

Book Review

Lakshman Dissanayake, Medium-Term Population Projection for Sri Lanka: 2012 to 2037, UNFPA, ISBN 978-955-8375-13-6, pp.72.

It appears that the medium-term projection made by Lakshman Dissanayake and published by the UNFPA is timely as Sri Lanka is presently undergoing major population dynamics with the slowed down growth of the population but with an unanticipated surge of fertility with noteworthy transformations in age structures associated with youth bulges as well as population ageing and extensive changes in migration and urbanization. As demographers, we all know that any population projection should be based on sound scientific evidence and provide plausible forecasts of demographic trends. Most of the earlier projections were long-term projections and the assumptions that we make now may not hold for a longer period such as the turn of this century. In this respect, the medium-term projection prepared by Dissanayake, appears more reliable in terms of the assumptions made in its construction. Time increases uncertainty: Short-term projections may be more practical because of the compounding effects of inaccuracies in assumptions over time. In this projection, make assumptions for a reasonable time length such as 25 years, because of the uncertainty involves in the assumptions made in relation to fertility, mortality and migration behaviour of the population. This is mainly because of the assumptions about future migration, fertility and mortality is often limited by the inertia in population change, the future population of an area is strongly influenced by the initial base population. Dissanayake looked at the recent fertility change using fertility assumptions by looking at upsurge of fertility which explained the phenomenon how it happened through demographic terminology of the 'tempo effects' of fertility. He went further and predicted when TFR will reach its replacement level with the use of an appropriate technique. Dissanayake has used his intuition to make more reliable assumptions on fertility, mortality and migration. His assumption on fertility was based on very scientific elucidation with historically evaluated similar situations in the world. In order to make reliable mortality assumptions for his projection, Dissanayake has done a very detailed analysis of mortality in Sri Lanka by looking at past trends in various mortality indicators as well as possible scenarios which can take place in the future. He also carried out this analysis in the context of epidemiologic transition in Sri Lanka with a very strong theoretical base. For making migration assumptions, the author has carried out a detailed examination of international migration trends because unlike fertility and mortality, migration does not follow a definitive pattern as international migration is considerably determined by the national policy as well as policies at destinations, in addition to socio-economic development at the origin. Therefore, sudden changes in international migration policies can alter volume as well as the pattern of migration dramatically. The author has successfully captured this phenomenon into his migration assumptions. Projections made in this study demonstrate probable causes of population change based on assumptions about future births, deaths, and net international migration. The projected values presented throughout this report are one

possible outcome for the future that would occur only if all the assumptions hold true. All assumptions about the components of change are based on historical trends. It is important to mention that population projections are estimates of the population for future dates. Therefore, accuracy of the projected population figure rests on how accurate the assumptions on fertility, mortality and international migration would be during the period of projection. As seen in this study, a thorough analysis was performed in order to detect future trends of the three main components of population by examining the past, present behaviours. Therefore, it is anticipated that the degree of the accuracy will be very high for the projections produced in this book.

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