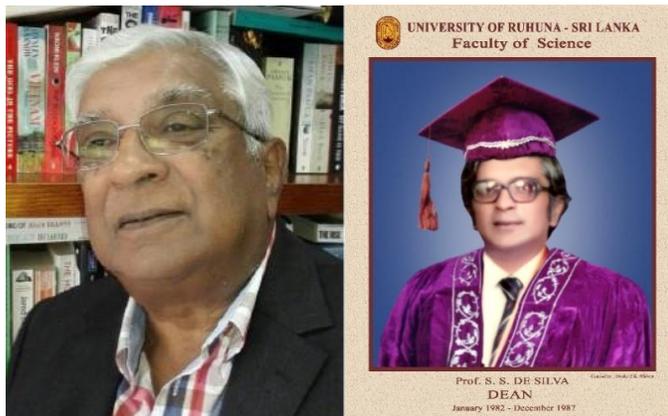


## Professor Sena S. De Silva (1946 – 2020)



It is with profound grief and sorrow that we learned that our dear teacher, Professor Sena S. De Silva passed away on 6 May, 2020. He was an honorary member of Sri Lanka Association for Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (SLAFAR).

After obtaining his B.Sc. (honours) degree in Zoology in 1968, he joined the Vidyalankara University (presently University of Kelaniya) as an assistant lecturer in Zoology. He obtained his Ph.D. in Fisheries Biology, from the University of Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom in June 1973. After returning to Sri Lanka, we were fortunate to be three of his first students in the field of fisheries biology. He was a lecturer in Zoology in the Vidyalankara Campus (and subsequently University of Kelaniya) of the University of Sri Lanka until December 1978. Then he joined the University of Ruhuna (then Ruhuna University College) as a pioneering senior member of the academic staff.

He was the founder Professor of Zoology in the Faculty of Science at University of Ruhuna (1978 - 1988). He was appointed to the professorship at the age of 32 years and was the youngest academic to hold such a position within the higher education system in Sri Lanka. He served as the founder Head of the Department of Zoology and Dean of the Faculty of Science at University of Ruhuna. During his tenure in the University of Kelaniya (then Vidyalankara Campus), he made a radical change in the research culture in the Faculty of Science. He was the first academic in the Faculty of Science in the University of Kelaniya, who produced a postgraduate student in the field of fisheries science. He was instrumental in attracting research grants from international donor agencies such as IFS,

IDRC, SAREC, CIDA, ACIAR etc. which enabled capacity building for research at University of Kelaniya and University of Ruhuna and also for many students to read for postgraduate degrees in fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic ecology under his supervision. Professor De Silva was an Invited Visiting Professor by the Chinese Academy of Sciences from 2016 to 2018.

He paved the way for most of us who were students at the University of Kelaniya and the University of Ruhuna to become internationally recognized fisheries scientists in Sri Lanka and we are indebted to him for identifying our research abilities and for providing guidance to become fisheries scientists. If we call him the “Father of Fisheries Sciences in Sri Lanka”, nobody would disagree. Most of the senior academics and senior researchers specialized in the fields of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Sri Lanka and presently holding or have held high ranking positions within the higher academic institutions, fisheries research centres and in the Department of Fisheries in Sri Lanka have been his students at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels.

He is an internationally highly recognized eminent Sri Lankan fisheries and aquaculture scientist and an academic who was a pioneer in the development of Fisheries Science education within the higher education system in Sri Lanka. He was also instrumental in promoting fisheries research especially with respect to development of reservoir fisheries and inland aquaculture. His contribution to development of Fisheries sector in Sri Lanka goes back to more than 4 decades. He was awarded with Titular award of Vidya Nidhi (Class I) at the maiden



Presidential Awards made by Hon. J.R. Jayawardena, the President of Sri Lanka on 22 May 1986 for research contributions in the field of Fisheries. His contributions are not limited to Sri Lanka, but are well recognized internationally and as a result he was awarded a D.Sc. from the University of Sterling, U.K. in June 1989 for his research contributions to Reservoir Fisheries Management and Aquaculture. He was also conferred honorary degree of Doctor of Science by the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka in 1996.

Professor De Silva was a Senior Visiting Fellow of the National University of Singapore, from November 1989 to February 1991. He was the coordinator for the Asian Fish Nutrition Network, he was responsible for coordination of research on fish nutrition in Asia, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Canada 1988 -1991). In February 1991, he joined the Deakin University, Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia and served as the Coordinator of the Post-graduate Degree Courses in Aquaculture. He served as the Professor in Aquaculture and Fisheries Management, & Director Research, Deakin University until August 2006. From August 2006 to August 2011, he served as the Director General, Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), Bangkok, Thailand. Professor De Silva's tenure as Director General of NACA is considered as five highly successful years, playing a key role in project development in areas including culture-based fisheries, the development of better management practices for Vietnamese catfish, management of reservoir fisheries, the use of remote sensing for inland fisheries management, reducing the dependence on trash fish in feeds for marine fish, and climate change. His term culminated in the highly successful FAO/NACA Global Conference in Aquaculture 2010, held in Phuket, Thailand, where he presented the regional synthesis paper on Aquaculture Development in the Asia-Pacific. During his term as the Director General of NACA, he was instrumental to win the 2010-2011 Margarita Lizárraga Medal, conferred by FAO, with recognition of its significant contribution to sustainable aquaculture development in the Asia and Pacific Region, serving as a cohesive intergovernmental forum for the formulation of regional policies as well as cooperation and coordination in aquaculture research, development and training.

He was awarded a Gold Medal by the Asian Fisheries Society in 2004. In May 2005, Professor De Silva was awarded the prestigious Honorary Life Membership of the World Aquaculture Society. He was also conferred the AFS Honorary Life Member Award during the 10th Asian Fisheries & Aquaculture Forum held in South Korea in April 2013. He has been the Editor-in Chief of *Reviews in Aquaculture*, Willey- Blackwells (from 2008 onwards); the journal with an impact factor of 7.19, which is currently the ranked first among those on Fisheries and Aquaculture. Some of the key areas that I have been working in the recent past include: Development and adoption of Better Management Practices (BMPs) for commodities such as catfish farming sector in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam; Inland fisheries (reservoir & lake) development and management; Feed management in aquaculture; Global issue on fish meal usage and pellet feed versus trash fish usage in marine fish farming; The role of alien species in aquaculture in relation to impacts on biodiversity and food security; Culture based fisheries (CBF) development as a low cost strategy for food fish production in rural areas; Climate change impacts on aquaculture; vulnerabilities, adaptations and mitigation in respect of specific aquaculture farming systems; Access and benefit sharing (ABS) of aquatic genetic resources, and brood stock management in aquaculture; Role of alien species in aquaculture and Certification in aquaculture. At the time of his demise on the 6th of May 2020, he was serving as an honorary professor at Deakin University, Australia.

He leaves behind the legacy of quality aquaculture profession passed onto his numerous students, and he is ever remembered by his over 300 scientific publications, several textbooks, and edited conference proceedings, with some of the most valuable treatises on aquaculture among them. He was born on the 8th October 1946 and his untimely demise at the age of 74 is a great loss not only to the Higher Education system and Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors in Sri Lanka, but also internationally. We are proud to be his students and he will be always honoured and remembered for ever, by all his students, friends and followers.

May he attain the supreme bliss of Nibbana.

**Upali S. Amarasinghe, P. Ruchira T. Cumaratunge, M. Jayantha S. Wijeyaratne**