



International
Labour
Organization



The ILO in Sri Lanka

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES



Population (2017)

21.4 million



GDP per capita (2018)

US\$4,073

	Total	Male	Female
Labour force (2017)	8.56M	5.43M	3.13M
Labour force participation rate (2017)	54.1%	74.5%	36.6%
Employment to population ratio (2017)	51.8%	72.4%	34.3%
Unemployment rate (2017)	4.2%	3.1%	6.9%
Youth unemployment rate (2017) (15-24 years of age)	18.5%	14.9%	24.5%

Source: ILO Stats, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report 2017, Central Bank, Economic and Social Statistics of Sri Lanka, 2018 and Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey, 2017

RATIFIED CONVENTIONS

Sri Lanka has ratified 43 ILO Conventions including all eight Fundamental Conventions:

- C.29 Forced Labour Convention, 1930
- C.87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948
- C.98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949
- C.100 Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951
- C.105 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957
- C.111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958
- C.138 Minimum Age Convention, 1973
- C.182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999

Most recently the country ratified the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No.122), the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006) and the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No.185).

Source: The ILO

In 2009, Sri Lanka emerged from almost three decades of civil conflict that caused economic, political and social disruption. Sri Lanka is moving towards sustained peace, reconciliation and sustainable development. Yet, regional disparities and marginalisation of rural communities in terms of livelihoods, compounded by slow and rapid onset of environmental disasters including incessant droughts and floods continue to pose challenges.

The Sri Lankan GDP per capita stood at US\$4,073 in 2018. The largest contributing sector to GDP is the services sector standing at 56% of GDP in 2017; in sharp contrast to the agriculture sector that contributed a mere 6.9%, despite this sector representing a significant share of the labour force (26.1%).

Sri Lanka observed a welcome downward trend in the past two decades in terms of the poverty headcount index, which fell to 4.1% in 2017. However, there is a disproportionately large proportion of the poor living and working in estate and rural areas, representing 82.2% of the nation's total poor.

While the overall unemployment rate was 4.2% in 2017, unemployment among youth, educationally qualified and women continues to be very high. Gender inequality in the labour market has been slow to change, with the female labour force participation rate stagnant at 36.6%, or around half that of males in 2017.

Social security coverage in Sri Lanka is more extensive than in most other South Asian countries. Workers in the formal economy and public sectors are well covered. A few voluntary schemes operate for some groups in the informal economy, such as farmers, fishermen and self-employed persons.

THE ILO - WHO WE ARE

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the United Nations agency for the world of work. Devoted to advancing social justice, it promotes a Decent Work Agenda based on four strategic pillars: rights at work, decent employment opportunities, social protection and social dialogue.

It is the only public international organisation which is tripartite, where workers and employers enjoy equal rights with governments in representation and decision making. Together they set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes upholding decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity for all.

Created in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, the ILO became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946. It received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969 and today is recognized as the world's authority on the world of work, offering over 100 years of knowledge, experience and achievements.

THE ILO IN SRI LANKA



Sri Lanka became a member of the ILO in 1948. In 1984 the ILO Country Office in Colombo was established. In 2009, the ILO Country Office expanded its coverage to include the Maldives.

Since 2006 Sri Lanka has designed and executed three Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). The ongoing fourth Decent Work Country Programme (2018-2022) has three Country Priorities, and these are the creation of sustainable, inclusive and decent employment; better governance of the labour market; and rights at work for all; and with greater data and knowledge generation as an enabling priority across the DWCP.

Current areas of work

Within the framework of the DWCP, the ILO has contributed to Sri Lanka's social, economic and labour market development in a number of important ways.

- Supporting the Sri Lankan workforce supported to have more and better employment opportunities whilst reducing the challenges facing them, in particular youth, women and persons with disabilities to have skills or competencies to meet current labour market demands. Reducing barriers for women, youth and those with disabilities to enter the labour market. Equipping Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises with business solutions in line with the Decent Work Agenda to enhance their resilience, sustainability and competitiveness.
- Assisting the tripartite constituents and other stakeholders to formulate a national strategy to respond to technological advancements and other productive market demands in the context of the future of work in the 21st century.
- Improving constituent capacity to institutionalise and operationalise effective systems of social dialogue and tripartism. Supporting national minimum wage-setting through enhanced social dialogue, and in national tripartite social dialogue on labour and social policymaking and workplace cooperation.

- Supporting the government to implement a more effective labour administration system with more efficient workplace inspection through building capacity of the labour administration and ensuring that mechanisms are in place for effective dispute resolution. Also, supporting social partners for effective implementation of ILO Conventions.
- Ensuring laws and policies are modernised to respond to diverse and evolving forms of work. Supporting the process of labour law reform through tripartite consultation, while strengthening the capacity of duty bearers and claim holders for effective implementation of updated labour laws.
- Supporting the government to formulate and implement a policy framework and legal environment to eradicate child labour and specifically its worst forms.
- Providing technical assistance to improve labour market outcomes for (low-skilled) migrants and reduce their vulnerability to exploitation (forced labour). Supporting the strengthening of regulatory frameworks on labour migration, forced labour and trafficking, and in enabling institutions to facilitate decent work opportunities and provide access to justice for (low-skilled) migrant workers, returned migrants and persons affected by forced labour/trafficking.
- Ensuring social protection for all workers with a special focus on informal workers while facilitating increased coverage and accessibility of social protection.
- Supporting the timely availability and accessibility of reliable user-friendly labour market information (LMI) to policymakers, constituents, and the public. Building the capacity of constituents to use available LMI data for evidence-based policy and practice.

Social Partners

The ILO's social partners in Sri Lanka include the subject ministries for Labour, Foreign Employment, Skills Development and Vocational Training; the Employers' Federation of Ceylon; and trade unions.

Decent work: a key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals



“Decent work is not just a goal – it is a driver of sustainable development”

Guy Ryder, ILO Director General

By embracing the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a once-in-a-generation chance to make a change and improve the lives of billions, leaving no one behind.

At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while working to preserve our planet.

The importance of decent work in achieving sustainable development is highlighted by Goal 8 which aims to “promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

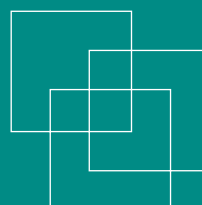
Putting decent work at the heart of economic policy-making and development plans will not only generate jobs but also lead to more robust, inclusive and poverty-reducing growth. It is a virtuous circle that is as good for the economy as it is for people, and one that drives sustainable development.

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