

MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL

National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka

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Despite the significant progress made with globalization and trade liberalization, South Asia still faces challenges in equity and poverty. Hence it is timely that we discuss this subject at length towards promoting socio-economic equity in South Asia to understand and identify gaps in research and re-look at the policies that are already available towards the economic progress and social justice.

Most importantly, the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka has been unique compared to other funding agencies in the country that it not only promotes research and development in science and technology, but also in social sciences. In this context, the NSF has established a Working Committee on Social Sciences (WCSS), which has been instrumental in organizing the International Conference on 'Promoting Socio-economic equity in South Asia: challenges and prospects' to be held from 15-16 July 2015. This is the second International Conference on a currently important topic organized within two years by the same expert Committee. As for the subjects to be discussed at this Conference, a few broader themes such as: Economic aspects of inequality; Interactions in intersections among caste, class and gender inequalities; Impact on egalitarianism, democratic politics and social policies; and Implications of science and technology in socio-economic equity etc., have been identified in general, and the sub-themes in particular, that cover a range of disciplines to meet its objectives. The Conference aims at bringing together multi-disciplinary researchers to present their findings on one platform and views to help developing and strengthening research and decision-making with evidence based data to come up with suitable policies that the governments may formulate and implement.

Further, this Conference is one initiative of various activities to uplift R&D in Social Sciences that are lined up to be conducted based on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2014 between the National Science Foundation, Colombo and the Indian Council of Social Science and Research (ICSSR) in New Delhi. The technical sessions scheduled for the 15th July will be followed by a Joint Advisory Committee Meeting (JACM) representing NSF and ICSSR that will discuss and plan the future activities. Besides, it needs to be emphasized that an interesting Policy Dialogue entitled 'Challenges and prospects for reducing socio-economic inequity in South Asia' will be held on the 16th July, with the sponsorship of the UNDP that will bring together academics, researchers, policymakers and development practitioners to discuss and debate on various issues of relevance.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the Chief Guest, Keynote Speaker, Chairmen of Technical Sessions, Resource Persons, Referees and the Paper Presenters for their invaluable contribution rendered. I thank the NSF Board of Management, and also the Chairman and all the members of the NSF Working Committee on Social Sciences for their support and close guidance provided. I congratulate the staff of the Science and Technology Policy Research Division (STPRD) of the NSF for their commitment, dedication and hard work towards materializing a successful event. I wish all the participants a fruitful and enjoyable time of two days at a pleasant atmosphere in Colombo.