

# SOCIAL SAFETY NETS AND THE STATE OF POVERTY IN SRI LANKA

## SPEAKER BIOS



**HON. SHEHAN SEMASINGHE**

State Minister,  
Ministry of Finance

Sri Lankan Politician and a member of the Parliament of Sri Lanka from Anuradhapura. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Delhi, India, and MBA from the University of Peradeniya.



**DHANANATH FERNANDO**

CEO, Advocata  
Institute

A founding member of Advocata Institute, and had worked as COO since its inception. Dhananath holds a Bachelor's degree in Bio Sciences and Bio Chemistry at the University of Colombo and is an alumnus of the International Visitor Leadership Programme by the State Department of the United States of America, as well as an alumnus of the ATLAS Think Tank Leadership Academy in Washington, DC.



**GAYANI HURULLE**

Senior Research  
Manager,  
LIRNEasia

Studies social protection, and the digital economy, policy, and regulation in South and Southeast Asia. In her work, Gayani has led mixed-methods research projects, supported the drafting of national policies and regulations, and facilitated capacity building programmes for government. She holds a Master of Public Policy degree from the National University of Singapore and a BSc in Economics from the University of London.



**B. WIJAYARATNE**

Chairman, Welfare  
Benefits Board

Previously served as the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, prior to which he held positions at the National Institute of Plantation Management and Ministries of Youth Affairs & Skills Development and Economic Development. Mr Wijayaratne holds a Masters of Public from the Post Graduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayawardenapura, and a Certificate of Public Administration at the Sri Lanka Institute of Public Administration.



**KARIN FERNANDO**

Team Leader -  
Sustainable  
Development,  
CEPA

Has over 15 years' experience in implementing Development and Environmental Management projects with NGOs and multilateral agencies. Karin has led and managed multiple research projects that cover numerous topics related to the environment and climate change, estate sector, labour, education, infrastructure, and resettlement. Karin holds a Master's in Sustainable International Development from Brandeis University, USA.



**THARAKA AMARASINGHE**

Statistician,  
LIRNEasia

Specializes in survey and sample design (in particular, representation of target populations). He also leads statistical analysis for all of LIRNEasia's survey research projects. Prior to joining LIRNEasia, Tharaka worked at Hemas Pharmaceuticals and Nielsen Sri Lanka. Tharaka holds a Masters' in Applied Statistics from the University of Colombo and a BSc in Industrial Statistics and Mathematical Finance from the same university.