

Dr.Vinya S. Ariyaratne
Brief Bio



Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne is the General Secretary of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement which is Sri Lanka's largest non-governmental grass roots development organization. Dr. Ariyaratne also serves as the Director General of the newly established Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning (SIHL) and as a board member of Sarvodaya Development Finance (SDF), the economic empowerment arm of the Sarvodaya Movement.

Dr. Ariyaratne is a physician by training and a Board Certified Specialist in Community Medicine. He is a past President of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka (CCPSL).

Dr.Ariyaratne obtained his Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) Degree from the De La Salle University in the Philippines in 1989 and his Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) degree from the Johns Hopkins University U.S.A. in 1990. He also holds the Degrees of Master of Science M.Sc. (1996) and Doctor of Medicine (MD) in Community Medicine (2003) from the Post-Graduate Institute of Medicine of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, U.K. (1992) and a Chevening Fellow at the Nuffield Institute of the Faculty of Medicine and Health of the University of Leeds, U.K. where he obtained with Distinction the Postgraduate Certificate in Health Management, Planning and Policy (2006).

Dr.Ariyaratne started his career as an Intern Medical Officer at the Government Hospital in Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka in 1990. After a brief spell serving in the Government Department of Health and overseas fellowships and training in public health, in 1995 he joined the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the University of Sri Jayawardenepura as a Lecturer in Community Medicine. After serving in the academia for 5 years, he decided to join the voluntary non-government development sector with which he has had a lifelong association. In July 2000, Dr.Ariyaratne resigned from the University of Sri Jayawardenepura and became the Executive Director of Sarvodaya, the position he held up to December 2010. As the Executive Director of Sarvodaya, Dr.Ariyaratne was responsible for the implementation of the island-wide integrated community health and development programmes of Sarvodaya through a network of over 50 district centres and training institutions with a full time staff of over 800.

Through Sarvodaya, Dr.Ariyaratne developed numerous innovative community health programmes working closely with the government sector, universities, professional colleges as well as other civil society organizations. He has been extensively involved in health and development programmes related to the war affected communities in Sri Lanka. In the early 1990's, at the height of the separatist war in Sri Lanka, he initiated a novel programme to address the psycho-social effects amongst children affected by the war. This programme which adopted a community based, non-medicalized approach to healing, helped thousands of children belonging to all ethnic groups, to recover from the trauma of war. He was also associated with planning and delivering services for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and continues to work on health issues related to war affected civilian populations.

After the Tsunami disaster in 2004, Dr.Ariyaratne was responsible for the overall coordination of the Sarvodaya's emergency response and later the entire reconstruction programme which is one of the largest Tsunami recovery programmes in the country with a portfolio of projects worth over 15 million US dollars. In recognition of his dedication to humanitarian causes and peace initiatives, in February 2007, Dr.Ariyaratne was awarded the Degree of Civil Law (DCL) honoris causa by the University of Durham, U.K. When the large displacement from the Northern Province took place in early and mid 2009, Dr.Ariyaratne was coordinating the humanitarian relief efforts of Sarvodaya to assist the Health Ministry, the UN agencies and humanitarian organizations to provide services to the large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Dr.Ariyaratne has extensive experience in working with governmental bodies, UN agencies, multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, national and international non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector in matters related to national development and policies. He serves in several senior governmental advisory committees.

Dr.Ariyaratne has been a founding member and the Coordinator of the People's Health Movement (PHM) Sri Lanka, which is a network of grassroots health organizations working on advocacy related to health rights. The PHM Sri Lanka works on health rights, including rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS, commercial sex workers, national drug policy, anti-tobacco policy and other contemporary health issues.

Dr.Ariyaratne has also been involved extensively in civil society peace and reconciliation initiatives in Sri Lanka. He has been trained as a professional facilitator for peace dialogues and he engages in teaching assignments related to peace building, conflict resolution and reconciliation. He has been a Visiting Faculty Member of the European Peace University (EPU) in Statdschlaining, Austria in its Masters Degree Programme on Peace Studies between 2004 -2008 and held a Visiting Lecturer post in the World Peace Academy (WPA) in Basel Switzerland from 2009 – 2013 in its Master of Peace Studies Degree Programme.

Dr.Ariyaratne serves as the independent Lead Facilitator for the Sri Lanka One Text Initiative (OTI), a back channel multi-party political dialogue which aims at building consensus amongst key political stakeholders towards meeting the aspirations of all communities living in Sri Lanka.

In 2012, Dr.Ariyaratne was attached to the Heller School for Social Policy and Management of the Brandeis University U.S.A. as a Visiting Senior Lecturer and Feldman Engaged Scholar and continues as a Visiting Adjunct Faculty.

In 2014, Dr.Ariyaratne received the Social Entrepreneur of the Year from the Schwab Foundation/World Economic Forum.