8.1 Overview

Sri Lanka has made significant progress in reducing poverty over past decades. The Poverty Head Count Ratio at the national level has declined from 22.7 percent in 2002 to 6.7 percent in 2012/13. Despite the above achievements, inequality and vulnerability remain issues of great concerns. Generally, certain segments of the population like children, disadvantaged women, elders and disabled are vulnerable. The government mainly focuses to ensure the well-being of those segments within the family through group specific interventions. In line with the above principle, major welfare and livelihood assistance programmes have been implemented aiming at the above vulnerable groups to ensure inclusive growth where each and every individual of the country is able to enjoy the economic and social benefits.

8.2 Safety Net Programme

Currently, around 36 welfare programmes are being implemented island-wide mainly focusing on poverty reduction and reducing vulnerability. These programmes are managed by different agencies at national and provincial levels. However, at present most of the ineligible families/ persons are receiving welfare assistance. According to the HIES 2012/13 data, although 6.7 percent of the households are below the poverty line, 16 percent of the households in the country have received Samurdhi cash transfers. Further, almost two-thirds of the poorest quintile does not receive any cash transfers at all.

8.2.1 Prevailing issues in existing welfare programmes

1. Targeting- (inclusion and exclusion errors) -include the beneficiaries those who are not eligible to receive benefits and exclude the eligible persons. In most cases beneficiary selecting criteria is based on the poverty line and also suffer from lack of clearly defined criterion/ definition. Therefore, the following major weaknesses are identified:

- Difficulty to identify the real income of beneficiaries
- Difficulty of eligible persons to enter the programme
- No clear exit mechanism to remove empowered families

Box 8.1 : Main Safety Net Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Beneficiary /Target Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Support programmes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurdhi - (Divi Neguma)</td>
<td>Subsidy and related benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly allowance for disabled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly allowance (Monthly)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public assistance monthly allowance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance for illnesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation Grants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(one-off grants for micro-business activities, as alternative to PAMA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nutritional Support programme</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriposhaj national supplementary food programme</td>
<td>All pregnant and lactating mothers (up to 06 months from birth) and undernourished children aged 05-59 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2 Take-Home packs of Thriposhaj per month)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Allowance (Poshana Malla food stamp Rs.2000 per month)</td>
<td>All pregnant and lactation mothers below required body mass index (BMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Milk for nursery children</td>
<td>Children 2-5 Years in ECD centers in low nutrition areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Inefficient institutional framework and higher administrative cost

There are overlaps in programmes, both at national and provincial levels and among agencies. This duplication makes it difficult to develop a coherent and efficient social protection system.

3. Unavailability of a proper social security system in the informal sector

This is mainly because those who are employed in the informal sector do not enjoy the benefits of any existing social security scheme. This is crucial as Sri Lanka’s aging population is increasing.

Therefore, it is necessary to establish an integrated welfare and subsidy management (“one-stop-shop”) and social security system for addressing the above issues. The international experiences reveal that countries such as Chile, Brazil and Colombia have succeeded in integrating their social protection system. The key features of this integrated system are a centralized and unified database of beneficiaries and standardized mechanism to target eligible beneficiaries.

Further, the targeting system of the welfare programmes; especially Samurdhi, needs to be revised using scientific method namely Proxy Means Tests (PMT). This means shifting to indirect methods of eligibility assessment based on score obtained from a formula with a weighted set of proxy indicators including household assets, demographic characteristics, housing conditions, expenditure pattern, etc., in addition to the monthly income. Particularly, attention needs to be given to identify “pockets of poverty” and ensure the well-being of the people specially in underserved areas.

Box 8.2 : Samurdhi/ Divineguma Subsidy Programme

The Samurdhi /Divineguma programme is the main social protection initiative for the poor in the country both in terms of the expenditure and the number of beneficiaries. This associates with multiple programmes like the subsidy (or the cash transfer), social security (or insurance), microfinance and livelihood development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Monthly Subsidy (Rs.)</th>
<th>Net Subsidy Amount (Rs.)</th>
<th>Compulsory Savings (Rs.)</th>
<th>Contribution to Social Security Fund (Rs.)</th>
<th>Contribution to Housing Fund (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 member families</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 member families</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2,245</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or more members</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>3,145</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowered Families</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Divineguma Development

The main purpose of the subsidy programme is to promote compulsory savings and improve savings culture among poor families. However, currently, these compulsory savings can only be withdrawn after a beneficiary reaches the age of 60 years unless he/she suffers from a serious illness or require funds for investment.

Despite being in operation for nearly two decades and having a substantial coverage of families, the Samurdhi/ Divineguma subsidy programme has several weaknesses relating to targeting both inclusive and exclusive errors.

The Samurdhi/ Divineguma cash transfer programme has undergone a few waves of reforms during the last decade. These reforms were aimed at enhancing the quantity and coverage of benefits and restructuring the design of the programme. The rising cost of the Samurdhi/ Divineguma programme requires to bring down the number of ineligible beneficiaries, while targeting the benefits only for the needy groups.
8.3 Women

Allowing all members of a society to participate in, and contribute to, the growth process on an equal basis will result in achieving inclusive growth regardless of their individual concerns. However, the available data and indicators show that the economic potential of the Sri Lankan women is not fully utilized for the process of economic development. The condition of women in Sri Lanka is determined by the social-cultural norms and economic status. As a result of social policies on free health and education services, women’s quality of life has remarkably improved. Compared to the rest of South Asia, Sri Lankan women enjoy better quality of life with high life expectancy (74 years), nearly universal literacy, and access to economic opportunities, which are nearly unmatched in the rest of the subcontinent.

8.3.1. Issues and Challenges

- Low female labour participation

Recent studies have revealed that Sri Lanka’s female labour participation is low compared to its Asian counterparts such as Thailand and Malaysia which have a high rate of 64 percent and 44 percent respectively. The latest available data indicate that out of the total economically inactive population of the country, 70.3 percent is female and out of the total economically active population females account for only 33.4 percent (Department of Census and Statistics, 2013). Lack of facilities for child caring has been identified as a major constraint which prevents women from participating in the labour force.

- Low participation in the decision making process

Renewed efforts are being made to improve female representation in Sri Lankan politics targeting the upcoming local government elections which is an essential part of inclusive development. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Sri Lanka political representation of the women is less than 6 percent and ranks 128th out of 140 countries. Females represent only 4.1 percent of seats in the Provincial Councils (PCs), and 2.3 percent of seats in the Local Government (LG) bodies in Sri Lanka.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.3.1: Comparison of Female Labor Force Participation in Developed/Developing Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.3.2: Female Representation in Parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

However, the Table 8.3.2 reveal that, Sri Lanka female representation is the lowest in the region. Deserving women should have a chance to represent themselves in the parliament and facilitate to improve good governance through inclusiveness.

- Increase of incidents of Violence Against Women (VAW)

Violence against women occurs in many parts of the country and however not all cases are reported. The violence against women has serious health and development impacts and is a gross violation of women’s rights. Some studies show that these issues are mainly reported in estate and rural sectors.

Key Factors influencing Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Sri Lanka

- Family conflicts due to the poverty status of the family
Women in nuclear family set up seem to be more vulnerable to GBV compared to extended family units. 

Women Headed Households (WHH)

According to the most recent Household and Income Expenditure Survey (2012/13), it is estimated that out of 5.2 million households in Sri Lanka, 1.2 million households or 23 percent of the households are WHH. WHHs are not confined to a particular geographical location or a residential sector. When a sector-wise comparison is made, the highest proportion of WHHs is found to be in urban areas. The proportion of WHHs is increasing in all three sector, urban, rural and estate with the highest increase recorded for the estate sector.

Currently, Government and other organizations are supporting WHHs including war widows. While the ongoing efforts are positive and have contributed to the betterment of the lives of individuals in WHHs, there are some serious issues concerning WHH unaddressed. In most of the current development efforts, WHH are not considered as a diverse group with varied and multi-faceted issues but as a simple category identified as “most vulnerable”. Another limitation is that current approaches are often focused on one facet of experience of a WHH (i.e. livelihoods), the success of which is dependent upon other issues (health, security etc.). As such, a multi sectoral approach is required to improve the lives of WHH.

Ongoing Programmes

Implementing several livelihood development programmes targeting vulnerable women, providing training, financial and technical assistance to improve the economic status of the family. These include Samurdhi, cash grants, concessionary lending facilities etc.

Box 8.3: Snapshot of WHH Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over 60% of female heads are under 60. The highest concentration is within the age group 40-59. 20% of women headed households are below 40.</td>
<td>Employment of female heads is below 35%. In the estate sector 52% are employed but in precarious employment. 22% indicated that they are unable or too old to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% have no schooling (This figure is twice the national figure). 27% have only primary education.</td>
<td>32% of female heads are married. While a majority are widowed, there is a substantial proportion of NHs due to separation or divorce.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conducting awareness programmes on reducing Gender Based Violence (GBV) at national, district and divisional levels

Providing services mainly for widows and Women Headed Households collaboratively with the relevant Ministries and agencies and other stakeholders in Northern and Eastern Provinces.

8.3.2. Key Strategies

- Implement special programmes for women on business development training and technology transfer, create markets and market linkages, share business information and facilitate access to credit for the business.

- Implement a range of special programmes by both government and non-government institutions especially focusing the Women Headed Households and vulnerable women.

- Boost the supply of childcare facilities to enhance women labour force participation through a comprehensive programme to establish day care centers with the support of stakeholders.

  Carry out a comprehensive survey and develop a data base

  Revise Child Care policy and standard regulations to standardize the existing centers and care givers

  Promote all government and private institutions to start the day care centres

- Ensure and safeguard the rights of women

  Enact the Bill of Rights of Women

  Establish a “National Commission on Women” to enforce the bill of rights

  Enforce strict legal punishment for sexual and violent crimes against women

  Appoint a “National Commission on Preventing Sexual and Gender Based Violence (GBV)”

  Provide assistance for victims of gender based violence

- Strengthen the counseling system in each DS division to resolve family disputes

- Develop a comprehensive programme to identify current gaps and limitations covering the areas of legal aid for land disputes, GBV, awareness-raising on sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS/

Social stigma associated with widows, divided/separated families etc

- Develop a model of vocational training for skill development

- Initiate a campaign to change attitude towards women’s participation in the labour force

- Increase women participation in decision making at political and institutional level

8.4 Children

For a balanced growth of a child, health and education are the two most important services he/she should receive. Both of these services are available free of charge within the country ensuring the proper physical and mental growth of the child. Although Sri Lankan children are in a better status compared to other South Asian countries, there are several challenges to be addressed.

8.4.1. Issues and Challenges

- High malnutrition and obesity among children

- Poor quality of early childhood education

- Increased violence/abuse against children

- Unsystematic implementation of Early Childhood Development Programmes

- Provision of foster parent or institutional care for destitutes and orphans

- Inadequate access to health, nutrition and education facilities by vulnerable children

8.4.2. Key Strategies

- Promote advocacy as a continuous process to help mobilize resources and galvanize political and social leadership to prevent child abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect
Setup administrative and social reforms for preventing child violence and abuse

Formulate and implement child protection policy

Enforce strict legal punishment for child abuse

Formulate a child friendly legal system

Ensure effective coordination amongst all organizations and actors working for the protection and development of the children of this country

Strengthen and expand non-formal education opportunities for children who have not been to school, children who are drop-outs

Ensure every child’s preschool enrollment

Reduce malnutrition among children under 5 years

8.5 Elders

As a consequence of changing fertility, mortality and international migration trends, Sri Lanka’s aged population has increased from 6.6 percent in 1981 to 9.2 percent in 2001 and 12.2 percent in 2012. It is projected that elder population will double from the current level in 2041 and reached the level of 24.8 percent.

Future trends are as follows:

Every one out of four will be over the age of 60 years by the year 2041. Further the oldest old people (80+) will account for more than 5 percent of the nation population.

Older population will be more predominantly female in the future.

One in five (20.9 percent) of the aged persons who are 60 years or above is widowed with higher tendency for women to become widows at older age.
8.5.1 Issues and Challenges

- Change in attitudes on traditional family support to older people.
- Formal social security systems have limited coverage and inadequate benefits
- Inadequate geriatric health care
- Lack of opportunities to participate in productive economic activities
- Ill-treatment of elders

Ongoing Programmes

- A new model for elder care is being developed to ensure protection of vulnerable elders (Figure 8.1)
- A special programme is being implemented to establish elder care centres - a data base of elder care centers and web page for the elderly care is currently created with the participation of the all stakeholders.
- Financial assistance is provided to low

8.5.2 Key Strategies

- Increase the number of day care centers for senior citizens to spend quality leisure time with the private sector participation
- Establish special ward facilities in every hospital for senior citizens with trained geriatricians
- Provide free passes to senior citizens for public transport (over 74 years)
- Provide higher interest rates of deposits of senior citizens
- Provide training in gerontology to Social Service Officers, Elders Rights Promotion Assistants, Social Development Assistants, Development Officers, Counselors, Hospital Attendants and Family Health Officers
- Provide necessary medicine for chronic diseases such as kidney diseases, cancer, heart diseases, etc. at a concessionary rate for elders
- Facilitate senior citizens to engage in productive economic activities
- Implement a health insurance scheme for senior citizens
- Establish elders’ cooperative societies in order to facilitate microfinance, marketing, national and international networking, etc.
- Improve and expand infrastructure facilities of exiting elder homes
- Introduce universal pension scheme (social security system with health insurance scheme) for all the persons above 65 years of age who donot have the benefit of any other pension scheme.
- Establish at least 3 elder care centers in each DS division
- Include basic principles of gerontology in the school curriculum
- Establish subsidized elder homes for elders who have regular income

8.6 Differently-abled

The issue of disability exists in every society. According to the Department of Census and Statistics, out of the population aged 5 years and above, 8.7 percent have reported at least one difficulty. Of this, 43 percent were males and 57 were females.

8.6.1 Issues and Challenges

- Low educational achievements, especially in tertiary education
- Less economically active
• Experience higher rates of poverty
• Inability to live independently or participate fully in community activities

8.6.2 Key Strategies

• Identify the children with disabilities in their early childhood
• Invest in specific programmes and services for people with disabilities
• Promote employment and develop livelihoods through Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)
  - Teach skills for developing income-generating opportunities and for being employed
  - Impart knowledge about the labour market
  - Shape appropriate attitudes to work
  - Provide guidance on developing relationships with employers to find a job or receive on-the-job training
• Support targeted welfare programmes for differently abled persons with severe disabilities and low income.
  - Promote self-employment and provide microfinance
• Improve human resource capacity of the employees who are engaged in providing services to the differently-abled
• Increase public awareness and understanding of disability

8.7 Internal Displaced Families

Sri Lanka has passed nearly 7 years since the end of three decade long conflict in May 2009 and now people have gained new strength and expectations about their living standards. The Government has placed a high priority on expediting the development of conflict affected areas and improving living conditions of the people with a view to achieving firm economic development to strengthen the national reconciliation process. In view of this policy, a broad array of development interventions have been implemented by the Government with the support of the development partners. As a result of post conflict development interventions in the Northern and Eastern provinces, most of the socio-economic indicators have improved close to the national level. However, some indicators such as pipe borne water coverage (northern), infant mortality (northern) and maternal mortality (northern) are far behind the national level.

Since the Northern and Eastern Provinces and adjoining districts had been facing the direct consequences of a conflict situation nearly for three decades, bringing back these areas to normalcy within a short period is a huge challenge. In order to achieve government macroeconomic and regional development objectives by 2020, a substantial amount of additional resources are required to fill the remaining gaps in relation to vital socio-economic infrastructure needs in the Northern and Eastern provinces as well as bordering districts.

8.7.1 Issues and Challenges

• Resettlement of IDPs in their places of origin
• Resettlement issues of Second generation
• Repatriation of refugees from Tamil Nadu, India.
• Rehabilitation and social integration of detainees and ex-combatants.
• Issues of detainees against whom charge sheets not framed / minor offenders need to be addressed.
• Payment of compensation for persons, properties and industries.
• Demining of lands for resettlement

8.7.2 Key Strategies

• Take action to release original lands to IDPs or provide alternative lands.
• Strengthen the resettlement programme by providing basic requirements and infrastructure facilities to the IDPs and returnee refugees.
• Provide assistance for livelihood development to enhance the standard of living condition of resettled IDPs.

• Ensure effective coordination among all organizations working for the resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons to expedite the resettlement process.

• Provide self-employment and livelihood support to rehabilitees (ex-combatants) to mainstream them into national development.

Medium Term Targets of the Social Protection Sector

• Zero tolerance of gender based violence
• Increase women labour force participation up to 40 percent
• Increase women representatives in municipalities and provincial councils up to 25 percent
• Increase preschool enrolment up to 100 percent by 2020
• Increase preschool teacher training up to 100 percent by 2020
• Reduce malnutrition among the children (reduce underweight by 5 percent)
• Ensure social welfare and rights for needy people
• Reduce incidence of women and child violence and ensure women and children rights
• Integrate all welfare systems and ensure that benefits are reached only by the needy segment
• Reduce poverty among vulnerable communities

Source: Department of National Planning