

Socio-economic Consequences of the Ageing of the Population in Sri Lanka

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This paper attempts to probe the status of population ageing in Sri Lanka and its social and economic consequences. The study uses secondary and primary level data, drawn from the censuses, vital registration and Demographic Survey, 1994 and from a purposive sample of 731 elderly people aged 60 years and over in several districts in 2003 respectively. Mostly the cross sectional approach is used to analyse the data.

Sri Lanka is continuously experiencing one of the fastest ageing populations in the developing world due to gradual change of fertility and mortality with prolongation of longevity. The proportion of old population aged 60 and over has been increased over the decades and the age structure is conspicuously changed from young to old population. The rapidity of ageing has commenced since last two decades whilst its acceleration could be expected more in future decades. The doubling proportion of old persons is sooner in future. Socio- economic consequences were generated by the changing of age structure with the transformation of family systems, living arrangements, co-residence patterns and socio-economic situation of the country. The economic and social support and care of the elderly are changing in view of breaking up of traditional family systems, changing life styles and activity patterns of youth adult children. The strengthening of social security benefits for the elderly by using several policy options is so beneficial as the present coverage and the benefits are inadequate for the survival of the elderly people with their longevity. The elderly people those were in the private and unorganized sector, unemployed, those who are in agricultural and casual work under uncertain or low wages should be seriously concern to provide them some form of social security benefits and socioeconomic empowerment to the family to care for better health and fair diet. Though there are such numerous policy options could be considered, the most pragmatic and sustainable policy options, programmes and strategies to be taken vigorously and momentously to meet the challenges due to rapid population ageing in Sri Lanka. These all policy implications will lead to mediate the problems associated with ageing in future and thereby brings the elderly as so healthier and productive group of people in the Sri Lankan society.

Key Words: Socio-economic; Population; Sri Lanka; Security; Family

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