

Advertisement

Post of Research Assistant (02 vacancies)

Project: Study on Prevalence and associated factors of psychological issues among school children aged 11–15 years and the perceptions of parents, teachers, principals and education officials regarding these issues, in Kalutara, Batticaloa, and Ratnapura districts – Family Health Bureau

Background of the Project:

Above survey had been initiated jointly by Family Health Bureau of Ministry of Health and Health & Nutrition Branch of Ministry of Education in October 2025 and concluded by January 2026. Data entry stage is now in process.

This survey had been designed to identify prevalence of important mental health issues and associated factors among school children and also to find out perceptions of parents, teachers, principals and education officials regarding these issues. Findings from this study will help authorities to identify priorities and develop and establish relevant programmes. These findings will also be used in advocacy initiatives for resources for mental health programmes targeting school children.

Duties and Responsibilities

The research assistants are expected to perform the tasks described below under the supervision of the National Programme Manager of School Health/ Survey Coordinator.

1. To complete data entry following coding and validation procedures
2. To conduct cleaning and verification of entered data under supervision of survey coordinator
3. To run consistency checks for correction of data and prepare datasheets for analysis under supervision of survey coordinator
4. To assist the technical team in final analysis and report writing by preparing preliminary summary sheets and components including tables and graphs
5. To develop correspondence paperwork to communicate with relevant education and health officials
6. To conduct any other survey-related activities identified by the survey coordinator

The selected candidate should work mainly under the Director Maternal and Child Health and the Survey Coordinator who is the National Programme Manager, School Health Unit of the Family Health Bureau. It is a full time job with working hours as 8.30am to 4.15pm but the candidate may be requested to work extended hours and weekends if needed without additional remuneration. If necessary, transport will be provided for official visits from the Family Health Bureau. Accommodation will also be arranged if/as necessary for official visits.

Desired Qualifications and Experience for the Post

- Pre intern Medical officer with MBBS qualifications
- Previous experience of scientific research, data collection, data entry and analysis

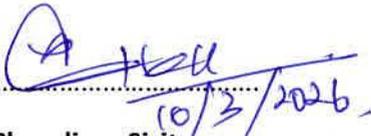
- Good command in English and Sinhala languages. Writing/Speaking skills in Tamil language will be an added advantage
- Ability to work with Microsoft office applications (Word/Excel/PowerPoint/SPSS)
- Proven ability to work as a team member

Nature of Duties

Full time/part time: Full time
No of days per week: 05-06 days
Working hours per day: Eight hours (8.30am to 4.15 pm)
Place of work: Family Health Bureau
Monthly remuneration: Rs 94,265.00
Duration: Three (03) months from 24th March 2026

A Research assistant is not entitled for any other privileges or claims other than the benefits specified above from the Ministry of Health and/or the funding agency.

Candidates are requested to provide an updated CV with copies of relevant documents and contact details before 19th March 2026 to School Health Unit, Family Health Bureau, No 231, De Saram Place, Colombo 10. (Tel: 011 2692746, E mail: sh_fhb@yahoo.com).


10/3/2026

Dr Chandima Siritunga
Director Maternal and Child Health

Dr. Chandima Siritunga
MBBS, MSC, MD Community Medicine
Director Maternal and Child Health
Family Health Bureau



Dr Buddhika Sudasinghe
Consultant Community Physician
National Programme Manager – School Health
Survey Coordinator

Dr. S P B H Sudasinghe
Consultant Community Physician
School Health Unit - Family Health Bureau
Ministry of Health

Terms of reference (TOR)
Recruitment of Research Assistants
For
Completion of the Survey on Prevalence of Mental Health Issues among School Children in 3 selected districts of Batticaloa, Kalutara and Ratnapura, Sri Lanka

Background

Sri Lanka faces a significant mental health burden, with high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The country has a high suicide rate and for 2022-2023, it was 15.6 per 100,000 population (*Annual Health Bulletin 2022/2023*). Hospital admissions due to mental disorders have also been increasing over the past years since 2019. Namely mood disorders, schizophrenia, mental and behavioral disorders due to use of alcohol and other psychoactive substances and psychosocial problems have become critical issues in the Sri Lankan context.

Adolescence is a critical transition period in life. Adolescents (ages 10-19 years) make up 16.6% of Sri Lanka's population (Department of Census and Statistics, 2024). This period is a transit phase with rapid emotional, physical, and intellectual growth and they have a natural inclination to explore new experiences but a limited ability to fully comprehend their consequences. Therefore, adolescents are extremely vulnerable to unhealthy behaviours such as substance use including tobacco and alcohol, violence and abuse. This tendency of adolescents in the present context with its inherent societal issues and resultant stressors, needs to be addressed.

Recently concluded Global School Health Survey 2024 (GSHS 2024) had revealed alarming findings on psychosocial issues of adolescents, that necessitate urgent action. These findings reported that during the past year 18% of school children felt depressive symptoms, 15.4% had suicidal ideation and 22.4% felt lonely most of the time or always. The National Child Suicide Investigations 2024 conducted by Family Health Bureau reported that 94% of child suicides were school children.

This survey - to assess the prevalence of mental health issues affecting adolescents was designed and initiated to identify the extent of this critical issue and to enable the authorities to develop targeted interventions to mitigate the negative consequences.

The survey was launched in October 2025 and data collection in all 3 districts had been completed. This comprehensive activity needs to be completed speedily so that the timeliness of this critical study is ensured.

Completion of this survey would require a large amount of work comprising of;

- Running consistency checks for correction of data following completion of data entry
- Preparing datasheets for analysis
- Generating preliminary statistical summaries following analysis
- Producing components for compiling the report including graphs and tables
- Assisting survey coordinator in compiling the report
- Corresponding with Ministry of Education and UNICEF

- Assisting in any other tasks related to the survey and school health

The term of employment of the present research assistant would terminate by end of January. School Health Unit has no post graduate trainees and only 2 medical officers who are entrusted to handle all routine and ad-hoc correspondence, compilation of routine and special reports and communicate with regard to school health, monitoring/scrutiny over routine school health programmes at RDHS and MOH levels and planning, organization and coordination of routine training programmes and meetings on school health.

Hence, it is essential to ensure presence of adequate and appropriate human resources i.e. technical staff consisting of pre-intern doctors to manage the extensive amount of remaining tasks and to accomplish the predetermined outputs of this survey. Pre-intern medical students receive a thorough and updated exposure to survey methodology, conduction of research and also latest data analysis software. Thus, their contribution would ensure high-quality data entry, timely and accurate analysis and development of an extensive report. Therefore recruiting 2 research assistants would guarantee that the study progresses according to set timeframes and that objectives are achieved.

Scope of Work

The research assistants are expected to perform the tasks described above under the supervision of the National Programme Manager (NPM) of School Health/Survey Coordinator.

They are summarized below.

- running consistency checks for correction of data following completion of data entry
- preparing datasheets for analysis
- generating preliminary statistical summaries following analysis
- producing components for compiling the report including graphs and tables
- assisting survey coordinator in compiling the report
- Corresponding with Ministry of Education and UNICEF
- Assisting in any other tasks related to the survey and school health

The selected research assistants will be posted to the School Health Unit of the Family Health Bureau (FHB), which is the main focal point of the survey.

Duration

For three (03) months beginning 24th March 2026. Successful recruits will work 05 - 06 days a week from 8.30am – 4.15pm.

Desired qualification and experience required for the post

- Pre-intern Medical officer with MBBS qualifications
- Previous experience in scientific research, data collection, data entry and analysis
- Good command of English and Sinhala languages. Writing skills in Tamil language will be an added advantage
- Ability to work with Microsoft office applications (Word/Excel/PowerPoint/SPSS)
- Proven ability to work as a team member

The successful candidate will be paid a monthly remuneration of Rs 94,265.00.

The selected candidates will be briefed on the survey and will be given a comprehensive training on procedures involved in data analysis at the School Health Unit, FHB.

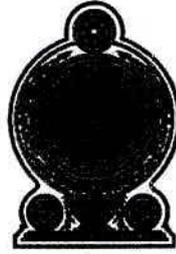
Candidates are requested to provide an updated CV with copies of relevant documents and contact details before 19th March 2026 to School Health Unit, Family Health Bureau, No 231, De Seram Place, Colombo 10. (Tel: 011 2692746, E mail: sh_fhb@yahoo.com).

දුරකථන) 0112669192 , 0112675011
தொலைபேசி) 0112694033, 0112675280
Telephone) 0112675449

ෆැක්ස්) 0112693866
பெக்ஸ்) 0112693869
Fax) 0112692913

විද්‍යුත් තැපෑල) postmaster@health.gov.lk
மின்னஞ்சல் முகவரி)
e-mail)

වෙබ් අඩවිය) www.health.gov.lk
இணையத்தளம்)
website)



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சுவசிரிபாய
SUWASIRIPAYA

මගේ අංකය)
எனது இல)
My No.) HPD/UNICEF/09/2026/FHB

මගේ අංකය)
உமது இல)
Your No.)

දිනය)
திகதி)
Date) 03. 2026

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சுகாதார மற்றும் வெகுஜன ஊடக அமைச்சு
Ministry of Health & Mass Media

Director (Maternal & Child Health),

Family Health Bureau.

Recruitment of two research Assistant and completion of Study on Prevalence and associated factors of psychological issues among school children aged 11 -15 years and the perceptions of parents, teachers, principals and education officials regarding these issues, in Kalutara, Batticaloa and Rathnapura districts conducted by the School Health Unit, Family Health Bureau jointly with Ministry of Education.

Reference is made to your letter No. FHB/SH/UNICEF/1/2026 dated 30/01/2026 on the above subject.

Secretary, Health & Mass Media has given approval to carry out the below activities as requested by you.

	Activity	No. of programmes	Duration	Cost (SRL Rs.)
1	Resource –Overall technical guidance; coordination and supervision of data entry & coordination and handling of data analysis	1200.00x 6 persons x 14 days x 3 months		302,400.00
2	Resource - Overall technical guidance; coordination, supervision and handling of report writing	1200.00 x 3 persons x14 days x 3 months		151,200.00
3	Recruit of two Pre Interns as research Assistants	(Rs. 94,265.00) x 2 persons x 3 months		565,590.00
	Total cost			1,019,190.00

Total cost of the estimated budget is Rs. 1,019,190.00 (One million nineteen thousand and one hundred ninety only).

Subjected to follow the Government tender procedures for obtaining conference facilities, purchase of stationery and follow the General circular 1822 and 1822 (11) for resource payments and payment for others and follow the Government recruitment procedures for recruit Pre-Intern Medical Graduate for 3 months according to given TOR.

Funds identified under UNICEF pending biennium Work Plan 2026 - 2027.

After carrying out the above activity, please submit your Project Progress Report (PPR) with statement of expenditure of the activity to UNICEF with copy to DDG (Planning).



Dr. Anil Samaranayake
Director/International Health

Sgd. Dr. Anil Jasinghe
Secretary, Health & Mass Media

Cc: UNICEF



18/08/25
S.
36/25

දුරකථන (සාමාන්‍ය)
தொலைபேசி (பொது)
Telephone (Common) } 0112 696 677
0112 681 309

දුරකථන (අධ්‍යක්ෂ)
தொலைபேசி (பணிப்பாளர்)
Telephone (Director) } 0112 696 508

ෆැක්ස්
பெக்ஸ்
Fax } 0112 690 790

විද්‍යුත් තැපෑල
மின்னஞ்சல்
Email } director@fhb.health.gov.lk

වෙබ් අඩවිය
இணையத்தளம்
Website } fhb.health.gov.lk



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குடும்ப சுகாதார பணியகம்
சுகாதார அமைச்சு

Family Health Bureau
Ministry of Health

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எனது இல
Our Ref. No. } FHB/SH/MHI/SP/2025

ඔබේ අංකය
உமது இல
Your Ref. No. }

ලිපිනය
முகவரி
Address } 231, ද සේරම් පෙදෙස,
கොழும்பு 10,
231, De Seram Place,
Colombo 10.

දිනය
திகதி
Date } 07.2025

Through
Deputy Director General Public Health Services II

Through
Director General of Health Services

Secretary
Ministry of Health & Mass Media

Dear Sir,

Re: Request to Support for the Study: Prevalence and Associated Factors of Psychosocial Issues among School Children Aged 11-15 Years in Kalutara, Batticaloa and Ratnapura Districts and Perceptions of Parents, Teachers, Principals and Education Officials on these issues in Kalutara, Batticaloa and Ratnapura Districts

Family Health Bureau, the focal point for School Health Programme (SHP) in Ministry of Health and Health & Nutrition Branch of the Ministry of Education are jointly responsible for ensuring that health of our 3.8 million school children is protected.

There is a significant mental health burden among our population, with high rates of depression, anxiety and suicides. Recent societal changes including economic vulnerability and changes in parenting styles have introduced a multitude of stressors which have significantly impacted on the mental well-being of school going adolescents as well, leading to disrupted education, social isolation and psychological issues.

Recently concluded Global School Health Survey 2024 (GSHS 2024) had revealed alarming findings that warrant urgent action. It showed that 15.4% and 18% of 13 - 17 year old school children surveyed has had suicidal ideation and depressive symptoms respectively, during the previous year. In this context, it is important to assess the prevalence of mental health issues affecting adolescents to identify the extent of this grave issue of growing concern. Kalutara, Batticaloa, and Ratnapura districts have been selected for the proposed study and it will assess the prevalence and associated factors of psychosocial issues among children aged 11-15 years in a selected sample of schools in these districts along with perceptions of parents, teachers, principals and education officials on these issues in same districts.

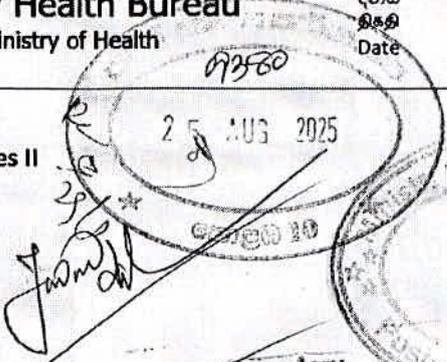
Ethical clearance for this study will be obtained from Ethical Review Committee of Post Graduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo. Findings of this study would greatly help our decision making and enable us to provide appropriate services by aligning them properly.

Whilst appreciating the continuous guidance extended for the School Health Programme and National Maternal and Child Health programme, I would value your authorization and concurrence f to implement this activity considering its timely importance.

Thank you,

Dr Chandima Siritunga
Director, Maternal and Child Health

Dr. Chandima Siritunga
MBBS, MSC, MD Community Medicine
Director Maternal and Child Health
Family Health Bureau



19/07/2025

To
Secretary
Ministry of Health

Approved
Yan/18/2025

Actg. Secretary
Ministry of Health & Mass Media
"Suwasiripaya"
385, Rev. Baddegama Wimalawansa Thero Mawatha,
Colombo 10

Through
Director General of Health Services

Through
Deputy Director General Public Health Services II

Through
Director
Maternal & Child Health

22/7/2025

22/7/25

Dear Sir

Following two (02)

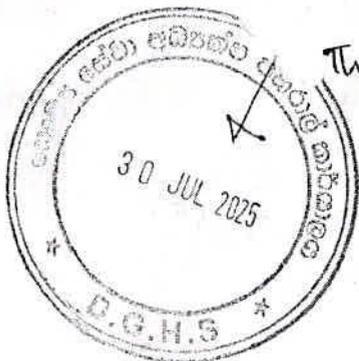
I am forwarding letters -

- ① to obtain your concurrence
- ② to obtain concurrence from Secretary Ministry of Education.

This is for the proposed study 'Prevalence and associated factors of psychological issues among 11-15 year old school children in 3 selected districts and perceptions of parents, teachers, Principals and education officials on psychological issues of school children in same districts' to be conducted jointly with Health & Nutrition Branch of Ministry of Education, Higher Education & Vocational Education.

I will be grateful for your kind attention & consideration.

Thank you



Dr Buddhika Sudasinghe
CCP/Head - School Health





ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE
POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA



Chairperson

Dr. Kamani Samarasinghe

Secretary

Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardane

Committee Members

Prof. A Gnanathanan

Prof. Ajith Nagahawatte

Prof. Amila Isuru

Prof. Guwani Liyanage

Prof. Harsha Atapattu

Prof. Lohini Vijayendran Athithan

Prof. Pandula Siribaddana

Prof. Sanjeewa Seneviratne

Prof. Shanthi Segarajasinghem

Prof. Shreenika Weliange

Dr. Ruwan Ferdinando

Dr. G. Sudath Dharmaratne

Dr. Nilantha Ratnayake

ERC/PGIM/2025/ 179
03.09.2025

Dr. S.P.B.H. Sudasinghe
No. 94,
Kalugashinna,
Pattiyagama,
Pugoda.

Dear Dr. Sudasinghe,

Title: Prevalence and associated factors of psychological issues among school children aged 11–15 years and the perceptions of parents, teachers, principals and education officials regarding these issues, in Kalutara, Batticaloa and Ratnapura districts.

Principal Investigator: Dr. S.P.B.H. Sudasinghe (MBBS, MSc in Community Medicine, MD in Community Medicine)

Co-investigators-

Dr Ayesha Lokubalasooriya (MBBS, MSc in Community Medicine, MD in Community Medicine)

Dr. Chandima Sirithunga (MBBS, MSc Community Medicine, MD Community Medicine)

Dr. P.V.S.C.Vithana (MBBS, MSc in Community Medicine, MD in Community Medicine)

Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardhana (MBBS, PG Certificate in Medical Education, Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education, MSc in Community Medicine, MD Community Medicine),

Dr. Ganeshamoorthy Pragasan (MBBS, MSc in Community Medicine, MD in Community Medicine)

Ms. B.W.G. Dilhani [BSc Chemistry, Zoology, Forestry and Environmental Science, M.Ed., PhD in Education Supervision (Reading)]

Ms. S. Harshee K. Perera (BSc Mineral Resources and Technology, MSc Industrial and Environmental Chemistry, M.Ed, PG Diploma Education Administration, PG Diploma in Education),

Dr. Yamuna Ellawela (MBBS, MSc in Community Medicine, MD in Community Medicine)

Dr. Priyani Karunarathne (MBBS, Dip. In Family Medicine),

Dr. W S Jayasinghe (MBBS, MSc in Community Medicine, Master of Public Health– Bio Security),

Dr. Kanchana L.K. Mahagamage (MBBS)

Thank you for submitting the above research proposal. I am pleased to inform you that the study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee at its meeting held on 18.08.2025 after reviewing the following documents submitted by you.

Document	Version No.	Date of Submission
Project protocol	2.0	28.08.2025
Study Instruments - English	1.0	28.07.2028
Study Instruments – Sinhala	1.0	28.07.2028
Study Instruments – Tamil	1.0	28.07.2028
Information sheet & Consent form-English	2.0	28.08.2025
Information sheet & Consent form-Sinhala	1.0	28.07.2028
Information sheet & Consent form-Tamil	1.0	28.07.2028

The approval is valid until one year from the meeting date stated above. You may make a written request for renewal/extension of the validity, along with the submission of a progress report.

Address: 160, Prof. Nandadasa Kodagoda Mawatha, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka.

Web: www.pgim.cmb.ac.lk **Email:** erc@pgim.cmb.ac.lk

Tel: +94 11 2689266

Fax: +94 11 2689268

Please note that you are required to inform the ERC about the following:

- Any unanticipated events involving potential risks to study subjects.
- Any deviations in protocols
- Any changes to the documents listed above.

You are required to submit the final report to the ERC/PGIM with the following declaration:
"The research was conducted in accordance with the proposal for which approval was granted by the ERC of PGIM" within three (03) months upon the completion of the study.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a rectangular box. The signature appears to read "Dushyanthi Jayawardane" with "Jm.S." written below it.

Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardane
Secretary-ERC/PGIM