

Cover Story**Every baby thrives, every community flourishes: evidence for action****Ishanka Ayeshwari Talagala**

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Cover theme – The cover denotes the logo of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka for the year 2024/25, portraying the theme for the year, ‘Every baby thrives, every community flourishes’.

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 2.3 million children have died within the first 28 days of life in 2022, mostly due to preventable causes such as infections, prematurity and intrapartum complications (1), urging the necessity to take prompt action to prevent it. However, delivering high-quality maternal, newborn and child health care remains an ongoing challenge across the globe, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Thriving baby: flourishing community

It is well understood that when every baby thrives, every community flourishes. A thriving baby is not only a symbol of successful maternal and newborn care, but also a foundation for long-term social and economic development. Healthy infants grow into healthier, more productive adults who contribute to the prosperity of their families and communities. When neonatal and maternal care systems are strong, communities benefit from reduced healthcare burdens, improved educational outcomes, higher productivity and greater economic stability. Therefore, investing in the earliest stages of life creates a ripple effect, promoting equity, breaking cycles of poverty, and fostering resilient and empowered societies.



In line with this objective, Sustainable Development Goal 3 - ‘Health and wellbeing’ highlights that every country should achieve universal health coverage (UHC). In order to do so, delivering high-quality healthcare services while ensuring that all individuals and communities receive equitable health services without suffering financial hardship, is essential. In many LMICs, health services may be available but are often inconsistent, unsafe or ineffective, resulting in preventable deaths and long-term health complications (2). Therefore, strengthening the quality of care

through trained and skilled health workers, reliable systems and evidence-based protocols, will ensure that every contact with the health system leads to better outcomes.

The role of public health professionals

Public health professionals play a critical role in mitigating the well-known existing challenges in achieving UHC by promoting system-wide approaches that ensure equitable and sustainable healthcare delivery. They serve as the bridge between science, policy and practice. Their efforts encompass data-driven planning, strengthening health systems, designing context-specific interventions, training health workers, advancing multisectoral collaboration, advocating for equity-driven policies, and monitoring and evaluation.

Sri Lanka has set an example across the globe on providing an effective, low-cost maternal and neonatal field-care service. Evidence demonstrates that community-based care models are effective in improving maternal and neonatal health outcomes in resource-poor settings (3) and that public health professionals have been instrumental in designing programmes that align with global and national health goals. They respond to the needs of the population by advocating for necessary policies; collaborating with multi-stakeholders; implementing, monitoring and evaluating such programmes; and ensuring their integration into national health systems and sustainability. Their work necessitates a well-coordinated, evidence-based approach to overcome challenges and create lasting health improvements.

Global Public Health Summit 2025

In the backdrop of several calamities including triple burden of diseases, pandemics and climate change, it is imperative that public health professionals across the globe team up and work towards a common goal of improving the health and well-being of the population. In concurrence with this worthy cause, the Global Public Health Summit 2025 is held focussed on exploring the following key themes:

- Strengthening health system governance and financing to ensure UHC including quality healthcare
- Harnessing digital health and Artificial Intelligence for healthcare
- Strengthening epidemic preparedness and response
- Enhancing maternal, newborn and childcare services
- Strengthening multi-sector collaboration and community engagement

This summit, hosted by the College of the Community Physicians of Sri Lanka (CCPSL) in collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, coincides with the landmark 30 years of the CCPSL in their journey of public health excellence through shaping public health policies, disease control and prevention strategies, and strengthening of the health system across all six pillars.

Under the theme '*Delivering high-quality care in resource limited settings: ensuring every baby thrives, every community flourishes*', the Global Summit 2025 aims to provide an inspiring opportunity and an excellent platform for the public health professionals across the globe to share their knowledge, experiences, best practices and innovations. The summit focusses on providing evidence on latest, pragmatic, adoptable practices and interventions, which are affordable and scalable, allowing the policy makers to make informed decisions and optimize resource allocation. This will further affirm the role of public health professionals, especially in low resource settings, in providing new dimensions to public health, such as incorporating digital technology into health information systems (4), applying health economics in decision making, preparedness on public health emergencies and global health

security, and emerging health conditions in Asia such as traffic related injuries, climate change related health issues, health issues related to fast greying population, substance abuse and adolescent health. Especially in settings with limited access, availability and affordability to healthcare, this evidence is geared and equipped to prioritize the needy and provide equitable services to reduce barriers and improve health outcomes. Thereby, public health professionals are able to advance the goal that every baby thrives and every community flourishes, by bridging clinical care and policy, fostering innovation and ensuring inclusivity.

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