areas. The overall 2012 unemployment rate for the Kilinochchi district was 7.2 percent, while Mullativu recorded 6.8 percent, higher than the national average of 3.9 percent. Both districts are still recovering from a prolonged conflict. Other districts with high rates were Kandy at 7.2 percent and Matara at 7 percent.²⁰

The National Youth Survey 2013 confirmed that the provinces of the North, East and South are struggling to provide jobs, including to youth. Up to 50 percent of survey respondents from these provinces reported they were looking for work. Uva and Sabaragamuwa provinces also face challenges. Among districts, Hambantota, Monaragala and Trincomalee have higher youth unemployment.²¹

Post-war economic recovery has not boosted employment in most cases. New enterprises registered with the Board of Investment were mainly in Colombo from 2009 to 2010.²² A more deliberate approach to infrastructure reconstruction could be supported through new enterprise development initiatives that take into consideration regional resources and needs.

Vocational education falls short

Sri Lanka is transitioning from an agricultural economy based on low skills and wages, and oriented around exports. It aims to become a knowledge-based, higher value economy, but to get there requires more advanced skills and a capable workforce.²³ Reforming vocational training is one move to increase employability, and to connect the quality and relevance of skills to industry growth and greater employment.²⁴

The National Youth Survey 2013 found that many young people consider vocational education unattractive. While 85 percent of survey respondents said that vocational training is important to securing a job, 62 percent have not taken any vocational courses. The courses are designed based on the skill requirements of services, industry and agriculture, according to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development.

BOX 3.3: EGYPT'S EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ALLIANCE PROGRAMME

Egypt's Education and Employment Alliance programme develops partnerships among public, private and NGO entities. These pilot and expand innovative approaches to closing education and employment gaps for young Egyptians.

Activities fall into two main categories: career development centres on the campuses of a number of Egyptian public universities, and 'one-stop shops' for youth development in national youth centres in different villages. The programme has provided demand-driven training in basic life skills as well as technical skills, such as computer literacy, Web design, information and communications technology, office management, and other competencies. Offerings have also included career counseling and mentoring, and entrepreneurship training.

An evaluation found that both types of centres have evolved from simple job matching to career development programmes. The university centres aid in areas such as career exploration and counseling, soft skills and language training, and student assessment. The one-stop shops reach out-of-school youth as well as students in secondary schools and technical institutes who are eager to build their workplace readiness.

Source: www.youth-employment-inventory.org.

But youth prefer higher skilled, professional employment, creating a discrepancy between labour market needs and jobs sought by youth. Educated youth tend to aspire to professional employment; the less educated aim to work in computer operation, administration and clerical fields.²⁵ Among survey respondents, 48.7 percent said they would prefer a skilled job (figure 3.5). They viewed the mid-level skills generally imparted by vocational courses unfavourably. This attitude links to that of the general labour force, where people traditionally aspire to white collar jobs.

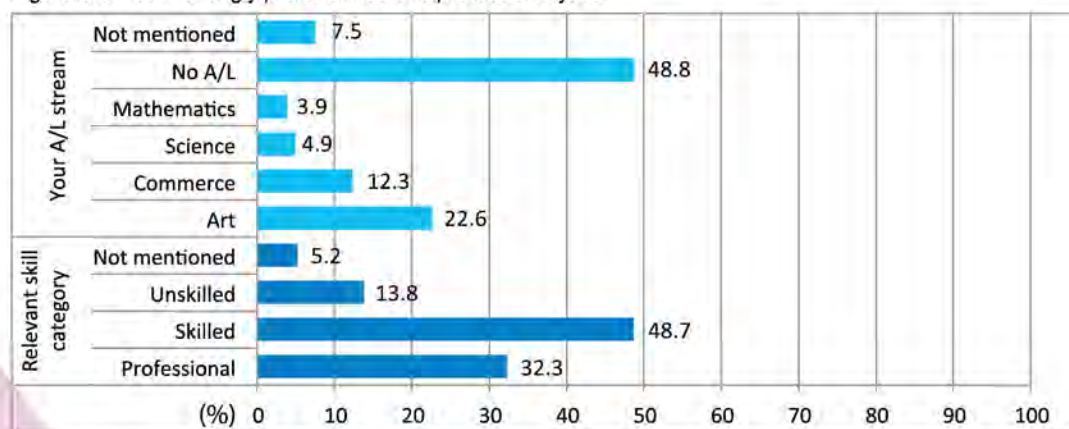
While certain skills have helped young people establish self-employment or migrate abroad for work, prevailing attitudes combined with a perceived lack of economic benefits from vocational training seem important in reducing demand for courses, even if they are available and accessible. The recent formation of the University of Vocational Technology may be a step forward in

National Human Resources and Employment Policy, could be helpful as well.

Vocational courses are not reaching the vast majority of youth, for a variety of reasons. Awareness of available courses tends to be minimal to start, particularly among rural youth. Although many courses are offered free of charge or at affordable rates, transport and costs related to studying, including the opportunity costs of foregoing labour, pose additional constraints. Institutes in many regions have few human resources and cannot offer some popular courses. For young women, finding accommodation close to vocational training centres is a major consideration. Many women end up in courses equipping them mainly for informal, home-based employment.

The strong presence of the government in vocational education may curb incentives for improvements through private sector investment. A recent study in Turkey found that vocational

Figure 3.5: Youth strongly prefer skilled and professional jobs



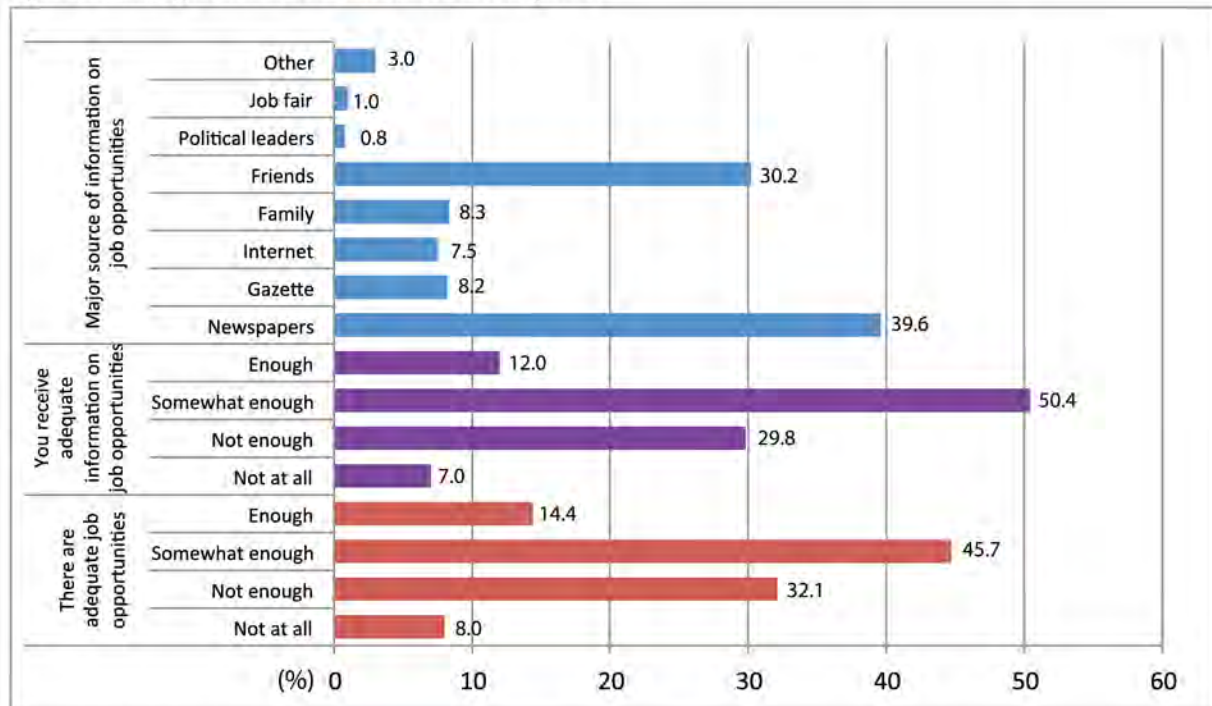
Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

improving the quality and attractiveness of vocational education.

Specific interventions are also needed to shift perceptions and balance ambitions with reality, recognizing that young people's thinking tends to be shaped more by cultural forces rather than by consideration of labour market information. A variety of career development services could be offered in educational institutions, including the national universities. One-stop shops, as found in Egypt (box 3.3), and also identified in Sri Lanka's

training by private providers has a stronger impact on employability, since these providers are more responsive to the heterogeneous needs of industry.²⁶ This finding underlines the strong case for the Government to shift its intervention from directly providing vocational education to supporting youth in gaining access to industry-led vocational courses, in addition to its role in quality assurance and accreditation. There can also be positive impacts from linking regional vocational and technical institutions to local small and medium enterprises.²⁷

Figure 3.6: Job opportunities and information: a mixed picture



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

The lack of a level playing field

In the National Youth Survey 2013, around 60 percent of respondents said that job opportunities are available but not without constraints. Forty percent said their major source of information on jobs is newspapers, while 30 percent noted that social networks played a considerable role (figure 3.6). Youth said that qualifications, skills in information and communications technology (ICT), English language fluency and training experience are important in securing employment. Yet for public sector jobs, they listed other factors—54.4 percent pointed to political connections, 34 percent to recommendations from professionals and 30 percent to family connections, which young people often do not have (figure 3.7). The situation is similar for the private sector. The lack of a level playing field fosters a sense of discrimination.

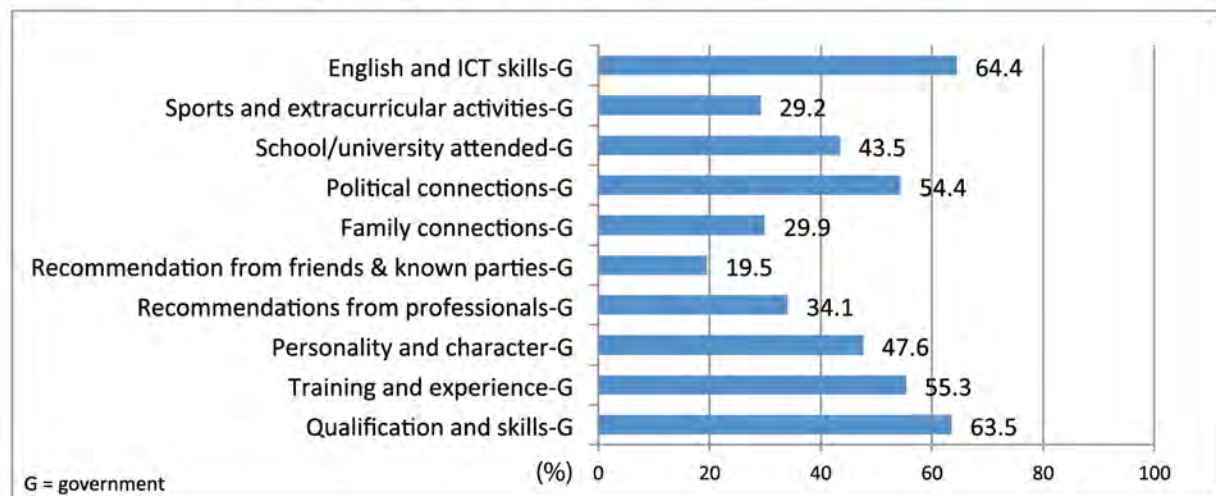
We do not get government jobs; these are given to those supporting the dominant political party and to those from certain regions where the politicians come from; qualified people do not get these jobs, they are discriminated (against). Some private sector companies also engage in such practices."

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Uva Province*

Diminishing the strong-hold of class and status can be challenging. In the private sector, a starting point is to promote jobs in micro, small and medium enterprises, where entry may be less restrictive. In some Southeast Asian countries, as a comparative example, these enterprises make up more than 90 percent of all domestic firms and 75 to 90 percent of the non-agricultural workforce. They provide a supplier basis that can support the success and productivity of large international corporations, becoming the essential foundation of their operations.²⁸ For this, Sri Lanka needs to focus on economic diversification and increased access to these kinds of enterprises, with specific initiatives to encourage youth.

Around 10 percent of National Youth Survey 2013 respondents said they preferred to be self-employed. But they face challenges in establishing themselves, including in accessing finance to invest in entrepreneurial activities.²⁹ Most are not considered credit-worthy because of their lack of collateral, skills and experience. Since targeted programmes to assist them are mostly lacking, the implementation of previous policies suggesting these, such as the Action Plan on Youth Employment, would be a step forward. A few existing financial schemes to promote

Figure 3.7: Skills aren't the only factor in getting a government job



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

self-employment among young people with vocational skills have limited outreach, particularly those under the state-managed banks. Prerequisites such as a suitable physical location and a well-drafted business plan are hard for youth to satisfy.

Youth in general lack basic financial literacy, another barrier to participating in the formal financial system. Many look at the limited income and market access of other self-employed youth, particularly in rural areas, and feel discouraged from initiating business activities. Poor interaction and coordination among potential supporters, such as the district chambers of commerce, also retard the growth of youth enterprises. Expanding self-employment requires widespread promotion of entrepreneurship, the introduction of entrepreneurship principles into education, access to low-cost finance and networking among different business actors.



PHOTO CREDIT : UNDP SRI LANKA

I got training in making leather products, through an NGO; a few of my friends also got training; but we have no capital to start a business as a group; banks won't give us credit.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Northern Province*

The 2006 National Policy for Decent Work recommends interventions to change negative attitudes towards jobs involving manual labour, and the general rejection of entrepreneurship and self-employment. The 2014 National Youth Policy also calls for promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship by facilitating links with regional chambers of commerce so that young people have access to mentoring and other forms of support.

The National Human Resources and Employment Policy proposes entrepreneurship development programmes, and credit and business development services for enterprises that maintain decent work standards. These programmes need to be more youth friendly, for instance, by simplifying administrative procedures that facilitate formal business ownership for the self-employed. Additional incentives might focus on skills training.

Aspirations limit choices

"I would like to be a school teacher; that will give me a lot of flexibility to take care of work at home."

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Central Province*

Youth aspirations and preferences significantly affect employment prospects. Traditionally, there

has been a greater preference for employment within the public sector, despite lower wages than in private firms. The stability and prestige associated with the public sector inhibits young people from diversifying their employment options or setting up their own enterprises. In parallel, however, is widespread dissatisfaction over how public employment opportunities are distributed. Increased politicization has greatly disillusioned young people across the country about the prospect of finding jobs based on merit.³⁰ The significant drop in minorities in the public sector³¹ is due to Sinhala being the primary language used there.

The National Youth Survey 2013 revealed a perception among minority youth that links discrimination with public sector jobs, and a feeling that they can do very little to improve the situation. For youth who are self-employed or engaged in various trades, problems in accessing markets because of language barriers negatively affect their ability to build businesses.

Swayed by social norms, youth tend to limit career choices within traditionally popular categories.³² Previous studies found that about 28 percent of school-going adolescents were not certain of their future goals, while 36 percent aimed at popular professional areas such as medicine, engineering and accounting.³³ While boys have relatively more choices compared to girls, both tend to focus on a few categories such as computers, administration, education and clerical work. Without adequate educational opportunities in these areas, some youth prefer to migrate abroad, expecting to earn higher incomes, rather than choosing low-paid local jobs.

I like a government job with pension; I can also do other work, like farming, during free time to earn an additional income.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Northern Province*

About 52 percent of survey respondents, mostly young women, reported a preference for working for the government, especially in education. Again reflecting a cultural bias, among survey respondents who said respectability was a factor in job selection, 64 percent were young women.

Youth in general were far less enthused about employment in agriculture or self-employment, largely because of irregular patterns of income and concern with risks. Youth from farming households said they were reluctant to invest in farming because of frequent crop failures, increased costs for inputs and uncertainty in market access. Agriculture continues to play a crucial role in providing employment to a sizable portion of the workforce, however. Among those contributing their labour to their family, 65 percent were in agriculture, as were 44 percent of self-employed people.³⁴ Young men and women in farming households mostly contributed to family labour to maintain a subsistence living.

Despite low educational achievements, survey respondents expressed high aspirations for full-time, highly paid jobs in the formal sector. Rural youth, particularly women, however, said they were willing to accept low-skilled work in manufacturing if it was locally available. A significant 47 percent of youth, mostly men, were willing to move internally for jobs. Specific interventions to improve access to finance and markets could help youth actively engage in livelihood activities in their localities, which could in turn minimize youth unemployment and improve attitudes to entrepreneurial activities.

A major gap in helping youth make employment choices is the lack of career guidance facilities. Nearly 41 percent of survey respondents reported that there are no such facilities in their locality; almost 44 percent said they do not know if one exists near them. While some sectors have career guidance facilities, their quality and relevance could be improved to reflect the changing job market. An additional deficiency is the lack of personnel skilled in delivering career guidance services. Beyond creating new institutions, such as one-stop career centres, the necessary human resource pool could be expanded, including through public-private partnerships.

Venturing abroad

I don't know about vocational courses, but I like to go abroad because I can earn more.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Central Province*

Foreign employment remains a key source of foreign exchange for Sri Lanka, bringing in nearly US \$6 billion annually through remittances, or almost 35 percent of the foreign exchange requirement.³⁵ Sending labour abroad also helps reduce the unemployment rate, and diminishes pressure on authorities from people otherwise without jobs, especially youth.³⁶

According to the Bureau of Foreign Employment, 35 percent of Sri Lankans going overseas are between the ages of 15 and 29. Recent studies have suggested that youth consider migration a serious option for improving their lives. In 2011, 87,509 youth between the ages of 20 and 29 years migrated for employment.³⁷ A further 3,615 below age 20 also migrated. Thirty-three percent of all people migrating for employment were in these age groups.

Among those below the age of 20 years, 697 were women. In the 20 to 24 age category, 13,294 were women, as were 20,278 of those in the 24 to 29 age group. Although fewer women migrate, they are more vulnerable due to age, educational level and lack of life skills. Limited information to make informed choices has been a problem for many.³⁸ Even if information is available, women cannot always use it prudently due to poor functional literacy.

Gender differences in skill levels are wide. While only women migrate for domestic work, considerably more men migrate for professional, clerical and other skilled jobs, and for semi-skilled jobs. Women of all age groups primarily migrate to become housemaids, with the largest number going to the Arab States—they comprise close to 50 percent of the entire migrant workforce.³⁹

Perceptions about migration among youth are influenced by what they see around them. Households with members abroad often prosper,

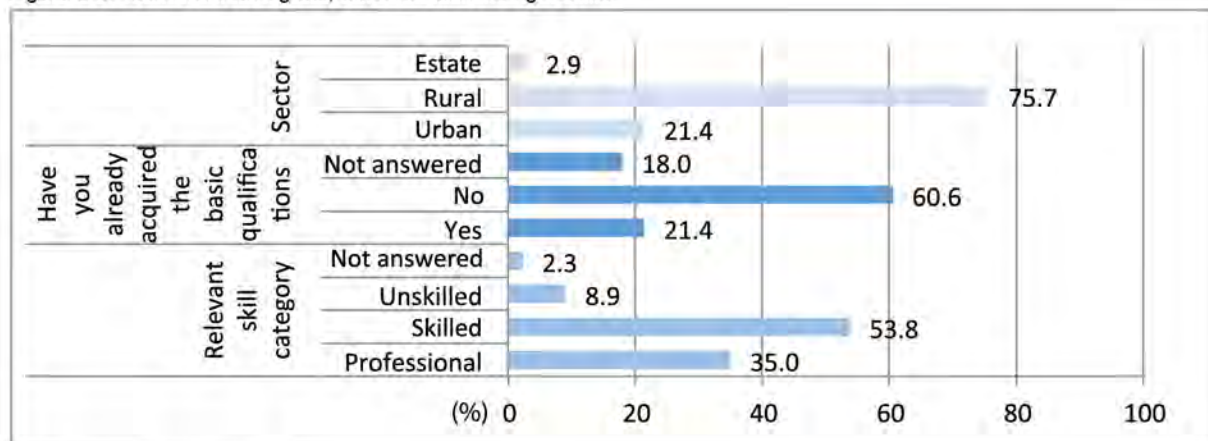
although there are cases of failure. In the focus group discussions for the National Youth Survey 2013, youth tended to argue that, though not desirous, even migration for unskilled work can improve their family's economic conditions more rapidly than can investing in education locally, either vocational or another form.

The National Youth Survey 2013 found that 88 percent of respondents preferred foreign employment, in either a professional or skilled category, but only 21 percent had acquired the necessary qualifications. Not surprisingly, 75 percent of those seeking foreign employment came from rural areas where job opportunities are rare (figure 3.8). Data for 2009 indicated that Sri Lanka was able to meet only around 30 percent of the overseas employment demand, in part because it lacks global labour market information to guide investments in the right skills.⁴⁰



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

Figure 3.8: Youth want to migrate, but often lack the right skills



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

To promote labour migration, the Government offers a range of incentives including subsidized housing loans through state banks, support for children's education and ready access in villages to foreign employment services. The new thinking is to encourage the poor to migrate, but protection issues with respect to migrant workers as well as the families they leave behind remain largely unaddressed. The National Labour Migration Policy for Sri Lanka has discussed various forms of vulnerability and rights violations, such as harassment and abuse at the work place, that need to be seriously understood as part of safeguarding citizens who seek foreign employment to escape poverty. Social costs that can outweigh the benefits of migration, such as the lack of care, protection and education of children of migrant families, also need to be considered.

The National Human Resources and Employment Policy envisages a mechanism to educate youth about overseas skills requirements, since those with limited skills are vulnerable to exploitation, particularly in countries with poor working conditions. Developing better skills depends in part on modernized vocational education and collaboration with overseas partners offering diverse skills training.

Limited ICT and English skills

Most of the job advertisements want us to be knowledgeable in computer usage and English; there are no proper courses or teachers; I can't show any certificate on that.

Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion, Central Province

In the National Youth Survey 2013, respondents said acquiring ICT and English language skills increased chances for employment, in urban and rural areas. But even though youth seek these skills wherever possible, it is not clear that they actually boost employability. Nearly 62 percent of survey respondents did not have the chance to acquire those skills.

Use of computers for learning remains low. More than 60 percent of survey respondents reported that they have never or rarely used a computer for education or learning. Only a handful of youth reported using computers regularly. Similar patterns applied to education-related use of the Internet, email and mobile phones, and to use of these technologies for employment or livelihoods. Eighty percent of youth believed that ICT in general increasingly helps them in accessing information.

According to the National Youth Survey 2013, among 84 percent of youth seeking employment, usage of ICT was low, implying a lack of practical application of ICT skills in learning and productive activities, although these evidently help them to be informed and connected. Much ICT usage is for social interactions, according to the survey focus group discussions. Promoting job-related applications of ICT skills in education, inside and outside schools, could improve access to employment and further education, and help the workforce become more competitive locally and globally.

With regard to English skills, youth, in general, do not rate highly their ability to communicate in this language. Only around 25 percent of survey respondents reported having confidence in their English language skills. Youth in rural areas, on estates, and who are members of minorities said they feel greatly constrained in accessing formal employment due to poor English. A lack of facilities, particularly teachers and learning materials, and few opportunities to regularly speak the language hinder fluency. The education dimensions of acquiring ICT and English skills are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Policy perspectives: integrated actions build a supportive environment

Youth participation in the labour market has slightly improved in the past decade, but challenges persist. Youth unemployment results from mismatched skills; excessive numbers of workers seeking certain jobs; and limited information on jobs available or qualifications required. Though each of these factors calls for a different solution, an integrated intervention combining training with vocational skills guidance, labour market information and job search assistance would, help more youth find suitable work. A policy dialogue on youth employment may also be important. It could be geared towards strengthening youth interventions based on sound analysis of the impact and effectiveness of existing youth-oriented policies and programmes, and towards closing gaps through innovative and cost-effective interventions.

A lack of information on the job market is a serious impediment. As recognized in the National Human Resources and Employment Policy, it could be addressed by periodically surveying enterprises to determine which economic sectors are growing, which occupations are needed, which skills are needed, and what kinds of training are warranted. Information generated through such surveys could then be disseminated through career guidance centres, job service centres and other relevant institutions so that youth can make informed choices. This would eventually help many see the rewards of investing in skills and higher education that better meet demands.

More broadly, economic growth policies need to seriously consider pro-employment strategies as also envisaged by the National Human Resources and Employment Policy. While Sri Lanka's economy is largely composed of small and medium enterprises, most are in the services sector. Promoting them in agriculture and industry could boost employment opportunities for youth. Sri Lanka also needs predictable policies to attract foreign direct investment that brings in technology, supports industries, creates local demand for skilled jobs and aids the transformation to a knowledge economy. Currently, foreign direct investment is around US \$1 billion against a projected US \$2 billion for 2013, with a large share flowing into infrastructure. Attracting investment in manufacturing is particularly vital for job creation and increased employment opportunities for young people.

Specific efforts need to balance youth aspirations against labour market realities. High aspirations, mostly shaped by cultural perceptions and parental hopes, are not necessarily based on correct information. One positive aspect is that youth seek higher education. But for them to benefit from diverse employment opportunities, they need adequate knowledge about the kinds of jobs available. Introducing them to the world of work while in school, and making this part of their learning and assessment, could encourage attitudinal changes toward different career options. Incorporating labour market and entrepreneurship studies in curricula, and increasing career guidance could further improve the situation. Further, minimum wage provisions in the Shop and Office Act need to be implemented, as noted in the National Human Resources and Employment Policy, and a wage-setting system linked to productivity put in place.

Negative attitudes about vocational training could be addressed through the school curricula to increase the likelihood of students choosing these courses, particularly in a context where a significant 40 percent of unemployed people have only a 6th to 10th grade education. The National Action Plan on Youth Employment recommends

incorporating internships and mentoring programmes for youth at the higher secondary level to foster the transition to work. Other valuable measures would be to modernize school curricula to include training on entrepreneurship, and to consider exposure to workplaces as part of learning and assessment at the higher secondary level.

Vocational education may need to be broader in scope; provide skills for diverse fields in services, agriculture and manufacturing; and do more to appeal to students from different educational backgrounds. Outreach could be improved through active provincial education efforts. For example, the Vocational, Education and Training Plan, implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Sabaragamuwa Province with provincial authorities, took career guidance to over 15,000 young people in the most vulnerable area of the country. This and other innovative initiatives could be replicated elsewhere, helping to achieve existing commitments under the National Policy on Vocational Education and Training Provision for Vulnerable People. Support specifically for young women could help them overcome barriers related to financing and concerns about safety. Skills development initiatives could be guided by positive experiences, such as those linking training with small and medium enterprises.

Robust collaboration among the education, labour and industrial fields could do much to boost the relevance of skills education. Existing public-private partnerships need to be scaled up and made more strategic, perhaps catalysed by the chambers of commerce. They also need to reach out to young people in a more practical way, promoting young entrepreneurs and business leaders, and inspiring youth to develop positive attitudes to business. Enhancing organizations such as Youth Business Sri Lanka, which helps young people start businesses by providing mentoring and access to credit, could help the chambers engage more youth across the country. State support for low-cost finance is also important.

Public-private partnerships can be one strategy to improve skills development. More comprehensive



PHOTO CREDIT : ILO SRI LANKA

actions are also needed to reform tertiary education, as envisaged in the National Policy on Higher Education and Tertiary and Vocational Education. These measures include diversifying academic programmes and aiming at higher order skills to make the workforce globally competitive. The Government could also identify priority public-private partnerships vital for developing skills and higher education, and develop an incentive mechanism to leverage private sector support. Partnership with the non-profit sector could provide additional leverage.

Youth increasingly aspire to secure foreign employment, but face vulnerabilities related to age, gender and low levels of skills. Steps could be taken to improve the provision of skills that are in demand in host countries, and to give youth more information about social and legal conditions in destination countries. Specifically targeting rural youth for employment opportunities within Sri Lanka would help mitigate their movement towards urban centres and potentially unsafe migration abroad.

Many youth live in regions generating only minimal employment opportunities and lacking modern education. Detailed mapping of regional challenges and opportunities could back specific strategies to improve the employability of young people. Specific regional needs could be considered not only in terms of skills, but also in promoting enterprise development, particularly labour-intensive small and medium businesses that can readily absorb youth. While 80 percent of Sri Lanka's economy comprises these enterprises, most are in the services sector. The potential to develop them in agriculture and industry could be explored. With more training on entrepreneurship and access to credit facilities, youth could better integrate in value chains, particularly in agriculture, which is still a major source of employment, absorbing around 30 percent of the workforce. Youth could be encouraged in particular to venture into higher value areas such as agricultural processing and marketing.

Decentralizing the design and delivery of vocational courses to the regions could make course more responsive to specific labour market requirements and improve outreach. More actions are needed to extend vocational education to youth in regions with a deficit of facilities. Links among provincial vocational institutions, chambers of commerce and provincial authorities could help develop training based on regional demand.

Finally, in conflict-affected areas, collaboration with non-profit organizations could help reach vulnerable segments of youth, including former combatants. Initiatives on livelihood development supported by the Local Empowerment through Economic Development Project of the ILO with the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations could be further enhanced to include more grass-roots youth. This initiative aims at supporting local enterprises and re-establishing market linkages with the private sector and cooperatives, which were severely disrupted during the conflict.

HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING

YOUTH AND
DEVELOPMENT





Health and well-being are crucial for youth, both now and later as they establish a foundation for adulthood. While Sri Lanka is on track to achieve most of the health-related MDGs by 2015, youth face specific challenges, as explored in this chapter. It examines socio-economic, educational and other factors, focusing on particular concerns for young people; these include sexual and reproductive health, alcohol and tobacco usage, and mental health. A discussion of new health threats considers changing lifestyles and persistent behavioural risks. The chapter also looks at the consequences of limited health-related knowledge, awareness and education.

Growing challenges in the health care economy

For decades, Sri Lanka, owing to its remarkable commitment to financing and regulating universal health care, has had an impressive record of health care provision, especially compared to similar developing countries. It has ratified many international conventions, and passed a variety of national laws and policies relevant to the health of children and young people, including its Constitution, the Ten Year Health Master Plan (2007-2016), the National Child Protection Act (1998), the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act (2006), the National Policy on Maternal and Child Health (2011), the National Nutrition Policy (2010), the Population and Reproductive Health Policy (1998), the National HIV/AIDS Policy (2011), the National Policy on Health Promotion (2009), the National Policy and Strategy on the Health of Young Persons (2011), and the National Policy and Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (2009).

New challenges have come, however, from recent demographic, epidemiological and socio-economic shifts.¹ Rapid declines in fertility and increased life expectancy have resulted in a growing number of people over the age of 60.² The over 60 population is expected to double to 24.4 percent of the total by 2040, from 12.2 percent in 2012.³ This transition hints at drastic changes in disease patterns, especially with regard to non-communicable

illnesses, which now account for almost 90 percent of Sri Lanka's disease burden.⁴

Currently, nearly 60 percent of Sri Lankans turn to public services for health care. State spending on health accounts for 45.8 percent of the total as of 2009; the rest comes from private sources. Around 85 percent of private financing is borne by patients, about 51 percent of the total.⁵ With growing health care needs, and hobbled by insufficient health care investments, the public system is increasingly unable to meet demands.⁶ Overall public expenditure remained below 5 percent of GDP between 1995 and 2008, which is low compared to the global average of 8 percent.⁷

Given increases in non-communicable illnesses such as heart disease and cancer, and an ageing population, chances are high that public funds for youth could decline if public health care spending remains within current limits. Human vulnerability to non-communicable diseases starts at a young age, however, through factors such as poor nutrition patterns and unhealthy lifestyles, mental stress and substance abuse. Young people are also vulnerable to other modern threats such as road casualties, which are currently a leading cause of death and injury. Twenty six percent of drivers were between 16 and 30 years old in 2011.⁸

Changing lifestyles

The increase in non-communicable diseases is in part linked to lifestyle shifts, such as changing eating habits and decreased physical activity. The National Youth Survey 2013 found that among respondents, only about a quarter were actively involved in sports. Twenty two percent claimed that they are heavily engaged in religious activities, 20 percent ranked reading very high, and 23 percent said they often watched television and movies – all fairly sedentary pursuits. As this is the age with the greatest opportunities for high levels of physical activity, the lack of it indicates a problem that will likely only increase with age, with potentially negative impacts on health, productivity and psychological well-being. Survey respondents also commented on eating patterns where consuming fast food and skipping meals appeared to be common.



PHOTO CREDIT : WHO SRI LANKA

Several youth and young health care workers expressed their fear of youth trying to experiment and live up to ideologies perpetuated through the media, mentioning the vulnerability of youth in the face of negative social influences. Increasing access to different types of media was perceived as affecting norms and values that in turn have an impact on lifestyle.

Youth are increasingly exposed to busy and stressful lifestyles. From school days and throughout their life there is not enough time even to eat properly. There are many youth in Colombo who are coming from other areas of the country. Some travel daily to work from places like Nittambuwa, Padukka and Awissawella. They travel in crowded buses from as early as 4 in the morning without anything to eat or drink. My colleague who is a girl and travels from Awissawella told me how she used to get harassed in the bus; on top of hunger due to missing breakfast, and sleep deprivation, she has to put up with men harassing her in the bus. And by the time she comes to work she's exhausted, angry and frustrated. This certainly must be affecting her work productivity as well. She wanted to start a diploma course over the weekend, but she couldn't since she's always burnt out by the end of the week, and the weekend is the only time she has left to regain her energy. Some of my friends who are boarded here in Colombo are skipping meals on purpose to save money. Already the rent in Colombo is too high, and the starting salary of a 23 year old cannot facilitate all these needs.

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

Today media (are) making (creating) people through marketing. They create (mawanawa) things. Rural people think that it is the reality because media is displaying that. Earlier some positive messages were given through tele-dramas (TV soap operas) but that is not there now. It doesn't deliver positive messages to people anymore, even about lifestyles.

Young people are trapped into these things. They should have the knowledge and ability to question wrong from right. But they don't.

*Youth health care worker, Focus Group Discussion,
Sabaragamuwa Province*

Media is creating self-centered people; the concepts of team spirit, culture and religion are lacking. This new culture is not very healthy.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

Youth appear to be spending a lot of time on Facebook, this can be both a positive and a negative thing. The danger of the type of information received by youth can make them vulnerable to poor health and well-being. At the same time these are good avenues that as health care workers we can use to provide health-related information to youth.

*Youth health care worker, Focus Group Discussion,
Sabaragamuwa Province*

Knowledge of health is poor in some areas

In the National Youth Survey 2013, around 80 percent of respondents had a fair knowledge of general health care services provided in nearby areas. But 15 percent stated that they were unaware of such services. Knowledge of the availability of sexual and reproductive health, and mental health services was poor: 55 percent and 59 percent of respondents, respectively, said that they did not know about services close to where they live.

When asked whom they would most likely ask for advice on health-related issues, 49 percent stated that they would turn to parents, 19 percent mentioned health care workers, and 11 percent and 10 percent, respectively, named spouses and friends. The fairly significant proportion of youth who said that they would go to a health care worker is a positive sign. Socio-cultural and religious norms hold particular influence over sexual and reproductive health and mental health issues. The tendency to rely on parents, spouses and friends for advice can therefore indicate a good chance that youth will receive misleading information.

Further strengthening the knowledge and skills of health care workers to engage with youth and

setting up systems of qualified peer educators could do much to ensure that health care information and services are more attractive, confidential and youth friendly.

Barriers to accessing care

The National Youth Survey 2013 found that 38 percent of respondents considered cost the biggest barrier to accessing general health care. Youth spending on health care despite free public services could indicate that services have not kept up with demand, due to insufficient investment, and are not catering to youth-specific needs.

Fifty three percent of respondents said that parents covered their health care expenditure. Youth referred to financial dependency on parents and obligations to support their family as among the reasons for minimizing their health care spending.

During focus group discussions, youth health care workers expressed their concerns about the lack of active youth organizations that could advocate for the concerns of young people, including to reduce barriers to care. Youth in the discussions repeatedly expressed their discontent with the lack of space to express themselves.

Lack of education, unemployment, poverty and financial difficulties appear to be determining the ways in which an individual practices good health and enjoys well-being. With the current busy lifestyles and societal transformations youth are moving away from healthy nutrition habits, sports and recreation, and their affiliations with religious activities. Thus, the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of today's generation appear to be frighteningly deteriorating. Drug usage (and) risky sexual behaviour are serious causes of concern with regard to young people's health and well-being.

Youth health care worker, Focus Group Discussion, Sabaragamuwa Province

Village level youth organizations should be revived and platforms should be provided for youth to discuss their concerns. It can reduce stress and develop their leadership skills. But in our villages we don't have any active youth to take those organizations forward. They are more focused on education, tuition classes, social media and income generating activities.

Youth health care worker, Focus Group Discussion, Sabaragamuwa Province

Little does the society listen to the young; there is very little room for them to express themselves and issues that affect their lives.

Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion, Western Province

Exposure to malnutrition during early childhood

One way of assessing the well-being of today's youth, born between 1985 and 1999, is to assess their nutritional status in the first five years of life. This affects health at all subsequent stages of the human life cycle. Malnutrition, for instance, impedes educational attainments by causing school drop-outs, and stalling progress in primary and secondary schooling. Poor nutrition also hinders opportunities for employment once children become adults, and increases health risks, including from non-communicable diseases, and mortality.⁹

The Demographic and Health Surveys of 1987, 1993 and 2000 cover children who are now youth. According to their data, the prevalence of severe stunting, caused by long-term insufficient nutrient intake, dropped by approximately 75 percent between 1993 and 2000 in Sri Lanka, moving the country from 'high' to 'low' prevalence, based on a World Health Organization classification.

Wasting, or low weight to height, which usually results from significant food shortage, remained unchanged, however. Wasting is a strong predictor of mortality among children under five. As of 2000, prevalence of mortality in this age group was 14 percent, considered high by the World Health Organization.¹⁰ And even though underweight rates dropped between 1987 and 2000, prevalence as of 2000 was 29.4 percent for the same age group, also high according to the World Health Organization.¹¹

In the estate sector, stunting rates declined by 37 percent between 1993 and 2000, but remained much higher than in the urban and rural sectors. Underweight prevalence fell much more slowly in the estate sector, compared to the other sectors, and wasting rates increased slightly. The Demographic and Health Survey for 2000 reported that child malnutrition was considerably higher in the

conflict-affected Northern and Eastern provinces, with an underweight prevalence rate of 46 percent, compared to the rest of the country.

Given growing inequalities in income, the extent to which undernutrition disproportionately affected poor children increased. In 1993, a child from the poorest household was 2.8 times more likely to be underweight than a child from the richest household. By 2000, this ratio had increased to 4.1. In 1993, a child from the poorest household was 3.7 times more likely to be stunted. By 2000, this ratio had more than doubled to 7.7.¹²

Intergenerational effects, such as those linked to maternal nutrition and education, are important determinants of the good nutritional status of children. Maternal undernutrition is one of the major causes of low birth weight and undernutrition among children (box 4.1). By the end of 2000, more than 33 percent of all Sri Lankan women suffered from chronic energy deficiency, disproportionately so in the estate sector. Demographic and Health Survey data show that women's mean body mass index increased between the early 1990s and 2000, but inequalities in the mean index also increased.

In 2000, children whose mothers had no schooling were twice as likely to be underweight or stunted compared to children whose mothers had secondary schooling or more. Across the surveys in 1987, 1993 and 2000, the link between a mother's lack of schooling and child stunting became stronger.

Gaps in sexual and reproductive health services

The Demographic and Health Survey 2006-2007 reported that 68 percent and 58 percent of ever-married women in the age groups 15 to 19 and 20 to 24, respectively, were not visited by family health workers responsible for providing information on family health planning. Among respondents to the National Youth Survey 2013, 55 percent were not aware of reproductive health services in their regions. Shame and legal barriers were among the major obstacles preventing them from accessing services (figure 4.1).

BOX 4.1 : YOUNG WOMEN OFTEN SUFFER FROM POOR NUTRITION

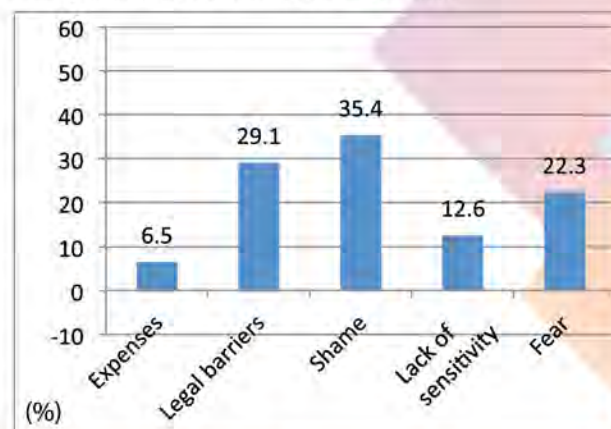
Adequate nutrition is a fundamental cornerstone of women's health, especially because of the intergenerational impacts, and also because poor nutrition undermines women's productivity, capacity to generate income and ability to care for their families. Children of malnourished women are more likely to face cognitive impairments, short stature, lower resistance to infections, and a higher risk of disease and mortality.

Sri Lanka's Demographic and Health Survey 2006-2007 found that one in six women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) were malnourished. Women aged 15 to 19 years comprised 40 percent of the total, making them most likely to suffer from malnutrition, followed by women aged 20 to 29 years at 22 percent. Among women on estates, malnutrition was 33 percent, twice as high as for urban women at 16 percent. Nearly 39 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 were anaemic. The highest rates of moderate and severe anaemia were on estates, at 10.4 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively.

Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2009.

The issue of legal barriers needs careful attention. It points to dominant cultural norms and values that consider sexual relations only for married people, leading youth to assume that there are legal barriers to services if they are unmarried. It also suggests that service providers or those who are in a position to provide information, such as teachers or health professionals, do not encourage youth to use sexual and reproductive health services unless they are married. It raises questions about the impact of the lack of support for youth in terms of unwanted pregnancies and abortion-related issues, and for those who are homosexual; both abortions

Figure 4.1: Shame and legal barriers are major obstacles limiting access to reproductive health services



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

and homosexuality are illegal. In general, obstacles to reproductive health care reflect stigma and negative social connotations.

Sexual behaviour despite limited knowledge

Sexuality and reproductive health matters are not spoken of in public due to stigma. Youth are reluctant to go to public health providers owing to the same reason, and financial constraints may prevent them from receiving care from private practitioners. Ultimately health issues are left untreated.

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

A significant portion of youth and adolescents seem to be sexually active.¹³ One United Nations Children's Fund survey found that 6 percent of 14 to 19 year old children and adolescents have experienced heterosexual intercourse, while 10 percent reported having had homosexual relations.¹⁴ Among females between the ages of 14 and 19 years, the average age of first sexual intercourse was 15 years, whereas for males it was 14 years.¹⁵ According to the Demographic and Health Survey 2006-2007, 11.7 percent of young women aged 15 to 24 have their first experience of sexual intercourse around age 18.

The United Nations Children's Fund survey found that a major proportion of sexual debuts took place between lovers, but a significant number of adolescents reported that they had their first sexual encounter with individuals with whom they were not romantically involved. Twelve percent of males claimed that they had their first sexual experience with a commercial sex worker. Only about 24 percent of adolescents used condoms during sex,¹⁶ a concern reported elsewhere. According to a study by De Silva, young people were not fully aware of the outcomes of having sex or how to have safe sex.¹⁷ This absence of knowledge exposes them to relatively high reproductive health risks.

The United Nations Children's Fund survey noted that less than 50 percent of school-going adolescents had an overall knowledge of matters related to reproductive health. Less than 25 percent had comprehensive understanding of menstruation, the risk of conception among

teenagers and signs of pregnancy.¹⁸ Knowledge of risks from induced abortions and frequent child bearing was also limited. Only 57 percent of adolescents had some awareness of sexually transmitted infections.¹⁹

There are disparities in awareness of sexual and reproductive health issues among different groups of youth. Only 18 percent of young people on estates have some knowledge of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.²⁰ Young women in Batticaloa, Ampara, Badulla, Kandy and Matale know less about sexually transmitted infections than young women in other districts.²¹

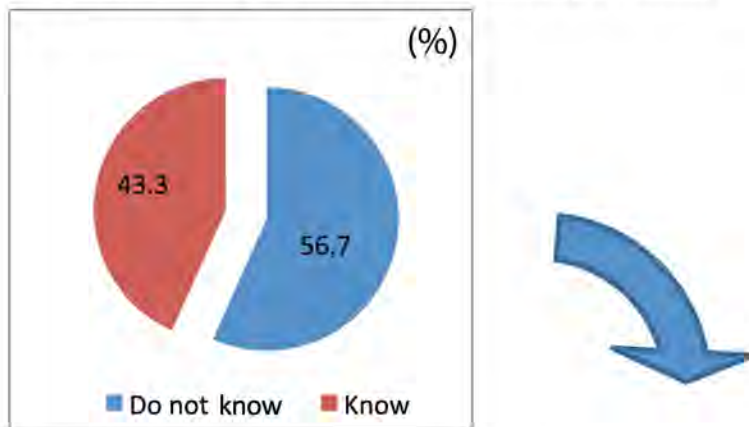
Poor knowledge of contraception was reflected in the National Youth Survey 2013, where 56.7 percent of respondents indicated that they were unaware of contraceptive methods (figure 4.2). Of those who were aware, 73 percent said that they knew about condoms and 71.2 percent about oral contraception (figure 4.3). The United Nations Children's Fund survey found, across all its respondents, that condoms were the most frequently known contraceptive method at 29 percent, followed by birth control pills at 24 percent.

In the National Youth Survey 2013, only around 59 percent of respondents had received education on reproductive health at school (figure 4.4). The study conducted by De Silva found that more than 60 percent of a sample of adolescents and youth reported discussing sexual and reproductive health in school.²² According to the National Youth Survey 2013, 13 percent of respondents reported learning about reproductive health through friends. While around 30 percent considered health professionals the best source of information on reproductive health care overall, only about 5 percent have received information from them.



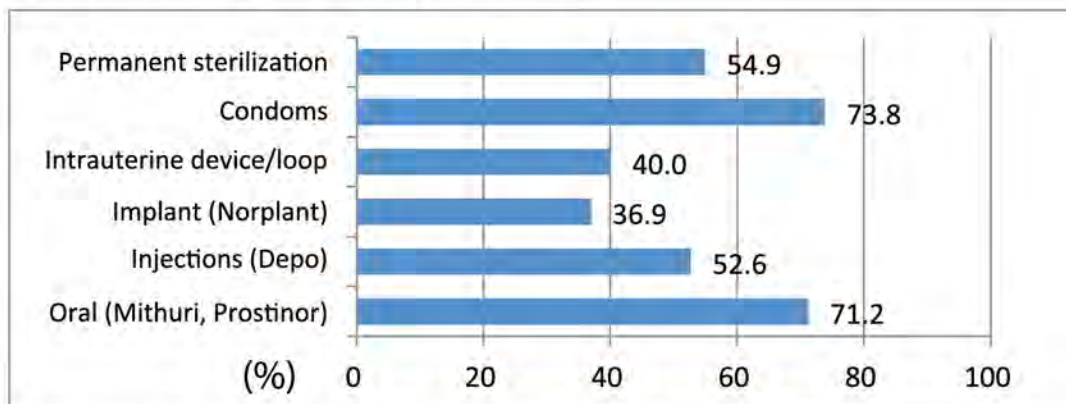
PHOTO CREDIT: WHO SRI LANKA

Figure 4.2: A majority of youth do not know about contraceptive methods



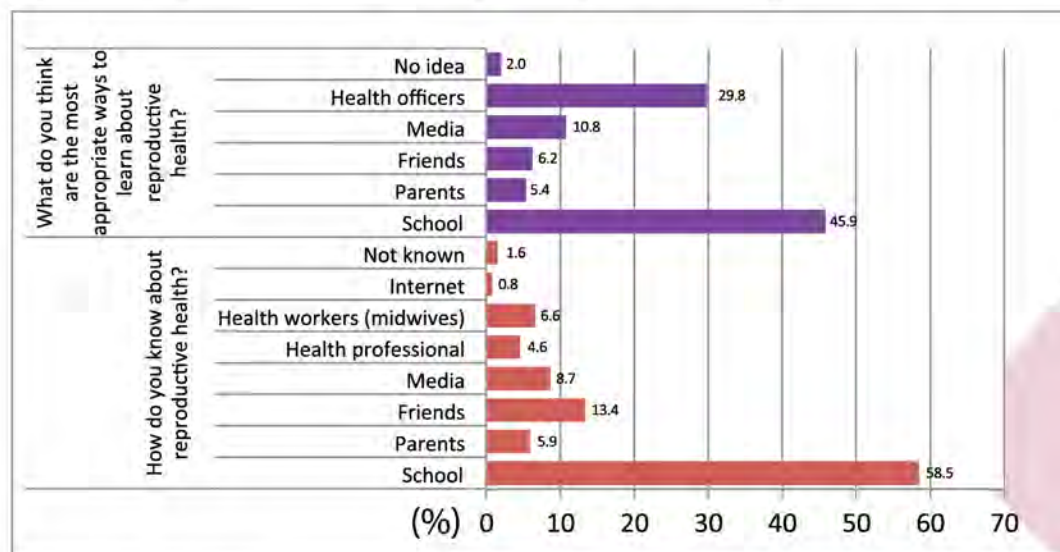
Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 4.3: Awareness of different contraceptive methods



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 4.4: For reproductive health information, youth rarely turn to health care professionals

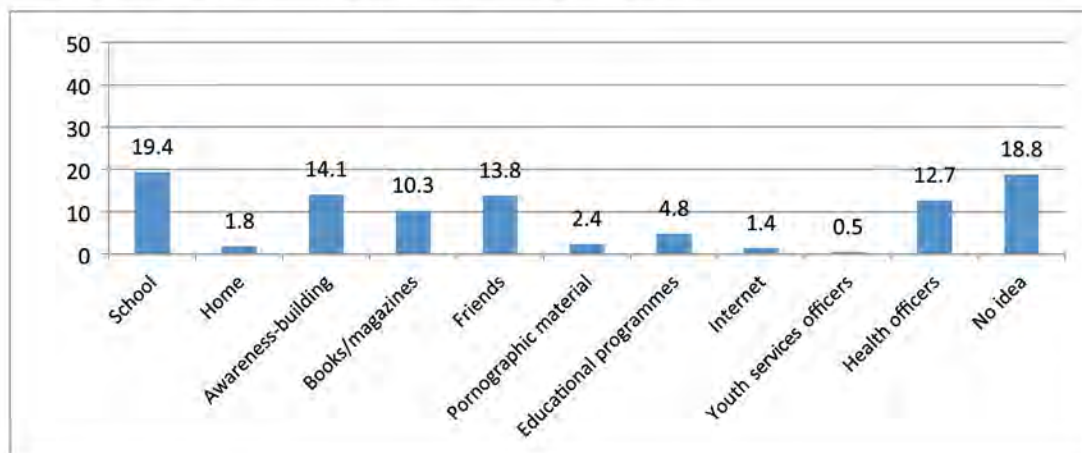


Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Among survey respondents, 31 percent had learned about sexually transmitted infections from school and 20 percent through awareness programmes. For information on contraception, 19 percent had

turned to their family, 14 percent to awareness programmes and 13 percent to health officers (figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Youth are most likely to learn about contraception at school



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Teenage pregnancies pose special risks

The incidence of teenage pregnancies appears low by international standards. The fertility rate among women aged 15 to 19 years declined from 35 per 1,000 live births in 1993 to 27 per 1,000 in 2000, although from 2006 to 2007 it marginally increased to 28 per 1,000. The adolescent fertility rate on estates from 2006 to 2007 was 37 per 1,000.²³

Teenage pregnancies in any number are a special concern, in part owing to the risk of complications due to the young age of mothers. The Demographic and Health Survey 2006-2007 reported that 6 percent of adolescent women aged 15 to 19 years were already mothers or were pregnant with their first child. The estate sector recorded the highest number of teenage pregnancies at 10 percent compared to other sectors.²⁴ According to the district-wise distribution of teenage pregnancies, Ampara in the Eastern Province recorded the highest portion at 16 percent. Trincomalee, Hambantota, Monaragala and Kalutara had more than 10 percent of the total reported number of teenage pregnancies.²⁵ Among respondents to the National Youth Survey 2013, 6 percent of those aged 15 to 19 years were married, mostly women. Their chances of pregnancy and childbirth were quite high.

Abortions are illegal and unsafe

Abortion is a criminal offence under section 303 of Sri Lanka's 1883 Penal Code. Doctors can advise

therapeutic abortions under certain circumstances to safeguard the life of the mother. But the majority of women lack access to safe abortion care.²⁶ This has opened up a market for unregulated private providers and unqualified personnel, thereby leading to unsafe abortions and related economic burdens for households.²⁷

The study by De Silva found that 12.5 percent of a sample of 18 to 24 year olds had induced abortions. About 32 percent of them had sought skilled persons to perform abortions, while 68 percent resorted to various other remedies.²⁸ Approximately 19 percent of abortion seekers interviewed in two separate studies were between the ages of 15 and 24 years.²⁹

Socio-cultural pressures and a lack of options appear to push unmarried teenagers with unwanted pregnancies to have abortions.³⁰ On estates, 16 percent of teenagers have reported unwanted pregnancies; septic abortions are relatively common there compared to urban and rural areas.³¹

HIV cases among youth have sharply increased

Sri Lanka has low HIV prevalence, but the most recent National HIV Strategic Plan 2013-2017 notes that the number of infections has gradually increased, particularly among high-risk groups

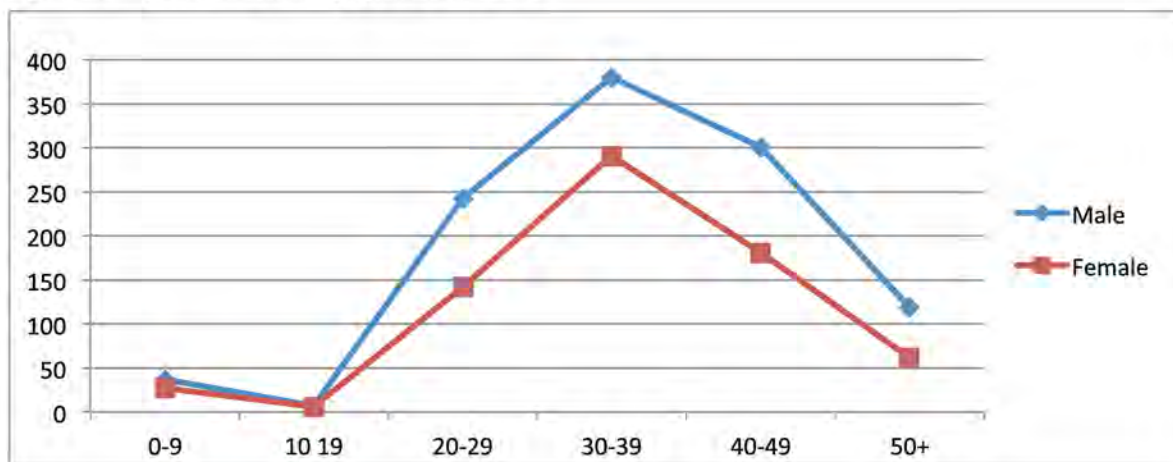
(figure 4.6). Youth are vulnerable, with 20 percent of the HIV cases reported in 2013 occurring in people between the ages of 15 and 25, a very sharp increase in that age group. In 2009, the same group accounted for less than 6 percent of infections.³² Low levels of knowledge and awareness, and limited accessibility to youth friendly health care services foster risky behaviours. Other issues include a tourism boom and return migration. In combination, these factors have stirred fears of a future epidemic.

openly. Marginalizing these groups keeps them out of the circle of care, despite risks from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (figure 4.7).

Patterns of abuse and violence

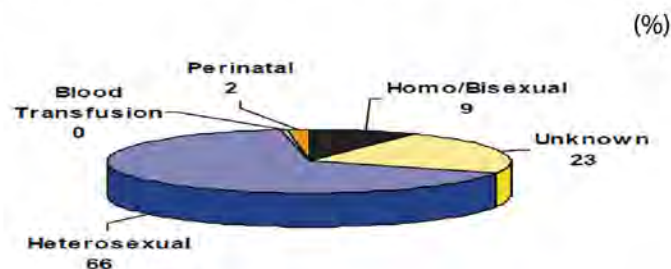
Gender-based violence and sexual abuse take many forms, with some reports of increases in cases.³⁵ Violence adds to youth vulnerability, on top of poverty, poor quality educational attainment, unemployment and risky sexual behaviour.

Figure 4.6: Reported HIV cases by age as of end 2013



Source: National STD/AIDS Control Programme.

Figure 4.7: HIV is transmitted in many ways, but not all groups have access to equal care



Source: Department of Health Services 2002.

About 100,000 to 200,000 new episodes of sexually transmitted infections occur annually, of which only about 15 percent are seen in public clinics.³³ In 2004, 50 percent of infections were in people below 30 years, and half were in women.³⁴

Negative cultural connotations around sexual activity often link it with disease. Both homosexuality and drug use are criminal offences, making it extremely difficult to discuss these issues

A national United Nations Children's Fund study indicated that 10 percent of children aged 10 to 13 years admitted to being sexually abused at some point in their lives; 8 percent were girls. In the 14 to 19 age group, 14 percent said they had been sexually abused, a portion divided almost evenly among boys and girls.³⁶ A second, cross-sectional study in the Southern Province surveyed 2,389 students, with 22 percent of male students and 16 percent of female students reporting they had

suffered physical abuse.³⁷ Thirty one percent of male students and 25 percent of female students experienced emotional abuse at least a few times during the three months preceding the study.³⁸

In the United Nations Children's Fund study, perpetrators of abuse in early adolescence seemed to be mainly family members, with 38 percent from the immediate family and 27 percent being more distant relatives.³⁹ Among older adolescents, the portion of perpetrators who were close family members was the same, but outsiders rose to 35 percent.⁴⁰

The National Youth Survey 2013 showed little awareness of gender-based violence, with 92 percent of respondents saying that they did not know any young person who had experienced it. Stigma associated with talking about gender issues and low awareness may explain this tendency, since other studies show that gender-based violence is present among youth.

If you are living in a violent environment it can hinder your educational attainment, and expose you to all kinds of vulnerabilities from lifelong depression, anxiety issues, unemployment and poverty. It can change your personality completely and make you disinterested in activities such as sports and entertainment. Substance abuse has risen. Youth appear to be addicted to dangerous substitutes such as certain medication that one can easily purchase from a drug store. These influences come largely from friends and elder siblings.

Youth health care worker, Focus Group Discussion, Sabaragamuwa Province

Risks to mental health

Homicides, other purposely inflicted injuries and suicides are major causes of death among youth.⁴¹ In the National Youth Survey 2013, 21 percent of respondents claimed that they personally knew a young person who had attempted suicide. Police records for 2011 show 3,770 deaths due to suicide, which is most prevalent among men. Among people aged 17 to 30 years, there were 683 reported cases of male suicide, about 18 percent of the total. Among female suicide victims, about 44 percent involved women aged 17 to 30 years.

The United Nations Children's Fund explored the perceptions, aspirations, expectations and

frustrations affecting the mental well-being of Sri Lankan adolescents. Almost half of those in school and 75 percent of those out of school had some key worry. About 3 percent were concerned that their academic performance was poor compared to others, while nearly 60 percent rated their academic performance as average. Among school-going adolescents, fear of failing exams was the most common problem. Financial constraints, parental disharmony, absence of a mother from home and fear of not finding a job were other sources of stress. Worries increased with age, but with no gender differences, and declined with better socio-economic status.⁴² Marginalized groups carry particularly heavy burdens (box 4.2).

In the National Youth Survey 2013, 59 percent of respondents were not aware of mental health services in their regions. While the fact that youth have worries does not automatically mean they need mental health services, this lack of awareness in relation to high rates of suicide suggests young people do not consistently get the professional help they need. The survey found that 14 percent of respondents were afraid of accessing mental health care, and 8 percent felt ashamed by the idea. Many stated that mental health care is not sensitive to their needs, and expressed a lack of confidence in it.



PHOTO CREDIT: WHO SRI LANKA

BOX 4.2: YOUTH IN PRISONS SUFFER DIRE CONDITIONS

Prison inmates are subjected to severe marginalization and exclusion. Despite the crimes they have committed, they are part of society and their well-being matters. In 2011, according to police records, around 45,520 people aged 16 to 30 years were admitted to prison. Narcotic drug offences, homicides and sexual abuse were the main reasons for imprisonment.

Prisons are overcrowded, with poor ventilation. Severe anxiety and other health issues prevail among prisoners, who often lack a resident doctor to provide care. Dire living conditions and inadequate nutrition have caused a high prevalence of tuberculosis. Beyond solving these problems, prisoners need education, rehabilitation and spaces to express their concerns.

In a focus group discussion, a male inmate noted: "Here, people are depressed about their situation, so they automatically get addicted to drugs. It is hard to stop. You see, if you want to stop selling rice in a shop, first you have to stop people eating rice. Then the selling will automatically stop. If they want to prevent prisoners using drugs in the prison, first they have to address the reasons for people using drugs. People do not care about their lives. They think that they are going to die anyway. When the army soldiers were shooting from everywhere, these prisoners tried to run away in the middle of that fight. They didn't care whether they will get shot or not, they said that they are going to die anyway, so it is better to try. They have lost their hopes".

Another inmate said: "My whole life has been destroyed because of one mistake. They are telling us that we are given rehabilitation but no one knows the reality. When we go to the society how can I tell them the reality? How would people treat me? They will not care about what I have to say."

Source: Youth in prisons, Focus Group Discussion

Significant use of tobacco and alcohol

Smoking and alcohol use among youth are significant.⁴³ While substance abuse could be due to peer pressure, other factors include conflict, high stress owing to uncertainties about the future, unemployment, and lack of education and opportunities. A 2013 survey by the Alcohol and Drug Information Centre found that 26.9 percent of respondents aged 15 to 24 years were current users of tobacco, while 26.7 percent drank alcohol. Use of tobacco and alcohol was highest in the under 40 category, and particularly among people aged 25 to

39 years, where 35.9 percent used tobacco and 43 percent alcohol.⁴⁴

A 2004 United Nations Children's Fund survey estimated that among adolescent boys who attend school, 18 percent had smoked at some point and 6 percent were current smokers; the corresponding rates among adolescent girls were 6 percent and 1 percent, respectively. Among out-of-school adolescents, 42 percent had smoked and 23 percent did so currently.⁴⁵

Current users of alcohol and tobacco aged 15 to 24 years have reported that the main reasons were to be with friends and enjoy themselves.⁴⁶ Attitudes towards smoking and alcohol use appear to be favourable among the majority of adolescents,⁴⁷ so a recent decision by authorities to have health warnings cover at least 60 percent of tobacco packets is a positive measure.

Policy perspectives: new demands, distinct needs

National interest in the health of adolescents and youth has manifested in many commitments to their personal, spiritual, social, mental and physical development. Despite socio-economic transitions and certain policy improvements, however, lifestyles, persistent behavioural risks, lack of knowledge, mental stress, and new health situations and threats challenge the health of young persons.

Certain urgent challenges require action, preferably through an intersectoral approach, since factors influencing the health of young people are numerous and interrelated. The economy, socio-cultural norms and values, the media and education all shape how young people understand health and access care accordingly. Further, mental stress due to marginalization, unemployment, inadequate education, lack of socio-economic mobility and other issues can determine the rapidly changing nature of youth vulnerability to poor health and well-being. Successful health policies and practices must take all aspects of the lives of youth into account.

Sri Lanka's impressive health outcomes in maternal and child health, low levels of communicable diseases and long life expectancy result from a fundamentally sound health system. But growing health care needs and reduced health care investments now endanger these achievements. With the transformation of the economy to a lower middle-income level, and social, demographic and epidemiological changes, the health care system needs stronger state support to meet new and growing demands. Any shifts should ensure that no young person slips through the cracks, and recognize the different life situations of youth. For instance, while some youth are vulnerable to non-communicable diseases due to sedentary lifestyles and the fast food culture, others suffer poor nutrition associated with poverty. The fact that stunting and wasting continue to be problems in certain parts of the country shows that despite vast improvements in health care, some marginalized groups suffer problems generally associated with countries at lower levels of human development.

Information reinforced by positive attitudes and useful skills will largely contribute to making youth less vulnerable to health risks. Even though many policies and action plans have recognized the importance of learning, health care knowledge among young people is still often low. Health care providers, educational institutions and youth workers could consider peer-based models to share information, and provide counselling and services. Institutions that work with youth can provide additional support to health promotion by emphasizing supportive social values and norms, including through peer engagement, and making information, counselling and services available.

While the competence of health care providers denotes quality in services, their attitudes and practices often stand out in the minds of adolescent clients, and can be strong indicators of whether or not a follow-up visit will be made. It is imperative that health care professionals build trust and confidence when working with young people.

Since young people need to be involved in decisions affecting them, Sri Lanka could also look

for health solutions that include and are friendly to youth. Youth themselves must be actively empowered to resolve issues hindering their development. Their rightful participation should be respected and positive environments created to encourage it. As the Cairo Declaration, part of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 review process, affirms, policy makers and implementing bodies must recognize the need of young people "to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives."⁴⁸ Educational mechanisms in particular can equip youth with adequate health-related knowledge, self-esteem and life skills, with an emphasis on gender equality, and special encouragement for people with disabilities and youth with different sexual orientations.

A particular area of concern for youth is sexual and reproductive health. Dominant cultural norms and values of chastity and abstinence outside a heterosexual marital union are not reflected in actual practices. Teenage pregnancies and pregnancies outside marriage, early marriage or cohabitation, and homosexual relations all take place among young people. They need comprehensive sexual and reproductive health knowledge to make informed decisions. While some youth get this in school, such initiatives need to be part of non-formal education and vocational training programmes. Out-of-school youth also should have ready access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. The particular needs of vulnerable groups, including street children, internally displaced people, prisoners and people on estates should be factored into future policies and programmes. Further, there is an urgent need to sensitize parents, religious groups, teachers and the society at large on the reality of the sexual activity of youth, and the importance of access to family planning services.

Other issues relate to the rise in illegal abortion clinics run by unqualified practitioners, which put many pregnant teenage mothers at risk. Even though the Health Master Plan 2007-2016 identifies unwanted pregnancies and abortions as a challenge for the health and well-being of young persons, the scope of intervention is still limited to knowledge

provision, such as through school health programmes and mentoring. There is no proper mechanism to safeguard the right to attend school for adolescents who get pregnant.

The implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 2005 is a major milestone; however, steps must be taken to ensure that its limitations with regard to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence are addressed. Given the prevalence of gender-based violence and sexual abuse, more could be done to meet the physical, psychological and legal needs of survivors. One priority is to develop and implement a national strategy to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence. Another is to ensure the competency of law enforcement officers and practitioners at medical and legal institutions offering care to survivors of sexual abuse. In general, continuous training, counselling and gender sensitization are imperative to change discriminatory perceptions of gender-based violence and to assist survivors. Care providers should be well trained in recognizing, counselling and providing appropriate referrals to survivors.



PHOTO CREDIT : UNDP SRI LANKA

The role of both curative and preventive health care could be integrated in a violence identification system, and medical practitioners sensitized to identification, especially when there are inconsistencies between injuries and patient explanations. Other measures could encourage all institutions, including schools, government agencies, the police and private sector organizations, to examine whether or not they foster gender stereotyping that can lead to violence, and be a bar to survivors seeking assistance and justice, and act on the findings accordingly.

Sri Lanka has progressively ratified all major international human rights treaties, but its Constitution does not explicitly recognize health as a socio-economic right. Nonetheless, the judiciary has affirmed a child's right to survival and health care through articles on the right of access to education and the right to freedom from torture. The constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression, as well as to equality and non-discrimination, confers the right to access reproductive health information. The Domestic Violence Act 2005 bans coercion in family planning methods, and protection of young persons from different forms of abuse, while the Health Act of 1952 highlights the "duty of the state to disseminate health information." Legal concepts such as age of discretion, evolving capacity and the right to information should be embedded in legal and policy documents, however, as these are imperative to ensuring the right of young persons to sexual and reproductive information and services.

Current legislation does not clearly state the concept of the 'best interest of the child', opening the door to varying definitions among medical personnel that may not be well informed and may affect the quality of care. There is no clear right to privacy, and young people often find privacy and confidentiality are violated by law enforcement authorities and others, including on sensitive issues such as sexual orientation. All youth need to be treated by all actors and service providers with sensitivity, and as a group with distinct needs.

CIVIC AND
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
**YOUTH AND
DEVELOPMENT**





Youth participation in civic and political life is important because youth should be part of finding solutions to the difficulties they face, rather than simply being passive recipients of support identified and prioritized by adults. Youth are constantly referred to as the 'future'. Society therefore has an immense responsibility to ensure that they have opportunities to experience citizenship, and political and social responsibility as preparation for the roles they will assume. This will shape how they choose to engage, or not, in coming decades. Sri Lanka's history is a testament to how suppressing or ignoring youth interest in their society and the world around them can end in tense and violent stand-offs, with tragic consequences for all concerned, especially young people.

This chapter focuses on how youth exercise their civic responsibilities and engage politically in Sri Lanka, and the barriers they face. Given a legacy of violent youth insurrections, a historical perspective helps assess the past and the present.

A global imperative: include youth in development

As the 2015 expiry date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draws nearer, and discussions on post-2015 development goals accelerate, consultations on the role of youth have stressed youth-inclusive development. This imperative is gaining momentum across the world, through platforms such as "Beyond 2015", "World we want 2015" and the recently concluded World Conference on Youth 2014. An increasing global urgency around making youth enabling partners within global processes of change is interwoven with the reality of an increasingly 'young world', due to the growing youth bulge in many countries. The immense power of youth needs to be tapped as part of finding solutions to problems such as debilitating poverty, overwhelming unemployment, a deteriorating environment and gaps in governance.

More than 85 percent of youth live in the developing world. In South Asia, one of the fastest growing regions economically, yet home to the

largest concentration of poor people, one-fifth of the population is between the ages of 15 to 24 years. India alone has some 200 million young people, the largest number ever to transition into adulthood, both in South Asia and the world as a whole. In Egypt, more than 65 percent of the population is under 30, as is nearly 70 percent in Africa (both sub-Saharan and North Africa). Youth uprisings in Venezuela and the Arab countries, and the global Occupy Movement are indications that youth around the world are experiencing injustice, and are organizing to challenge what they see as the causes of growing inequalities and insecurities.

Why is youth activism largely outside mainstream political structures? Are they unwilling to subscribe to the values of mainstream politics? Does their restlessness indicate their desire to challenge the values of the older generation, and to participate in finding solutions to problems that affect their lives and the environment around them? Understanding the experiences of Sri Lanka's youth, given a history of violence, is especially important in considering these questions.

Sri Lanka, with a closing demographic window, is not experiencing a significant youth bulge. But it still needs to include youth in its development process. They otherwise are likely to perceive society and the political system as unfair, and, in frustration, to contest social norms they see as preventing their successful transition to adulthood. Young people need to be part of solutions to issues affecting them, including through participation in power and decision-making processes.

Political participation and the concept of citizenship are closely interrelated; they express the extent to which youth feel they belong. This sense is linked to access to various social actions that influence civic and political processes, such as formal and informal voluntary work, participation in family and community networks, and formal and informal political activities. Yet all too often in Sri Lanka, youth are not involved; they end up feeling excluded.

A tense history with the state

Historically in Sri Lanka, youth have had a major political role, with several political movements drawing mainly from young people. The 1970s, in particular, saw youth highlighting issues of social injustice and inequality. Early youth movements in the North during this time attempted to organize around issues of caste, ethnicity and socio-economic discrimination. In the South, youth agitated for employment opportunities in line with their educational achievements.¹ Youth led several armed insurrections.

By the 1980s, the growing tension between ethnic groups influenced youth politics as much as mainstream politics, which took on distinctly nationalist slants. In the South, the motivation for the second Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) insurrection was the presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force and proposed constitutional reforms for the devolution of power. At the same time, university students were agitating against the proposal to establish Sri Lanka's first private medical college.

These movements and debates were spearheaded by the student community – most notably the Inter University Students Federation (IUSF) and rival student movements such as the Independent Student Union (ISU). Positions taken by these two movements were distinctly different in relation to the ethnic issue although they were both left leaning. The latter advocated for devolution and against discrimination against ethnic minorities; the former took a more Sinhalese nationalistic position. While these debates and tensions were building in the Sinhalese-dominated areas, in the Tamil-dominated areas, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was rapidly gaining control of the Tamil militant movement. The period ended tragically, with the death and disappearance of thousands of young people, due to violence perpetrated by state and para-military groups as well as intra-youth violence.

Youth-led insurrections were largely influenced by disappointment with the post-independence state, which failed to address inequalities.² On three

separate occasions, youth attempted to capture state power or to establish an alternative state, rather than trying to bring about changes within existing systems. Examining the complicated and problematic relationship between youth and the state is essential to understanding the history of youth rebellion in Sri Lanka.

The post-colonial Sri Lankan state has played a central role in mediating economic, political, social and cultural interests, such as by providing health and education services, transport, food and employment. It thus became extremely significant in how people live.³ But it has also been primarily dominated by elite groups, resulting in relationships of paternalism and patronage. Rather than the state strengthening citizen entitlements, it has been a paternalistic provider of resources, position and privileges, favouring some groups and excluding others, such as ethnic minorities, youth from marginalized backgrounds⁴ and those who hold dissenting positions.

Successive governments have maintained the rhetoric of the paternalistic and benevolent state, despite the fact that welfare measures have been gradually stripped away as economic pressures set in. But this has not meant replacing the state with the market or other economic and political relations mediating how citizens are able to access resources and entitlements. Instead, a powerful state is imbued with the rhetoric of welfarism, mixed with the growing influence of neoliberal, market-driven interventions (also strongly mediated by the state) that focus on individual responsibility and market forces. No substantial political or social reforms have led to less hierarchical, more democratic social relations. This anomalous, state-centric neoliberalism means that state power has actually increased over the years, while the patronage system has extended to many areas of people's lives.⁵ Some groups continue to fall through the cracks, with little means to influence or access resources and power.

State responses to past youth insurrections were extremely violent, leading to large numbers of deaths and mass destruction. Increasingly violent responses have gradually led to an intolerant and

repressive approach towards youth engagement in politics. This manifests, for example, in attitudes towards youth political activism in universities, where authorities are extremely wary. Even in recent times, this has led to clashes between youth groups and university administrations.

In society at large, there is a general wariness about youth political activism. Youth who attended focus group discussions as part of the National Youth Survey 2013 described how mainstream media reproduce negative images of youth, and projected student politics as violent and inappropriate. There is also the perception that university students receiving free education funded by taxpayers should not be spending their time on demonstrations and protests; they should focus instead on their studies and securing employment. Youth themselves, however, appear to be on a course distinctly different from that of the past. It is notable for a high level of disenchantment with politics and an unwillingness to engage.

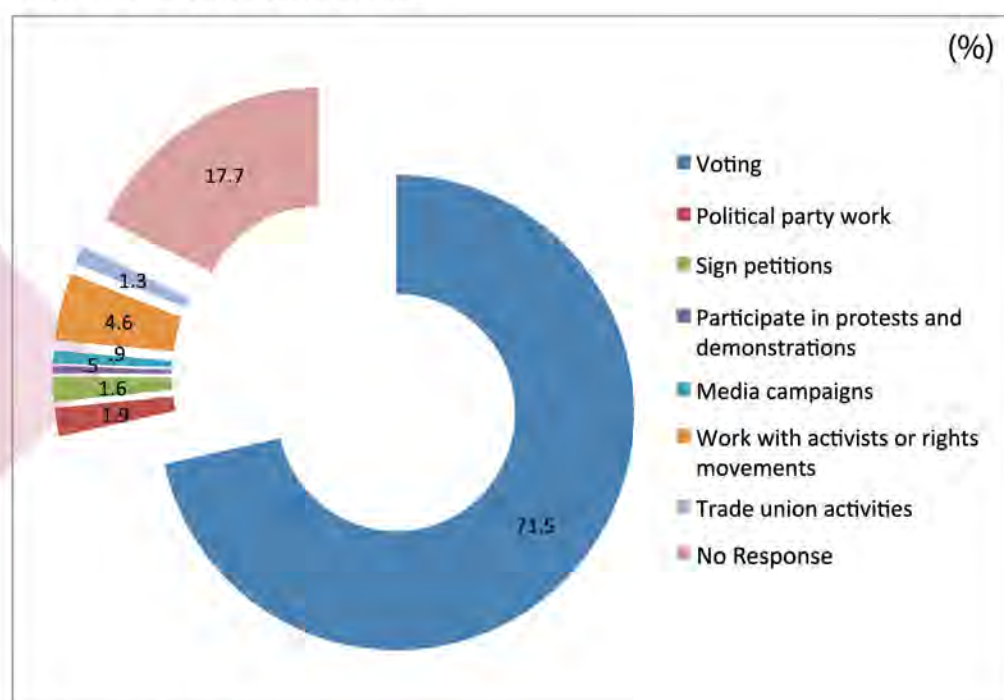
Declining participation

Political participation in conventional electoral politics is guaranteed for all citizens through Sri

Lanka's Constitution. Each political party has a youth quota of 30 percent. Strengthened by the National Youth Services Act of 1969, the National Youth Services Council, a designated body for the management of youth affairs across the country, attempts to facilitate youth participation. As of 2014, the council manages 11,235 youth clubs with around 443,912 members.

Established in 2002, the Youth Corps provides personality development training and vocational education. The Yovun Balakaya (Youth Brigade) was initiated to provide training and educational opportunities. More recently, the Yovun Senanka (Youth Corps) and Nil Balakaya (Blue Brigade) were launched by the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Other political parties have their own youth wings, such as the Jathika Yovun Peramuna (National Youth Front) for the United National Party (UNP). The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna has several youth-related organizations, including the Socialist Student Forum, Socialist Youth Forum, Youth Socialist Women's Front and several youth-dominated trade unions.

Figure 5.1: Youth vote, but do little else to participate



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

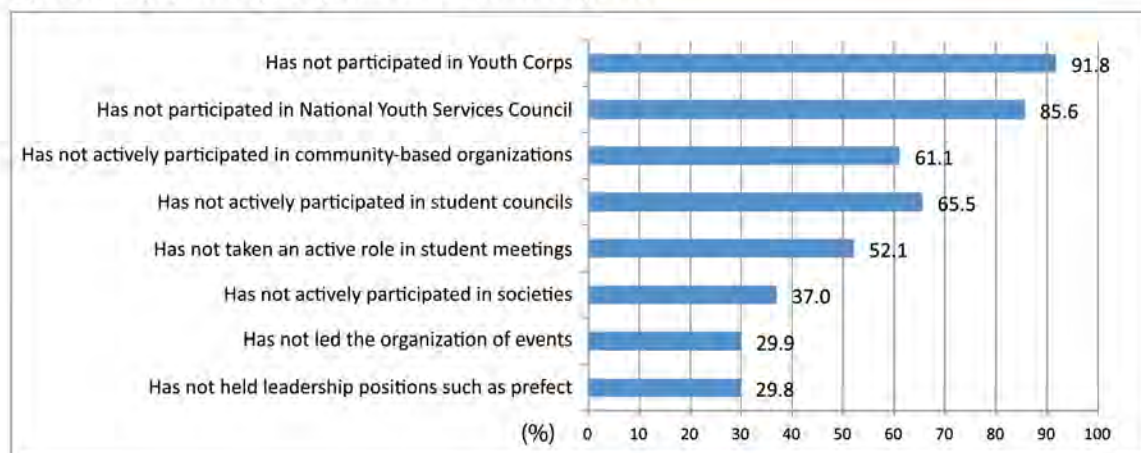
Apart from exercising their right to vote, however, very few youth take part in political decision-making, or voice their opinions at community, district or national levels.⁶ Low rates of participation persist across locations, and ethnic and religious identities. In the National Youth Survey 2013, 72 percent of respondents indicated that their primary choice of engagement was through voting (figure 5.1). Only a much smaller 5 percent appeared to be involved in direct activism.

In key informant interviews conducted as part of preparing this report, a citizen journalist active on social media and a social activist commented on the

apathy of middle class youth, who are disengaged from the problems of youth in lower-income and excluded groups. Most youth activists said that while a small portion of Sri Lankan youth were very politically active, their concerns were not shared by the majority of the population.

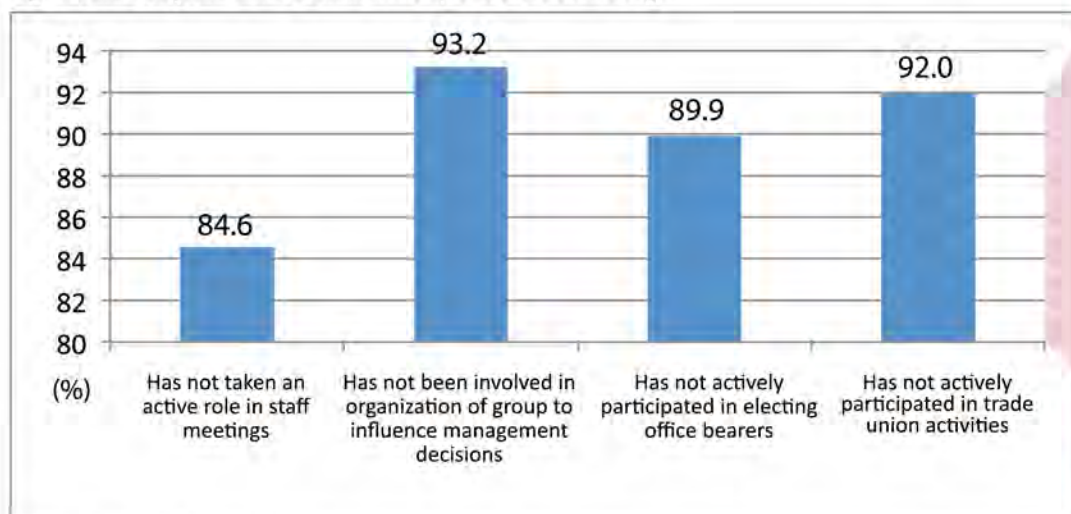
Student civic and political engagement, generally high in the past, seemed to be declining, with only about 30 percent of survey respondents claiming to have taken leadership roles in school, such as being a prefect. Fifty two percent said that they have not had active roles in student meetings, 66 percent have not been involved in student councils, and

Figure 5.2: High percentages of youth do not take leadership roles



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 5.3: Most youth are not active in workplace decision-making



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

61 percent have not taken any role in community-based organizations. Participation in state-supported youth initiatives was low, with 85 percent of respondents noting that they did not participate at all in National Youth Services Council activities, and 92 percent that they did not participate at all in the Youth Corps (figure 5.2).

According to the survey, youth participation in the workplace was very low as well, with 85 percent of respondents indicating that they do not participate actively in staff meetings, 93 percent saying that they do not attempt to influence decisions at the workplace, and 92 percent not actively participating in trade unions (figure 5.3).

Usually people think that running for an election is the only form of political participation. But trying to fulfil the needs of people through exercising one's role within the society, and being able to address injustices are also means of political participation. Politicians of the present day lack interaction with people. They do not make decisions with sound knowledge of the problems faced by the people. If people are to experience authentic social and economic justice, our contribution to society should not be based on political affiliations. The youth should be empowered to safeguard rights. And mechanisms that reinforce privileges should be abolished. Youth should be involved in politics with a notion that they will act with an understanding of the needs of the present and the future. And that they will provide impartial service, and equitable rights to people in order to facilitate their well-being with freedom. Usually there is a family government in Sinhalese politics, and the Tamils are confined to the same situation that they have been in for the past several years. The youth who are involved in politics today are the children of those who are already in the political arena.

Youth participation could also be influenced by role models such as Nelson Mandela. Lack of such leaders and role models within local communities is a cause of concern. In addition, there is not enough time to serve our own personal obligations and we do not have the time to engage in politics. Also money is crucial to get into politics. Participation is impossible if you don't have money, and only a little impact can be made by raising one's voice given the current political climate. Questions remain as to how youth can be different to current politicians who prioritize getting their own needs fulfilled. What capabilities and skills would youth bring in to solve the problems of the people before their own?

Past incidents have created a frightening situation hindering one's confidence to get involved in politics directly or indirectly. For instance, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is considered as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. So there is interference when people get involved in party activities. In addition to that, the youngsters who engage in this party are seriously monitored, and these situations limit the contribution of these youngsters in politics. Youth need skills, and when collaborating and mobilizing people, questions remain on the ability of youth to mobilize and gather people. Their inability to answer questions raised by the public or the opposition, and to face challenges is a concern we must address.

Summary of the Focus Group Discussion in the Northern Province

Pessimistic beliefs, diminished interest

One needs money, power and connections to participate in decision-making. There is no chance for those of us who struggle with financial difficulties and families to support.

Young Man, Focus Group Discussion, Southern Province

Attitudes and views of youth on politics and related institutions expressed in focus group discussions conducted as part of the National Youth Survey 2013 were very negative. Many young people blamed the political system for the ills they faced. In the previous 1999-2000 National Youth Survey, youth were also extremely pessimistic about the political situation of the country, with 65 percent stating that the situation was bad and 36 percent that the future would get worse. According to the 2013 survey, 49 percent of youth thought that politics was becoming more violent.

Levels of trust among youth towards most public institutions, such as the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the police, and the pradeshiya sabhas (the lowest unit of local government), appear to be alarmingly low. The 2013 survey found that 89 percent of respondents expressed low trust in political parties, a much higher percentage than in the 1999-2000 survey, where only 47 percent of youth stated that they did not trust political parties or elected representatives. In 2013, 79 percent of youth reported low trust in provincial councils, compared to 55 percent in the 2009 National Youth Survey.

Youth in the focus group discussions for the 2013 survey remarked there was no point in resisting or challenging existing systems and practices. This was due to economic grievances, family obligations, fear of engagement and the belief that change is impossible. The survey indicated that 42 percent of respondents were not at all interested in discussing politics with friends and family, 81 percent were disinterested in participating in campaigns, 40 percent did not read or follow political news, and 90 percent did not engage in Internet discussions on civic and political matters. On a more positive note, 88 percent of youth said that they are interested in what is happening immediately around them.

During the focus group discussions and stakeholder consultations for this report, many young people stressed the importance of youth learning more about their role in civic and political engagement and decision-making. They felt that their peers are not knowledgeable and empowered enough to influence civic and political outcomes.

When asked about gender in politics, 71 percent of survey respondents said that they would not invariably vote for a male politician (table 5.1), and 74 percent agreed more women should be in politics. But 68 percent said women had adequate opportunities to be in leadership positions, a notion belied by actual participation rates. The percentage of women holding seats in the national Parliament was 5.8 percent in 2013, compared to 33.2 percent in Nepal, 19.7 percent in Bangladesh and 10.9 percent in India.⁷ Seychelles, closer to Sri Lanka on the HDI, has 43.8 percent.

Evidently, youth are unaware of the challenges faced by women in leadership positions, or of how gender shapes identity in ways that can constrain what a person can or cannot do. Many women leaders are subjected to sexualized jokes and questions about their 'respectability'. Increasing political violence has made it extremely difficult for them to engage in political activities.⁸

The lack of interest among young women in decision-making and political activism is notable.

Table 5.1: A majority of youth believe more women should enter politics

		(%)
More women should enter politics	Strongly disagree	6.1
	Disagree	20.7
	Agree	22.5
	Strongly agree	49.6
	No response	1.0
I would always prefer to vote for a male candidate	Strongly disagree	16.8
	Disagree	55.1
	Agree	16.9
	Strongly agree	10.2
	No response	1.0
Politics in my locality is becoming more violent	Strongly disagree	10.3
	Disagree	39.0
	Agree	30.2
	Strongly agree	19.3
	No response	1.1
Young women have adequate opportunities	Strongly disagree	4.6
	Disagree	27.1
	Agree	29.6
	Strongly agree	37.6
	No response	1.1

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Some women in the focus group discussions felt that politics is not their domain. Despite their educational achievements, and considerable advantages compared to other women in the South Asian region, socio-cultural barriers remain steep, and they are not transferring these to employment or the public sphere. Many stereotypical notions about the 'right' place of women in society have apparently been internalized.

How many female politicians do we have? From the ground level the societal norms on gender are preventing women from exercising their political and civic rights. It appears that together with the society at large, women themselves have internalized that they are confined to a certain role that does not include exercising their right to participate. The attitudes towards women are very negative. Even women themselves vote for male candidates.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Southern Province*

Alienation and self interest

Youth are not a homogenous mass. Their identities are interwoven and complex, influenced by families, communities and socio-cultural environments. But a certain distaste for or tiredness with politics held true across ethnic and other divides among youth respondents to the National Youth Survey 2013. In contrast to the past, youth today were unaware of their political and civic roles, and no longer willing to associate with political leadership or global and local change agents. Earlier generations felt excluded and wanted to establish systems more responsive to their needs; today's generation seemed to feel that transformation is not possible.

Young people—and adults—participating in the survey and the preparation of this report saw youth as largely interested only in frivolous pastimes influenced by a consumerist, materialistic culture. Provincial politicians in focus group discussions described youth as lacking prospects, goals and ambitions about their own development, let alone that of their communities. Youth were constantly referred to as oblivious to larger political issues and ground level problems.

Youth seem to be desperate to migrate out of the country for better [perceived] living conditions. Becoming a waiter in Italy seems to be more prestigious and rewarding than working and living here. I think this is a generation that would prefer to escape from realities than actively participate to change things for the betterment of a large community.

*Provincial council member, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

They may be living in poverty, unemployment, and vulnerable conditions, but it appears that they have succumbed to those difficult living conditions. It's almost like they have no energy and the drive to change those unfortunate situations that affect their lives. Social media, mobile phones, reality TV programmes and musical concerts appear to be easily facilitating this obliviousness. However, when we were young about 20, 30 years ago, we wanted to change things, we were angry and restless to challenge the unfortunate situations that were affecting our lives and our communities.

*Provincial council member, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*



PHOTO CREDIT: NYSC SRI LANKA

Youth are disinterested to join a roundtable conversation if we [politicians] invited them. They have no trust in the system or the state. They have limited themselves to the cyber space, away from real life politics.

*Provincial council member, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

When I first came into politics I was about 22 years old. The 1990 Presidential Commission on Youth Report recommended the political participation of those who are under 35 [years of age], and that created the space and gave the opportunity for me to enter into politics. There were a number of other young

politicians who entered politics with me; and all were active members of youth clubs and associations. However, what we experienced was difficulty in engaging in politics with older politicians. Our opinions were belittled due to our younger age and it was difficult to convince older politicians of our ideas and thoughts. Back then they did not pay much attention to what we have to say, and this created disillusionment among young politicians, and those who aspired to get into politics. I think this disillusionment has grown over time. What we observe today is mere apathy among young people as they simply feel that their opinions do not matter within an adult-led political sphere, and that there is no point entering politics.

*Provincial council member, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

Responses to the survey suggested that youth appeared to seek political favours as their only means of obtaining access to certain resources such as employment, while at the same time expressing severe discontent with the influence wielded by politicians and political parties in power. Youth said they were disillusioned by party politics, and noted the difficulty of participating without financial support and political connections. At the same time, they did not reject the possibility of aligning with politicians for their own benefit. Politicians lure youth, particularly young men, with promises of jobs and other benefits. Youth appeared to take very cynical and pragmatic decisions based on their assessment of how favours, resources and privileges were distributed.

Any tangible ideas from young people on how to hold their local leaders accountable were less evident in the National Youth Survey 2013 findings. The main response involved distancing themselves from any activity 'tainted' by politics. Economic dependence, lack of opportunities and low confidence in existing institutions have led a majority of youth to focus more on achieving economic independence by finding a job rather than asserting their rights.

...youth are disinterested to engage with the society. I think there has been a drastic change of societal values and how we co-exist with one another, and how we feel each other's pain and difficulties. I think the youth have lost these values somewhere along the lines. Perhaps it's the ways in which the education system nurtures young people, it could also be what they learn from their families and communities, or the disillusionment towards how politics operate in Sri Lanka and

how grievances are answered through existing systems.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

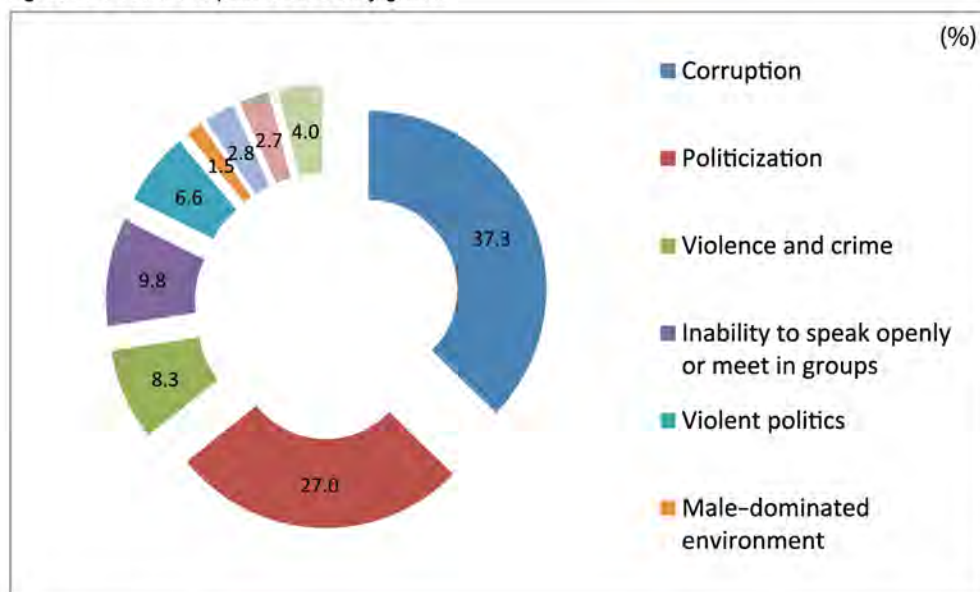
Despite the disengagement of youth from mainstream politics, they have been attracted to alternative or more radical political movements, as has happened in other parts of the world. In the past, both the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna posited themselves as alternatives to mainstream parties. Alienated youth, especially in leftist movements, formed the core cadres of both.⁹ While it is tempting to understand this as part of the youth culture of rebellion, it may also have been the result of youth seeing prospects for transformation and an end to exclusion in alternative ideologies.

Many alternative or radical groups call upon people to participate in creating change, and offer leadership as well as opportunities for people to mobilize themselves. Mainstream political groups, on the other hand, appear to be mainly interested in upholding the status quo. They are beset by internal conflicts, charges of corruption, nepotism and political patronage. Sri Lanka's major political parties from both ends of the ideological spectrum are dominated by the political and social elite, meaning that youth not part of these groups feel left out and tend to be drawn to the opposition.

Today, of course, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has been militarily defeated, and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna is part of the political mainstream. The recent split within the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, however, where a group left the party protesting (among other things) that it was getting too comfortable within parliamentary politics, shows that youth continue to feel suspicious of mainstream parties. The Inter University Students Federation, which had supported the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, broke away and aligned itself with the new faction.

Youth are also active in emerging extremist religious groups, many of which offer a strong critique of the current political system and of politicians in general. They position themselves as providing an alternative to politics as usual, a strong pull for youth, even though some have been accused of links to various members of political parties.

Figure 5.4: Youth see politics as a dirty game



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Sources of apathy

The National Youth Survey 2013 and associated focus group discussions brought to light the sources of apathy and disillusionment among young people. Among survey respondents, 37 percent said that escalating corruption prevents their participation in civic and political affairs (figure 5.4), while 27 percent of youth identified politicization, 8 percent violence, and 10 percent the inability to speak openly as other major barriers. Focus group discussions revealed that youth view political participation largely in terms of party-based politics. Their disillusionment with political parties thus influenced how they view political activism.

Parties are not succeeding in attracting the young constituency. Youth feel that it is questionable how youth friendly the current political sphere is and the space for participation in spaces such as youth clubs. Discussions also pointed out a poor understanding of democracy, good governance and democratic principles, which could result in conscious or unconscious decisions to restrict involvement in civic and political affairs. Media, educational attainment, family and party politics were identified as key influential factors shaping the ways in which youth perceived societal issues and their consciousness of exercising their roles. Economic grievances, and family and work obligations appear to be limiting factors. Youth said that organizing themselves collectively is a challenge, with very little societal support to

organize themselves, especially since parents and the community at large observe such collective efforts with suspicion. Provincial Council members described the lives of youth as revolving around social media, mobile phones and tuition classes, and said that there is simply not enough time for them to make many friends or associate with peers, another barrier to youth organizing themselves.

*Extract from the report of the Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

A lack of opportunities and freedom

Given the right opportunities and freedom, young people in focus group discussions asserted they have a strong will to participate in politics. See also the statement by young political leaders in box 5.1. But survey respondents described limitations on their options, citing, for example, the lack of avenues for young people to present their demands to the government. In focus group discussions, they described their involvement as being sought only during elections, when politicians need the youth vote.

According to a 2004 Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) study, at all decision-making levels, youth described constraints on their freedom and rights. This feeling was particularly common among young girls and women. While in school, young people

are rarely allowed to make independent decisions, as they remain financially dependent on their families.¹⁰ After school, particularly if they remain unemployed, they feel disempowered. When youth in the post-war Northern Province were asked if they felt free to protest or attend a demonstration against political injustice, 47 percent said no, only 11 percent felt completely free to do so, and 26 percent said they were not sure.¹¹

The UNDP Socio-Economic Baseline Report 2011 on the Killinochchi and Mullativu districts found young people in the North did not want to assume leadership roles because they feared being suspected of having links to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam if they displayed leadership qualities. As a result, young people, especially young men, shied away from decision-making, so that such roles were assumed by older members of the community, the opposite pattern from the time of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam dominance.¹² The report claimed that young women ex-combatants were forced to remain indoors and away from the public domain in order to avoid suspicion. This deliberate distancing reinforces the limited part that young people can play at the community level and restricts integration into normal life.¹³

BOX 5.1: STATEMENT ON THE CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

*By the Young Political Leaders Forum of Sri Lanka
Dated 24 July 2014
Colombo*

Young people are often described as disengaged from civic and political engagement. Yet, their role as active agents for change remains fundamental, especially in a post-war society such as Sri Lanka.

Given the above, we, the undersigned members of the Young Political Leaders Forum of Sri Lanka (YPLF), strongly believe in the need to actively engage youth in civic and political participation. As a group of concerned young politicians, we therefore call for the implementation of the following set of recommendations:

- 1. Restructure the Sri Lanka Youth Parliament to enhance its transparency and representation.*
- 2. Strengthen existing platforms under the National Youth Services Council, such as the youth federations and youth clubs, to achieve effective representation of all youth,*

irrespective of their political affiliation and/or social background.

- 3. Establish a Youth Caucus in the national Parliament.*
- 4. Ensure that political parties increase, by 10 percent, the participation of young adults, under the age of 40, by 2020.*
- 5. Revise the current electoral system to allow young people from different backgrounds to enter politics.*
- 6. Form party platforms at the national level to promote political and civic education among young politicians.*
- 7. Introduce a Code of Ethics to all politicians; especially parliamentarians, as an effort to rebuild trust and confidence in the political system.*
- 8. Add effective strategies to the National Youth Policy Action Plan 2014 to increase the participation of young people in political and civic engagements/activities.*
- 9. Ensure that youth are meaningfully involved and actively engaged in national monitoring mechanisms in order to guarantee accountability for commitments and transparency at all levels.*
- 10. Integrate civic education in all curricula, including at universities.*
- 11. Guarantee the right to information, as well as the freedom of speech and opinion to all, including marginalized youth.*
- 13. Recognize the importance of voluntary movements working for positive social change as influential actors for peace and development. Voluntary activities need to be encouraged at all levels, including in the university and workplace, without misguiding and involving youth in hate campaigns.*
- 14. Identify mechanisms to enhance civic engagement among young people in a democratic way.*
- 15. Use social media as an effective tool to increase the engagement of youth in civic and political participation.*

Signatories:

Vasantha Senanayake, Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka Freedom Party
Shehan Semasinghe, Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka Freedom Party
Niroshan Perera, Member of Parliament, United National Party
Harin Fernando, Member of Parliament, United National Party
Hunais Farook, Member of Parliament, All Ceylon Muslim Congress
Raghu Balachandran, Representative, Tamil National Alliance

Hostility to student activism

University students who participated in the focus group discussions for the National Youth Survey 2013 thought that a university is a good nurturing ground for youth political participation. First and foremost, the knowledge gained equips students to be more conscious and critical about what is happening around them. Second, the internal culture is such that building coalitions among peers becomes less arduous than within society at large.

You will easily find likeminded and dedicated people to collaborate, thus making participation much more convenient.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Southern Province*

Student politics can nurture new leaders to act on issues in their communities. In contrast to politics at large, significant numbers of women participate in student political movements, although there have been very few in leadership positions. University students in the focus group discussions repeatedly confirmed that both men and women have equal space and respect within the student political sphere, but the situation is completely different and discouraging outside the university. They said that a majority of women active in student political movements refuse to pursue politics after leaving the university due to the pressure to be confined within a patriarchal framework, family obligations and economic constraints. This shows the strength of gendered norms and values in society, since even though they are exposed to leadership and other forms of engagement while at university, female university students view this as a temporary phase.

Within the university women work shoulder to shoulder with men, and are important contributors to student politics. However, when they leave the university, they tend to live up to the stereotypical gender role.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Southern Province*

Sri Lanka's political system has long been hostile to student politics. Student-led youth movements are regarded as linked to particular political groups and parties, and there is very little tolerance towards student political activism. This has led in many instances to repression of student unions and student leaders. Youth involvement in politics in universities is often portrayed as a problem of

'discipline' and 'manipulation' of youth by political parties. The Inter University Students Federation in particular has come in for sharp criticism because of its alleged link to the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and later to the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna breakaway faction, the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP).

Authorities are particularly hostile to student unions, and many universities have been experiencing problems. Although the Universities Act No 16 of 1978 provides for the establishment of unions, some have been either banned or made effectively dysfunctional through the refusal of authorities to conduct union elections.

An adult-centred society

Sri Lanka is an adult-centred society, where adults are respected, irrespective of their status in the family or society. Adults do not support or encourage youth to be active in their communities, and expect young people to obey their advice and directives. Young people, by default, consult adults, teachers and religious leaders when making decisions.

These socio-cultural norms have influenced the general goals of young people to be confined to studies, employment and contribution to the income of their families. Parents constantly encourage their children to pursue 'respectable' and uncontroversial careers such as becoming a doctor, lawyer or engineer, a tendency that shapes the consciousness of youth and how they act in society. Adult dominance is reflected in school as well as other social domains such as religious and work environments.

The reluctance among adults to encourage youth to be more politically and socially active is linked to the consequences of the violence the country has



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

experienced in the past. Youth leadership roles are treated with lesser importance, unless exercised within carefully managed and controlled environments. The focus group discussions confirmed parents do little to encourage their children's political and civic engagement. Having witnessed three youth insurrections, they appear to be fearful that their children might get involved with the 'wrong type of politics'.

Youth in the focus group discussions said that those who go against this norm may face harassment and intimidation. University student activists, for instance, are often subjected to arrest, and engage in confrontations with the authorities and sometimes even the security forces. The message is clear, youth stated: their political activism, unless under the protection of those in power, carries the risk of sanctions.

Formal and informal youth organizations, while limited, are spaces for youth to develop their critical thinking, leadership and decision-making skills with their peers. But adults often create and lead these for youth, according to the focus group discussions. Youth-driven initiatives are rare or subject to the directives and patronage of political parties. Youth commented that those aligned to the political party in power are given special privileges, while others are excluded, discriminated against and/or regarded as 'troublemakers'.

Focus group discussions conducted with a number of youth groups revealed that youth felt concerned about the extent to which these mechanisms provide genuine liberty to voice their opinions and influence outcomes. Youth said that truly democratized participation for them must not be influenced by or confined to agendas of adults.

Attempts at inclusion

I question who controls current youth politics? How youth friendly is the political sphere?

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Southern Province*

The troubled history between student activists and university authorities has given rise to various efforts to address the 'problem' of student politics

within the university system. One is the Leadership Training for University Entrants (also called the Leadership, Attitude and Positive Thinking Development Training) introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Defense and Urban Development in 2011. This initiative is somewhat controversial, since the university community has questioned the fact that the training is conducted in military camps. Officials from the Ministry of Higher Education have cited the lack of 'discipline' among students as one of the reasons for problems in universities, and contend that the training deals with this problem. The training has also been promoted as a response to the practice of 'ragging' in universities, but university academics have argued that it is more important to implement laws against ragging.

Leadership and personality training have become common means of encouraging youth to participate. While available through both state and non-state agencies, they are not linked effectively with actual decision-making. The Youth Parliament, for example, was established to cultivate leadership skills, but in the focus group discussions, young people expressed disappointment about its selection process, which they felt could have been more transparent. They also commented that views and opinions expressed in platforms like this are not properly translated to broader policy platforms and implementation processes. Youth who participate are often those searching for a political career or other career advantages. These forums seem less able to attract youth disenchanted by the mainstream.

Through the focus group discussions, it was clear that very few youth are interested in the continuation of village level youth societies. The majority of these state and non-state platforms aim largely to manage youth and prevent them from being misguided. That these platforms are largely adult led and controlled, however, raises questions on whether or not they have encouraged apathy among youth and deepened their internalized sense of pursuing only 'adult approved' roles.

While the situation is different within the university system, only an extremely small minority of youth become students there, and even then, they are likely to face suppression of their political activities. The burgeoning number of private universities and higher educational institutes do not expose students to youth-led organization and political activism at all. As youth apathy and disinterest increase, spaces for activism or learning about political and civic engagement are not opening up, and in fact, seem to be rapidly diminishing.

Turning to social media

The Internet seems to be an arena where youth are beginning to participate politically. In focus group discussions, youth said they enthusiastically take part in conversations on politics and what's happening around them via social media. These conversations were described as very rich and engaging.

Facebook and social media are an excellent medium to communicate your thoughts and opinions. Within the student political movement, if we are having a demonstration or a gathering we use social media to inform our peers. We also send news alerts via mobile phones to a larger student audience. Social media and mobile technology have been helpful when mobilizing masses.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Southern Province*

Social media have proved useful in certain social movements. Recently, young people have been extremely active on a variety of issues, including in responses to religious extremism and funding cuts to education. Some of these initiatives have spilled over to the public space. In a key informant interview, a citizen journalist observed, however, that while campaigns have been successful in bringing attention to overlooked concerns, the connection between greater awareness and actual policy change or government action remains dubious.

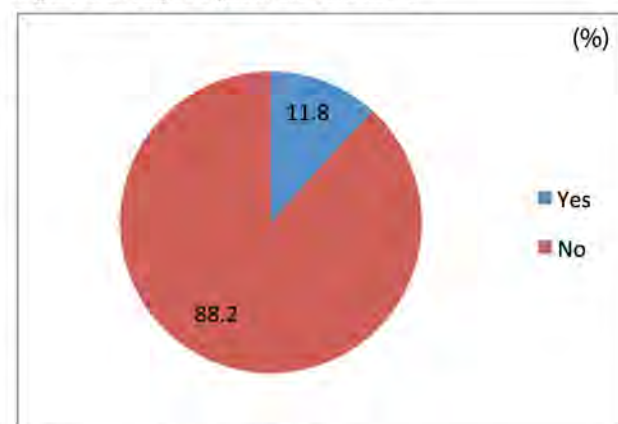
Another citizen journalist said in a key informant interview that gender equality was the only area in which activism on social media had transformed

into gradual recognition and change within wider Sri Lankan society. But he stated that "social media empowers youth on solely a communicative level." An economist from a research organization mentioned that most Sri Lankan politicians still interact with the masses via traditional media, with many candidates not using social media at all. Among the older generation active in politics, most agreed that traditional media have a certain legitimacy, and that social media are significantly weaker competitors.

Nonetheless, many younger social activists mentioned in key informant interviews that they rely to a greater extent on social media, which they see as being more reliable and trusted sources of information, paralleling the views of some youth in Egypt and other such countries where the traditional press is highly restricted. Social media provide a relatively free space allowing multiple views to be expressed, although that includes in some cases youth entanglement with various extremist groups.

Limited volunteerism

Figure 5.5: Very few youth are volunteers



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Engaging in voluntary work is often an important avenue for youth to get involved in civic activities.¹⁴ Voluntary work inculcates values of social responsibility, participation and leadership.

Volunteering is extensive in Sri Lanka, mostly through non-formal activities. Formal volunteerism generally takes place in not-for-profit organizations, and may involve registration of volunteers, assigning work to them, and monitoring and evaluation. Non-formal

volunteering refers to the spectrum of activities outside any formal organization, with people acting either as individuals or in groups, on either a periodic or on-going basis.¹⁵

It is difficult to assess the size and extent of non-formal volunteerism, as it is, by definition, not highly organized and often not very visible. Not all volunteers wish to publicize their work as it is done purely for their personal satisfaction. Assisting the vulnerable has been encouraged through religious values, and a number of religious and faith-based organizations engage in both formal and non-formal volunteer work. Some individuals volunteer for personal reasons, without any associations with organizations.

A United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Youth Volunteerism Online Survey with 300 responses and several key informant interviews found that around two-thirds of respondents agreed that non-formal volunteering makes as much of an impact as formal volunteering. A key conclusion was that non-formal volunteerism appears to be more common, in line with recent global findings¹⁶ and the National Youth Survey 2013.

The UNV research found that the majority of youth respondents were interested in volunteer work, while 34 percent were not. Various factors restrict participation. In the National Youth Survey 2013, over 88 percent of respondents were not involved in any formal voluntary work either at the local or national level (figure 5.5). Around 55 percent cited lack of time as a reason for not being involved. About 49 percent said they did not have enough information on volunteering at organizations. The UNV survey corroborated this tendency. It also reported that around 52 percent of respondents highlighted time constraints due to intensive competition involved in school examinations. Other issues included a lack of recognition of how volunteer work can help in acquiring employment and higher education opportunities.

Organizations working with volunteers provided some insight into challenges faced by youth, such as conflicts when assignments fall on school days; the need for youth to contribute funds in certain

circumstances; and the unwillingness of parents to allow their children to volunteer given concerns they may be subject to bad influences. Among the UNV Youth Survey respondents, however, 70 percent disagreed with the idea that their parents prevented them from engaging in volunteer activities. The National Youth Survey 2013 produced a similar finding.

Educational institutions need to pay more attention to strengthening civic consciousness and social responsibility among young people. Unless these values are inculcated at a fairly young age, youth may not develop them later on. Both the National Youth Survey 2013 and the UNV research show that while youth are willing and motivated to volunteer, the education system does not support them. A broader value-based curriculum may be required, where education is understood as not simply providing a labour force, but also civic-minded, socially responsible citizens. See box 5.2 for an example of youth volunteering.

BOX 5.2: YOUTH VOLUNTEERS HELP INTEGRATE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN EDUCATION

Village children with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of education. The causes are multifaceted; they include poverty, ignorance among family members and the community, difficulty in accessing pre-school facilities and/or social stigma. Pre-school teachers may be reluctant to admit children with disabilities, as this may result in pressure from parents and other pre-school children, and extra effort in working with children with disabilities. Teachers may also lack appropriate knowledge and skills.

Youth volunteers in the Community Based Rehabilitation of Persons with Disability programme are providing these children with pre-school education. Under the Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare, the programme, mainly implemented by volunteers, operates in the Rajanganaya Divisional Secretariat in the Anuradhapura district. It initiated the 'Apey Iskoley', literally meaning 'Our School', which is a multipurpose welfare centre for persons with disabilities, including children and their parents/caretakers.

A 20-year-old volunteer who has recovered from a brain tumour has initiated a pre-school for children with disabilities at the centre. She also provides training for pre-school teachers to motivate them to admit children with disabilities; over the past three years, she has succeeded in having 12 children with disabilities join normal schools. This is a contribution towards inclusive education and the mainstreaming of children with disabilities.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

Policy perspectives: new notions of participation

The National Youth Survey 2013 confirmed that young people remain on the margins of most democratic processes in Sri Lanka. Many present themselves as passive recipients of development who feel that systems and practices are not worth challenging since transformation appears impossible. They perceive themselves to be at the mercy of top-down solutions, and are apathetic in finding answers to their problems. Growing cynicism and disillusionment stem from the belief that there is too much violence and corruption for engagement to be meaningful.

Initiatives to promote youth political and civic participation are largely led by adults, while youth-led initiatives are suppressed or expected to fall in line with adult approval. Moving outside accepted activities can result in suppression and sometimes even violence. Sri Lanka's adult-centred society and adult fears of 'radical' youth have driven this tight control.

Given the history of youth violence in Sri Lanka, however, state and civil society need to engage more seriously with youth. An apathetic, cynical and passive generation of young people is as detrimental to a country's development as one that is violent and destructive. Youth need to have self-belief and hope. Whether or not they develop these is heavily swayed by the attitudes and actions of adults around them.

Institutional responses also exert a strong influence on young people, with law enforcement, educational and health services shaping how youth participate in society. The 2014 National Youth Policy has recommended steps to improve the professional skills of people working with youth, including through training and education, and by setting standards and regulating accordingly. This could foster a more youth friendly institutional environment, and facilitate youth participation and leadership.

Marginalized youth need to receive specific emphasis in opening opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making processes. Many state and non-state institutions have mechanisms for youth participation, but make little effort to reach excluded youth. Issues such as language, class, gender and ethnicity need to be factored into these mechanisms.

The specific constraints of young women call for special attention. Education alone cannot empower them. The social and cultural environment needs to actively support women's participation and leadership. This area can be hard to address, since it involves critically examining entrenched social norms, values and cultural traditions. But Sri Lanka has a history of women in top political positions, and as leaders in civil society, trade unions and political movements. They need to be made known as role models for young women today. Women need room to network and support each other collectively. Established women's groups have an important role in supporting younger women.

Youth-led mechanisms also require more space to be active. Suppressing student councils and leaders within the university system contravenes the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 and is inimical to youth participation. Educational institutions, especially at higher levels, need to encourage independent, self-reflective and mutually respectful student activism.

Adult-controlled youth participation mechanisms should be reconsidered in light of the legitimacy of youth involvement in decision-making. Institutionalizing democratic systems for youth

participation and decision-making includes providing equal opportunities, ensuring the participation of different stakeholders, and upholding transparency and accountability.

One way of facilitating youth civic and political participation is through volunteerism. But the current competitive educational culture is proving to be a significant barrier. Volunteerism could be integrated more closely with school curricula, so that civic and social responsibility and leadership skills are explicitly identified as desired outcomes of schooling.

More broadly, the values and goals of education could be revisited, towards linking education to the larger goals of producing socially responsible and engaged citizens. 'Quality' education is key. It should help children and youth develop critical, analytical and independent minds, and not just require them to see the world through the eyes of adults. New measures could give children and youth opportunities to develop a range of participatory models and leadership skills.

Formal and informal education both should assume greater roles in strengthening responsible civic and political engagement, and creating awareness of basic principles. Access to information at all levels will help young people make informed, meaningful contributions, and to engage in effective dialogue without being isolated from debates that may be taking place or decisions being made. A commitment to working on the basis of shared principles is vital. It should be rooted in respect for young people's capacities as agents of change, and a willingness to recognize them as equal stakeholders and partners.

Technology clearly has potential for supporting youth leadership. Empowered youth should be able to use technological platforms and resources not only to express and communicate their concerns to decision-makers, but also to mobilize for change, and most importantly to innovate and help their communities to achieve well-being, peacefully and through democratic means.

Sri Lanka needs to learn from its past. Its post-independence history has been marred by

political violence, where youth were primary agents and victims of conflict. One of the major reasons propelling youth towards violence was their alienation from mainstream political processes and institutions. Today's youth are too disillusioned by the failures of the past to follow the same path, but they are as alienated from and disenchanted with politics as earlier generations. It would be naïve to think that current apathy and cynicism will prevent youth from resorting to violence. There is a great danger that they may be driven towards the kinds of movements that do not seek transformation but destruction, and that may prove to be far more dangerous than in the past. The rise of small, but influential extremist religious groups, which can be highly divisive and inflammatory, suggests this trend.

It is necessary to rethink the relationship between the state and society in Sri Lanka. The welfare model has been key to significant human development achievements in health and education. But political reforms did not accompany these initiatives, which has meant that relations based on hierarchy and patronage mediate how people are able to access these benefits. This has been inimical to democratizing society. The ruling political and social elite has become a supra-class, governed by different rules.

Unless this weakness in political and social relations is addressed, the political and civic participation of youth will likely not improve in any meaningful way. This may be the single most important factor determining whether or not Sri Lanka can truly build the kind of society where youth will flourish, while ensuring sustainability, inclusivity and justice. It has a choice about whether the future will involve well-being for some – or for all.

POST-WAR RECONCILIATION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT





If you don't respect another's religion, how can you respect your own?

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

Making the transition from war to peace is a complex undertaking for any society. While the end of violent conflict prepares the ground, transforming the underlying social, economic, political and cultural causes of conflict requires sustained and focussed attention.

The role of youth is an important consideration, because they have not been simply passive victims of war, but have often asserted their identity through violence. Their leadership in preventing and resolving conflict, violence and extremism has been recognized as integral to sustainable peacebuilding. Their participation in general is crucial,¹ including to foster social integration, which is a major aspect of reconciliation. Social integration encourages different actors to participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. It is not an end in itself, but a dynamic process.

Many Sri Lankan youth who have grown up over the past 30 years are experiencing life without war for the first time. For most of their lives, they have been exposed to ideologies teaching them to be suspicious, fearful and mistrustful of each other. They have been separated spatially, linguistically, politically and culturally. Today, they have an opportunity to not only enjoy the dividends of peace, but also to be active in finding non-violent and peaceful ways of expressing their idealism and their quest for social justice. Youth need to be central to post-war reconciliation and help lead the transition from conflict to peace.

This chapter explores the perceptions of youth with regard to peace and reconciliation. It discusses several reconciliation and social integration initiatives as well as the broader policy and programmatic environment, analysing these in relation to youth.

Putting in place a policy framework

The Sri Lankan Government has taken several measures on post-war reconciliation and social integration, including the 2011 Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report and its corresponding National Action Plan, and the 2012 National Policy Framework for Social Integration.² One of the goals of the National Youth Policy is to strengthen social integration among youth. Two other relevant policy documents are the National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (2011-2016), and the draft 10-year National Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka (2012-2021).

The National Policy Framework for Social Integration explicitly takes a rights-based approach, identifying rights holders and their responsibilities, and duty bearers accountable for upholding these rights. The Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration is charged with conducting multistakeholder consultations to formulate an action plan for implementation. The National Youth Policy emphasizes the need to recognize the diversities in Sri Lankan society, and reiterates the values of inclusivity, non-discrimination and tolerance. The National Action Plan for Protection and Promotion of Human Rights has identified the need to establish a language policy and to promote cultural pluralism in relation to social integration.

Apart from progress reviews of the National Action Plan based on the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report, there is minimal documentation on advances under other policies, which makes it difficult to assess their progress. A major weakness is an emphasis on preparing and launching policies, with little follow-through to establish specific implementation mechanisms, allocate resources and adopt monitoring mechanisms. Some policies are more important than others: The government's overall policy is detailed in the *Mahinda Chinthana*, the main basis for government programmes. The extent to which other policy documents have been incorporated into this one is unclear. Coherence across policies is inconsistent, aside from the notion of promoting the learning of Sinhala and Tamil,

which is mentioned in almost all of them. More systematic approaches and implementation of all policies will be crucial in the years to come.

The most comprehensive policies related to social integration and reconciliation are the National Action Plan based on the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report, and the National Policy Framework for Social Integration (box 6.1). The commission was established in May 2010 and its report handed to President Mahinda Rajapaksa in November 2011. The report was subsequently tabled in Parliament, and the Government formulated the National Action Plan according to its recommendations—the Cabinet approved the plan in July 2012. In 2014, a United Nations Human Rights Council resolution was passed reiterating the need to implement the constructive recommendations in the commission's report, and calling on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to undertake a thorough investigation into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and related crimes by both parties in Sri Lanka during the period covered by the report.³

There are conflicting positions on progress in implementing the recommendations. While the Government has noted considerable advancement, civil society organizations have been more critical, pointing out, for instance, that there are discrepancies in the claims of progress, and a lack of initiative in implementing several key

recommendations. These include strengthening the independence of public institutions and independent investigations of alleged violations of human rights abuses.⁴

What divides us, what keeps us together?

Social integration is an essential element in the quest for peaceful social relations. Societies emerging from civil wars find themselves polarized on a range of issues inhibiting collaboration and cooperation. Many civil wars have been fought on the basis of ethno-communal factors. It is rarely one factor that leads to conflict; usually multiple problems converge, including those related to identity, distribution of resources, and disputes about what is considered fair and just.⁵



PHOTO CREDIT: IOM SRI LANKA

BOX 6.1: KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION

- Fostering an informed and integrated society founded on the pillars of ethics, education and empowerment.
- Strengthening the seven elements of the social integration process, which entail access to education, economic activities and employment, justice and legal resources, a safe and secure social environment, a safe and secure physical environment, and political participation, as well as a sense of belonging and responsibility.
- Ensuring individual well-being and quality of life, facilitating upward mobility for all, and empowering youth and women as change agents.
- Assuring consistency in building and promoting trust to nurture a strong sense of belonging within the nation.

Source: Secretary, Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration, Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013.

Sri Lanka's civil war has often been described as an ethnic conflict based primarily on questions of identity and belonging. Finding identity and meaning in life is an important human need, more so for youth struggling to find their place in society.⁶ As they wrestle with questions of identity, belonging and the meaning of life, ideologies that provide answers are extremely attractive to them, especially when these ideologies are perceived to provide solutions to conditions of injustice.⁷

Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict has had a profound effect on youth not only in terms of the direct costs of war, but also in how nationalist ideologies have shaped their identities. As discussed in the chapter on political and civic engagement, youth have grown up in an environment where politics of identity based on ethnicity and religion dominated national discussions on what it means to be Sri Lankan. At the same time, nationalism provided the ideological and political space for youth to assert their rights, fight for social justice and protest against discrimination.

The emergence of ethnicity as one of the most important aspects of identity reflects the changes that Sri Lankan society has undergone. The influence on youth becomes apparent in a careful analysis of youth political mobilization. The 1971 Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) insurrection was based primarily on issues of class inequality; it attacked the prevailing system of privilege and elitism. The demands were for a more just, equal society based on meritocracy rather than social position.⁸ In contrast, by the late

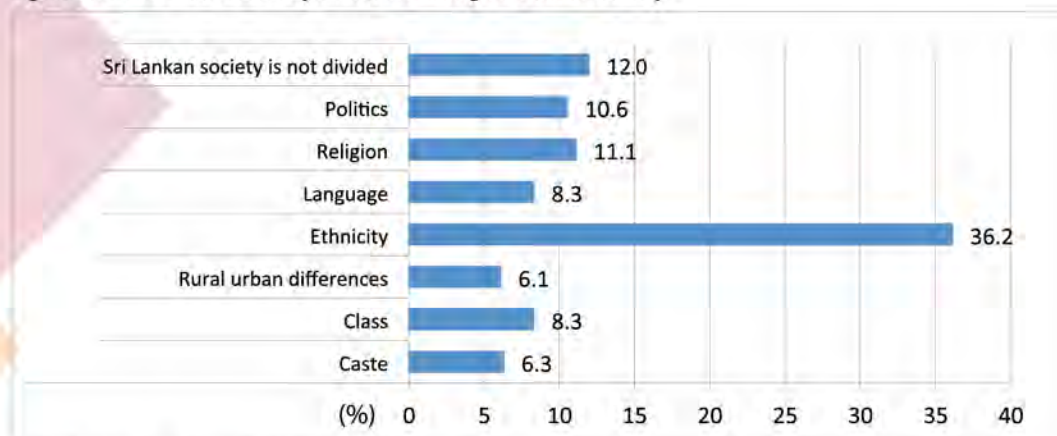
1980s, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna mobilization was around issues of patriotism and threats to the 'unitary nature of the motherland'.⁹ By then, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna had taken a firm anti-devolution position and become more strongly identified with Sinhalese nationalist politics.¹⁰

Similarly, among Tamil youth, earlier militant movements were associated strongly with issues of social justice, including caste discrimination, and aligned with socialist ideologies. But after the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) took control, socialist ideologies became less influential, and Tamil nationalist ideology took precedence.¹¹ Consequently, the past several decades have seen the rise of both Sinhalese and Tamil nationalist positions. The defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 2009 saw a resurgence of Sinhalese nationalism and heightened sensitivities among minorities regarding their position in society.

Youth in the National Youth Survey 2013 showed a strong awareness of ethnic identity; 46 percent said that their sense of belonging to their ethnic identity intensified after the war. Young people also saw ethnicity or rather ethnic politics as deeply divisive in Sri Lankan society. When asked about the most divisive factors currently at work, 36 percent chose ethnicity as the major one (figure 6.1). This held true across all ethnic groups, except among Indian Tamil youth, who identified language.

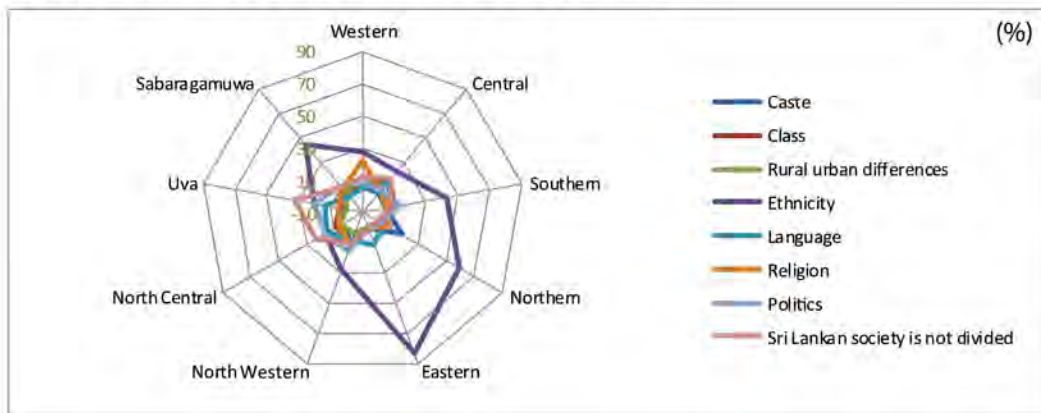
Unfortunately, religion has now begun to emerge as a point of contention. Recent tensions between factions of Sinhalese Buddhist monks and the

Figure 6.1: Youth identified major factors dividing Sri Lankan society



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Figure 6.2: Ideas about the most divisive factors varied by province



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Muslim community have led to confrontations and even violence. These have heightened religious sensitivities in parts of the country, which were evident in the National Youth Survey 2013. Among Moor respondents, 19 percent identified religion as the most divisive issue in Sri Lanka. In the Western Province, witness to much of the recent religious tension and the most diverse province, 22 percent said religion fragments society (figure 6.2).

Only considering identity-related factors such as religion and ethnicity as sources of social disintegration would be misleading, however. A closer analysis of the responses in the survey showed that youth also highlighted structural divisions around class, caste and power relations. These were often specific to particular communities or regions. For example, 19.7 percent of Sri Lankan Tamils from the Northern Province pointed to caste as the most divisive factor (table 6.1). Indian Tamil

youth noted the rural-urban divide, while Sinhalese youth in the South identified class and politics.

Despite the preoccupation with ethnic politics during the last several years, other factors contributing to divisions underscore the importance of understanding how different elements come together to position people differently and hierarchically in society. While ethnicity is a fundamental source of stratification, the combination of ethnicity with factors such as class, caste and sector (rural, urban or estate) is what really determines a person's position in life.¹² In other words, even a person from a minority ethnic group can have the advantages of class, caste and political and/or social connections. Similarly, a person from the Sinhalese ethnic majority without the advantages of class and political connections could experience marginalization. The various

Table 6.1: Ideas about the most divisive factors varied by province

Reason	Northern Province					Eastern Province					(%)
	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamil	Moor	Indian Tamils	Other	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamil	Moor	Indian Tamils	Other	
Caste	0.0	19.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.3	0.0	0.0	
Class	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Rural/urban	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Ethnicity	80.6	59.1	25.0	0.0	0.0	87.3	82.1	81.7	100.0	100.0	
Language	19.4	5.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.5	11.5	12.8	0.0	0.0	
Religion	0.0	5.2	75.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.1	0.0	0.0	
Politics	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	
Not divided	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

factors producing different forms of division and social exclusion therefore need to be fully considered in reconciliation and social integration efforts.

Language remains a barrier

Language has been a volatile issue in Sri Lanka since independence. The Sinhala Only Act in 1956 was a turning point in this debate, an attempt to give the Sinhala language its due place and displace the dominance of English. But it resulted in the politicization of language linked to ethnic identity, Sinhala being the native language of the majority Sinhalese, and discrimination against minority communities. For example, minority communities found it difficult to find employment in the public sector, an area they had previously dominated.¹³

As the medium of instruction in education switched to vernacular languages, schools became separated based on whether they were Tamil or Sinhala language schools. Only a few larger, mainly private schools were able to provide instruction in both. The linguistic separation between ethnic communities became more entrenched with fewer opportunities to learn each other's languages or to interact with each other. The Official Language Policy of Sri Lanka, enshrined in the Constitution, attempts to address this issue. It recognizes both Sinhala and Tamil as the national languages of Sri Lanka, while English serves as a Link Language. The Government has taken several initiatives

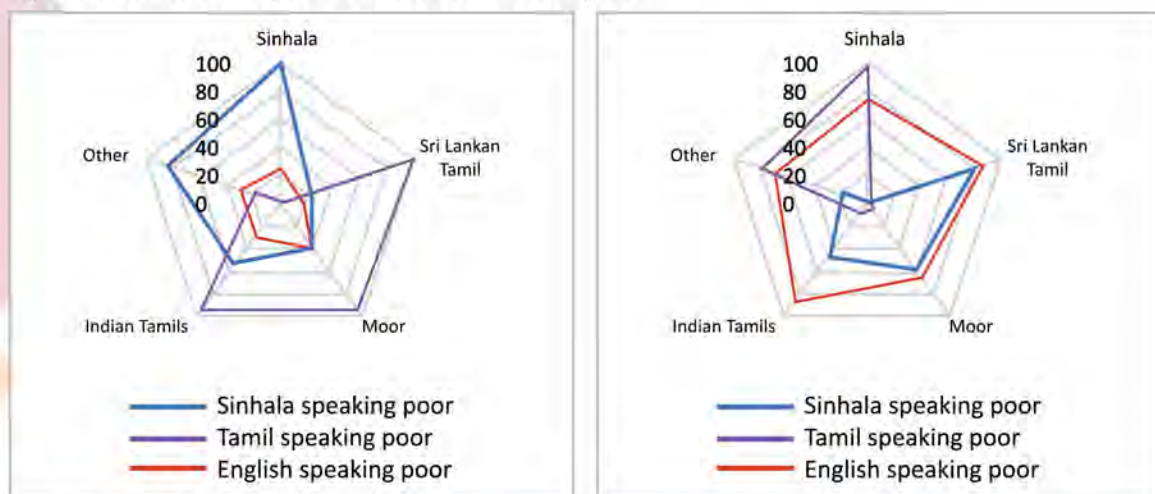
accordingly, such as establishing a dedicated department under the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration to facilitate implementation of the constitutional provisions.

These initiatives need to be fully supported, as the National Youth Survey 2013 reflects several gaps. For example, Sri Lankan youth continue to be largely monolingual: 79 percent of Sri Lankan Tamil respondents assessed their Sinhala speaking skills as poor (figure 6.3). Indian Tamils were more confident, with 52 percent saying their Sinhala speaking skills were good, as did 42 percent of Moor youth. Ninety-seven percent of Sinhalese youth said their Tamil speaking skills were poor. Despite the Official Language Policy and concerted efforts to teach the national languages and English in schools, Sri Lankan youth continue to primarily feel comfortable only in their mother tongue.

The link between language competencies and interaction between ethnic groups is evident in the fact that Indian Tamil youth respondents, the most confident among the minorities in their Sinhala language skills, were the most likely to have friends from other ethnic groups; 85 percent said they had a close friend from a different community.

The confluence of multiple factors in causing exclusion and marginalization are apparent in analysing problems related to the English language. The inability to function in English is seen primarily, and in general terms, as a constraint in the job market. From a social integration point of

Figure 6.3: Youth are mainly comfortable in their mother tongues



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

view, however, English can also be a polarizing factor, especially among youth who feel excluded or face discrimination due to their lack of fluency. Interviews with young people from all ethnic communities revealed that English is linked to the power of an elite class. The English-speaking minority, regardless of ethnic or religious identity, is seen as having privileges denied to those who speak only Sinhala and/or Tamil. Despite English being taught from grade 1 at school, most youth lack confidence in their English abilities. Those from certain socio-economic backgrounds end up with little hope of social mobility, including through better jobs in the private sector.¹⁴

That this lack of confidence is due to factors other than simply being able to master a different language is evident. English is linked with a certain upper-class lifestyle and cultural demeanour, which places many constraints on how youth approach it. The perception is that even if a person is able to learn the language, unless they also possess the social and cultural capital associated with it, the advantages of mastery will be denied. Lack of confidence in English language skills is thus as much a reflection of feelings of exclusion as an assessment of actual competency.

You must have the ability to come forward without being scared. It is the literate sector of the population who must come forward. We all learn the same thing. Once you think you are not as literate as others, you do not come forward. That should not happen. People don't come forward because they don't think they have the capacity. So they remain backward.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

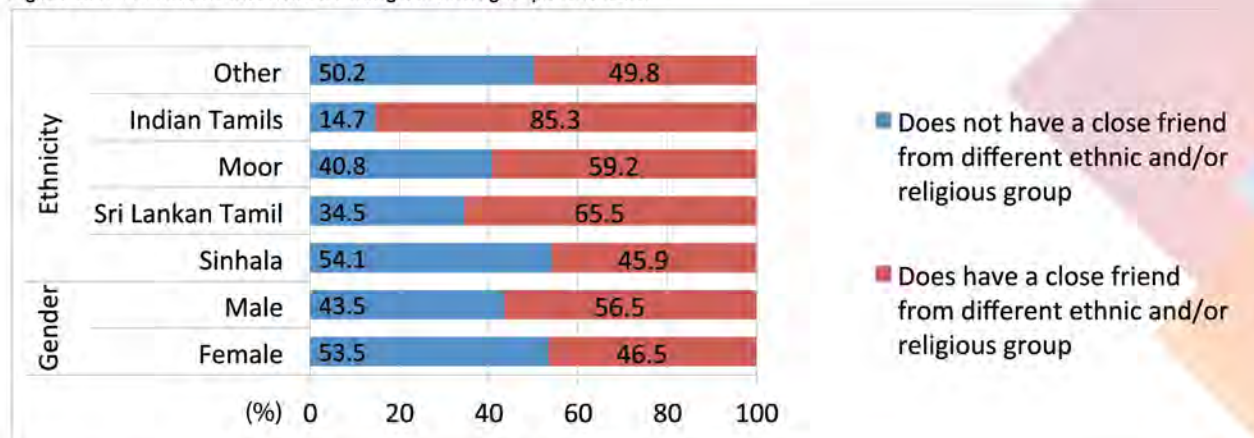
You should have the freedom to express yourself. This is a problem in the education system. We have to minimize the gap between the rich and the poor. The education system is the means to remove the gap between the rich and the poor.

*Young Man, Focus Group Discussion,
Sabaragamuwa Province*

This perception needs to be seriously addressed, since it is a barrier to teaching and learning English. The difficulty lies in its deep roots in Sri Lanka's socio-cultural context, reflecting an entrenched feature of colonial history.¹⁵ Despite Sinhala and now Tamil being considered national languages, there is no doubt about the continued influence of English. The language problem, in short, is highly complex.

Ensuring that people can function in a vernacular language of their choice while also having competence in the link language of English has been the official policy of successive recent governments. The current government has concertedly promoted all three languages. But the general population has yet to see necessary changes. Despite the department established under the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration to advance the language policy, financial and human resources need to be committed at least for the Bilingual Administrative Divisions that have been gazetted, and for critical service delivery units such as police stations, hospitals and schools. Initiatives identified in the draft 10 Year Action Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka could be expedited.

Figure 6.4: Youth said interaction among different groups has risen



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Interaction among ethnic groups has improved

Among all respondents to the National Youth Survey 2013, 72 percent said there was now more interaction among ethnic groups than previously (figure 6.4). For youth who had friends in other ethnic groups, 77 percent said that there was more interaction.

Sinhalese youth were the least likely to have friends from another ethnic group, with only about 46 percent saying that they had a friend from a different community. This compares to just over 59 percent of Moor youth and nearly 66 percent of Sri Lankan Tamil youth. These responses mark a significant improvement since the National Youth Survey of 1999/2000, where only 5 percent of Sinhalese youth, 14 percent of Sri Lankan Tamil youth and 22 percent of Muslim (Moor and Malay) youth had a friend from another ethnic group.¹⁶

Since the end of the war, a number of initiatives have encouraged interactions among youth as part of facilitating social integration. Several ministries, such as the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration, and the Ministry of Education; international and local non-governmental organizations; United Nations entities; schools; and youth organizations, such as the Girl Guides Movement, have orchestrated youth exchanges among different parts of the country.¹⁷ Since the early 1990s, the education system has introduced changes in curricula and integration activities. These steps to build bridges, though small, clearly recognize the need for improved understanding among communities, but there is not enough evidence of their sustainability and impact.

Youth interviewed during Focus Group Discussions as part of the National Youth Survey 2013 spoke of the importance of exchanges among ethnic groups. This is an essential starting point, given that communities have been physically distant for so long. For reconciliation, however, more sustained lines of communication and exchange are critical to better understanding of issues affecting different groups and in turn greater social cohesion.¹⁸

Youth-led reconciliation efforts show how youth value interaction and building understanding (see box 6.2). These initiatives could do more to engage youth at different levels. Although they currently reach out to those at the grass-roots, they are conceptualized and led by youth from more cosmopolitan, urban backgrounds. The extent to which they impact a cross-section of youth could be better explored.

BOX 6.2: YOUTH LEAD THE WAY TO RECONCILIATION

"Hate has no place in Sri Lanka" – Mohamed Hisham, co-spokesperson, Rally for Unity

Rally for Unity is a network of youth volunteer organizations aimed at bringing ethnic harmony, reconciliation and peace to Sri Lanka, mainly through digital campaigns. "Hate has no place in Sri Lanka" was the theme of a rally held in Colombo in 2013, where youth were largely mobilized through networking on social media.

The rally aimed at spreading the message that everyone wants to live in peace and harmony in Sri Lanka. Leading up to the rally, a website circulated slogans and instructions on how to participate. Text messages (SMS) were sent to all volunteers in the network. Advertisements and various print and electronic media publicized the event.

More than 500 people took part, including politicians from across the political spectrum, professionals and volunteers. Youth volunteers uploaded videos online using their mobile phones. The day was heralded as a genuine success.

Another example of a youth organization is Sri Lanka Unites, led by young professionals in Sri Lanka and from diaspora communities. It works through Sri Lanka Unites clubs in various districts, organizing events in schools and communities to engage youth in debate and dialogue on issues of social integration. It also fosters exchanges among youth from different parts of the country.

The group's website states: "As the next generation moves into leadership, we, the youth of Sri Lanka hold the future of our country in our hands. In this critical period of transition for the country, we have the opportunity to replace a culture of divisiveness and conflict and be a voice for change; for hope and reconciliation. The Sri Lanka Unites movement represents this choice of our nation's youth, from ethnic and religious groups, from across the country, to rise up and provide a new voice."

Source: www.srilankaunites.org

Youth want to bridge differences

Among National Youth Survey 2013 respondents, 68.5 percent stated that young people were more aware now about the right to be treated equally and without discrimination. This is a positive signal,

since it shows that youth see equality as key to social integration and their role in promoting it. They also demonstrated awareness of how challenging it can be to bridge differences in a pluralistic society.

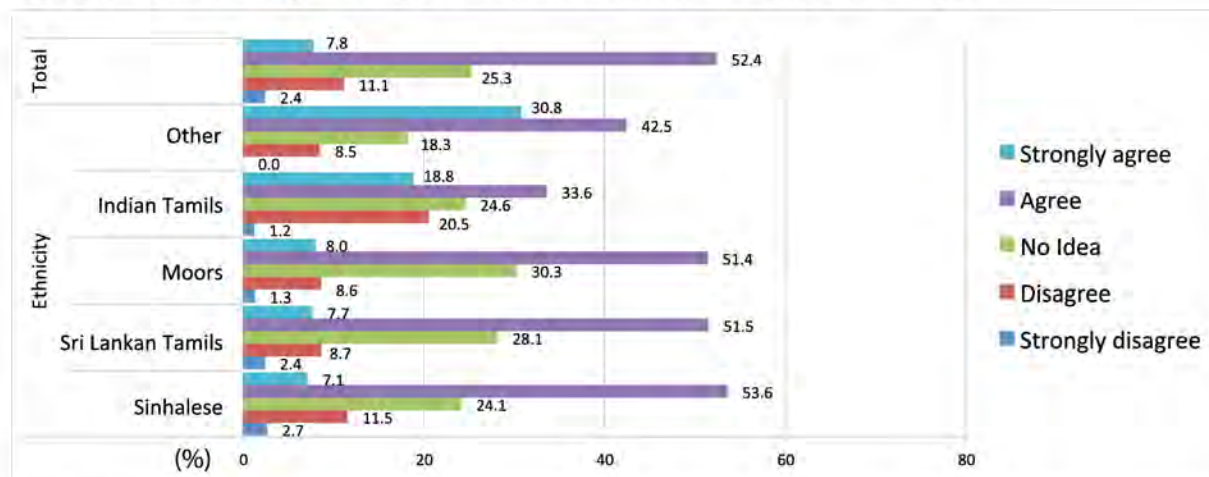
It is difficult to think positively about social integration. When people have language and religious problems, they only associate with those who have the same attitudes or knowledge. Poor people don't mix with rich people. If a person with knowledge is poor, that person is not taken seriously. Even if you know it's a wrong thing, people behave like that. Even if they know the right thing, they behave that way because they listen to people who they think belong to their own group.

*Young Woman, Focus Group Discussion,
Western Province*

Respondents from all communities agreed on banning organizations inciting hate on the basis of ethnicity and religion. Youth also felt that political parties based on ethnic or religious identity should be forbidden.

Sri Lankan Tamil youth said that implementing the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission was a major part of improving social integration. Its report notes, among other issues, the importance of language, the de-politicization of public institutions, reinforcement of law and order without interference from political authorities, and

Figure 6.5: The majority of youth agreed that infrastructure development fosters social integration



Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

The government has focussed on infrastructure development as the primary tool for reconciliation and social integration, based on the premise that improving access to basic facilities and facilitating mobility would lead to communities feeling less isolated and excluded. By and large, survey respondents supported this notion, with 60 percent agreeing that infrastructure development helped increase social integration and reduce disparities between different parts of the country. Around 13 percent disagreed (figure 6.5). Notably, around a quarter of those surveyed said they had 'no idea'. There were no significant differences among ethnic groups. Youth were divided when asked if the government is spending enough on assisting vulnerable communities: 39 percent said more could be done, while 37 percent were positive about the government's role.

initiatives to address the suspicion and mistrust between communities.¹⁹ While lauding the government's commitment to infrastructure development after the end of the war, the report stresses 'soft' initiatives as well. More than 50 percent of National Youth Survey 2013 respondents agreed that strengthening development activities in areas lagging behind was important, but highlighted sustained interactions among groups

BOX 6.3: COMMUNITIES MAKE MUSIC TOGETHER

The Music Project was inspired by El Sistema of Venezuela, which uses music to build communities. The project attempts to create 'orchestral communities' between children in the North and South of Sri Lanka, working in the districts of Kurunegala and Mullativu. Children learn music as a part of their after school activities and recently performed in their first concert.

Source: www.musicprojectsl.com

as among the other requirements for reconciliation (see boxes 6.3 and 6.4). Sri Lankan youth clearly want to move beyond identity politics and towards equitable development.

Youth from all communities need to understand the contents and importance of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report. The fact that Sri Lankan Tamil youth highlighted implementation while youth from other ethnic groups did not suggests that the latter may not understand the centrality of the war in the lives of the former. As noted in the report, being able to acknowledge and discuss the war, its consequences and its impact on all young people is integral to reconciliation and social integration.

BOX 6.4: TURNING TO THE DIASPORA TO HEAL DIVISIONS

Sri Lanka's 26-year civil war ended in May 2009 with a military victory for the government. The war is over, but the task of securing long-term peace is just beginning. Rebuilding the economy and infrastructure is important. But so is healing divisions between people and creating equal economic opportunities, giving the chance for all Sri Lankans to play a role in their country's future.

Communities living abroad—the so-called diaspora—can sometimes fuel violent conflict in the countries of their origin through their financial and ideological support to different parties to the war, and they can by the same token promote peace, reconciliation and development. In the case of the Sri Lankan conflict, some voices from all sections of the diaspora were seen as having contributed to polarisation between and within ethnic communities, hampering attempts to find alternative ways of addressing the issues.

In January 2011, International Alert along with the Royal Commonwealth Society, took a group of second-generation British Sri Lankans and two British parliamentarians to visit Sri Lanka. The group travelled across the island to meet with a cross-section of politicians and civil society representatives. This visit helped them improve their understanding of the complex realities on the ground and challenged their misconceptions. And it initiated an alternative dialogue in Sri Lanka itself on the potential post-war role the diaspora could play, an issue on which there had been little discussion thus far.

This was possible because post-war Sri Lanka offers new opportunities for people of all ethnic origins to get together to address their divisions. But the diaspora has been as badly divided by the conflict – if not as badly hurt – as the country itself. Before any dialogue can take place between them and Sri Lanka's political and civil society, significant steps have to be taken for dialogue within the diaspora communities themselves.

To address this, Alert adopted a dual approach of working in Sri Lanka and in the UK, to improve understanding of the impact and significance of the diaspora on Sri Lanka's post-war reconciliation and development. The initial aim was for the diaspora communities to improve their understanding and awareness of post-war issues to then engage in constructive dialogue with people in Sri Lanka, to identify and work on areas of common interest.

The starting point was therefore an extensive period of trust-building. Alert worked with community leaders and people from all ethnic and religious backgrounds, and with civil society and politicians both in the UK and Sri Lanka to share their experiences of post-war realities. Opportunities were provided for groups to meet "the other", to test out and challenge their perceptions in a safe, constructive environment. This process was underpinned by the first exchange visit in 2011.

Working with the One Text Initiative, a Sri Lankan-based research and dialogue group, Alert initiated a dialogue with young, first-term Sri Lankan parliamentarians on the significance and role of the diaspora in Sri Lanka's conflict history and their potential in building a long-term peace. Sri Lankan politicians and civil society representatives visited the UK in December 2011 to meet with representatives from the Muslim, Tamil and Sinhalese communities in the UK. The visit helped to confront the perceptions held in Sri Lanka of the diaspora and their interests. This week-long encounter led to considerably changed perceptions of the people involved, leading them to believe that the Sri Lankan communities abroad can play a strong peacebuilding role within Sri Lanka.

In future, Alert plans to build on this work, looking to consolidate the engagement with second-generation Sri Lankans in the UK and political actors in Sri Lanka, to strengthen activities that support economic and political reconciliation.

Source: www.international-alert.org/news/bringing-diaspora-home.



PHOTO CREDIT : UNDP SRI LANKA

Other major components of reconciliation include the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants. Soon after the war, the then Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights prepared the National Framework Proposal for the Re-integration of Ex-combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka. This identified several steps such as disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration.²⁰ The Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation, under the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Prison Reforms, was responsible for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants who surrendered to the armed forces after the end of the war.

According to government reports, most ex-combatants have been rehabilitated and returned to their homes and communities.²¹ A major focus was on providing former combatants with education and skills,²² but their ability to use these skills depends to a large extent on how well their local communities have recovered economically and can generate employment opportunities. As experiences in other countries have shown, former combatants face many challenges when reintegrating. In Liberia, for instance, ex-combatants were feared by their communities, found it difficult to find gainful employment and had little support to rebuild their lives after demobilization.²³ Families and communities as much as former combatants therefore require assistance to facilitate reintegration.²⁴ Rehabilitation also needs to be closely linked to post-war reconciliation, since the underlying animosities that gave rise to conflict need to be eased so they do not re-emerge.

Society looks at us in the wrong way as people from rehabilitation centres frequently visit us for inquiries. Since we joined the armed groups at an early schooling age, we could not follow our education properly. Therefore there are no good job opportunities. Even though people like to give us jobs, they get discouraged due to the on-going inquiries about us. As we were frequently visited by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and police, people think that we are trouble makers.

The main problem we face is economic problems; we need financial assistance, guidance—there is no one to guide us to uplift our lives, to give us guidance on job opportunities and how to get some financial assistance needed for our jobs.

Focus Group Discussion with ex-combatants in the Northern Province

Schools and families: channels for engagement

Focus group discussions and the National Youth Survey 2013 revealed that youth have very definite ideas about what could further social integration and post-war reconciliation. They identified two important channels to engage youth: educational institutions and the family.

One of the causes of social disintegration, according to young people, was the selfish nature of human beings. Youth were highly critical of parents and families for encouraging selfishness, characterized by the pursuit of individual success and material well-being, which they considered barriers to social integration. They referred to an awareness of and sensitivity to other people as essential to ensuring that people bridge differences. In contrast, the pursuit of material well-being blinded people to the values and habits that might bring them together. Youth said they have high ideals about the kind of society they want to live in, but felt that adults and social institutions, in their pursuit of selfish interest, do not encourage these, and in fact contradict youth ideals.

Mothers and fathers run behind money. Although they provide every material comfort for their children, they are not integrated with their children. The bond between children and parents is weak. I go to homes to give tuition to children. Children talk about their daily things with me. They don't have the opportunity to discuss these things with their parents. It is important to think about these things. Parents are educated and do good jobs and they provide their children with everything. But they are not really close to their children. They think if they give their children everything they will get to a good place. But that only develops one side of the children. One day these children will not have the capacity to even understand something about a person who is working for them. They do not have a sense of social integration to even understand something like that.

We tend to think only about ourselves in Sri Lanka. It is a kind of a selfish attitude. We are not living in an environment that teaches us to help everyone. We may help our family but not others.

Youth participants, Focus Group Discussion, Sabaragamuwa Province

Education is key in advancing reconciliation and social integration, as confirmed by youth, and

recognized in the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, the National Policy Framework for Social Integration and the National Youth Policy. Education is one of the three key pillars, along with ethics and empowerment, in the National Policy Framework for Social Integration.²⁵ Its potential to both promote social integration, and reinforce stereotypes and divisions²⁶ underlines the need to review curricula from the vantage point of reconciliation and social integration, particularly in Sri Lanka as a post-colonial state struggling to build a collective identity.

Sri Lankan governments since the 1990s have endorsed the link between education and social integration. The Education Reform proposals of 1997 explicitly included a component on “Values Education and National Integration,” towards ensuring that teaching and learning advanced a sense of justice and fair play, irrespective of differences of caste, creed and class.²⁷ Since the 1990s, changes have been made to curricula, such as the introduction of civic education. In 2008, a national policy on social cohesion and peace education was prepared.

Extracurricular activities in schools have been initiated to build bridges between communities, generate dialogue and debate on social cohesion, and foster interaction. Language teaching has been an important intervention, with the strengthening of teaching both national languages, and English as the Link Language.²⁸ Under the Higher Education for the 21st Century project, universities are implementing various programmes to promote social cohesion.

While the National Youth Survey 2013 showed positive changes in attitudes to social integration compared to previous surveys, youth still noted room for improvement. Recent events in the Southern Province, where Muslim communities came under attack, have underlined that radical, extremist groups still can incite violence. This raises question about the effectiveness of various programmes and policies in actually changing attitudes and behaviours.

Exploring this issue can start with examining some of the contradictions in education between its more

progressive elements and the less palatable outcomes of various policy interventions. Sri Lanka’s success in increasing access to education and making it a strong source of social and economic mobility cannot be denied. But the record in promoting understanding among different groups, pluralism and respect for diversity is more problematic.

The majority of schools remain segregated by language, stemming from the politics of colonial education, when British colonial governments, who had the most impact on the education system, established English language schools mainly run by missionaries. Sinhala and Tamil language schools made available to the masses were distinctly inferior. This dual system created an English-educated elite and a large number of others excluded from prestigious jobs and positions.²⁹ Further, in response to the dominance of the Christian missionaries, growing Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim elites established their own schools. A consequence was relatively rigid separations in education based on language and religion even after independence.

According to the last School Census conducted in 2008, only around 5 percent of schools offer mixed medium instruction.³⁰ This effectively means that school children learn in a strongly mono-cultural environment, with limited opportunities to be exposed to other cultures, languages and religions, except perhaps through an extracurricular activity, a lesson in a textbook or a special event. The most effective way of promoting understanding is through everyday exposure to and engagement with diversity, but this is not facilitated in the education system.

While it could be difficult to establish multicultural schools in areas where the population is largely from one ethnic community, even in highly diverse areas, such as the Western, Eastern and Central provinces, schools are largely segregated by medium of instruction. In higher education, not all subjects are offered in all three languages. Certain faculties, such as medical and engineering, teach only in English. Other disciplines, such as the arts, segregate students based on language of instruction. Ironically, the greatest student body

diversity today is in the few surviving, now privately run schools originally established by the Christian missionaries and among the rapidly growing international schools.

Efforts have been made to reform curricula, but actual changes need to be closely considered. The teaching of history, for example, has been criticized for focussing on a particular Sinhalese Buddhist idea of the nation. Several attempts to ensure that history textbooks are more reflective of the diversity and plurality of Sri Lankan society have not met with great success. Minority cultures are under-represented or depicted as those who came as invaders or visitors to the country. Teachers from minority communities have remained largely uninvolved in textbook preparation.³¹ Textbooks in other subject areas reflect similar issues.

The influx of private educational service providers at different levels has added another layer. Students who attend international schools and private higher educational institutes are taught in English and follow a different curriculum from the one in the national education system. They are basically prepared for examinations outside the country, such as the London O/Ls and A/Ls. Because they teach in English, these institutions cater to all ethnic groups, and have a far more diverse student population and much broader curriculum than the national system. But they also reproduce socio-economic inequalities. The privileges and advantages of those educated in English language schools in colonial times are now being reproduced in the international school system.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP SRI LANKA

Previously, state universities provided space where all groups congregated. But the growth of private higher education has meant that state universities are now almost exclusively for those who come through the state education system and cannot afford private universities locally or abroad. While the establishment of private institutions is justified on the basis of expanding opportunities, the consequences in terms of dual educational structures with differing degrees of privileges mirroring broader inequalities have not been fully considered.

Contradictions in gender norms

Sri Lankan women have been agents of war and peace. The women's wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam gained much prominence for its role in suicide bombings. Many of the women recruited to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were adolescent and young, and were restricted from maintaining any contact with their families or entering into marriage.³² Women also serve in the armed forces in various capacities. The situation of former female combatants who returned to often hostile communities and were forced to conform to 'traditional' female roles at odds with their militarized past has yet to be fully addressed.

Women have often been portrayed as the major victims of the war. For instance, the numbers of women-headed households and widows have increased; both issues have received considerable attention. In 2012, women headed 23 percent of households, or 1.2 million in total.³³ The stigma associated with widowhood and remarriage has often placed these women, many of whom are quite young, under severe stress. Human rights organizations have also pointed to the vulnerabilities of displaced women.³⁴

Women have also been in the forefront of campaigning for peace. They organized a Mothers' Front in the North and subsequently in the East to protest against alleged human rights violations. In the late 1980s, a Mothers' Front in the South drew significant attention to disappearances during that period. Women's civil society organizations actively advocated for peace and a negotiated end to the conflict.³⁵

The cultural role of women, as those primarily responsible for reproducing and nurturing the 'nation', 'culture' and 'tradition', has also meant that women who came before the public gaze were subject to surveillance and sometimes even ridicule and humiliation.³⁶ In recent times, women at non-governmental organizations have been criticized for breaking traditions and accused of promiscuous behaviour. This new conservatism has reinforced the view that women should be confined to their 'traditional' roles. That is, that even when they participate in the public sphere, they should do so in conformity with the ideals of 'proper' womanhood, as chaste, virtuous and docile mothers, daughters and sisters, exerting their influence on their men folk without compromising on their femininity. Even within educational institutions, including universities, this ethos remains influential.

Policy perspectives: understanding all the issues

As a country emerging from many years of war, conflict and violence, Sri Lanka faces diverse challenges in managing post-war reconciliation and social integration. As discussed in this chapter, many initiatives are in place. A dedicated Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration is responsible for implementing a variety of policies and programmes, in collaboration with other ministries and government institutions working on education, women and child development, economic development, human rights, and so on. These moves provide a solid framework, but progress will depend as well on a careful, continued examination of the root causes of conflict, accompanied by appropriate responses.

Reconciliation and social integration need to be firmly grounded in principles of justice, equality and non-discrimination, and a recognition that many factors may combine to cause social division. So far, the focus of many policies and programmes has been on improving relations between ethnic communities, which are complex, shaped by the colonial period and post-colonial nation-building. Every ethnic group in Sri Lanka has a sense of grievance with regard to the sharing of resources and opportunities. During the colonial period, the

majority Sinhalese felt a keen sense of discrimination and believed that colonial rulers favoured minority communities. Attempts to redress these feelings after independence resulted in the politicization and dominance of the Sinhalese Buddhist majority and the marginalization of ethnic minorities.

Some sources of conflict and grievance cut across ethnicity, however, such as language, the politics of patronage, class differences, gender, caste and religion. Policies and programmes now need to consider links among all of these issues. As discussed in the chapter on political participation, youth rebellions have erupted largely from feelings of exclusion and discrimination based on multiple factors. That these rebellions eventually morphed into nationalist movements indicates the political contingencies of a time when political parties mobilized voters around ethnic identity.

Education is key for promoting reconciliation and social integration among youth. But the very structure of the education system has not been conducive to these goals. It can even be described as a site that reproduces many factors preventing integration. For instance, the mono-cultural environment of most schools; the implicit and explicit messages contained in school textbooks; and the reproduction of social hierarchies through the distinction between state and private (and international) educational institutions have been inimical to reconciliation and social integration. In such a situation, reconciliation and social integration activities become an 'extra' or a 'special event' that does not have a lasting impact. The challenge is to ensure that values of mutual respect, tolerance and appreciation of diversity become part of the everyday experiences of Sri Lankan youth. This requires firstly the recognition of the consequences of all forms of nationalism and a commitment to values of pluralism.

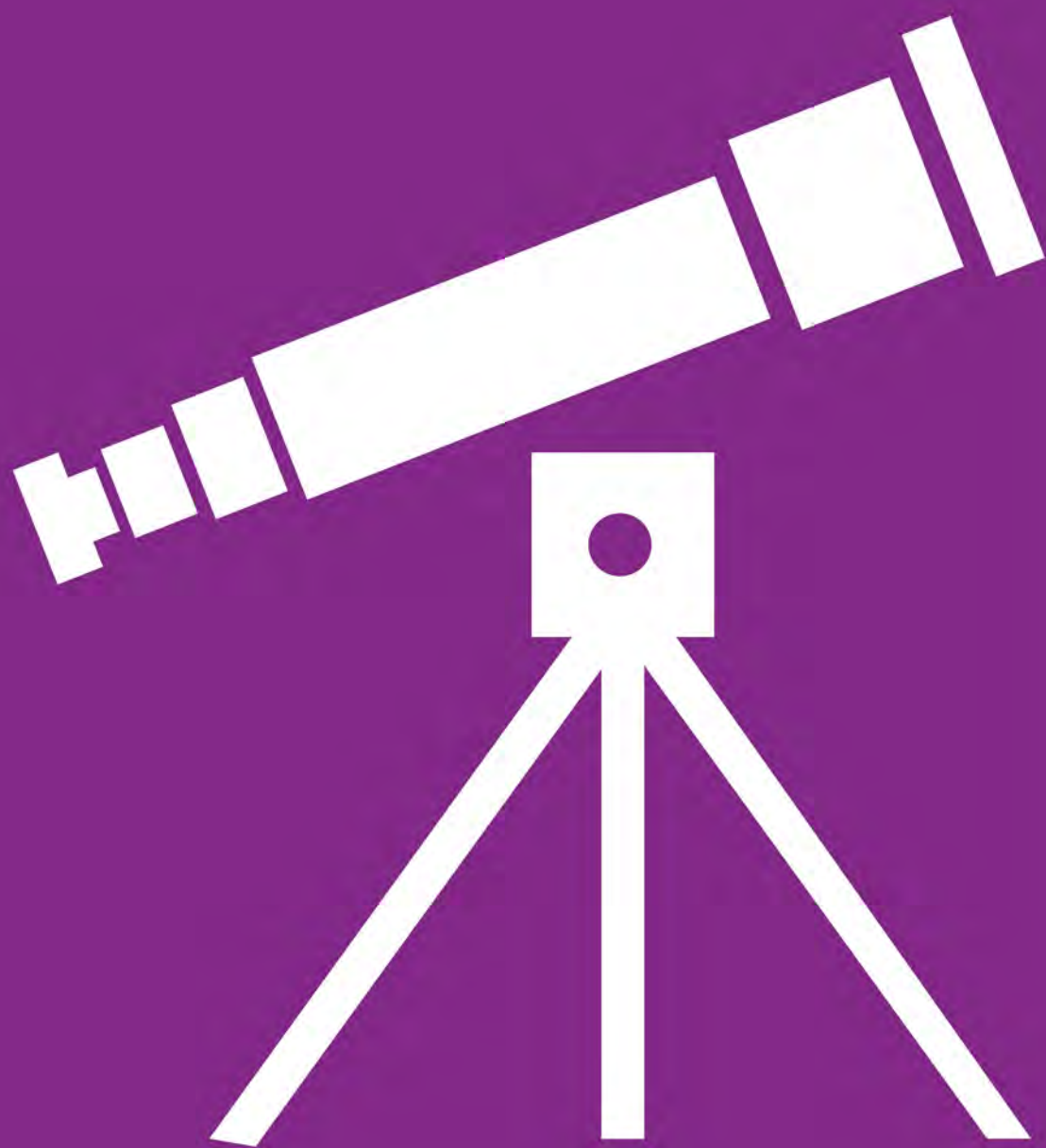
The recent emergence of religious tensions in Sri Lanka highlights the critical nature of reconciliation and social integration, and sadly, the relative failure of efforts up to now. That a country bruised by over three decades of war is suddenly confronting the possibility of another source of tension is unfortunate to contemplate. What these events show in particular is that the root causes of grievances in different communities have not been sufficiently addressed. The continuing sense of grievance makes it possible for extremist and opportunistic groups to mobilize people against each other. The many factors engendering division, mistrust and suspicion call for greater attention.

Although Sri Lanka is generally regarded as a country that performs well on gender equality, cultural norms still restrict women's participation, especially in the public sphere. The war affected women, especially those who are young, in various ways, underlining that reconciliation needs a strong gender focus. Women's movements have been active at the grass-roots level on many issues. But recent gender-insensitive statements made by government officials on sexual- and gender-based violence and women's roles in the public sphere, among other issues, have stirred much concern among women's organizations. Sri Lanka's gender equality gains need to be protected and extended, not squandered. A robust dialogue on how 'culture' is sometimes used to constrain women is necessary for meaningful movement forward.

The perspectives expressed by young people in the National Youth Survey 2013 and focus group discussions give hope for social integration. They appear to want a more altruistic, just society. Their grievance is with adults and the institutions around them, which from their point of view are barriers to achieving that kind of society. With no lack of policy initiatives in this area, what is required now is an examination of how basic institutions, particularly in education, public administration, law enforcement and the justice system, reinforce inequality and hierarchy. An essential complement to transforming these institutions would be consideration of how the values of reconciliation and social integration, such as social justice, equity, non-discrimination and re

spect for the rule of law, can be fostered across Sri Lankan society, particularly among youth, to fuel positive change.

LOOKING AHEAD
YOUTH AND
DEVELOPMENT





Human development, as an approach, is concerned with what I take to be the basic development idea: namely, advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live, which is only a part of it.

*Amartya Sen, Professor of Economics,
Harvard University and Nobel Laureate in Economics, 1998*

In many ways, Sri Lanka today is at a crucial moment, with the end of the prolonged war five years ago, and the transition of its development strategies and trajectories. For many decades since independence, Sri Lanka was hailed for its welfare state model, where publicly funded health and education services became basic entitlements of citizens. This was largely responsible for a strong showing on certain key development indicators such as literacy and life expectancy. Progress on social indicators, however, has not been matched in the economy or in terms of political reforms.

Sri Lanka has in fact been somewhat of a development anomaly, with some social indicators on par with those of economically more advanced countries. Some of its human development challenges differ from those in countries at similar levels of economic development and in the South Asian region. Sri Lanka cannot be categorized easily. Universal development aims and targets do not fully reflect its situation. In terms of the MDGs, for example, it has achieved or is close to achieving many of the targets, certainly on poverty and education. But it faces challenges in areas not reflected in the goals, such as in disparities between different groups of youth. While aiming for global targets, Sri Lanka needs to factor local specificities into its development aims and programmes.

Understanding the broader development context is important when analysing the situation of youth. Many issues discussed in this report have arisen not necessarily because 'youth-specific' interventions have been ineffective. Instead, limitations in larger institutional, political, economic and cultural processes and structures have curtailed the potential for change. **For any intervention or policy to be effective, broader institutional structures and processes need to be properly aligned.**

Youth issues cannot be isolated from larger social concerns, even where they may have specific consequences for youth. While youth insurrections have challenged society and social structures as a whole, they never asked for more youth-specific policies and interventions, but broader social, economic and political transformations.

Towards pursuing a different model

Despite Sri Lanka's impressive human development indicators, economic growth now seems to take precedence in the envisioning of development goals. This is not surprising, given the lag in economic development. But there is a danger of forgetting how, despite economic woes, human development has remained strong, testifying again to the need to understand Sri Lanka's unique development situation. Sri Lanka's strength lies in its healthy and educated population. It needs to build on this comparative advantage. Economic growth should not come at the cost of health and education, specifically in terms of equal access to high-quality services as highlighted in global discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. A development model focused on economic growth only is unsustainable, as has been proven in multiple cases around the world. Countries that have best survived the global economic crises recently are those that continued to balance economic and sound social policies.

In the past several decades, Sri Lanka has witnessed a steady decline in investment in health and education, shifting financial burdens to individuals, families and the private sector. This is having a significant impact on equality of access and service quality. The health sector, despite a history of outstanding service, is struggling to meet new challenges, and respond to changing demographics and health needs. Similarly, the education system struggles to maintain quality and relevance. The implications for the economy and particularly for employment are potentially severe. Policy makers tempted to prioritize economic growth and make 'economically rational' decisions also need to take into account accomplishments from daring to follow a different development model in the past.

From a human development perspective, Sri Lanka's early investment in health and education was right on track. Given the impressive returns, Sri Lanka needs to carefully consider how to build on progress already made and ensure it is not reversed. The decisions it makes will have profound consequences for youth, since their capacity and potential are inextricably linked with investments that Sri Lanka makes in developing its people. Future development trajectories also need to be considered in light of past conflicts, which arose from the keen sense of social injustice felt by many youth. Development initiatives thus need to respond to injustice and otherwise take the concerns of young people seriously.

Building on the achievements of the past does not mean that innovations are unnecessary. Existing structures and provisions need to be assessed for relevance and responsiveness to new conditions, such as those related to disparities, service quality, and changes in lifestyle and demography.

Disparities remain a concern

This report affirms that disparities in development persist, and are multidimensional and interrelated. They are not shaped simply by income inequalities, but also by factors such as gender, ethnicity, language and political affiliation. For instance, although women do not appear to experience discrimination in accessing education, their educational achievements do not translate into better employment or higher levels of political participation, suggesting that traditional gender norms outweigh the 'modernizing' effect of education.

Youth are extremely cognizant of and sensitive to these disparities. The language they use to describe their experiences is imbued with a sense of being outsiders. In the process of preparing this report, politically active youth spoke of how disconnected they felt outside of their political groups, and how discouraged they were when they tried to deal with the 'real' world. University students talked incessantly about the different 'groups' within

universities—some are 'insiders' or belong, and others are 'outsiders' and don't belong. Often these groups are divided by language, particularly English. Youth described how English symbolized a whole system of privilege and exclusivity, denied to those 'outside' certain cultural and social circles.

Unemployed youth spoke bitterly of how political connections and social networks triumph over hard work and merit in the job market. Youth from ethnic minority communities discussed being distrusted and subject to surveillance simply for being identified as the ethnic 'other'. School and university students highlighted the competitiveness of the education system, and how differences in values between parents and children are leading to strained and distant relationships within families, and constraining youth contributions to civil and political spheres.

These disparities and feelings of 'otherness' need to be taken seriously. They represent the kind of alienation that youth feel from a world that they believe is constructed for them by adults, without encouraging their empowerment or consistently responding to their needs. **It appears that youth are withdrawing into themselves—the distrust they express in institutions, and their disengagement from civic, political and social activities all point to a kind of distancing from decision-making spaces and bodies.** Incidents of self-harm and suicide; alcohol, tobacco and drug use; and violence among youth are some of the more dysfunctional manifestations of this sense of alienation.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNV SRI LANKA

Reversing this trend calls for a return to some of the values and ideals expressed in the earliest global Human Development Reports from over 20 years ago. These recognized that true wealth lies in a happy, contented and capable citizenry. Achieving that goal depends in large part on investing in enhancing the capabilities and freedoms of youth, and placing confidence in their energy, enthusiasm and idealism. Rhetoric and policy need to be coupled with specific action and interventions providing youth with the space to realize their hopes and create their futures.

Celebrating and renewing success

Sri Lanka does not need to look too far for inspiration; it lies in the courage and vision of its early policy makers, who invested in people long before the Human Development Reports had been thought of. As shown in this report, there are several excellent policies in place. The challenge has been to transform these into action, and link them to sustainable national goals rather than just immediate political aims. What Sri Lanka needs today are not more policies, more frameworks and more action plans; rather, it needs leadership to transform existing policies and frameworks into actions that benefit people.

One way forward is to strengthen governance structures and processes, including transparency and accountability in policy- and decision-making. More effective mechanisms are needed to evaluate and assess the performance of those in political leadership positions. Policy makers, bureaucrats and other officials in the public, private and non-state sectors also need to be more accountable. Appointment of officials to important bodies should be through independent mechanisms. Public trust in institutions should be strengthened, since the loss of confidence can create a dangerous situation where individuals rather than public interest drive actions.

Sri Lanka needs to celebrate the successes it has achieved in the past and renew these in light of current challenges. It needs to value the passion and idealism of its youth, including those who

sacrificed their lives to fight for what they believed. The violence of the past has made Sri Lanka wary of rebellious youth, of dissent and critique, yet these very characteristics, creatively channelled, could lead to positive social, political and economic transformations that adults are too timid to consider. Creating an environment where youth can flourish is probably the greatest investment Sri Lanka can make in its future.

Taking up the challenge of policy implementation

Sri Lanka's development challenges are complex and multifaceted. There are no easy answers. What this report highlights repeatedly is how political and social contexts have determined the effectiveness of development policies and programmes.

Sri Lanka has many existing policies, programmes and initiatives containing plenty of specific plans to address the issues discussed in this report. Yet youth continue to face some of the same problems that they confronted in the 1970s, just before Sri Lanka experienced its first youth rebellion. While many advances have been made since then, groups of youth have fallen through the cracks. They experience discrimination and exclusion based on a variety of factors, and as a result, perceive society as being unfair.

A persistent feeling of grievance expressed by young people reflects a particular relationship between the state and its citizens, as well as the specific nature of the Sri Lankan state. Simply to describe the relationship in terms of a welfare state does not capture the extent to which the state intervenes in the everyday functions of people's lives. It has become the chief facilitator of people's material existence, be it in providing employment, enabling social mobility, distributing goods or managing group interests¹. In such a situation, different social groups should feel secure in their relationship to the state, including less powerful ones. When various groups experience this relationship differently, with some groups feeling excluded, a rupture occurs. This is not simply an existential crisis, but a material crisis undercutting people's abilities to live decent and dignified lives.

This context calls for considering the relationship between development policies, programmes and the state in Sri Lanka. Whereas welfare mechanisms previously ensured some measure of basic services to all, the erosion of the welfare system has meant that those social groups with a difficult relationship with the state are often excluded not simply from the outcomes of development programmes and policies, but also participation in shaping programmes to respond to their needs.

There is currently far more emphasis on building the private sector and linking people directly to the market so that the role of the state is minimized. Yet this shift has not been accompanied by any transformation of the relations that position people differently within Sri Lankan society. Consequently, the private sector often reproduces many of the hierarchies that privilege certain people over others. This can be clearly seen in its failure to meet the employment needs of youth, for instance. It recruits largely through exclusive personal and social networks, even as constraints on national expansion have confined much private sector growth to the relatively well-off Western Province².

This kind of tendency underscores how acting on intentions expressed in development policies and programmes requires social and political transformation as much as efficient planning. There needs to be a realistic assessment of the degree to which policies and programmes are embedded within social and political processes and institutions they seek to transform. Actions identified in many of the policies and programmes discussed in this report have been around for many decades, in different forms. Many recommendations that came out of the stakeholder consultation conducted for this report are already stated in these. There seems to be broad agreement about what needs to be done—on paper, but not in practice.

One possible spur to action might come from explicitly emphasizing the socially and politically transformative potential of development

in a manner benefitting the society at large. Further, there is a need to move beyond the process of policy development, notwithstanding how much commitment and consultation may have been brought to that. Ensuring ownership and accountability for acting to implement policies could be advanced in part by more systematic mechanisms for monitoring and review. These also need to be applied regularly to adjust policies to changing circumstances.

Several key policies related to youth have been developed over the past several years. They include:

- The National Youth Policy 2014
- The National Action Plan on Youth Employment 2008
- The National Policy and Strategy on Health of Young Persons 2011
- The National Policy on Maternal and Child Health 2012
- The National Policy Framework on Social Integration 2012
- The National Plan of Action to Implement the Recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission 2012

The extent to which these have actually resulted in specific interventions and actions is unclear, making it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness. The National Youth Policy has proposed a mechanism for monitoring implementation: a high-level Youth Commission. Instead of focusing only on the National Youth Policy, however, the Commission could be responsible for monitoring and tracking the implementation of all policies relevant to youth. Integrating a mechanism directly into policy development and implementation would encourage regular reviews.

The proposed Youth Commission would benefit from the representation of different stakeholders, such as from the non-governmental and private sectors, in addition to the currently designated ex-officio members of the public sector. While youth representatives have been included, they would be in the minority. An alternative would be to consider an independent, youth-led watchdog body allowing youth to have more oversight and

influence over policy implementation. The participation of youth has been stressed globally, as seen in the 2014 World Conference on Youth. In the Colombo Declaration that resulted, governments and youth jointly called for “an enhanced and active role for youth in policy formulation and implementation and evaluation of processes related to development³.”

National planning and budgeting mechanisms also need to strengthen coherence across different policies and ensure adequate resources for implementation. Disconnects between different initiatives otherwise limit their effectiveness.

Some priority perspectives: a call to action

Many important policy recommendations on youth first appeared in the recommendations from the 1990 report of the Presidential Commission on Youth. See box 7.1 for a summary highlighting some recommendations where implementation is most relevant to youth today.

BOX 7.1: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 1990 REPORT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON YOUTH

The Depoliticization of Society (Chapter 1)

Hold elections to grass-roots institutions on the basis on the individual acceptability of candidates rather than their political affiliation.

Formulate and adopt a code of conduct for politicians reflecting norms crucial to the health and continuity of public life. Some youth-specific matters that might find expression in such a code are:

- *Do not compel school children to participate in partisan political functions or ceremonies.*
- *Functions organized in schools as part of the regular routine should not be made use of, even indirectly, for political purposes.*
- *An open competitive examination for public sector employment should include an aptitude test where appropriate.*

- *Equity considerations pertaining to district, ethnic identity and other factors must form the basis of recruitment for public sector employment.*

Youth Alienation and the Erosion of Institutions (Chapter 2)

Make it obligatory for all political parties contesting provincial council elections to nominate not less than 40 percent of their candidates from within the age group 18 to 30 years.

Settlement of Youth Grievances (Chapter 3)

Set up a Youth Ombudsman who would not need to have grievances channelled through Parliament as a prerequisite for any inquiry.

Education and Employment (Chapter 4)

Although the mismatch between education and employment is an urgent problem to be addressed, the commission does not believe that the sole aim of education should be employment creation.

Education should equip students with skills and knowledge so that they may pursue a vocation of their choice, given the opportunity and minimum standards. Also, education should develop personality traits so that the student becomes a self-reliant, self-determining individual who is able to contribute to the life of his or her community.

Mismatch between Education and Employment (Chapter 5)

It is important to set up a manpower unit, within the relevant ministry, that will be in charge of manpower projections. These should be published every six months to evaluate government projects and investments in terms of manpower development.

The industrialization policy needs to promote investments and growth in rural areas, especially the South and districts of high unemployment. It is important that urban-rural disparities, which are the basis for many grievances, are not widened as a result of a major thrust towards industrialization centred in urban areas.

Identify rural geographic units, such as one Divisional Secretariat Division in each district, as growth centres for infrastructure development and planning, and consider granting special tax incentives to industries that invest there. Also, as the existing banking sector is wary of

lending to young people, establish a separate banking system to extend credit to young entrepreneurs in rural areas.

Schemes for vocational training, the development of entrepreneurial skills and the encouragement of self-employment should include young women.

Disparities Aggravating Social Inequality (chapter 6)

Resource allocations to schools should be on the basis of annual grading linked to available facilities and student teacher ratios.

Vigorous initiatives are required to offer incentives to teachers who work in difficult areas.

Disparities in income and living standards are a major source of discontent, envy and frustration. Lower level salaries cannot be completely disproportionate to those at higher levels, particularly when the former are insufficient to meet the rising cost of living.

Language Policy (Chapter 7)

Strong measures should be taken to prevent linguistic discrimination. These could include a requirement that all job interviews should be conducted in the language chosen by the person to be interviewed. The envisioned official language commission should be set up to ensure that there is no discrimination against those who seek employment, and that information from all government departments as well as the private sector is provided in all three languages.

Ethnic Harmony (Chapter 9)

To improve religious tolerance, awareness of other religions and their practices should be introduced in the primary school curriculum.

All government communication should be in Sinhala and Tamil, and all government offices should have officers who can speak the official languages. Anyone walking into a government office should be able to communicate in the language of his/her choice.

Media policy should encourage more programmes catering to a multi-ethnic audience.

All school textbooks in Sinhala and Tamil should be re-examined and edited as needed to ensure they contribute to national harmony.

State bureaucracies should be sensitive to the need to

promote national unity and communal harmony, and in this regard use 'Sri Lankan' when referring to nationality in birth and marriage certificates, etc.

A devolution package needs to be finalized, based on a negotiated consensus, to enable the provincial council system to be viable and effective.

Note: Minor edits for length and clarity were made to the recommendations.

Source : Sri Lanka Sessional Paper No. I-1990

This National Human Development Report also presents some policy perspectives in the preceding chapters; a few key points are reiterated here as a call for action.

Make education about more than just a job

When considering existing policies, there is a major lack of those focusing on education, despite its crucial role in the lives of youth and all other aspects of development. The system is highly divided, with extreme differences of opinion among policy makers, academics, teachers, students and education service providers. A transparent and consultative policy development process could start with dialogues among different stakeholders and the larger community to build clearer consensus on the role and relevance of education in contemporary society.

A sustained, in-depth analysis of the current situation of education, combined with a vision for where the country is heading in the next several decades, could move the national discourse beyond the current emphasis on



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examinations and employability, and towards broader, more humanistic education. This could better align with youth expectations, change societal perspectives and contribute to the long-term development of the country as a whole.

In this process, the 'how' of teaching and learning calls for as much focus as the 'what'. This requires a comprehensive review of curricula at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary; an assessment of the pedagogy employed in educational institutions; and an emphasis on the process of teaching and learning rather than just focusing on examination results. It depends on considerable investment in teacher training, support, job satisfaction and social recognition.

Interventions for the educational empowerment of youth have to not only take into consideration the quality and relevance of educational systems at various levels, but also gender, age, civil status, norms, societal structures, geographical location and economic status in order to understand how these may present obstacles for particular groups.

Improve employment choices

A lack of information on the job market is a serious impediment that could be addressed by surveying enterprises to determine which economic sectors are growing, which occupations and skills are needed, and what kinds of training are warranted. Information could be disseminated through career guidance centres, job service centres and other relevant institutions so that youth can make informed choices. This would eventually help many see the rewards of investing in skills and higher education that better meet demands.

Detailed mapping of regional challenges and opportunities could back specific strategies to improve the employability of young people, in terms of appropriate skills and the development of enterprises that can readily absorb youth. Robust collaboration among the education, labour and industrial fields could do much to boost the relevance of skills education. Tertiary education reforms could include diversifying academic

programmes and aiming at higher order skills to make the workforce globally competitive.

Negative attitudes about vocational training could be addressed through the school curricula to increase the likelihood of students choosing these courses; internships and mentoring at the higher secondary level could foster the transition to work. Minimum wage provisions need to be implemented and a wage-setting system linked to productivity put in place.

Uphold sexual and reproductive health rights

Sri Lanka's substantial investments in health care have not overcome some obstacles for youth, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health services. Socio-cultural influences can result in a lack of awareness among youth, an unwillingness to use services or services that do not respect youth needs. At the same time, teenage pregnancies and pregnancies outside marriage, early marriage or cohabitation and homosexual relations are realities for many young people.

Legal concepts such as the age of discretion, evolving capacity and the right to information should be embedded in legal and policy documents to ensure young people realize their right to sexual and reproductive health information and services. There is also an urgent need to sensitize parents, religious groups, teachers and the society at large on the sexual activity of youth, and the importance of access to family planning services. Youth themselves need comprehensive sexual and reproductive health knowledge to make informed decisions. While some youth get this in school, such initiatives also need to be part of non-formal education and vocational training programmes. Out-of-school youth should have ready access as well.

Take youth participation seriously by dropping barriers

Given the history of youth violence in Sri Lanka, state and civil society need to engage more seriously with young people. **An apathetic, cynical and passive generation is as detrimental to development as one that is violent and destructive. Youth need to have self-belief and hope.** Whether or not they develop these is heavily swayed by the attitudes and actions of adults around them.

Institutions have a central role in the lives of youth, particularly those in law enforcement, education and health care. They need to be youth friendly, and facilitate youth participation and leadership. While many state and non-state institutions have mechanisms for youth participation, they need to be more proactive in overcoming barriers related to language, class, gender and ethnicity. They should move away from models designed and controlled only by adults for youth, and recognize that youth need to assume leadership roles and have a voice in shaping their own agendas. Access to information at all levels will help young people make more informed, meaningful contributions.



PHOTO CREDIT : UNDP SRI LANKA

Educational institutions, especially at higher levels, need to encourage independent, self-reflective and

mutually respectful student activism. Formal and informal education both should do more to cultivate responsible civic and political engagement, and create awareness of basic principles.

It may be most important to rethink the relationship between the state and society in Sri Lanka, since relations based on hierarchy and patronage are inimical to democracy. Unless this weakness is addressed, the political and civic participation of youth will likely not improve in any meaningful way.

Embrace everyday values that cut the roots of conflict

Youth rebellions have erupted largely from feelings of exclusion and discrimination based on multiple factors. These cut across ethnicity, language, the politics of patronage, class differences, gender, caste and religion; policies and programmes could do more to consider links among them. Progress will depend as well on a careful, continued examination of and response to the root causes of conflict.

Values of mutual respect, tolerance and appreciation of diversity need to become part of the everyday experiences of Sri Lankan youth. This requires first the recognition that all forms of nationalism have consequences, and second a commitment to pluralism. Basic institutions, particularly in education, public administration, law enforcement and the justice system, need to be examined for how they can foster values of reconciliation and social integration, particularly social justice, equity, non-discrimination and respect for the rule of law.

Shift gender norms to advance gender equality

Sri Lanka has made impressive advancements towards achieving gender equality in education and improving the health of women. But persistent gender

norms, mediated by culture and society, interrupt women's advancement in other areas, particularly employment and political participation. Norms and values around gender clearly need to shift if progress towards gender equality is to continue. This can be a difficult process, although as a starting point, Sri Lanka is fortunate that it does not have some of the extreme, life-threatening forms of gender discrimination seen in other parts of the world.

Moving forward, all young women and men need to be encouraged to explore their full potential and express themselves without fear of humiliation, stigma, or loss of respectability and status. This requires a close examination and questioning of the subtle ways in which gender identities and barriers are institutionalized within education, the legal system, religious bodies, the family, and the broader political and social environment.

Social justice and inclusion: now is the time

Sri Lankan youth have often been the focus of public attention for their violence and political extremism. But a close analysis shows that they have also been at the forefront of highlighting some serious flaws in the post-colonial Sri Lankan state, its polity and society. Their efforts to draw attention to these flaws have often unfortunately had tragic consequences. While successive Sri Lankan governments have attempted to respond to the issues raised by youth, this report shows that many of these well-intentioned initiatives have not always had desired outcomes. This report attempts to understand why—an extremely pertinent question if Sri Lanka is to break away from its past cycle of violence.

One important conclusion is that it is not enough to have good policies to bring about change. Change requires fundamental transformations in political, social and economic structures. To bring about such transformations requires leadership and genuine commitment among lawmakers, bureaucrats and development practitioners, putting aside personal and political ambitions for the greater good of youth and ultimately all citizens.



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Further, changes to improve the lives of youth do not simply require youth-specific interventions. The multiple forces influencing young people need to be understood, along with the reality that youth can flourish only in societies where all citizens experience social justice and inclusivity. In this regard, Sri Lanka needs to address youth experiences and perceptions of exclusion and marginalization, and the diverse drivers behind them.

Sri Lankan youth have always yearned for social justice. They have made great sacrifices while endeavouring to attain it. Surely, now is the time to take the opportunity to address shortcomings of the past.

Notes

Executive Summary

- 1 The Department of Census and Statistics has released the results of 5 percent of the Census carried out in 2012. The figures presented in this report are based on those results.
- 2 UNDP 2014.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 5 Ministry of Finance and Planning 2014.
- 6 UNDP 2014.
- 7 UNDP 2012.
- 8 Department of Census and Statistics 2013.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Department of Census and Statistics 2013.
- 11 Ministry of Education 2013a.
- 12 Department of Census and Statistics 2013.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Engelgau et al. 2010.
- 15 Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 16 UNICEF 2004.
- 17 De Silva et al. 2003.
- 18 Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 19 Ibid.

Chapter 1

- 1 Sen 1999.
- 2 Alkire 2010.
- 3 The Sinhalese comprise the largest ethnic group at about 15 million, followed by Sri Lankan Tamils at a little over 2 million. Indian Tamils are just over 800,000. The Moor population stands around 1.8 million. 'Moor' is the official term used by the Department of Census for the part of the Muslim population that originated from the Arab region. Muslims who came from the Java and Malaysian peninsula are known as the Malays. They are included in an 'others' category that also includes the Burgher population. For more details, see statistical appendix 1.3.
- 4 Kearney 1975.
- 5 Obeyesekere 1974; Kearney 1975.
- 6 Obeyesekere 1974; Moore 1993; Mayer 2000; Uyangoda 2003; Venugopal 2010.

- 7 UNDP 2014.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 11 UNDP 2014.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Centre for Women's Research 2007.
- 14 UNDP 2012
- 15 According to the Department of Census and Statistics, all areas regarded as municipal and urban council areas constitute the urban sector. The estate sector refers to areas with plantations of over 20 acres and 10 or more resident labourers. All other areas that do not fall into these two categories constitute the rural sector. These definitions are used in this report when referring to urban, rural and estate sectors.
- 16 Department of Census and Statistics 2011; 2013.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 UNDP 2012; Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 19 Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Kodikara 2009.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 UNDP 2012.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid., p. 1.
- 27 The Department of Census and Statistics has released the results of 5 percent of the Census carried out in 2012. The figures presented in this report are based on those results.
- 28 Based on data from 5 percent of the sample of the 2012 Census.
- 29 Goonesekere and Amarasuriya 2013.
- 30 Urdal 2012; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2005.
- 31 Urdal 2012.
- 32 De Silva 2007a; 2012.
- 33 Siddhisena and de Graaf 2010.
- 34 Ginwright and Cammarota 2002.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Obeyesekere 1974; Kearney 1975; Presidential Commission on Youth 1990; *Mahinda Chinthana* 2010.
- 37 Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development 2014, p. 7.

Chapter 2

- 1 UNESCO 2014.
- 2 *Pirivena* schools are based in temples and are primarily for Buddhist clergy. Data from Ministry of Education 2013b.
- 3 'International Schools' refer to fee levying schools that offer English medium education and prepare students for international examinations such as the London A/Ls and the International Baccalaureate. They are registered under the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka as private companies.
- 4 World Bank 2014a.
- 5 UNDP 2012.
- 6 Ministry of Education 2013b.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 University Grants Commission 2012.
- 10 World Bank 2011a.
- 11 Ministry of Education 2013b.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 OECD 2013.
- 14 Quenzel and Hurrelmann 2012.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Abeyasekera 2008; Jayaweera et al. 2008.
- 17 Sanderatne 2011.
- 18 Ministry of Education 2013a.
- 19 Aturupane 2011.
- 20 *Mahinda Chinthana* 2005.
- 21 Department of Census and Statistics 2012b.
- 22 For example, see Jayalath 2011.
- 23 Jayalath 2011.
- 24 Jayaweera et al. 2008.
- 25 The Government has set several ambitious targets to increase technical and vocational education and training. See "Ministry of Finance and Planning 2014" for further details.
- 26 Asian Development Bank 2012.
- 27 See, for example, IRIN 2014; *The Sunday Times* 2013.

Chapter 3

- 1 ESCAP 2012.
- 2 Commonwealth Secretariat 2013.
- 3 UNESCO 2013.
- 4 Ekanayake 2011.
- 5 Gunatilaka, Mayer and Vodopivec 2010.
- 6 Dependency ratio refers to the ratio of the population below age 15 years and above 60 years to the rest of the population.
- 7 Vodopivec and Arunatilake 2008.
- 8 Department of Census and Statistics 2013.
- 9 Karunathilake 2006.
- 10 ILO 2014.
- 11 ESCAP 2012.
- 12 Graner, Yasmin and Aziz 2012.
- 13 Department of Census and Statistics 2013.
- 14 World Bank 2014b.
- 15 Hettige, Mayer and Salih 2004.
- 16 Gunatilaka, Mayer and Vodopivec 2010.
- 17 Amarasena and Abeyasinghe 2004.
- 18 Karunathilake 2006.
- 19 See *Ceylon Today* 2012.
- 20 Department of Census and Statistics 2012b.
- 21 Karunathilake 2006.
- 22 Ekanayake 2011.
- 23 Asian Development Bank 2012.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Sarojini, Davi, Rita and Cristobal 2014.
- 27 World University Service of Canada 2012.
- 28 See www.ilo.org/jakarta/whatwedo/projects/WCMS_186796/lang-en/index.htm.
- 29 Ministry of Youth Affairs 2007.
- 30 Focus group discussions conducted for formulating the National Youth Policy 2014.
- 31 Ministry of Youth Affairs 2007.
- 32 Focus group discussions conducted for formulating the National Youth Policy 2014 and for the National Human Development Report.
- 33 UNICEF 2004.
- 34 Department of Census and Statistics 2013.
- 35 Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare 2012a.
- 36 Secretariat for Senior Ministers 2011.
- 37 Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare 2012b.
- 38 Transparency International Sri Lanka 2010.

- 39 Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare 2012b.
- 40 Secretariat for Senior Ministers 2011

Chapter 4

- 1 Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 2 Engelgau et al. 2010.
- 3 Department of Census and Statistics 2012a.
- 4 Engelgau et al. 2010.
- 5 Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 UNDP 2012; Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 8 Sri Lanka Police Records 2011.
- 9 FAO 2005.
- 10 World Bank 2008.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 World Bank 2008.
- 13 UNICEF 2004.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 De Silva 2007, cited in UNFPA 2013.
- 18 UNICEF 2004.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Department of Census and Statistics 2008.
- 21 Department of Census and Statistics 2009.
- 22 De Silva 2007, cited in UNFPA 2013.
- 23 Department of Census and Statistics 2009.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Abeysekera 1997.
- 27 Hettiarachchy and Schensul 2001.
- 28 De Silva 2007b.
- 29 De Silva et al. 2000.
- 30 De Silva et al. 2003.
- 31 De Silva 2007b.
- 32 IRIN 2013.
- 33 UNFPA 2009.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Goonesekere and Amarasuriya 2013.
- 36 UNICEF 2004.
- 37 Perera, Ostbye et al. 2009.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 UNICEF 2004.
- 40 Ibid.

- 41 Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka 2013.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Alcohol and Drug Information Centre 2013.
- 45 UNICEF 2004.
- 46 Alcohol and Drug Information Centre 2013.
- 47 UNICEF 2004.
- 48 Regional Conference on Population and Development in the Arab States (ICPD Beyond 2014) 2013.

Chapter 5

- 1 Wickramasinghe 2006.
- 2 Uyangoda 2003.
- 3 Uyangoda 1992.
- 4 Uyangoda 1992; Wickramasinghe 2006.
- 5 Moore 1990.
- 6 Ruwanpura 2012.
- 7 UNDP 2014.
- 8 Kodikara 2009.
- 9 Uyangoda 1992, Wickramasinghe 2006.
- 10 Ruwanpura 2012.
- 11 Centre for Policy Alternatives 2011.
- 12 UNDP 2011.
- 13 Ruwanpura 2012.
- 14 This section draws on UNV 2014. The study covered a sample of 300 respondents in an online survey, and interviews with 14 volunteer managers and 28 youth volunteers.
- 15 CIVICUS 2011.
- 16 Ibid.

Chapter 6

- 1 United Nations Inter-agency Network on Youth Development 2014.
- 2 Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration 2012.
- 3 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2014.
- 4 Centre for Policy Alternatives 2014; Verité Research 2013.
- 5 Klay Kieh, Jr. 2009.
- 6 Eriksen 1968

- 7 Wessells 2005.
- 8 Kearney 1975; Obeyesekere 1974.
- 9 Cooke 2011; Venugopal 2010.
- 10 Cooke 2011; Venugopal 2010; Dewasiri 2010.
- 11 Wickramasinghe 2006.
- 12 Mayer 2002; Hettige 2004.
- 13 Perera 2001.
- 14 Hettige 2004; Gunasekera 2005; Amarasuriya 2010.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Mayer 2002.
- 17 *Daily Mirror* 2013; Sarvodaya 2013; Peiris 2014.
- 18 Peiris 2014.
- 19 Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission 2011.
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- 21 See Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation, <http://bcgr.gov.lk/news.php?id=184>.
- 22 See Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation, http://bcgr.gov.lk/programs_adult.php.
- 23 Klay Kieh, Jr. 2009.
- 24 Wessells 2005.
- 25 Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration 2012.
- 26 World Bank 2011b.
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- 29 Keerawella 2012.
- 30 Department of Census and Statistics 2008.
- 31 Jayawardene 2006.
- 32 De Alwis 2002; Maunaguru 1995; De Mel 2008.
- 33 Department of Census and Statistics 2012.
- 34 Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka 2011.
- 35 De Alwis 2002.
- 36 De Alwis 1995.

Chapter 7

- 1 See, for instance, Uyangoda 1992.
- 2 Hettige 2004.
- 3 See Article 1, Colombo Declaration on Youth, World Conference on Youth 2014.

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A p p e n d i x e s



Appendix 1.1: National Youth Survey 2013 methodology

The methodology used for the National Youth Survey 2013 was based on the National Household Survey Methodology developed and followed by the Department of Census and Statistics, the apex body conducting national level statistical surveys in Sri Lanka. The National Household Survey Methodology is frequently used in regular national surveys, such as the Labour Force Survey, and Household Income and Expenditure Survey, and in many other irregular sample surveys conducted for national planning.

Sampling frame

In order to make the National Youth Survey 2013 nationally representative, the Master Registry of Census Blocks, which was prepared by the Department of Census and Statistics to conduct the 2012 National Census of Population and Housing, was used as the primary sampling frame. The registry is the total list of census blocks covering the entire residential extent of the country; it carries information related to census block boundaries, cartography, administrative hierarchy, names of locations, building units, population, housing and basic economic details of census block residents, etc. Department sampling experts decided to frame the youth sample for the youth survey within the national sample of census blocks selected from the master registry for the Household Income and Expenditure Survey conducted in 2012 to 2013. This allowed the use of already prepared, up-to-date lists of living units. This master sampling frame of housing units with calculated national weights was listed for the available youth population, and this youth sampling frame was used to draw the sample of youths for the National Youth Survey 2013.

Sample design

A three-stage, stratified sample design was used, including the same first two stages applied in the

sample design of the National Household Survey Methodology. The primary sampling units are treated as the census blocks drawn from the master registry at the first stage, and housing units listed in the selected census blocks or primary sampling units are the secondary sampling units drawn at the second stage. The district is the main domain for stratification. The residential sectors (urban, rural and estate) within each stratum (district) are used as the domains for selection so that all districts and residential sectors within districts are covered in the survey. The third stage for the National Youth Survey 2013 was explicitly created for the selection of youth, and the final sampling units of the sample design were youth usually residing in the housing units selected at the second stage.

Sample size and domain allocation

A sample size of approximately 3,000 youth was worked out considering the provincial variation of number of youth at the census block level. The domain (residential sector) allocation of youth was automatically adopted from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2012-2013, as the census blocks and the housing units in it already demonstrated a master sampling frame that was nationally representative in population intensity as well as living standards. A district quota of the sample was determined using the Neyman allocation, in which the sample distribution among strata is determined proportionate to the size of the domain and district variation of the most prominently used variable of the study (household welfare level in the case of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, and unemployment in the Labour Force Survey) known to have been measured in a previously conducted sample survey of the same nature. Sector allocation of the district quota of the sample was made proportionate to the square root of the sector size (number of housing units) in which sampling units in small domains were given a higher chance to be selected.

Appendix 1

National Youth Survey 2013

Sample selection

Sample selection is based on the selection domains (residential sectors within districts) demarcated using the administrative boundaries mentioned in the Master Registry of Census Blocks and the domain allocated sample size.

i. Selection of census blocks

In the first stage of the sample selection of the National Youth Survey 2013 as well as in the National Household Survey Methodology, the primary sampling units were selected systematically within each and every selection domain, with each census block in the domain given a selection probability proportionate to the size (PPS method, with size being the number of housing units) of the census block.

ii. Selection of housing units

The method used in the second stage selection of housing units, from a list of housing units taken afresh from the primary sampling units, was circular systematic, and in this selection, the size of

a census block was represented and measured by the total number of housing units found in it at the recent listing operation of the census blocks selected for the survey at the first stage. As a general rule in the National Household Survey Methodology, the listing of the total housing units of the primary sampling units selected for the survey is carried out approximately one month prior to the beginning of the field work of the survey; these fresh lists are used to select 10 housing units from each census block for the survey.

iii. Selection of youth

The selection method of youth from the lists of total youth in the housing units selected from the primary sampling units at the second stage was linear systematic, resulting in a sample of 3,150 youth (5 percent added to the 3,000 to compensate for possible non-respondents). A selection probability proportionate to the block youth size (number of youth listed in the block) was given to each youth to be selected from the block he/she was listed in.

Table A.1.1: Youth sample size by gender, residential sector and province

Province	Total	Residential sector			Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Estate	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	3,150	791	2,022	337	1,477	1,673
Western	778	304	431	43	367	411
Central	367	71	191	105	162	205
Southern	457	124	289	44	230	227
Northern	338	74	264	-	167	171
Eastern	329	105	224	-	145	184
North Western	245	39	194	12	125	120
North Central	203	21	176	6	85	118
Uva	187	19	113	55	87	100
Sabaragamuwa	246	34	140	72	109	137

Note : "-" indicates not relevant.

a. Estimation procedure

According to the sample design of the youth sample survey, an estimation of any selection domain for the total of any variable captured in the survey can be given by the following formula.

$$\hat{Y}_i = \frac{1}{l_i} \cdot \sum_{j=1}^{L_i} \frac{S_{ij}}{S_{ij}} \cdot \frac{M_{ij}}{m_{ij}} \cdot \frac{N_{ij}}{n_{ij}} \cdot \sum_{k=1}^n y_{ijk}$$

where

- \hat{Y}_i = Estimated total of any variable y in i^{th} selection domain (any sector of any district)
- L_i = Number of census blocks in i^{th} selection domain
- l_i = Number of census blocks (primary sampling units) selected from i^{th} selection domain
- S_{ij} = Size of the j^{th} census block in i^{th} selection domain as in the Master Registry of Census Blocks
- M_{ij} = Size of the j^{th} census block in i^{th} selection domain as listed
- m_{ij} = Number of housing units selected from the j^{th} census block in i^{th} domain
- N_{ij} = Number of youth listed in the j^{th} census block in i^{th} domain
- n_{ij} = Number of youth selected from the j^{th} census block in i^{th} domain
- y_{ijk} = Observed value of k^{th} youth selected from the j^{th} census block in i^{th} domain

Thus the estimation for total value for any characteristic y for the country can be given by

$$\hat{Y} = \sum_{i=1}^N Y_i, \text{ where } N = \text{Total number of selection domains in the country}$$

b. Adjustments for survey non-respondents

Non-respondents were replaced from the lists of youth not selected for the survey with matching gender and age bands, where possible, to maintain the original number of youth surveyed within a selected primary sampling unit. If no such youth were found in the list, a youth with matching age and gender, located in the same primary sampling unit, was surveyed instead of the non-respondent. The third and final option available to treat a non-respondent was to reduce the original block sample size, inflating the block weight (W_{ij}) so that the data of the non-respondent was replaced with the mean data values of the respondents within the primary sampling unit.

The block weight calculated from the sample was

$$W_{ij} = \frac{1}{l_i} \cdot \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{L_i} S_{ij}}{S_{ij}} \cdot \frac{M_{ij}}{m_{ij}} \cdot \frac{N_{ij}}{n_{ij}}$$

The block weight adjusted for the non-respondents was

$$W_{ij}^1 = \frac{1}{l_i} \cdot \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{L_i} S_{ij}}{S_{ij}} \cdot \frac{M_{ij}}{m_{ij}} \cdot \frac{N_{ij}}{n_{ij}} \cdot \frac{n_{ij}}{n_{ij}^1}$$

or

$$W_{ij}^1 = W_{ij} \cdot \frac{n_{ij}}{n_{ij}^1}$$

where

- W_{ij} = Weight calculated for the j^{th} block selected in i^{th} selection domain
- W_{ij}^1 = Weight adjusted for the non-respondents for the j^{th} block in i^{th} selection domain
- n_{ij} = Number of youths selected for the survey in j^{th} block in i^{th} selection domain
- n_{ij}^1 = Number of youths who responded from the j^{th} block in i^{th} selection domain

Appendix 1

Population Data and Human Development Indicators

Appendix 1.2: Distribution of general population by gender, sector and district

District	Total population	Male	Female	Sector (%)		
				Urban	Rural	Estate
Sri Lanka	20,271,464	9,808,362	10,463,102	18.3	77.3	4.4
Colombo	2,310,135	1,132,563	1,177,572	77.5	22.2	0.4
Gampaha	2,294,805	1,118,070	1,176,735	16.3	83.6	0.1
Kalutara	1,217,566	586,794	630,772	9.2	87.6	3.2
Kandy	1,370,247	646,777	723,470	12.1	82.0	5.9
Matale	482,406	231,269	251,137	14.1	83.4	2.5
Nuwara Eliya	706,726	338,608	368,118	5.9	40.9	53.2
Galle	1,059,069	507,731	551,338	12.0	86.1	1.9
Matara	809,617	386,366	423,251	11.8	85.3	2.9
Hambantota	596,788	294,974	301,814	5.5	94.5	–
Jaffna	583,613	274,981	308,632	21.0	79.0	–
Mannar	99,108	47,854	51,254	26.0	74.0	–
Vavuniya	171,391	83,818	87,573	20.7	79.3	–
Mullativu	90,842	45,000	45,842	–	100.0	–
Kilinochchi	112,980	55,413	57,567	–	100.0	–
Batticaloa	525,399	249,842	275,557	28.8	71.2	–
Ampara	648,344	313,940	334,404	23.7	76.3	–
Trincomalee	378,255	184,132	194,123	22.8	77.2	–
Kurunegala	1,610,955	775,618	835,337	2.0	97.5	0.5
Puttalam	760,077	368,310	391,767	9.3	90.5	0.2
Anuradhapura	856,399	414,493	441,906	5.4	94.6	–
Polonnaruwa	403,782	197,694	206,088	–	100.0	–
Badulla	815,253	397,865	417,388	8.6	73.0	18.4
Monaragala	448,210	221,437	226,773	–	98.3	1.7
Ratnapura	1,082,838	533,904	548,934	8.9	81.8	9.3
Kegalle	836,659	400,909	435,750	1.8	91.6	6.6

Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2013.

Notes: " – " indicates not relevant; These figures are based on a 5 percent sample of the 2012 National Census of Population and Housing.

Appendix 1

Population Data and Human Development Indicators

Appendix 1.3: Population by ethnicity

Province	District	Population	Population by ethnicity (%)				
			Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Indian Tamils	Moors	Others
Sri Lanka	All	20,271,463	74.9	11.2	4.2	9.2	0.5
Western		5,822,507	84.7	5.2	1.2	8.0	1.0
	Colombo	2,310,135	76.7	10.0	1.2	10.5	1.6
	Gampaha	2,294,806	90.6	3.5	0.5	4.2	1.2
	Kalutara	1,217,566	86.7	2.0	1.9	9.2	0.1
Central		2,559,379	64.9	4.9	21.4	8.5	0.3
	Kandy	1,370,247	74.3	5.2	6.1	14.0	0.5
	Matale	482,406	80.7	5.1	4.9	9.1	0.2
	Nuwara Eliya	706,726	39.6	4.5	53.2	2.5	0.3
Southern		2,465,474	95.2	1.0	0.7	2.6	0.5
	Galle	1,059,069	94.3	1.4	0.5	3.6	0.0
	Matara	809,617	94.3	1.1	1.5	3.1	0.0
	Hambantota	596,788	97.1	0.4	0.0	1.1	1.5
Northern		1,057,932	4.6	89.1	1.0	5.2	0.0
	Jaffna	583,613	0.6	98.9	0.1	0.4	0.0
	Mannar	99,107	2.0	81.3	0.4	16.2	0.0
	Vavuniya	171,390	10.0	82.4	0.8	6.8	0.0
	Mullativu	90,842	9.6	86.0	2.4	1.9	0.0
	Kilinochchi	112,980	0.9	97.0	1.5	0.6	0.0
Eastern		1,551,997	22.3	40.2	0.6	36.5	0.3
	Batticaloa	525,399	1.2	72.6	0.2	25.5	0.5
	Ampara	648,343	38.7	17.4	0.0	43.6	0.2
	Trincomalee	378,255	27.0	30.6	1.7	40.4	0.3
North Western		2,371,033	82.5	3.75	0.25	13.2	0.4
	Kurunegala	1,610,955	91.4	1.2	0.2	7.1	0.2
	Puttalam	760,078	73.6	6.3	0.3	19.3	0.5
North Central		1,260,181	90.8	1.2	0.2	7.7	0.1
	Anuradhapura	856,399	90.9	0.6	0.1	8.2	0.2
	Polonnaruwa	403,782	90.6	1.8	0.3	7.2	0.0
Uva		1,263,463	83.9	2.4	9.7	3.9	0.2
	Badulla	815,253	73.1	2.5	18.4	5.7	0.4
	Monaragala	448,210	94.6	2.2	1.0	2.1	0.0
Sabaragamuwa		1,919,497	86.4	3.8	5.4	4.4	0.2
	Ratnapura	1,082,838	87.1	5.1	5.8	2.0	0.1
	Kegalle	836,659	85.6	2.4	5.0	6.9	0.2

Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2013.

Note: These figures are based on a 5 percent sample of the 2012 National Census of Population and Housing.

Appendix 1

Population Data and Human Development Indicators

Appendix 1.4: Population by religion

Province	District	Population	Population by religion (%)					Other Christians	Other
			Buddhist	Hindu	Moors	Roman Catholic			
Sri Lanka	All	20,271,463	70.2	12.6	9.7	6.1	1.3	0	
Western		5,822,507	75.2	4.5	8.7	9.7	1.8	0.1	
	Colombo	2,310,135	70.7	7.9	11.8	6.8	2.8	0.1	
	Gampaha	2,294,806	71.5	2.3	5.0	19.3	1.9	0.1	
	Kalutara	1,217,566	83.5	3.3	9.4	3.1	0.7	0.0	
Central		2,559,379	64.0	23.3	8.9	2.6	1.1	0.0	
	Kandy	1,370,247	73.4	9.8	14.3	1.6	0.9	0.0	
	Matale	482,406	79.5	9.1	9.3	1.6	0.4	0.0	
	Nuwara Eliya	706,726	39.1	51.1	3.0	4.6	2.0	0.1	
Southern		2,465,474	95.0	1.2	3.1	0.3	0.4	0.0	
	Galle	1,059,069	94.0	1.5	3.7	0.4	0.5	0.0	
	Matara	809,617	94.2	2.0	3.2	0.3	0.4	0.0	
	Hambantota	596,788	96.8	0.2	2.5	0.2	0.3	0.1	
Northern		1,057,932	4.4	66.9	5.4	18.9	4.3	0.1	
	Jaffna	583,613	0.4	82.9	0.4	12.9	3.3	0.1	
	Mannar	99,107	0.0	23.7	16.7	52.7	4.7	0.0	
	Vavuniya	171,390	9.7	69.6	7.2	8.7	4.6	0.2	
	Mullativu	90,842	8.9	75.7	2.2	9.5	3.5	0.2	
	Kilinochchi	112,980	0.8	82.5	0.6	10.6	5.4	0.0	
Eastern		1,551,997	21.9	35.4	37.1	3.2	2.3	0.0	
	Batticaloa	525,399	1.1	64.6	25.5	4.7	4.1	0.0	
	Ampara	648,343	38.6	15.8	43.6	1.1	0.8	0.0	
	Trincomalee	378,255	26.1	25.9	42.1	3.9	1.9	0.0	
North Western		2,371,033	65.9	2.35	13.6	16.9	1.1	0.1	
	Kurunegala	1,610,955	88.6	0.9	7.3	2.6	0.6	0.0	
	Puttalam	760,078	43.2	3.8	20.0	31.2	1.6	0.2	
North Central		1,260,181	90.0	1.1	7.9	0.7	0.3	0.2	
	Anuradhapura	856,399	90.2	0.4	8.3	0.7	0.3	0.0	
	Polonnaruwa	403,782	89.7	1.7	7.5	0.7	0.3	0.3	
Uva		1,263,463	83.6	11.1	4.0	0.9	0.5	0.0	
	Badulla	815,253	72.6	19.4	5.8	1.4	0.7	0.0	
	Monaragala	448,210	94.5	2.8	2.2	0.3	0.3	0.0	
Sabaragamuwa		1,919,497	85.7	7.9	4.7	1.0	0.6	0.0	
	Ratnapura	1,082,838	86.8	9.3	2.3	1.0	0.6	0.0	
	Kegalle	836,659	84.6	6.5	7.2	1.0	0.7	0.0	

Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2013.

Note: These figures are based on a 5 percent sample of the 2012 National Census of Population and Housing.

Appendix 1

Population Data and Human Development Indicators

Appendix 1.5: Selected human development measures for Sri Lanka, 2005-2013

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (l.a.)
Population growth rate (%)	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	n.a.
Crude birth rate per 1,000	18.9	18.8	19.3	18.8	18.4	18.0*	18.0*	18.0*	n.a.
Crude death rate per 1,000	6.7	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	6.2	5.9	n.a.	n.a.
Rate of natural increase per 1,000	11.6	12.9	13.2	13.0	12.6	11.4	11.5	n.a.	n.a.
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	11.2	10.0	8.5	9.0	9.4	9.0*	9.0*	8.0*	n.a.
Per capita gross national income (\$)	1,226	1,402	1,616	1,966	2,033	2,370	2,805	2,866	n.a.
Per capita gross domestic product (\$)	1,197	1,355	1,634	2,014	2,057	2,400	2,836	2,923	3,280
Human Development Index** (Overall rank is 73 in 2013)	0.710	n.a.	0.725	n.a.	n.a.	0.736	0.740	0.745	0.750

Sources: Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2008 and 2013; * World Bank 2014; ** UNDP 2014.

Notes: 'l.a.' indicates latest available; 'n.a.' is not available.

Appendix 1

Population Data and Human Development Indicators

Appendix 1.6: Youth profile in the National Youth Survey 2013

Age	Province	Highest education qualification	Marital status	Religion	Gender		Ethnicity			Sector				
					Female	Male	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other	Urban	Rural	Estate
15-19					50.1	49.9	72.5	12.2	11.3	3.8	0.2	14.6	81.9	3.5
20-24					55.1	44.9	71.5	14.7	10.3	2.9	0.6	18.3	77.3	4.4
25-29					54.8	45.2	74.6	14.7	7.0	3.0	0.7	16.0	78.4	5.6
Western					51.0	49.0	83.8	4.1	11.6	0.2	0.3	35.6	63.7	0.7
Central					53.4	46.6	63.0	7.9	8.0	21.1	0.0	8.6	72.9	18.5
Southern					50.5	49.5	94.3	1.1	4.2	0.4	0.0	9.7	88.2	2.0
Northern					52.0	48.0	5.5	90.4	4.1	0.0	0.0	14.0	86.0	0.0
Eastern					59.4	40.6	19.8	48.8	30.3	0.2	0.9	23.8	76.2	0.0
North Western					50.2	49.8	82.3	4.8	9.8	0.1	3.0	4.0	95.6	0.5
North Central					56.0	44.0	90.4	2.9	6.7	0.0	0.0	3.0	96.9	0.0
Uva					50.3	49.7	86.2	5.3	5.2	3.3	0.0	5.6	85.9	8.5
Sabaragamuwa					59.6	40.4	85.5	7.9	3.8	2.9	0.0	5.1	84.3	10.5
Primary					30.9	69.1	58.5	24.4	5.2	11.9	0.0	10.2	65.2	24.5
Lower secondary					33.2	66.8	46.8	32.4	10.7	9.0	1.2	19.6	58.2	22.1
Upper secondary					50.7	49.3	72.5	14.1	10.5	2.7	0.1	11.2	84.2	4.6
O/L pass					53.3	46.7	76.4	10.9	8.3	3.9	0.5	15.3	81.4	3.4
A/L pass					59.1	40.9	74.7	12.6	10.1	1.8	0.8	24.1	74.5	1.4
Degree					79.0	21.0	79.3	12.7	6.7	1.3	0.0	19.6	79.1	1.3
Post-graduate					0.0	100.0	44.2	0.0	55.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Unmarried					47.7	52.3	72.8	13.5	9.8	3.6	0.4	16.2	79.5	4.2
Married					68.1	31.9	73.0	14.4	9.4	2.3	0.9	16.4	78.6	5.1
Married but not registered					67.9	32.1	73.2	26.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.5	84.5	0.0
Separated					100.0	0.0	36.2	63.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Divorced					100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Widowed					100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Buddhist					53.4	46.6	99.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	12.7	86.9	0.4
Hindu					49.4	50.6	2.4	77.0	1.2	19.5	0.0	18.8	58.5	22.7
Moors					58.7	41.3	1.1	0.6	97.8	0.0	0.5	33.7	66.1	0.1
Roman Catholic					49.4	50.6	70.6	19.8	0.0	4.0	5.7	21.3	72.5	6.2
Other Christian					56.2	43.8	32.4	66.3	0.0	1.3	0.0	10.6	57.8	31.5
Other					68.5	31.5	37.5	0.0	62.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 2 Youth and Education

Appendix 2.1: What are some of the changes youth would like in the education system?

(%)	Gender		Sector			Ethnicity				
	Female	Male	Urban	Rural	Estate	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other
More hours devoted to learning of life skills	28.1	26.4	34.4	25.8	27.1	24.6	35.7	31.1	34.0	70.1
Enhancing bilingual (Sinhala and Tamil) skills	30.4	28.6	27.4	29.9	31.2	30.0	25.6	34.2	28.3	3.4
Introduce human rights studies	15.6	17.0	17.9	16.3	10.0	17.3	13.8	15.4	9.2	0.0
Curriculum development for skills and attitudes with respect to diversity	11.1	9.8	10.0	10.6	9.7	12.1	5.6	5.9	8.0	9.5
Programmes for the prevention of violence and racism at schools	7.9	8.0	6.7	8.1	9.8	7.5	8.1	11.2	9.4	0.0
More learning hours devoted to inclusive and critical perspectives of history	5.2	5.3	2.8	5.4	10.4	4.9	8.2	1.6	9.4	9.7

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 2.2: Language skill level by gender, sector and ethnicity

(%)	Gender		Sector			Ethnicity				
	Female	Male	Urban	Rural	Estate	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other
Reading	33.0	28.9	45.0	29.2	13.7	32.8	17.7	41.1	18.0	36.7
Writing	32.3	27.0	44.2	27.7	15.2	30.6	19.8	41.8	18.1	36.7
Speaking	24.5	24.0	42.1	21.4	9.4	25.2	13.6	35.2	13.1	30.7

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 2.3: Use of information technology for education by youth

(%)		Gender		Sector			Ethnicity				
		Female	Male	Urban	Rural	Estate	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other
Internet	Low	73.6	68.8	56.5	73.6	91.1	69.7	75.0	77.5	76.2	87.8
	Moderate	17.2	19.3	21.9	17.9	5.6	19.3	15.1	14.7	18.3	12.2
	High	9.2	11.8	21.5	8.5	3.4	11.1	10.0	7.9	5.5	0.0
Mobile phone	Low	68.2	68.8	52.2	71.1	84.8	65.3	78.0	75.2	79.2	86.3
	Moderate	20.8	17.7	23.2	19.0	8.1	21.6	11.2	15.6	15.4	0.0
	High	11.0	13.6	24.6	9.9	7.1	13.1	10.7	9.2	5.4	13.7
Email	Low	85.6	82.0	73.7	85.6	94.6	83.5	86.2	84.5	80.6	100.0
	Moderate	8.6	10.4	10.0	9.6	3.0	9.4	8.6	10.1	14.3	0.0
	High	5.8	7.6	16.3	4.9	2.4	7.1	5.2	5.4	5.1	0.0

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 2 Youth and Education

Appendix 2.4: Use of information technology for education by province

Province		Province								
		Western	Central	Southern	Northern	Eastern	North Western	North Central	Uva	Sabaragamuwa
Internet	Low	56.1	69.9	69.9	57.7	92.5	79.5	83.7	82.7	79.8
	Moderate	26.6	18.5	22.5	24.1	4.9	12.9	12.5	13.3	11.9
	High	17.3	11.6	7.6	18.2	2.6	7.5	3.8	4.0	8.4
Mobile phone	Low	49.2	66.9	56.1	73.1	95.7	84.4	91.4	54.8	83.5
	Moderate	32.6	17.1	28.9	13.0	3.3	9.9	5.6	25.3	10.2
	High	18.2	16.0	14.9	13.9	1.0	5.7	3.0	19.9	6.4
Email	Low	73.3	80.6	87.2	77.3	95.8	90.7	95.5	90.3	86.5
	Moderate	14.1	10.8	9.8	14.2	3.1	5.1	3.6	5.2	8.9
	High	12.6	8.5	2.9	8.5	1.1	4.2	1.0	4.6	4.6

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 2.5: Do you face the following difficulties in your school?

Province	Province								
	Western	Central	Southern	Northern	Eastern	North Western	North Central	Uva	Sabaragamuwa
Too far	10.6	16.1	11.1	23.7	6.0	14.4	13.0	21.6	9.7
Travel problems	15.6	25.4	18.8	20.3	6.6	15.3	15.4	20.5	15.9
Lack of teachers	18.1	21.5	14.6	15.6	14.7	22.5	13.8	7.7	19.7
Fewer facilities	23.9	31.1	15.9	17.5	11.9	25.4	13.8	10.6	22.9
Does not cover syllabus	19.7	20.3	10.8	14.6	6.8	7.5	13.0	2.1	10.3
Bullying	3.6	2.0	0.8	2.0	1.0	1.9	4.2	1.4	2.9
Harassment from teachers	2.5	1.1	0.3	1.5	1.7	2.1	1.3	0.0	1.4
Sexual harassment	0.8	1.0	0.1	2.1	0.9	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.7
Unable to cover education costs	24.0	18.0	22.9	30.8	26.8	18.0	23.6	15.0	23.2
Did not have A/L choice	3.9	8.8	4.9	10.4	4.0	7.7	6.7	3.6	7.6

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 3 Youth and Employment

Appendix 3.1 Main activity in the last 12 months

(%)	Gender		Ethnicity				Sector			
	Female	Male	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other	Urban	Rural	Estate
Employed full time either permanent or temporary	36.2	63.8	73.5	14.2	6.4	4.8	1.1	16.9	75.0	8.1
Employed part time but not a student	32.5	67.5	67.5	18.0	14.2	0.3	0.0	14.4	83.8	1.8
Employed but seeking other employment	31.6	68.4	84.0	9.8	4.1	2.1	0.0	15.1	79.5	5.4
Unemployed but seeking employment	61.1	38.9	66.6	22.5	7.8	2.4	0.5	18.3	78.5	3.2
Unemployed and not seeking employment	77.5	22.5	74.4	8.3	15.3	1.2	0.8	17.7	79.6	2.7
Full-time student	53.4	46.6	76.1	9.9	11.2	2.8	0.1	15.9	81.9	2.2
Student with part-time employment	48.4	51.6	65.2	17.6	7.8	6.5	2.9	18.1	81.1	0.8
Unpaid household work	97.2	2.8	60.9	20.1	15.1	3.8	0.2	12.7	82.2	5.2

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 3 Youth and Employment

Appendix 3.2 Youth by occupational category

	Gender		Ethnicity					Sector		
	Female	Male	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other	Urban	Rural	Estate
Unemployed	63.4	36.6	71.9	13.9	11.6	2.3	0.2	15.8	81.3	2.8
Managers	49.7	50.3	89.3	5.9	1.9	0.6	2.4	29.8	69.6	0.6
Professionals	58.6	41.4	72.1	13.5	10.9	1.7	1.8	24.7	71.3	4.0
Technical and associate professionals	16.0	84.0	75.7	14.3	1.0	7.6	1.4	18.4	77.8	3.8
Clerical support workers	69.2	30.8	78.0	10.1	8.6	3.3	0.0	19.4	79.6	1.1
Services and sales workers	26.0	74.0	72.1	13.8	10.7	3.4	0.0	21.1	71.9	7.0
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	13.3	86.7	66.4	19.2	6.3	8.1	0.0	8.3	79.8	11.9
Craft and related works	26.5	73.5	60.9	15.3	9.2	8.5	6.1	11.5	81.5	7.0
Plant, machine operators and assemblers	55.9	44.1	80.7	7.9	5.5	4.1	1.8	11.1	84.2	4.8
Elementary occupation	32.8	67.2	72.1	19.6	1.7	6.5	0.0	16.2	66.6	17.2
Armed forces operations	25.6	74.4	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	97.5	0.0

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 3 Youth and Employment

Appendix 3.3: Youth by industry of employment

(%)	Gender		Ethnicity					Sector		
	Female	Male	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other	Urban	Rural	Estate
Unemployed	63.2	36.8	71.0	14.3	12.2	2.3	0.2	15.6	81.7	2.7
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	13.4	86.6	69.0	19.5	5.1	6.4	0.0	8.9	79.7	11.4
Manufacturing	48.7	51.3	82.5	5.2	1.7	7.8	2.8	9.1	84.0	7.0
Construction	9.2	90.8	70.7	20.2	5.7	3.5	0.0	10.8	83.0	6.2
Wholesale/retail trade, repair of vehicles	28.6	71.4	57.3	18.5	17.8	6.4	0.0	26.3	64.0	9.7
Hotels and restaurants	23.6	76.4	79.0	15.3	0.0	5.7	0.0	10.9	74.3	14.9
Transport, storage and communication	9.5	90.5	78.5	9.8	10.8	0.9	0.0	18.4	78.8	2.8
Financial intermediation and real estate	47.1	52.9	78.2	11.5	6.3	3.9	0.0	42.3	50.3	7.4
Public administration and defence/security	52.7	47.3	91.7	5.8	2.5	0.0	0.0	3.2	96.8	0.0
Education	76.9	23.1	59.2	13.1	16.1	8.9	2.7	13.9	83.7	2.4
Health and social work	52.5	47.5	80.8	18.1	0.0	1.2	0.0	21.7	75.3	3.0
Information technology/business process outsourcing	37.8	62.2	78.5	17.9	2.1	1.5	0.0	43.6	53.2	3.2
Other	56.0	44.0	81.0	14.5	2.6	0.9	1.0	18.9	73.7	7.4

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 3.4: Youth by sector of employment

(%)	Gender		Sector			Ethnicity				
	Female	Male	Urban	Rural	Estate	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other
Government	12.7	10.3	8.6	12.5	6.9	12.7	9.1	9.4	7.1	0.0
Semi-government	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.3	2.5	2.9	1.8	0.0	1.0	0.0
Private	32.6	55.0	50.9	40.9	60.6	46.1	34.4	28.3	66.3	95.5
Self-employed	5.5	20.2	10.0	13.3	13.7	11.5	13.8	22.2	12.6	4.5
Unpaid household workers	47.0	12.0	27.8	31.0	16.4	26.9	40.9	40.2	13.0	0.0

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 4

Health and Well-being of Youth

Appendix 4.1: People may engage in various activities to enhance their health and well-being; Please tell us if you engage in any of the following activities?

(%)		Total	Gender		Sector			Ethnicity				
			Female	Male	Urban	Rural	Estate	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other
Sports	Very high	25.6	17.5	34.7	25.7	26.1	16.3	28.0	19.1	16.7	20.5	48.5
	High	23.6	20.5	27.0	22.7	23.5	28.0	23.2	27.8	20.4	26.0	0.0
	Average	18.1	18.9	17.1	21.2	17.0	26.3	15.5	25.3	23.5	28.0	21.1
	Low	16.7	19.6	13.4	17.4	16.6	15.9	17.4	12.7	18.6	14.1	3.4
	Very low	15.5	22.8	7.2	12.7	16.2	12.8	15.1	14.1	20.6	11.3	27.0
Dancing	Very high	6.6	9.2	3.7	6.2	6.9	2.8	7.6	4.7	3.0	2.1	10.3
	High	11.9	14.6	8.8	14.2	11.4	12.5	12.7	8.9	8.6	16.2	20.0
	Average	15.1	18.5	11.2	17.3	14.4	18.9	13.4	21.4	12.1	34.4	22.2
	Low	24.7	24.3	25.3	23.9	24.6	31.1	23.8	24.2	32.5	28.5	0.0
	Very low	40.0	32.3	48.7	37.9	40.8	32.3	40.6	38.9	43.3	18.3	47.6
Music	Very high	10.8	9.5	12.2	15.9	10.0	6.9	11.4	9.5	9.0	7.0	10.3
	High	20.6	21.8	19.1	21.2	20.3	22.4	21.2	18.7	13.6	33.9	27.7
	Average	28.1	29.3	26.8	30.2	27.5	31.5	27.2	28.7	36.1	26.8	11.0
	Low	18.8	18.9	18.6	17.4	18.9	21.9	18.4	16.9	24.6	19.8	0.0
	Very low	20.3	19.1	21.6	15.0	21.6	16.0	20.1	24.8	16.7	11.5	51.1
Reading	Very high	20.2	24.7	15.2	23.1	20.5	5.6	22.5	12.2	20.1	4.5	18.2
	High	29.0	31.2	26.4	32.4	28.1	31.3	27.1	37.4	28.7	38.0	18.0
	Average	26.5	25.6	27.6	28.7	26.1	27.0	25.3	26.6	33.3	33.0	32.6
	Low	13.4	9.9	17.3	9.9	13.5	23.1	13.6	14.2	11.7	12.2	3.4
	Very low	8.8	6.8	11.0	4.8	9.5	9.6	9.4	7.1	5.5	9.5	27.8
Watching TV/movies	Very high	23.2	21.5	25.0	28.7	21.7	28.1	24.8	17.2	19.3	24.7	18.7
	High	39.8	40.5	39.0	42.9	38.9	45.4	38.0	40.8	48.5	50.7	32.8
	Average	27.0	27.5	26.4	23.4	28.3	17.3	26.9	30.5	26.0	17.6	30.2
	Low	6.0	6.7	5.3	3.0	6.6	6.7	6.1	7.5	3.5	6.1	8.5
	Very low	2.8	3.1	2.4	1.3	3.1	2.5	2.8	3.1	2.3	1.0	9.7
Religious activities	Very high	22.2	25.6	18.3	23.3	22.5	12.8	21.1	18.0	40.4	9.3	29.7
	High	38.4	40.6	35.9	44.0	37.5	34.4	36.5	42.6	42.3	49.5	48.1
	Average	28.3	26.0	30.9	25.5	28.1	42.7	29.6	33.5	10.4	32.5	11.9
	Low	6.9	3.9	10.4	4.6	7.3	8.3	7.6	4.3	5.1	7.1	10.3
	Very low	2.5	2.6	2.4	1.5	2.8	1.7	3.1	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.0
Computer games	Very high	8.4	5.8	11.4	15.0	7.5	1.9	9.3	4.7	9.0	3.1	9.7
	High	12.3	9.3	15.7	16.6	11.7	8.0	12.4	14.5	12.0	5.6	0.0
	Average	11.4	9.9	13.0	13.9	11.1	6.6	10.7	11.2	15.5	15.5	0.0
	Low	19.4	21.2	17.4	18.3	19.3	25.8	20.5	13.2	16.7	31.2	8.5
	Very low	46.5	52.1	40.1	35.0	48.2	57.5	45.0	54.4	46.4	44.6	51.6
Browsing Internet	Very high	8.2	6.7	9.8	18.3	6.5	1.7	9.1	4.7	9.6	0.0	0.0
	High	10.5	8.0	13.4	16.3	9.7	5.1	10.3	14.1	8.3	10.1	0.0
	Average	12.6	11.6	13.7	17.3	12.0	5.1	12.2	11.5	16.6	13.2	11.8
	Low	17.2	16.8	17.8	14.5	17.7	19.1	17.9	11.6	19.4	22.6	0.0
	Very low	49.5	55.2	43.0	32.6	51.9	68.7	48.6	56.7	45.1	53.9	48.2
Gardening	Very high	9.6	12.4	6.5	7.3	10.2	7.9	11.1	5.8	4.1	9.3	0.0
	High	15.2	17.1	13.0	8.3	16.5	16.0	16.9	10.9	9.1	13.1	9.5
	Average	18.3	20.8	15.4	12.5	19.2	22.7	19.0	17.4	10.1	31.7	6.7
	Low	21.6	19.5	23.9	25.3	21.1	16.8	23.5	18.5	14.1	16.2	8.5
	Very low	33.3	28.3	38.9	45.6	30.6	36.3	27.1	46.3	62.2	29.4	35.3

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 4

Health and Well-being of Youth

Appendix 4.2: How do you pay for health care services when the cost is significant?

	Total	Gender		Sector			Ethnicity				
		Female	Male	Urban	Rural	Estate	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other
From own savings	25.1	21.3	29.3	29.2	24.5	20.3	27.3	23.4	16.8	10.4	0.0
Parents	52.6	54.3	50.7	52.8	53.1	43.5	51.6	49.0	65.8	55.9	26.3
Borrow money	6.3	5.6	7.2	3.7	6.1	20.3	4.1	16.0	6.9	12.8	13.6
Insurance	3.8	3.4	4.2	5.4	3.7	0.2	4.2	2.5	0.9	6.7	18.7
Sell property or assets	4.0	4.2	3.8	3.1	4.0	6.5	4.0	4.8	3.4	3.7	3.4
Seek assistance from government/other sources	3.6	3.6	3.7	2.1	3.8	6.8	3.8	2.7	0.9	8.0	29.5
Other	3.7	6.7	0.4	3.2	4.0	1.9	4.1	1.5	4.6	1.9	8.5

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

Appendix 5

Civic and Political Participation of Youth

Appendix 5.1: What is your level of agreement that: “Politics in my locality is becoming more violent?”

(%)	Total	Gender		Sector			Ethnicity				
		Female	Male	Urban	Rural	Estate	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Moors	Indian Tamils	Other
Not at all	10.3	10.7	9.9	5.7	10.7	19.5	11.5	8.7	3.0	11.7	9.5
Somewhat	39.0	36.7	41.7	42.1	38.6	36.4	40.8	34.5	35.3	31.6	26.6
High	30.2	33.6	26.5	30.7	30.1	30.5	29.2	30.5	37.9	31.8	14.9
Very high	19.3	18.1	20.8	21.4	19.3	12.4	17.4	25.6	21.9	23.3	49.0

Source: National Youth Survey 2013.

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