



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR ETHNIC STUDIES

Addressing Labour's Precariousness in Sri Lanka and Beyond

1st and 2nd, February 2018
ICES, Colombo, Sri Lanka

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST

9.30am - 10.00am: Opening Remarks

“Reframing Global Debates on Precarity: Critical Perspectives from Sri Lanka.”
Nethra Samarawickrema, Doctoral Candidate, Stanford University.

10.00am to 10.30am: Keynote

“Women and Precarious Work: A Human Rights Issue.”
Priti Darooka, (Executive Director, Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, New Delhi, and South Asia Representative, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre.)

10.30am to 11.00am: Tea Break

11.00am to 12.30pm: Histories and Transformations of Labour in Sri Lanka and Beyond
Moderator: Nethra Samarawickrema

- “A History Of Precarity: An Attempt at Understanding the Rising Tide of Precarious Work and its Impact on the Labour Law Regime.”
Lakmali Hemachandra (Legal Consultant, Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers' Union)
- “Structural Transformation and the Changing Nature of Employment in Sri Lanka.”
Nomaan Majid (Senior Employment Specialist, ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia) and Ramani Gunatilaka; Economist, Independent Consultant)
- “Are Worker Rights of Precarious Employment Protected in Sri Lanka?”
Priyanka Jayawardena (Research Economist, Institute for Policy Studies)

12.30pm to 1.30pm: Lunch

1.30pm to 3.00pm: Precarity as the Exacerbation of Existing Marginalities

Moderator: Waradas Thiyagarajah

- “Militarisation and Precariousness in the Vanni Region.”
Dharsha Jegatheeswaran (Research Director, Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research)
- “Outside the Net: Intersectionality and Inequality in the Fisheries of Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.”
Gayathri Lokuge and **Dorathe Hilhorst** (Centre for Poverty Analysis)
- “Situation of Sri Lankan Domestic Workers and Experience From Beyond.”
Swairee Rupasinghe, (National Programme Manager, Labour Migration, ILO)
- “Struggles of Transgender Sex Workers in Sri Lanka”
Sakuni Mayadunne (Heart to Heart Foundation)

3.00pm to 3.30pm: Tea Break

3.30pm to 5.00pm: Precarity Across Spatial Movements

Moderator: Malathi de Alwis

- “Emplacement: Precarious Labor, Migration, and Sri Lanka’s Family Background Report Policy”.
Michele Gamburd (Professor of Anthropology, Portland State University)
- “Permanently Temporary: Protracted Precarity and Repeat Migration in Sri Lanka”
Matt Withers (Sydney Asia-Pacific Migration Centre, University of Sydney)
- “Well-being and Motility of Female Heads of Households in Vulnerable and Precarious Situations: The Case of a Fishing Village in South India.”
Fazeeha Azmi (Postdoctoral Fellow, Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

5.00pm – 6.00pm Film Screening and Discussion

Fourth of February

Nadya Perera, Director

Run-time 29 mins followed by discussion with the Director.

Synopsis: Over the past four decades, Sri Lanka has emerged as a leading supplier of labour in the form of domestic workers, largely to countries in the Gulf region. At present, the remittance of these migrant workers is the highest contribution made by a single sector to the country’s foreign revenue. The phenomenon is one which has significantly altered the structures of a traditionally patriarchal society that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious in its make-up. The film juxtaposes stories of three women who left Sri Lankan shores to work as housemaids in the Middle East.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2nd

9.30am to 11.00am: **Unrecognized/Under-Recognized Work**
Moderator – **Nireka Weeratunge**

- Short films from Suriya Women’s Development Centre
Niyanthini Kadirgamar, Discussant
- “Laboring for Salt: Convict Workers in the Levayas of Magampattu in the Early 19th Century.”
Sanayi Marcelline (University of Colombo)
- “The Things We Do Are Written in Heaven, and Yet Not on Earth: Exploring the Precarity of Catholic Women Religious in South Asia’s Labour Force.”
Anupama Ranawana (Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Poverty Analysis)

11.00am to 11.30am: **Tea Break**

11.30 to 1.00pm: **Wageless Work and Share Systems**
Moderator: **Balasingham Skanthakumar**

- “Precarious Work? Small-Scale Fishing as a Livelihood and Way of Life in Sri Lanka.”
Nireka Weeratunge, et. al. (Research Fellow, ICES)
- “The Lord’s Mine and the Workers’ Share: Wageless Labor and Precarity in Sabaragamuwa’s Gem Mines.”
Nethra Samarawickrema (PhD Candidate, Stanford University)
- “The Mining Industry and the Worker (*Karmanthya Saha Sewakaya*).”
Lionel Weerasinghe (President, National Mineworkers’ Organization)
- “Precarity of women’s engagement in the beedi industry in a village in Jaffna”
Nadhiya Najab (Research Professional, Centre for Poverty Analysis) and Prashanthi Jayasekara (Postgraduate Student, University of Sussex)

1.00pm to 2.00pm: **Lunch**

2.00pm to 3.30pm: **Precarious Labor and Organizing**
Moderator: **Lakmali Hemachandra**

- “From Precariousness to Progressive Movement: Fisheries Movement in Northern Sri Lanka.”
Waradas Thiagaraja (PhD candidate, University of Bath)
- “Manpower Work in Export Processing Zones.”

Chamila Thushari (Programme Coordinator, Dabindu Collective)

- “Unorganized Women's Work in Sri Lanka”
Yogeshwari Krishnan (Working Women’s Front)
- “The Health and Welfare Concerns of Migrant Sex Workers in Japan”
Shayani Jayasinghe (Research Assistant, Sophia University)

3.30pm to 4.00 pm: **Tea Break**

4.00pm to 5.00pm: **Roundtable Discussion: Addressing Labor and Precarity: Mobilizing Labour, Reforming Labor Laws**
Moderator: Balasingham Skanthakumar, (Research Associate, Social Scientists’ Association)

Participants:

T.M.R. Rasseedin, (General Secretary, Ceylon Federation of Labor and Member National Labor Advisory Council)

Anton Marcus (Joint Secretary, Free Trade Zones & General Services Employees Union)

Yogeshwari Krishnan, (Working Women’s Front)

Swarna Mallikarachchi, (Attorney at Law)

Chamila Thushari, (Programme Coordinator, Dabindu Collective)