

SRI LANKA IN THE 20TH CENTURY: A RAPIDLY CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC SCENARIO.

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Abstract: Sri Lanka has witnessed broad demographic transformations in the dynamics of size, structure and distribution, over the 20th century. These changes have accelerated particularly since Independence fifty years ago. They have been the result of a complex interplay of consistent and enlightened public policies in such areas as health, education, employment, migration, as well as more directly, fertility regulation. The demographic transitions these policies have engendered have played a critical role in determining the present contours of the country's social, economic and political landscape. Their effects will continue to define the shape, form and content of the Sri Lankan population in the new century. Issues which will need to be addressed through policy and programme interventions include the paradigm shift to reproductive health, gender equality, poverty alleviation, care of the elderly and broader partnerships with civil society and the international community.