

# Disability and Poverty in Sri Lanka: A Household Level Analysis

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Sri Lanka has recorded a significant reduction in poverty in recent times, yet, as in many other developing countries, little or nothing is known about poverty levels and reduction of poverty among the disabled or their households. The disabled and their families encounter different hardships than the usual sufferings of the poor. The recent literature questions the ability of the monetary approach in measuring poverty in general and especially among different groups like the disabled. Therefore, this study estimates both monetary and multidimensional poverty among the households with disabled persons using the Household Income and Expenditure Survey data of 2006/07 and 2009/10. In estimating monetary poverty, the standard Foster Greer Thorbecke indexes are estimated while their multidimensional counterparts are estimated using the Alkire-Foster method. The study specifically attempted to find out whether there are differences in estimated poverty levels between households with and without disabled, and thereby contribute to develop a poverty profile for households with disabled persons.

The study found that monetary and multidimensional poverty among households with disabled persons is higher than among other poor households. This was true for incidence, depth, and severity of poverty for both surveys and in all regions. Nevertheless, poverty among households with disabled persons is significantly higher in the estate areas as compared to other areas. Even though multidimensional poverty is relatively low in Sri Lanka, the difference in multidimensional poverty levels between households with and without the disabled is high. This suggests that households with the disabled encounter problems other than low monetary earnings. Depth and severity of poverty among households with the disabled is also higher than the other households. This suggests that the living condition of the disabled poor is worse than that of the other poor.

Poverty decreased significantly between the two surveys, irrespective of the analytical method applied. Nevertheless, the reduction in monetary poverty among households with disabled persons is less than in other poor households while the opposite is true for multidimensional poverty. This suggests that though the earning ability of the disabled (and their households) has not improved, the provision of other facilities such as housing, health and education have improved. Importantly, contributions from the three dimensions considered in this research to the incidence of poverty are almost equal, suggesting that further reduction of poverty in Sri Lanka requires improvements in all three dimensions - health, education and living standards - among poor households, with and without disabled persons.

**Keywords:** *Dimensions of poverty, Disabled households, Monetary approach*