

## Cover Story



## Improving human capital through integrated primary health care

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**Cover photo:** This logo denotes the Theme “*PHC x Human Capital – an Integrated Approach*” of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka of 2020/21 (logo created by Mr. Kalana De Silva and Mr. Kasun Peiris)

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Primary health care (PHC) is the whole-of-society approach to health that aims at ensuring the highest possible level of health and wellbeing and their equitable distribution, by focusing on people's needs. It is the first point of contact between individuals and their families, communities, and the national health system, bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work (1). It focuses on the most pressing health issues in the community, providing services that are promotional, preventive, curative and rehabilitative in nature (2).

Equity of access to PHC is a major social determinant of health; and is considered as a strategy for addressing health inequity although countries are striving to find effective ways of reaching equity of access to PHC to support those most in need, and to identify which aspects of services and abilities of people to strengthen (3). Similarly in the Sri Lankan context, access to PHC is basically due to lack of equality in access and is dependent on the economy of the countries' communities and families.

Economic wellbeing and social advancement in the modern world economy are determined primarily by human capital, which measures the skills, education, capacity, and attributes of labour that influence their productive capacity and earning potential (4). Human capital can be defined as the sum of capacities of all individuals in a community, including their level of intelligence, education, creativity, innovativeness, health and wellbeing, capacity for empathy and caring, and their level of involvement in the community (5). Investments through PHC would immensely benefit the human capital of a country which can be depicted by Human Capital Index (HCI).



This issue's cover picture shows four hands representing the components of HCI holding a wheel of health care and connecting them together. It describes the importance of integrating PHC to improve the human capital and how both are interconnected. Sri Lanka's HCI for 2020, the best in the South Asian region, is 0.6 although some health indicators are not up to the standard especially child nutrition and survival rates of adults. However, a score of 0.6 indicates that Sri Lanka's performance is 40% less than its potential (6). The reason for this higher HCI is due to proper investments on health through PHC.

In summary, necessary investments on health should be done through the PHC system to improve the health indicators and human capital.

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