

## Addressing Sri Lanka's Health Challenges for Long-Term Development

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Challenges we are facing today include aging, increasing levels of non communicable diseases (including injuries & mental health) and urbanization. Health system of Sri Lanka is not geared for the future needs & it must be modernized.

Sri Lanka can be coined as a "health star" when it's compared with other developing countries. Sri Lanka's health is pretty much compatible with most of the developed countries when we consider key health indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality rate & maternal mortality rate. However, the difference between male & female life expectancy is very high.

Even though Sri Lanka's health gains are internationally acknowledged there are certain areas with unfinished work such as malnutrition and emerging & reemerging of epidemic diseases; Eg. TB, Dengu, Rabies & H.I.V.

There are many new challenges in demographic & epidemiological transitions. Elderly population is going to be much higher in the year of 2050 which will affect not only the health sector but also the entire development process as the productive population will be very low in number. This will eventually increase the dependant ratio. The challenge is to use the productive population in a dynamic way to increase the production of a country with the help of good policies. Non communicable diseases including injuries (because of urbanization & road accidents) are very high in Sri Lanka. Systemic issues to be addressed include development of health infrastructure, health management information system, health care quality assurance, hospital & pre hospital emergency care, human resources for health, health finance issues and private sector engagement. 3.4% (nearly one billion USD per year) of G.T.P goes to health care in which 1.8% comes from the private sector. Sri Lanka is below the trend lines in terms of health expenditure as a share of G.D.P. Heavy reliance on hospital inpatient care and public & private expenditure on selected medicines are seen.

Sri Lanka needs to focus more on quality of the health services provided & this has to be supported by different sectors of the society such as defense, private sector & education sector.