

## Talk show summary: Sri Lanka's approach to youth employment (September 2013, Bangkok)

September 2013, Talk Show #23

Guests:

**Ms Nilanthi Sugathadasa**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Skills Development

Host:

**Mr Matthieu Cognac**, ILO Youth Employment Specialist

Camera, sound, editing:

**Mr Julian Hadden**



You can watch the video of the show at: <http://www.apyouthnet.ilo.org/podcast>

### **Question 1: What is the situation for youth and youth employment in Sri Lanka today?**

Until 2010-2011, Sri Lanka's youth unemployment rate was around 21%. It has since dropped to 19% due to social programmes and skills development approaches. Ms Sugathadasa states that when young people now finish their vocational skills training, many are able to find employment upon graduation.

### **Question 2: Sri Lanka is currently developing a youth policy, and there is a recently launched National Human Resources and Employment Policy. How do these two policies work together?**

The youth policy remains at the draft stage, and has recently finished its public hearing with youth and other stakeholders. Most areas covered in the youth policy are also present in the National Human Resources and Employment Policy, so there are natural synergies between the two.

### **Question 3: In terms of youth unemployment, there is a correlation between education and gender. The unemployment rates for young men with secondary education is 5.5%, while it is 11.7% for young women. On the other hand, youth unemployment rates for young men without secondary education is 1.7%, and 3.3% for young women.**

Tertiary education programmes are open to everyone, there is no gender bias. Never the less, female participation in some areas is low, but this is changing. For example, women are increasingly entering the construction industry which is otherwise a male dominated sector. On the other hand, women dominate the garment sector and female participation is increasing in entrepreneurial start-ups. Ms Sugathadasa there is no discrimination based on age or sex in Sri Lanka.

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**Question 4: 80% of Sri Lanka's population lives in rural areas. One of the largest employers are plantation owners; for example tea, rubber, coconut and tobacco. Never the less, they struggle to hire young workers.**

The work is hard, and parents of rural youth encourage their children to pursue education or to migrate to urban centres. That is the main reason for low entrance rates. Although pay is decent, parents dislike plantation work for their children.

**Question 5: Turning to Sri Lanka's 120,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) and the 470,000 returnees without durable solutions, what support and employment can they expect?**

The government has instigated special programmes. Vocational training centres have been established, and there is a focus on providing entrepreneurial skills. There are also courses in areas such as hospitality. These are available to those who were impacted during the war, and increasingly they are able to find work in the country's growing hotel sector, or they migrate overseas.

**Question 6: What is your vision for Sri Lanka's youth?**

According to Ms Sugathadasa young people should be empowered to have a proper education and decent employment, which includes deserving employable skills.

