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Message of Condolence from the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo on the passing of Dr. A. J. Weeramunda, Retired Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Colombo.

We, the members of the Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo are deeply saddened by the demise of Dr. A. J Weeramunda and we send this message of condolence to his family at this difficult time.

His loss is greatly felt by all for us who have benefited from his contribution to Sri Lankan society in general and to the development of the Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo in particular. He was a much-loved teacher to many of us in the Department and an extremely supportive colleague to the others. Above all, he was a great mentor who was admired by his students and his colleagues.

Dr. Weeramunda graduated from the University of Peradeniya specializing in English Language and Literature and served in the capacity of an assistant lecturer from 1971 -1972. He then left for the United States for his doctoral studies in Anthropology at San Diego State University. On his return to Sri Lanka in 1977, he joined the Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo and in 1980, became Head of the Department. He served the University of Colombo for over 30 years inspiring several generations of students.

Dr. Weeramunda's doctoral thesis published under the title *Transforming peasants : social change in a dry zone settlement scheme* (1982) and his more recent *Pul Eliya re-visited : a case study of agrarian change* (2011) (co-authored with M.K.Nadeeka Damayanthi) make significant theoretical contributions to the sociology and anthropology of Sri Lanka. His research work in rural sociology, sex work, child labor and child exploitation, and students' unrest in Sri Lankan universities are pioneering works in the fields and continue to be referred to with appreciation by many scholars.

Dr.Weeramunda worked with a large number of national and international organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, Save the Children, the Agrarian Research and Training Institute, and the National Education Commission. The contribution he made to build a research culture in the department through training programs for both students and staff continue to be remembered. The research training program that Dr.Weeramunda carried out with the staff with the support of the Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Co-operation (NUFFIC) had a long-lasting impact on department members' research capacity and still continues to be one of the department's greatest strengths.

Dr.Weeramunda was a firm believer in the synthesis of theory and practice. After his retirement he worked in rural development in the Badulla district and in a few other areas. He had a never-ending quest for knowledge and learning about the everyday life of people was a favored pastime. He found great pleasure in being with people in the remote villages of the country. He was an enthusiast of Sri Lankan traditions, rituals and culture. He once staged a Sinhala translation of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot,* and this was just one example of his enormous artistic talents.

Some of us, who were fortunate to be his students, remember him as a great teacher with a unique approach towards his students. He ensured that his students were punctual, responsible, committed, and cultivated good social skills. As colleagues we learnt from him and were supported by him during our junior years.
He was a great leader, a skillful administrator, a gifted teacher, an enthusiastic researcher, a brilliant intellectual, a prolific writer, and a caring mentor who was greatly loved and will always be fondly remembered.

May his soul rest in peace!

Professor Farzana Haniffa (Head of Department) and all members of the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo.