

## This month's highlights:

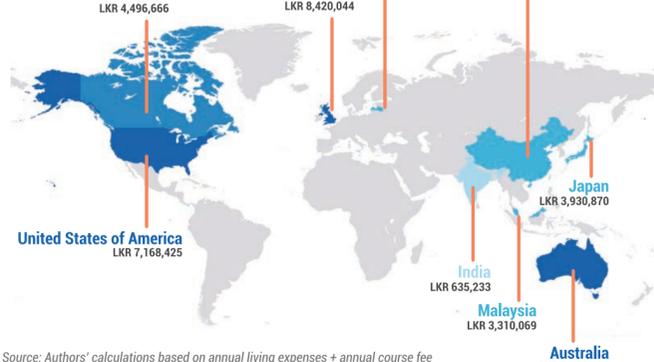
- New Policy Discussion Brief on 'Understanding Student Migration from Sri Lanka' by Dr Bilesha Weeraratne, Harini Weerasekara, and Thilini Bandara provide an understanding of Sri Lankan origin students migrating for higher studies.
- Blog by Thisuri Ekanayake explores the challenges and opportunities for Sri Lanka from student migration.
- Blog by Kimuthu Kiringoda gives insights into how pro-poor tourism can be harnessed to reduce poverty levels in the rural areas of Sri Lanka.
- Blog co-authored by Dr Nisha Arunatilake highlights the importance of Southern Institutions in international development research.
- IPS Research Assistant Thilini Bandara, in the 'Inside IPS' segment, discusses strategies to increase remittances to Sri Lanka including exploring new labour markets and upskilling migrant workers.

We hope you find this issue informative and welcome your feedback.

IPS Communications Team  
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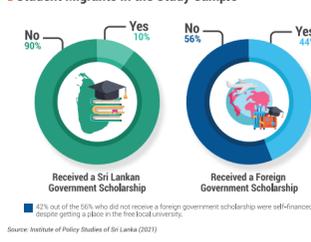
## New Policy Discussion Brief

### Average Annual Cost of Higher Education by Country



Source: Authors' calculations based on annual living expenses + annual course fee

### Scholarships Received by Student Migrants in the Study Sample



■ 42% out of the 56% who did not receive a foreign government scholarship were self-financed despite getting a place in the 'best local university'.  
Source: Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (2021)

### Annual Average Cost (Forex Outflow) per Sri Lankan Migrant Student



Source: Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (2021)

Migration for education purposes has become a growing migratory outflow from Sri Lanka. Based on available secondary data, there has been an increase in student migration from Sri Lanka in 2013-2017 (UNESCO, 2020). The out-migration of students has many implications, including merits such as easing the pressure on the Sri Lankan higher education system and inflow of social remittances such as expertise and know-how, as well as long term implications such as brain-drain and foreign exchange outflow.

This Policy Discussion Brief adopts a descriptive approach to arrive at an initial understanding of this population and the associated direct and indirect costs and benefits of student migration. The study's findings aim to inform policymakers in tailoring migration policies to optimise the merits and minimise the demerits of student migration from Sri Lanka.

[See more >>>](#)

## Blogs

### Youth Migration: Challenges and Opportunities for Sri Lanka

*By Thisuri Ekanayake*  
A great deal of discussion is underway on what appears to be the latest wave of migration from Sri Lanka. While the exact scale and nature of youth migration remain unclear, the costs of brain drain dominate these discussions. The brain drain concern is valid, yet focusing on it alone can limit our understanding of the complex implications of migration. This blog argues that apart from its challenges, youth migration can also present some surprising opportunities for socio-economic development, if strategically managed.



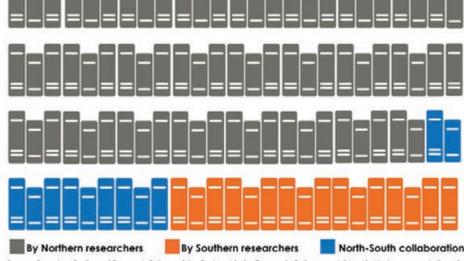
[See more >>>](#)



### Pro-Poor Tourism: Can it Reduce Poverty in Sri Lanka?

*By Kimuthu Kiringoda*  
The tourism industry's performance was hampered first by the Easter Sunday bomb explosions in 2019 and then the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Sri Lanka saw a decline in tourist arrivals from 1,913,702 in 2019 to 194,495 in 2021. It is estimated that revenue declined from USD 3600 million to USD 261 million during 2019-2021, reflecting a staggering 92.75% reduction due to a fall in arrivals. This blog discusses existing disparities in tourism and the possibility of adopting a sustainable, pro-poor tourism strategy to reduce poverty in Sri Lanka.

[See more >>>](#)

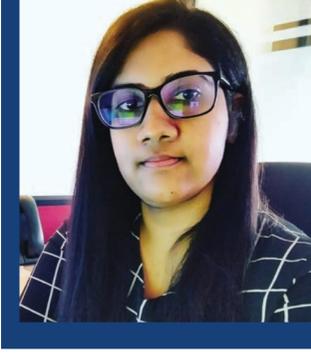


### Northern Institutions Dominate International Development Research: So What?

*Co-authored by Dr Nisha Arunatilake*  
International development research, studying the Global South, is dominated by scholars based in the Global North, far away from the realities they seek to understand. Yet, without a thorough understanding of the local context, "helpful" policies and initiatives can have unintended – and possibly detrimental – consequences. This blog discusses the importance of local researchers in the Global South in international development research.

[See more >>>](#)

## Inside IPS



### Special interview featuring

**Thilini Bandara**

Research Assistant with research interests in migration and urbanisation.

### Tell us about yourself and your role at IPS:

I am currently working as a Research Assistant at the IPS. I joined in 2021 as a Research Assistant in the migration and urbanisation policy unit. Since then, I have engaged in various research studies related to migration and urbanisation with several development partners such as the IOM, ILO, UN Women, and government ministries.

### What are you currently researching?

Currently, I am involved in two research projects. One is an in-depth country assessment on the linkages between climate change and migration in Sri Lanka. This study focuses on identifying the specific internal migration patterns relating to climate change in Sri Lanka, identifying the socio-economic characteristics of climate migrants in Sri Lanka, assessing the impacts of climate events and related migration on migrants and households left behind, along with their coping strategies.

### Tell us about the new Policy Discussion Brief 'Understanding Student Migration from Sri Lanka'. What are the study's main findings and the key takeaways for stakeholders?

Migration for education purposes has become a growing migratory outflow from Sri Lanka. Based on available secondary data from UNESCO, there has been an increase in student migration from Sri Lanka during the period 2013-2017, from 16,000 in 2013 to 20,700 in 2017. The out-migration of students have a multitude of implications, including merits such as easing the pressure on the Sri Lankan higher education system and inflow of social remittances such as expertise and know-how, as well as long term implications such as brain-drain and foreign exchange outflow.

### What are some of the challenging aspects of working as a researcher?

The other project on 'Comprehensive Mapping of Reintegration Measures in South Asian Colombo Process Member States', aims to identify and assess the existing return and reintegration policies and programmes available for returnee migrant workers in six specific South Asian Colombo Process (CP) member states, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

### What immediate steps should be taken to increase foreign remittances to Sri Lanka?

Instead of solely trying to encourage a shift from informal to formal remittance channels, the government should maintain a more realistic exchange rate. To broaden the exposure of Sri Lankan foreign remittances, the government should focus on exploring new labour markets and entering into new bilateral agreements with other established economies such as Singapore, Japan, and European countries. Additionally, upskilling migrant workers through vocational training and delivering high-quality training that meets international standards are critical to generating greater demand for Sri Lankan migrant workers and increasing remittances. Moreover, promoting labour migration and trade in services to Sri Lanka.

### Have you worked on any project that has impacted policy?

Yes, I was involved in a project titled 'Migration and Development: Mainstreaming Migration into Development Strategies of Sri Lanka', which will assist the Government of Sri Lanka to identify the current national goals and priorities to mainstream migration into development strategies of Sri Lanka. The project included initiating an inclusive national dialogue to discuss how migration can be incorporated into Sri Lanka's development planning to address the developmental challenges and opportunities that stem from migration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) funded this project and it will be presented to government stakeholders soon.

### What is the one book you recommend to an aspiring economist?

I recommend Economic Development by Michael P. Todaro and Stephan C. Smith. It takes a policy-oriented approach, presenting economic theories in the context of critical policy debates and country-specific case studies which relates to the problems and prospects of developing countries.

### What are some of the challenging aspects of working as a researcher?

As a young researcher, the main challenge that I have encountered so far is data availability. In most developing countries like Sri Lanka, there is a lack of quality data available for an in-depth investigation on different research topics. Even when data is available, access can be a time-consuming and challenging process.

## Featured Video

### Dr Nisha Arunatilake | Actions to Increase Southern-led Development | PEP Network Webinar



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