

Softlogic Life has gained more prominence over the last few years. Could you take us back to the beginnings and the journey of Softlogic Life?

Softlogic Life has been in operation for the past twenty years. It was known as the Asian Alliance Insurance PLC when it commenced insurance operations back in 2001. Softlogic Life Insurance PLC, now owned by the Softlogic Group, took over in 2011 and presently holds the majority of the shares.

Softlogic Group is one of Sri Lanka's most diversified conglomerates

with interests in retail, healthcare, IT, leisure, financial services and automotive industries. We are also the only Sri Lankan insurers to have Leapfrog Investments as a shareholding partner. Leapfrog Investments is one of the largest foresighted investment companies looking at potential markets like ours to diversify their investments.

With many awards and accolades achieved over the years, we are the only Sri Lankan company listed in Forbes Asia's 200 best companies under USD 1 billion. We have even been awarded the Gold Service Brand

of the year 2019/2020 and Gold Innovative Brand of the year 2020 at the SLIM Brand Excellence Awards.

Softlogic Life succeeded in expanding its market share from 14.1% in 2019 to 15.2% in 2020, successfully doubling its market share within a mere five years. We are the only life insurer to consistently grow its market share over the past ten years.

2020 was a significant year for us as we ranked as the third-largest entity in the Life Insurance industry by achieving the highest Gross Written Premium (GWP) of LKR

15.6 billion. Also, USD 30 million (LKR 5.6 billion) was invested towards Softlogic Life's growth by Finnfund, Norfund and Munich Re.

Our predominant focus is on long-term life insurance by providing protection to people and striving to elevate the quality of life by embracing creativity and innovation. We offer individual, corporate, bancassurance and global health insurance solutions to our customers through our superior products and services and we continue to develop innovative solutions.

Understanding the Insurance Sector with Softlogic Life's **PIYUMAL WICKRAMASINGHE**

Piyumal Wickramasinghe is the Executive Vice President and Chief Distribution Officer of the Alternate Distribution Channel at Softlogic Life, Sri Lanka's third-largest and one of the fastest-growing life insurance companies. Piyumal is amongst the industry's youngest and dynamic insurance personalities and has contributed significantly towards the transformational journey of Softlogic Life. In conversation with him, we probed into the prospects of this sector and its endurance thus far.

There appears to be a certain stigma revolving around insurance providers in general. What are your thoughts on this?

I think this is because insurance is related to uncertainty and most of the time, customers think you have to die to get the benefits. That is an incorrect perception. A great example is our Softlogic Life brand. Without creating fear mongers, our brand spoke to the audience with positive vibes, promoting living life to the fullest. We simply say that we take care of whichever health implications that may affect peoples' lives.

Softlogic Life is a company that cares for customers. We understand our customers' needs, wants and even sentiments, which is why we have prioritised paying insurance claims on time. More than 85% of our claims are settled within one day, which has helped us build trust and corporate reputation, bringing us this far.

Given the range of the products offered, are the facilities extended for expatriates as well?

Yes, under our product range, we have a separate product offering global health insurance. In our local policies, we also have a worldwide health insurance cover. The speciality of these plans is that it gives accessibility for you and family members to get health treatments anywhere in the world.

We are currently developing a global health plan that has accessibility to cover Sri Lankans

living overseas and we are hoping to launch this within the coming months.

We know that several sectors faced challenges in the recent past. What was the impact on the insurance industry and Softlogic Life?

The insurance sector went through many challenges during the past few years, yet Softlogic Life has grown despite the calamities. The detrimental impacts were short term as the company made the right decisions at the right time. Our company performance is better than most and today, we are the third-largest life insurer in terms of volume. We have been growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) between 25-30% over the last five years. This performance is almost double the growth of the insurance industry.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that it was challenge free. The predominant hurdle endured was to contain the stability of our customers in terms of payments. Due to the economic crunch and hardships, people sometimes found it difficult to pay for policies. Overall, there has been tremendous growth with the need for life and health insurance highlighted during the recent years with the effects of the pandemic.

From an operational standpoint, we have had systems that were tech-savvy for quite a while now. During the last 4-5 years, we invested heavily in technology and transformed towards digital platforms.

We are proud to claim that we have 33,000 advisors in our salesforce, with 100% paperless onboarding of customers. We manage to facilitate better than most, yet undeniably, there are challenges due to Work From Home (WFH) for certain employees. However, the technology deployed is geared to facilitate better service. This is also one critical reflection on the growth levels we have secured and achieved compared to our competitors.

Have you experienced a noticeable increase in claims due to the ongoing health crisis?

Yes and no. Why I say "no" is because, with the pandemic, customers are reluctant to visit hospitals. There is a high tendency to have home remedies and for consulting doctors via video calls. Medicine is also now being delivered to the doorstep. Hospitals are considered to be the last option, if at all.

Even though we experienced a downturn in regular hospitalisation, COVID-19 hospitalisation claims seem to have an upward trend, especially with the introduction of private facilities. Over the past three months, we have paid LKR 271 million COVID-19 related claims to our customers.

Looking forward, how do you see the future of insurance and where is Softlogic Life heading?

I believe that the insurance sector has high growth potential and there is still a large vacuum as the Sri Lankan market is still under-penetrated. Over the past few years, consumer

trust and confidence in insurance and behavioural patterns toward purchasing insurance policies have increased.

Softlogic Life today provides protection for more than 1.5 million customers, which is almost 5% of the total Sri Lankan population and almost 10% of the total labour force.

Looking at certain social and demographic changes, despite the current covid situation, the emerging middle class has shown clear signs of the need for insurance, especially for health. There has been an increase in health concerns relating to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), which causes 70% of the deaths in the country. So, I see huge growth potential in the insurance landscape.

Furthermore, Softlogic Life has and will provide carefully crafted insurance solutions that are relevant to different segments of our society. We believe there is tremendous room to grow and expand into many other untapped segments.

With the vision to revolutionise insurance in Sri Lanka through world-class innovations and deliver extraordinary stakeholder value, we believe in protecting and engaging with our existing and potential customers with digital lead customer-friendly solutions in the future.