

AGEING OF POPULATION AND ELDERLY CARE IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract: The unprecedented growth of the elderly population, both in terms of absolute numbers and with regard to its share in the total population, is a striking feature of the demographic scenario of Sri Lanka in recent times. While Sri Lanka has the highest proportion of elderly population in South Asia today, the annual growth rate of the population over 60 years of age is increasing faster than that of the total population, and demographic projections clearly indicate an acceleration of the index of aging. In such a context, the care of the elderly becomes of utmost importance as a socio-economic issue. Traditionally, societal values in Sri Lanka have stressed filial responsibility in the care of aging parents and relatives. However, there is considerable evidence to show that these residual mechanisms of family support and care of the elderly have weakened. There is an increasing demand for institutional support by the elderly. This Paper attempts to identify some of the underlying reasons that have prompted the elderly to make the decision to move out of the family kinship network and seek institutional support. Certain suggestions are also made to organize several programmes in a climate of economic restraint.