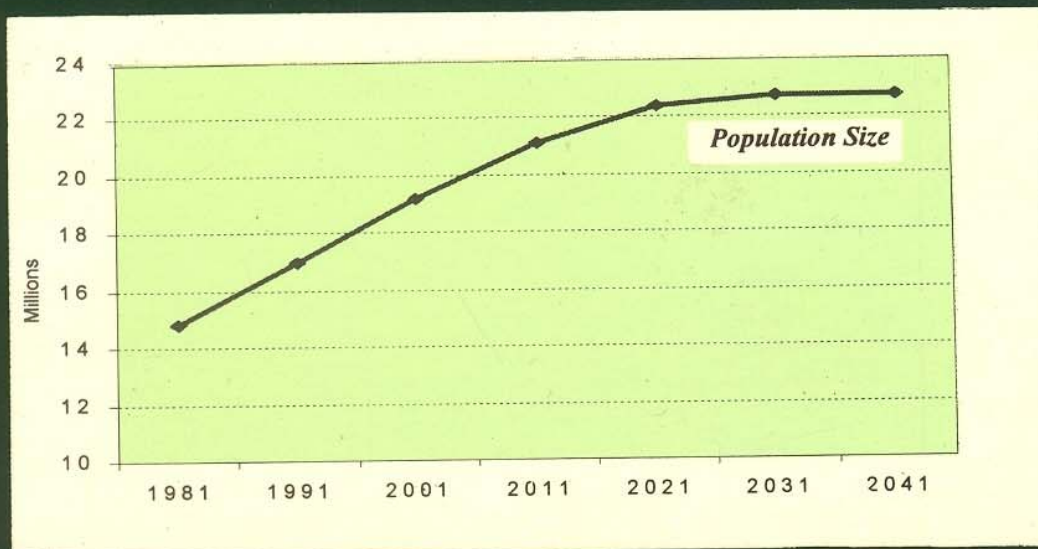


# Demography of Sri Lanka

## Issues and Challenges



*Department of Demography  
University of Colombo  
Sri Lanka*

**Demography  
of  
Sri Lanka  
Issues and Challenges**

A publication to mark twenty five years  
of the establishment of  
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# **Transition from Childhood to Adulthood: Reproductive Health Issues Among Adolescents in the Asia-Pacific Region**

*Indralal De Silva*

## ***Introduction***

At the World Health Organization (WHO) meeting on 'Pregnancy and Abortion in Adolescence' in 1974, adolescence was described as the period of sexual development from the initial appearance of secondary sex characteristics to sexual maturity, psychological development from child to adult identification, and socio-economic development from dependence to relative independence (WHO, 1975). Adolescence starts with a period of rapid physical growth accompanied by the gradual development of reproductive organs, secondary sex characteristics and menarche in girls. The period of adolescence for boys is generally longer than for girls', as girls in many societies are deemed ready for serious courtship or marriage proposals right after menarche. Boys, on the other hand, need more time, for reasons that have more to do with social relationships than with occupational or role training.

WHO defines adolescents as persons between 10-19 years of age and many studies throughout the world have adopted this age range as the standard: the present study unless otherwise stated specifically will conform to the WHO age range of 10-19 years when referring to adolescence. The size of the adolescent population in the world commands attention: they numbered nearly 1.1 billion in 1995 of which 913 million lived in developing countries and 160 million in developed countries. In other words, one in every five persons in the world is an adolescent, and 85 of every 100 adolescents live in developing countries. The size and growth of the world's adolescent population is determined by its levels and trends in fertility, and infant and childhood mortality.

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region represent about 60 per cent of the world population of which 20 per cent are adolescents. Most countries in the region are currently experiencing an increasingly larger adolescent population, although the rate of that increase is decreasing. During the initial stage of the demographic transition the absolute size and proportion of adolescents rose rapidly. Subsequently, the proportion of adolescents began to fall as the share of the aged population rose. However, the absolute increase

# Development of Population and Reproductive Health Policy in Sri Lanka

*Swarna Ukwatta  
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## **Introduction**

Sri Lanka's population has grown almost eight times since the first national census of 1871, which recorded only 2.4 million people. The first doubling of the population took place in 54 years between 1871 and 1925. It doubled again in 35 years between 1925 and 1960. This doubling within a short period resulted a relatively high rate of population growth. By which year could we expect to have a population of 19.2 million in Sri Lanka, that is, exactly double the size reported in 1960? Demographic estimates suggest that the size of the population could reach 19.2 million by the year 2001, a doubling in 41 years (Table 1).

The growth of the Sri Lankan population during the present century has not been uniform. Until 1946 the average annual intercensal rate of growth never exceeded 2 per cent (Table 1). However, post-war years reveal a sudden spurt in the rate of growth. The rate shot up to 2.8 per cent in the period 1946-53, and remained more or less the same during the period 1953-63. This was when the mortality rate had come down, while the birth rate remained high. However, after 1963 there was a clear decline in the rate of growth while at present it stands at about one per cent.

Even though the present rate of population growth is low, Sri Lanka still adds more than 200,000 people to its population annually. The country covering a land area of 65,610 square kilometers, ranks as one of the most densely populated countries in the Asian region with more than 300 persons per square kilometer by the turn of the century (Table 1).

As in many other countries, the population of Sri Lanka is not evenly distributed. Some parts within the country are very densely populated while others are less populous. As noted in the last population census of 1981, about 57 per cent of the population were in the Wet Zone that constitutes only about 21 per cent of the total land area of the country. Colombo the smallest of the 25 districts in Sri Lanka has a population density, which is about 11 times the national average.

# Population Change and Environmental Degradation in Sri Lanka

*Indralal De Silva  
Kumudika Boyagoda*

## **Introduction**

Population and environment have become topics of intense current discussion in an overwhelming majority of the countries of the world. As many countries show a pronounced imbalance between the growth of the population, on the one hand and the natural resource base needed to support it on the other, the linkages between population factors and environmental degradation and resource depletion is being stressed considerably.

The 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development which introduced the concept of sustainable development observes that "... rapidly growing populations can increase the pressure on resources and slow any rise in living standards; thus sustainable development can only be pursued if population size and growth are in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem". Two years later the international Forum on population in the Twenty First Century adopted the Amsterdam declaration on a "Better Life for Future Generations", which acknowledges "that population resources and environment are inextricably linked" and stresses the commitment "to bringing about a sustainable relationship between human numbers, resources and development" (United Nations, 1996). Thus the popular belief that population growth impedes socio-economic development has gained a new dimension in the form of environment. And it is being said that there is a premium on slowing population growth with all due dispatch as a pre eminent measure to safe guard the global environment (UNFPA, 1991).

Although the demographic profile of Sri Lanka, represents a unique scenario in the Asian region showing the ability to reduce its population growth tremendously, still experiences incremental annual growth in large numbers. The net annual additions could create serious environmental implications for a small country such as Sri Lanka. Therefore the main objective of this paper is to examine how population change has influenced the environmental degradation in the island and to discuss the future possible implications on environment due to population change.

# Induced Abortion in Sri Lanka: Who Goes to Providers for Pregnancy Termination

*Indralal De Silva  
Lakshmi Rankapuge  
Roy Perera*

## **Introduction**

Reproductive health in general implies that people have the capacity to reproduce, the freedom to decide it, and when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the rights of men and women to be informed of and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law (Hardee et al., 1998). Among the other methods of regulating fertility, the practice of induced abortion is observed to be the most common in the world.

In many developing countries induced abortion is illegal and illicit abortions are largely unsafe. Despite the dramatic increased the use of contraceptives over last three or four decades, abortion related mortality and morbidity continues to trouble health planners in many parts of the world. Recent estimates for the developing world show that at least a 30 million induced abortions take place annually. However, the lack of reliable information on abortion has hampered the design of effective policies, programmes and strategies to address the abortion issue (Henshaw, 1990).

As in many other countries, in Sri Lanka too a significantly large number of women in reproductive ages are faced with unwanted pregnancies, and an increasingly large proportion of them use abortion to prevent birth. In spite of it being widely practiced, abortion largely remains a taboo subject because of its legal, religious and cultural implications.

Only a very limited number of research investigations have been conducted in Sri Lanka on any aspect of the abortion issue up to now. The present study adopts interviewing techniques to investigate the causes of abortion, from a study group selected from two abortion clinics in the city of Colombo. This study is unique because it obtains information from the clients prior to the termination of pregnancy and is the first of its kind in Sri Lanka.

## **Data and Methods**

In medical literature "abortion" is defined as "termination of pregnancy before the foetus is capable of life outside the uterus",