



Promoting **Social Protection** Through  
**Human-Centred Design**

A Guide for Raising Awareness on Social Protection

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# Introduction

**Sri Lanka's National Social Protection Policy envisions a Sri Lanka where no one is left behind, and every citizen is empowered to live with dignity, security, and opportunity.** Key aims of the strategy include protecting the poor, vulnerable and excluded through income and care support, expanding coverage to informal workers and the elderly. The strategy espouses an approach that is rights-based and life-cycle oriented, universal, and shock-responsive.

Despite these principles being enshrined in policy documents, **there is a wide gap between policy and understanding of social protection among citizens.** A narrow definition of social protection as cash transfers and poverty alleviation is the primary way in which most citizens understand social protection.

This comes at the cost of a more comprehensive understanding of social protection as a right, and thus limits the capacity of citizens to demand for transformative social protection systems. **This is particularly so for the very groups that the policy wishes to reach, such as informal workers.** It is vital that such groups have an understanding of social protection and an opportunity to share lived realities and recommendations, if the policy is to be implemented in a meaningful way.

Given that social protection can be a complex and vast topic, **this guide offers a clear and concise template for raising awareness on social protection for Sri Lankan citizens.** While this guide was tailored to working mothers from urban working class communities in Colombo, it can be contextualised to other profiles and sectors.

# Introduction

It can also be adjusted so that the level of discussion is more suitable to the level of understanding of participants. **This workshop guide adopts Human-Centred Design (HCD) in its approach to disseminating knowledge and obtaining recommendations.** HCD is a set of methods that places the ‘end-user’ at the core of the design process in order to develop innovative solutions. This can be used in policy and research settings to better understand the everyday experiences of participants and potential beneficiaries. In social protection contexts, HCD ensures that future beneficiaries have an active role in designing effective policy implementation, which can be vital for administrators.



*Workshop conducted in Mattakkuliya.*

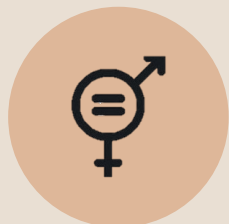
# Workshop objectives



**To introduce participants to the concept of social protection**, with an emphasis on social protection as a right that all citizens should be able to access.



**Facilitate participants formulating demands and recommendations** for social protection.



**Ensure a gendered perspective is incorporated** into understandings of social protection.



**Empower citizens who have the awareness and capacity** to advocate for social protection.



**Help participants develop an understanding of social protection** in the context of their own experiences, struggles and needs.

# Planning the workshop

- **The workshop takes 2 hours and is ideally for a group of 15-20 people.** The training should be scheduled at a time that enables people to attend without losing income, and should also be sensitive to care burdens that may limit participation of women participants.
- If such arrangements are possible, **communicate ahead of time that participants should feel free to bring their children and make arrangements** to keep them occupied during the workshop - for example paper and colouring material. There should be a dedicated individual to be with the children.
- **The venue of the workshop should be close to communities to ensure accessibility and familiarity.** A community centre, school hall or any other public yet enclosed space would be ideal.
- **Community leaders and other grassroots organisers can be a valuable resource** in finding and securing venues and participants, and getting a preliminary understanding of a community. Identifying the profile of potential participants.  
*e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, work will help refine the workshop content*
- **Identify specific thematic recommendations for the group/sector** to be validated and socialised. These should be based on the profile/sector of participants.
- The organising team **should familiarise themselves with the social protection landscape of Sri Lanka**, including the National Social Protection Policy and Strategy.
- Appoint a facilitator and notetaker.

# Planning the workshop

- **Obtain materials such as flipcharts, whiteboards, markers and post-its.** If the venue does not have facilities for PowerPoint presentations, facilitators can make physical slides by printing slides onto cardboard. An accompanying slide deck in Sinhala can be found [here](#).  
(Tamil version available [here](#)).

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# Role of the facilitator

- **The facilitator will take the participants' varied experiences accessing social protection** to guide, condense and collate conversations thematically around social protection gaps, policy, or any other topic. They will utilise the parts provided by participants to create a larger picture.
- **A facilitator does not necessarily participate in the discussion, but elicits, redirects and collates others' engagement.** They ensure the group's communication flows smoothly to ensure equal access and inclusive participation from everyone in the workshop. They will also ensure that participants converse and disagree with one another in ways that are respectful and non-aggressive. **Facilitators have a duty of care to ensure that participants leave workshops with new bridges built and not having any existing ones burned.**
- **A facilitator observes both the conversation and the participants.** The facilitator pays attention to the content and direction of the conversation and should be able to redirect it should it go beyond the bounds of the topic at hand.
- **The facilitator also observes the participants and pays attention to who has spoken, who has not spoken, who has spoken a lot and who has spoken a little.** They will recognise that not everyone has had or will have the same access to public spaces discussions, and will, at least for the duration of the workshop, attempt to break down these barriers to create an inclusive and democratic dialogue. For example, a facilitator would be cognisant of the fact that women and people from minority groups might be less-inclined to be active in the presence of men and majority groups.

## Role of the facilitator

- Facilitators and workshop designers should be aware of power imbalances, both within the community and between the community and themselves.** These can be created inadvertently by perceptions related to caste, class, ethnicity, language or even by the simple fact of being outsiders or guests. As these can be hindrances to a truly inclusive and democratic discussion, facilitators and workshop designers should be proactive in dismantling perceptions. **This can be achieved by using local colloquial language, making workshop materials and activities uncomplicated,** calling participants “Madam”, “Sir” or any equivalents in local languages.



*Workshop conducted in Mattakkuliya.*

# Social protection workshop

## Introduction (5-10 minutes)

The facilitator welcomes participants and outlines the agenda and objectives of the workshop. Participants introduce themselves - **a use of an icebreaker such as sharing a fact about themselves** - for example what is your favourite food to cook or eat - can also be included.

## Q1- What is the life of a happy worker like? (10 minutes)

**The purpose of this activity is to identify what living in happiness and dignity means to participants** and prime the participants to think about conditions, both within the home, within the workplace and beyond, that would determine what that happiness and dignity would look like.

**The facilitator poses the question to participants and encourages them to give responses.** These responses are written on a flipchart/whiteboard where they can be displayed for the remainder of the workshop.

During the conceptualisation stage of the workshop, it was a challenge for the facilitator to identify an apt word for “dignified” and “dignity” in Sinhala, and ‘happy’ was used as a culturally appropriate substitute.

# Social protection workshop

## Q2- What is the life of a happy female worker like? (10 minutes)

This invites participants to think about how dignity can mean different things for men and for women. **The facilitator emphasises that women workers can have responsibilities and roles that men do not perform, and that this can make a happy life look different for men and women.**

**This allows the opening of discussions of gendered responsibilities** while not overtly mentioning what those responsibilities are, allowing the participants,

- a) share what these responsibilities are in their specific communal contexts,
- b) to ideate and conclude without prompt about what dignity means for women.

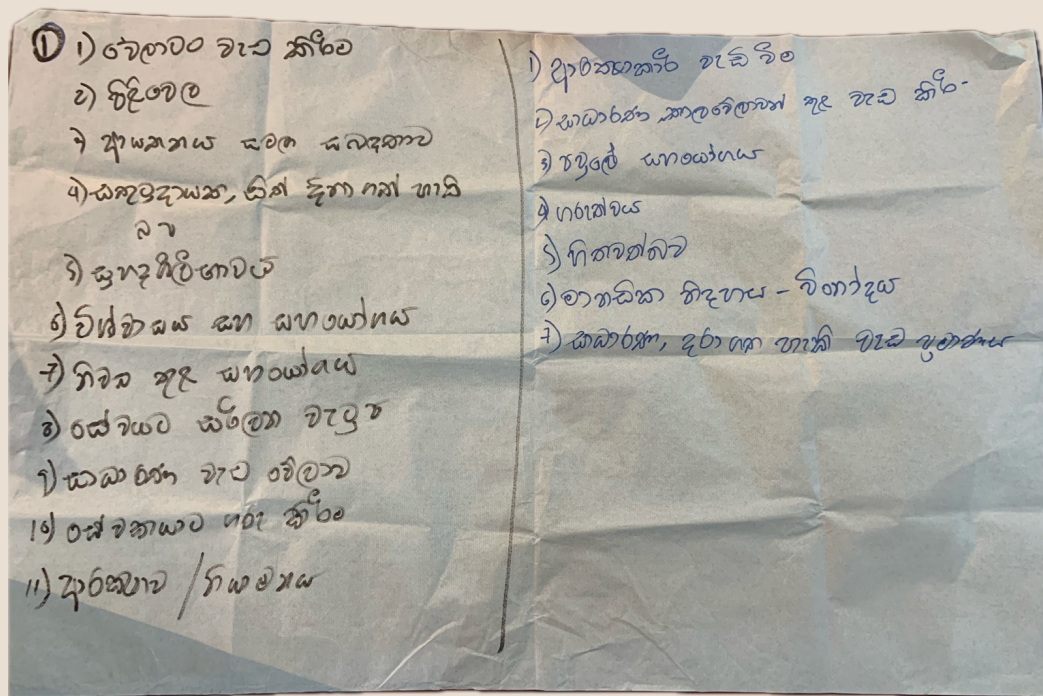
Responses are also written down on flipchart/whiteboard for display during the workshop.



*Workshop conducted in Mattakkuliya.*

# Social protection workshop

## Example of flipchart responses for question 1 and 2 (Q1, Q2)



Life of a dignified worker	Life of a dignified female worker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working on time</li> <li>• Being neat</li> <li>• Good relationship with the workplace</li> <li>• Is happy and charismatic</li> <li>• Is friendly</li> <li>• Trustworthy and is a team player</li> <li>• Togetherness in the household</li> <li>• Wages that match the work</li> <li>• Fair work hours</li> <li>• Honours his employers</li> <li>• Security/ Regulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe work</li> <li>• Work during reasonable hours</li> <li>• Family support</li> <li>• Being honourable</li> <li>• Is friendly</li> <li>• Mental freedom- Leisure</li> <li>• Fair and bearable amount of work</li> </ul>

# Social protection workshop

## Q3- Life-cycle of a female worker (30 minutes)

The facilitator divides the participants into 3 groups. The following question is displayed

**Think about the lifecycle of a female worker. What are the challenges and shocks that she would face in different phases of her life? Show them.**

The facilitator instructs each group to draw the life-cycle of a female worker from birth to old age, showing the challenges she might face in each phase of her life.

Flipchart paper and markers are distributed to the groups. A time limit of 15 minutes is given for the activity.

The purpose of this activity is to illustrate the life-cycle approach to social protection and show participants how citizens can be vulnerable at different stages of their life in different ways.

**The facilitator should allow participants freedom to draw and develop phases of life accordingly without very specific instructions.**

The facilitator asks each group to present their life-cycle, with one or two members of the group explaining what they have discussed. 15 minutes should be allocated for presenting back.



# Social protection workshop

## Q4- Introducing social protection (20 minutes)

**It is at this point in the session that the facilitator connects the previous activities to introduce the concept of social protection.** The facilitator compares the first activity which outlines what a happy and dignified life should look like, with the second which compares the reality of shocks and challenges facing citizens. Social protection is introduced as the bridge that would help take communities from the current reality to the dignified life that they are entitled to.

The facilitator presents a definition of social protection and explains it. The facilitator then asks participants if they know of any programmes or policies relevant to social protection.

As examples of Aswesuma and Samurdhi usually emerge, the facilitator attempts to expand the conversation to include free education, labour protections and retirement benefits.



*Workshop conducted in Mattakkuliya.*

# Social protection workshop

## The facilitator outlines 9 main types of social protection:

- Family and child benefits
- Maternity benefits
- Unemployment benefits
- Employment injury benefits
- Sickness benefits (earnings replacement)
- Health protection
- Old-age pensions
- Disability benefits
- Survivors' benefits

## The facilitator asks participants to place their own examples of social protection into the given categories.

In cases where they are not able to find a programme or policy that fits into one of these types, the facilitator guides participants to envision scenarios in which they would be entitled to receive such benefits.

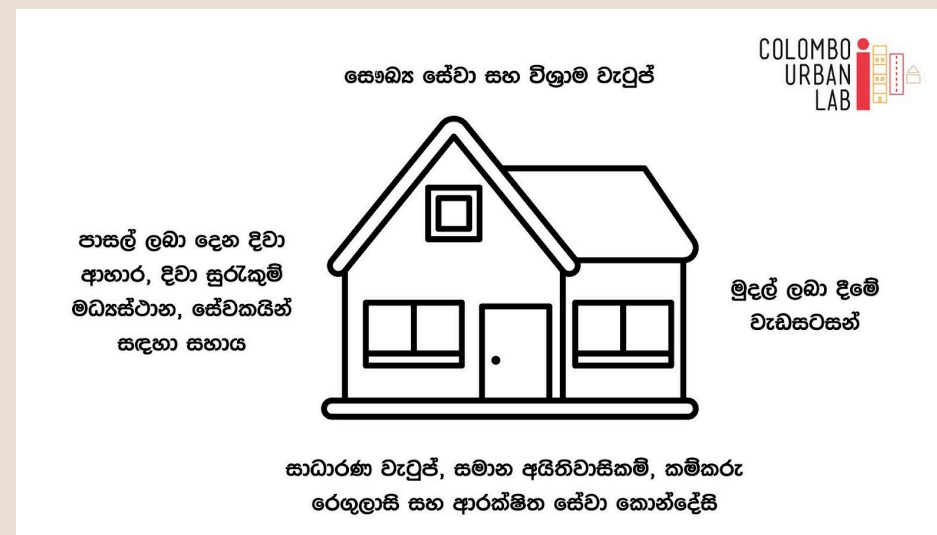
For example; *In what kind of instances would one be entitled to receive a survivor's benefit? What can that look like?*

# Social protection workshop

The facilitator displays the above image of a house as a metaphor to explain the various kinds of protection that social protection can provide to individuals and communities. An explanation of this image would be as follows:

“ Social protection is like a house that shields one from vulnerability. In some ways, it is much like the flooring in our houses; it gives us a strong foundation to stand on so we can build ourselves up. This can include things like fair wages, equal rights, labour regulations and safe working conditions. In some ways, it is like the walls of a house, allowing us to stand up straight when we are in vulnerable situations- an example for this would be cash transfer programmes like Aswesuma..

But social protection is also like the windows of the house, allowing us to breathe, ventilating our lives and giving us space. A good example for this would be school lunch programmes, which free up mothers' time but also help financially struggling families. Finally, social protection is also like the roof of a house that protects us from the elements. This can be things like free health services which heal us when we are sick, and retirement benefits that aid us in our old age.



# Social protection workshop

**The facilitator reiterates that social protection is a right that all citizens of the country are entitled to.** The facilitator asked the participants about mainstream opinions about those who receive social protection and presented how they are contradictory to the fact that they are indeed rights-holders.

The facilitator can provide the example of mothers who provide essential care work to children, or domestic workers and informal workers who enable the economy to function. These examples can be used to reiterate the fact that everyone deserves social protection.

## Q5- Barriers to receiving social protection (10 minutes)

**Facilitator asks participants to share their experiences of receiving social protection.**

**This point in the session allows participants to fully engage and share their experiences with social protection.** In order to elicit a holistic understanding, the facilitator can use prompts such as asking about barriers to receiving social protection or negative experiences.

The facilitator can contrast realities of receiving and accessing social protection and the fact that it is an entitlement of all citizens in the country.

# Social protection workshop

## Recommendations (10-15 minutes)

Facilitator shares 2-3 recommendations relevant to the participants and asks-

**What are the changes you would make to the recommendations you see? How would you implement it? Who should be involved?**

It is recommended that examples are given as this can be an opportunity to validate policy recommendations, gain insight into operationalising and implementing.

The facilitator seeks to gain additional recommendations by asking - **Is there any other recommendation that you would make?**

## Conclusion and next steps (5 minutes)

The facilitator wraps up the workshop by thanking the participants for attending. **Facilitator can encourage participants to approach organisers if there is more interest in capacity development.** If participants and organisers have identified an opportunity to further collaborate on developing recommendations, these next steps can be identified.

Facilitator and notetaker should record all proceedings and document workshop outputs.

# Resources

Asia Monitor Resource Centre (2017) Social Protection in the Grassroots Perspective: A Training Manual

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (n.d) Human-Centered Design (HCD) Toolkit, Boosting the Nutrition Impacts of Social Protection.

<https://www.gainhealth.org/human-centered-design-hcd-toolkit>

Social protection: A human right, socio-economic necessity and cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2022). UNICEF Sri Lanka.

[https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/4731/file/SP\\_HR%20and%20socioeconomic%20necessity\\_ENG.pdf.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/4731/file/SP_HR%20and%20socioeconomic%20necessity_ENG.pdf.pdf)

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