Zero Project Innovative Policy 2018 on Accessibility

# Effectively creating accessible buildings in rural, less developed areas

# Sri Lanka – Uva Provincial Council, Moneragala – Age Friendly & Disabled Friendly City

## Summary:

### Moneragala is a populous, less developed district in the Uva province of south-east Sri Lanka, with approximately 450,000 inhabitants. In 2011 the Uva Provincial Council – the provincial legislative assembly – developed a policy to achieve universal inclusion in this district by 2018, starting with the city of Wellawaya. The policy is addressing the gaps in accessibility to the built environment as well as targeting the inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons. Since the start of the project, approximately 50,000 persons with disabilities have benefitted.

## Problems Targeted:

### Despite the existence of accessibility regulations, Sri Lanka continues to lack inclusive environments, and an estimated 10–5 per cent of the Moneragala population are people with disabilities.

## Solution, Innovation, and Impact:

### The Uva Provincial Council recognised the relationship between ageing and disability and initiated efforts to address inclusion in a holistic manner and in a way that is feasible within a rural setting. The concept encompasses guidelines of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the national accessibility regulations of Sri Lanka. The project was the first instance in Sri Lanka where a legislative body specifically allocated funds for accessibility and inclusion, and includes the cooperation of provincial authorities, disabilities organizations, and local communities.

### The concept was first developed in the city of Wellawaya, attempting an inclusive city in a rural environment. Wellawaya joined the Global Age-friendly Cities network of the World Health Organization, and shortly thereafter the project was expanded to the entire district of Moneragala with additional categories of inclusion. Many public buildings in the district were made accessible, including schools, polling stations, and religious sites.

### In order to raise interest in the subject, the Council conducted awareness campaigns and provided staff training to address various inclusion topics. Notably, the project encouraged the participation of persons with disabilities.

## Outlook, Transferability, and Funding:

### In the future, the policy also foresees greater access and support for education, and the provision of self-employment support for families of children with disabilities. There are also measures planned for an inclusive labour market.

### The strategy is expected to be replicated at the national level in several selected districts in Sri Lanka, and will be driven by the Presidential Secretariat of Sri Lanka and through cooperation with local councils, provincial governing bodies, and the national government.

### Funding through the Uva Provincial Council was 46,000 US Dollars in 2016 and 29,000 US Dollars in 2017 (e.g., the cost for the installation of handrails in a building is $20 US Dollars). Technical support is being provided by WHO and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

## About the Policy at a Glance:

### Laws and Regulations Involved: Age Friendly/Disabled Friendly City, Wellawaya Division, Moneragala District (2013–2018)

### Responsible Body: Uva Provincial Council, Moneragala

### Country of Implementation: Sri Lanka

## Facts and Figures:

* From 2016 to 2017, 46 polling stations were made accessible, benefitting approximately 15,000 people.
* From 2016 to 2017, six religious places of worship were made accessible, benefitting approximately 2,000 people.

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