



# UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

## PERADENIYA 20400, SRI LANKA

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Department of Sociology

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### Professor Shanti Nandana Wijesinghe

University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka	1980-1985
Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Main, USA	1992-1993
Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand	1994-1996
Gothenburg University, Gothenburg, Sweden	2003-2010

Professor Shanti Nandana Wijesinghe, is a Sociologist, researcher as well and social activist who has been serving as a Professor in Sociology, Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Lecturer in Sociology at the Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka since 1985. He has studied at the Department of Peace and Development Research, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden since 2003 to 2010. He received a MA in Health Social Sciences in 1996 from the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Mahidol University, Thailand. Prof Wijesinghe obtained his BA in Sociology with Second Class Upper Division Honours in 1985 from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. He has served as the Director of Social Development Affairs to His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka from 2005 to 2015.

He teaches both undergraduate and post-graduate degree courses on sociological theories, peace theories, human rights, population and society / development, medical sociology / anthropology and sociology of reproductive health, sociological perspectives, classical sociological theory, advanced sociological theories, and sociology of religion.

He has conducted research and training in the fields of social reconciliation, peace, conflict, and health.

He has served for nearly twenty years as the editor of *Samaja Vimasuma* (Social Analysis), the annual publication of the Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, and he is currently serving as the chief editor of an international journal titled, *Social Affairs*, which is a free, peer-reviewed, bi-annual academic journal for the Social Sciences. *Social Affairs* has also launched two affiliated journals in Sinhala and Tamil titled, *Samaja Sameeksha* (Social Analysis) and expects to launch *Samooga Charlaram* (Social View Points), which consists of both original types of research generated in Sinhala and Tamil, as well as translations of the works that appear in the *Social Affairs Journal* in order that the vernacular audience may access such works with ease.

He is also the Executive Director of World University Friends (WUF), which is a collective group that has comprised university undergraduates, graduates and professionals e.g. scientists, social scientists, doctors, and engineers, etc. since 1995.

Since 1985, besides teaching, research in the Department of Sociology, and various social and community work in Sri Lanka, Prof Wijesinghe has participated in developing training programs in Sri Lanka as a training officer and resource person. He also organized a workshop titled, "Decentralization: Theory and Practice" for the members of the Central Provincial Council in 1998. He has also organized national and international projects, workshops under the *Enhancing Knowledge and Virtues: Student Empowerment National Programme* for ten years since 2006, and worked as a committee member in the 5th Asia-Pacific Social Science and Medicine Conference (APSSAM) in 2000 in Kandy. He has worked as a Steering Committee member in the Asia-Pacific Network of the International Forum for Social Sciences in Health (APNET) since 2002-2008 and also as a Coordinator for South Asia and Country representative of Sri Lanka in APNET. Prof Wijesinghe has actively served as senior Student Counselor for two years at the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, and Voluntary Student Counselor for many years.

Some of his research and publications are; *Youth Volunteerism and Social Reconciliation for Social Development*, published by WUF and Innovators Pvt (Ltd), P VI+142, 2015, ISBN 978-955-4889-05-7; *The Attitudes, Conflict Styles and Personality of Sri Lankan Buddhist Monks in Peace*, published by World University Friends. P VIII-166, ISBN 978-955-3901-11-8; *Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Peace in Sri Lanka, Reconciliation in Post-conflict Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Department of Government printing, P iv + 55, 2013, ISBN 978-955-4889-03-3; *Empowerment, Leadership and Social Development*; Colombo: *Enhancing Knowledge and Virtues: Student Empowerment National Program*, published by WUF and Innovators Pvt (Ltd), P 120, 2012, ISBN 978-955-4889-01-9.

Prof Wijesinghe has worked as the Director of Social Development Affairs to H.E. the President at the Presidential Secretariat from 2005 to 2015. He also had an opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the *Mahinda Chinthana* tenth-year policies and consequently, 13 national community projects were carried out under his direction as follows:

01. Enhancing Knowledge and Virtues: Student Empowerment National Program
02. Establishing Harmony Clubs (*Sahajeevana Samaja*)
03. *Sisu Saviya* (Student Scholarship Program)
04. Reconciliation through art workshops, painting and photographic exhibitions
05. *Sisu Diriya Rangana* (Dancing, Drama and Music) performances
06. Monthly and annual publications on reconciliation including *Nena Guna*, *Sahajeevana*, summary and progress reports of these programs
07. National Celebrations such as *Thaipongal*, New Year, *Vesak*, *Ramazan*, *Deepavali*, *Christmas* Festivals etc.
08. Educational Services for needy youth
09. Cultural Shows at the *Deyata Kirula* (Crowning the Nation) Development Exhibition

10. *Suwa Sewana* (Health and Refuge) Medical and Counseling Camps (MCC)
11. “Change Agents” trainings for social development activists
12. Counseling Programs for army soldiers and other affected youth
13. Humanitarian efforts for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) during natural disasters such as earth slips

All of these sub-activities were carried out under the main program of the ‘Student Empowerment’ (Sisu Diriya) national program. The ‘Enhancing Knowledge and Virtues: Student Empowerment’ national program has been in existence since 2006, originally benefitting those students who were rendered orphaned by the Kebithigollewa claymore mine attack. Since then the program has conducted a huge number of activities with the hope of easing the psychological and financial strain on the student populace especially in conflict-affected areas of Sri Lanka. After 2009, this program became primarily reconciliation-oriented, expanding its scope to bridge the gap between the North and the South mainly by enabling student interaction across regions. In 2011, the program aligned its functions along with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the recommendations made for post-war Sri Lanka by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). As such, it placed special emphasis on students in financial need along with those from former combat zones, to ensure that they can complete their studies successfully and not feel marginalized or under-privileged in any way, thereby contributing to sustaining social stability in Sri Lanka.

*Sisu Diriya conducts an extensive range of activities to mobilize youth for the cause of reconciliation and harmony. These activities include establishing Sahajeevana Samaja (Harmony Clubs) in schools, conducting workshops on capacity building, organizing national programs that provide a platform for students to demonstrate their talents, and aiding students who live in challenging financial circumstances. This last initiative, in particular, is in line with the LLRC recommendation on “the equitable distribution of educational facilities so that it will contribute towards a concerted effort to minimize any feeling of discrimination.” (Section 9.252)*

*It should be noted here that the program operates under minimal funding, with more than 75% of its contributors working as volunteers. Especially all events in 2013 were organized and held completely with the contribution of volunteers from the school student community as well as from the university student body, most of whom were female. The program, therefore, has served in its capacity to progress Sri Lanka towards the MDG of empowering women and achieving gender equality.*

Prof Wijesinghe has conducted many productive discussions, integrated projects on Reconciliation, and also merged the efforts of the Sisu Diriya Youth Empowerment project and the Ministry of Education and Provincial Ministries of Education. He has conducted many programs including conferences and seminars on reconciliation, leadership, productivity, etc. for the undergraduates of fourteen universities in Sri Lanka: Colombo, Eastern, Jaffna, Jayawardenepura, Kelaniya, Moratuwa, Open University, Rajarata, Ruhuna, South Eastern, Sabaragamuwa, Wayamba, Uva-Wellasa, and University of Visual and Performing Arts.

A historic series of events was launched at the Ridee Viharaya International Conference Centre, close to Ridigama, Kurunegala, Sri Lanka on the weekends -14th -16th, 20th -22nd, and 29th February to 1st March 2020 by the Department of Sociology, the University of Peradeniya organized by Prof. Wijesinghe and it was the first of three leadership programs, the University of Peradeniya since 1942. First-year 1000 undergrads from the University of Peradeniya participated in the three inaugural Outbound Training- OBT 2020. The leadership program was specifically catered to developing the students' group dynamics, team building, emotional intelligence, behavioral motives, conflict resolution, time management, and values such as respect, trust and spiritual development and continues most of the activities such as Saraswathi Archana, singing, Yoga, Sarasavi Webinar etc. online during COVID 19.

To complement these exercises, Prof Wijesinghe has incorporated local and foreign exposure/ experiences and his coursework training at Peace and Development Research, School of Global Studies, Gothenburg University, Sweden with national reconciliation activities and research projects as the Director to His Excellency the President (Social Development Affairs) of Sri Lanka.

He is a scholar who is interested in Buddhism, Ayurveda and Sri Lankan (local) knowledge, tradition, heritage and culture can contribute enormously whatever the national, international and global socio-economic realities. He has been working with youth empowerment, volunteerism and spiritual development for more than forty years and since 2005 conforming mostly to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the recommendations made for post-war Sri Lanka by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee (LLRC). Sri Lanka should consider a result-oriented person with a power of optimism as the head of peace building, reconciliation and social integration unit that will contribute to international cooperation, national integration, poverty alienation, welfare and national development programs in Sri Lanka. This will also be of benefit to the north and eastern provinces, the education and higher education sector and the country as a whole.