

## Recent Fertility Dynamics in Sri Lanka

Lakshman Dissanayake

Department of Demography, University of Colombo

The Fertility Rate (TFR) in Sri Lanka has increased to 2.51, an increase of 6.4 percentage points from its previous level in mid-2000. The analysis further revealed a significant increase of fertility among older women in the reproductive age span compared to previous fertility patterns in the country. Data demonstrates that age-specific fertility rates (ASFR) in mid-2000 have gone up in all the age groups compared to the values obtained in 2000, but surprisingly, ages 35 years and above showed a remarkable increase in 2012 compared to previous years. This indicates an unexpected outcome despite the prevalence of government and non-governmental fertility control programmes. This is an unusual trend in fertility behavior by older women in the reproductive age span because ordinarily, we observe older women terminating their childbearing at an earlier age than in previous years, which is a strong indicator of the third stage of fertility transition. It is a known fact that fluctuations in TFR in any country are due to fertility adjustments during the post-transitional time periods. The study demonstrates that in Sri Lanka, these adjustments were mainly due to factors such as postponement of births due to the 30-year long war which ended in 2009, adjustment of fertility behaviour by women during the post-tsunami period, neglect of contraceptive use by the older women, unmet need of family planning for older women and also possibly due to increase of Muslim fertility in the context of a 'minority group hypothesis'. Furthermore, by examining the fluctuations in TFR in Sri Lanka, the study predicts that TFR is likely to reach the replacement level of fertility in 2022, based on the resemblance of this increase of the TFR to that of the post-war baby-boom in the west.

Keywords: Fertility, Older women, Family planning, War, Disaster