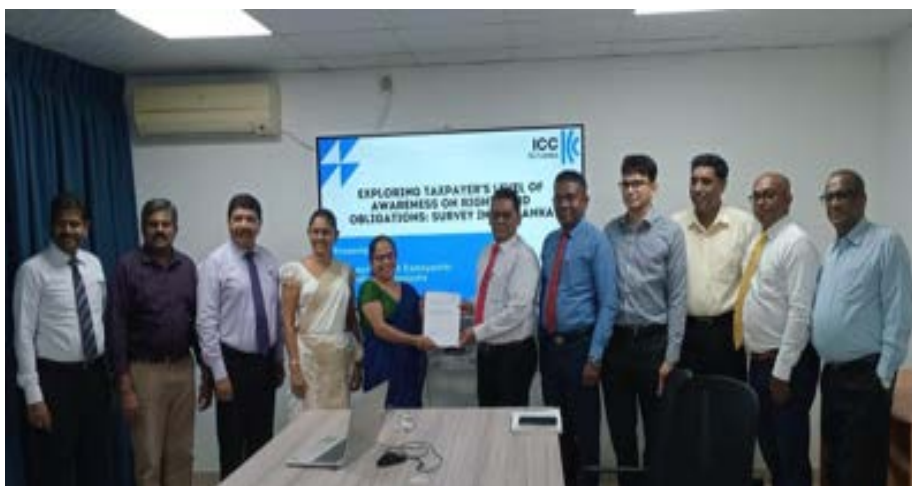


Sri Lanka's First Survey on Taxpayer Awareness Reveals Big Gaps in Understanding: Rights and Obligations



ICCSL report urges more inclusive, trust-based approach to tax education

In a landmark move to build a more citizen-focused tax system, the International Chamber of Commerce Sri Lanka (ICCSL) has released the country's first national survey on public awareness of the Taxpayer Charter and the findings are eye-opening.

Conducted by the ICCSL Committee on Research, Knowledge Mobilization and Taxation, the survey set out to understand how well ordinary Sri Lankans know their rights and obligations as taxpayers. The study was carried out by Professor B.W.R. Damayanthi, Head of ICT at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, and Dr. Nadee Dissanayake, Deputy Commissioner General of Inland Revenue and Chair of the ICCSL Committee for Research, Knowledge Mobilization and Taxation.

The final report was handed over to ICCSL Chairman Mr. Shanil Fernando on May 28, 2025, and presented to ICCSL Board Members and Committee representatives during a special session held at the ICCSL Head Office.

Awareness to action: Bridging the knowledge gap

While the survey found a general awareness of the Taxpayer Charter, many respondents lacked a deeper understanding of how their rights and responsibilities actually apply in real life. "People aren't just looking for information they're trying to make sense of a system that often feels confusing or intimidating," explained Professor B.W.R. Damayanthi, adding that tax rules don't exist in a vacuum; how individuals experience them depends greatly on their background, profession, and past interactions with the system.

Dr. Nadee Dissanayake emphasized that while raising awareness is essential, the true challenge lies in enabling people to confidently act on their rights and responsibilities. “Knowing your rights is one thing,” she noted. “But knowing how to exercise them within a fair and respectful system is something else entirely and that’s where significant work remains” she further, emphasized.

The report recommends several key actions:

- Rethink tax education campaigns to highlight both rights and responsibilities, using clear, practical language.
- Focus educational efforts on underserved communities and groups with lower levels of awareness.
- Rebuild public trust through more transparent handling of taxpayer data and visible protections for privacy.

Speaking at the handover event, ICCSL Chairman Shanil Fernando called the survey “a timely wake-up call.” He said that, “A tax system that works well isn’t just about collecting revenue, it’s about partnership, when people understand their role and feel respected by the system, compliance follows naturally. That’s the culture we need to build.” Going forward, ICCSL plans to engage policymakers, institutions, and civil society to take the survey’s findings seriously and turn them into meaningful change. The Chamber also aims to raise public awareness and encourage open dialogue on how to make the tax system more inclusive, transparent, and citizen-friendly.

Anyone interested in learning more about the survey or accessing the full report is encouraged to contact the ICCSL Secretariat at +94 (11) 2577603, coo@iccsrilanka.com.

ICCSL Tax Educational Videos

We're excited to announce the launch of our new tax education video series on the ICCSL YouTube Channel!

The videos are designed to raise public awareness and improve understanding of key taxation topics. With clear visuals and easy-to-follow explanations, they aim to simplify complex tax concepts and support taxpayers in meeting their obligations. The recent two videos are now live, see the links below and more will be released soon. Stay tuned and subscribe to stay informed!



Link: <https://rb.gy/l2729t>



Link: <https://rb.gy/yvoa0j>



The International Chamber of Commerce Sri Lanka (ICC Sri Lanka), through its Research, Knowledge Mobilization & Taxation Committee (RKMT), successfully organized a complimentary workshop on Individual Income Tax (IIT), exclusively for its members.

The event was held on 30th May 2025 at the ICC Sri Lanka office in Colombo 03. The session commenced with opening remarks by Mr. Shanil Fernando, Chairman of ICC Sri Lanka. Mr. Nihal Wijewardana, Senior Deputy Commissioner at the Inland Revenue Department, Sri Lanka joined as the resource person for the workshop.

A distinguished panel of tax professionals participated in the subsequent discussion, including:

- Mr. Velauthapillai Shakthivel, Principal – Tax, Ernst and Young
- Ms. Rifka Ziyad, Principal – Tax and Regulatory, KPMG
- Mr. Saman Srilal, Managing Partner, RTA Sri Lanka
- The panel was moderated by Dr. Nadee Dissanayake, Chairperson of the RKMT Committee at ICC Sri Lanka.

The interactive workshop covered key topics such as:

- Overview of Individual Income Tax
- Recent Changes in Tax Legislation
- Tax Planning Strategies for High-Income Earners
- Common Tax Deductions and Credits

Participants actively engaged with the experts during the Q&A session, gaining valuable insights into current tax matters. This well-received event was made possible through the sponsorship of RTA Sri Lanka and media partnership with Daily FT.

International Chamber of Commerce Sri Lanka
Suncity Building, Unit 2B/2/2,
No. 18, St. Anthony's Mawatha, Colombo 03.
admin@iccsrilanka.com