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ENRICHING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE: A PARADIGM SHIFT FROM TERTIARY TO PRIMARY CARE IN SRI LANKA

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Statement of the Problem: Sri Lanka is a lower middle income country with a population of 21.2 million. It enjoys a per capita income of US\$ 4085. Since its independence in 1948, both education and health has been cornerstone in Sri Lanka's celebrated social democracy. As a result of sustained investment in these two sectors by successive governments, today Sri Lanka's social indicators rank on par with most of the middle income countries. Sri Lanka offers unique universal health coverage to its population. However, Sri Lanka's health system encounters significant challenges in view of emerging demographic, epidemiological changes and rising patient expectations. Sri Lanka's population is fast ageing depriving a possible demographical advantage to local economy. Further, rising non-communicable diseases is a matter of great concern to health and economic planners. In this context, Sri Lanka plans to address emerging challenge by reorganizing its primary healthcare delivery system through integrating preventive and curative care segments of the system. The proposed paradigm shift from the tertiary care to primary care would consists of among others, re-organizing primary level health care, strengthening the primary health care delivery points and improving health surveillance systems. It is expected that the proposed shift would adequately addressing emerging challenges in the healthcare sector and make a significant contribution towards realizing value for money.

Biography

Janaka Sugathadasa is the Secretary, Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka. He holds a Master's Degree in Economic and Social Policy from the University of Manchester and also a recipient of Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship offered by the United States Government. He also holds a B.A. (Hons) Degree from University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. He is a career Civil Servant and counts over 30 years of experience in policy development, public management and administration.

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