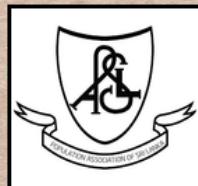


POPULATION ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA



NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



PROF. SUNETHRA J. PERERA PRESIDENT, POPULATION ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA FEBRUARY 2024

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the PASL newsletter 2023-2024. The Population Association of Sri Lanka (PASL) was founded on 8th February 1997 and celebrated its Silver Jubilee in November 2022. Over the last twenty-five years PASL has been making a significant contribution in addressing population and development issues in the country as well as in the Asian region. We are thankful to the UNFPA, Sri Lanka that has generously supported the PASL activities from its inception. The 26th Council commenced its tenure on 25th February 2023, and we have been engaging in activities such as guest lectures, networking, and community outreach activities. The PASL Life Membership currently stands at 337. I would like to thank all members who have contributed to the activities of the 26th council. I wish to thank the Editor of the newsletter, Dr. Kumudika Boyagoda for her active contribution for publishing this newsletter. Finally, I am looking forward to your continuous contribution and active involvement in PASL activities.

26TH COUNCIL - PASL 2023/2024

| | |
|---------------------|---|
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| VICE PRESIDENT | Dr. Indu R. Bandara Prof. Manori K. Weeratunga |
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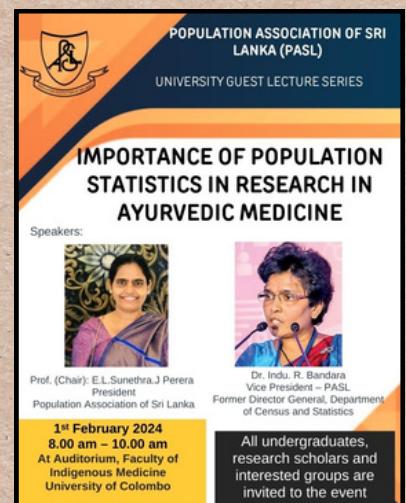
WORLD POPULATION DAY CELEBRATION 2023

The PASL celebrated the World Population Day on 11th July 2023 at the New Arts Theater, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo in collaboration with the Department of Demography, University of Colombo and the UNFPA. This event consisted with students' oratory and poster competition, and keynote speech on 'Healthy Lifestyles for Wellbeing and Happiness' by Dr. Shreenika De Silva Weliange, Department of Community Medicine, University of Colombo.



GUEST LECTURE:01

A Guest Lecture on the "Importance of Population Statistics in Research in Ayurvedic Medicine" was held on 1 February 2024. Speakers for the event were Professor (Chair) E.L. Sunethra J. Perera, President - Population Association of Sri Lanka and Chair Professor of Demography, Department of Demography, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo and Dr. Indu R. Bandara, Vice President - Population Association of Sri Lanka and Former Director General, Department of Census and Statistics. It was organized by the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo and the Department of Basic Principles, Ayurveda Anatomy and Physiology, Faculty of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo with the collaboration of the Population Association of Sri Lanka.



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COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMME

The PASL extended its support to an underserved settlement area at Thalahena, Battaramulla by donating a cupboard to the children's society to establish a Children's Library. President, Prof. Sunethra Perera coordinated this event with the collaboration of Urban Settlement Development Authority (USDA). Book donations for the library were done by undergraduate students of Department of Demography, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo.



ASIAN POPULATION ASSOCIATION (APA) COLLOQUIUM 2023

Prof. Sunethra Perera, the President, presented the activities carried out by the Population Association of Sri Lanka, at the Asian Population Association (APA) Colloquium 2023, which was held on 14th December 2023 from 9.30 a.m. - 2.30 p.m. via Zoom. All the Presidents and Council members of the Population Associations of Asian countries were attended to the event.

GUEST LECTURE:02

On behalf of the Population Association of Sri Lanka, Prof. Sunethra Perera delivered a guest lecture for the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP), on 27th January 2024 via Webex. She delivered the lecture on 'Aging Population in Sri Lanka: Issues, Needs and Policy Implications'.

IASP INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF POPULATION INVITES YOU TO LECTURE 16 DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

AGEING POPULATION IN SRI LANKA: ISSUES, NEEDS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Sri Lanka is one of the countries in Asia that experienced a rapid demographic transition during the latter part of the 20th century. The decline in fertility and mortality, along with an increase in longevity, caused the country to experience rapid growth in its ageing population compared to other countries in South Asia. Population projections indicate that one in every four people will be 60 years of age or older by 2050. Based on the existing population census data, vital statistics, and migration statistics, this lecture aims to discuss the ageing population diversities in Sri Lanka in terms of trends, patterns, characteristics, district variations, and their associated socio-economic issues and challenges. Further gaps in policies and programmes are discussed in relation to the availability of geriatric health care services, the adequacy of existing social security and social welfare mechanisms, human capital development, age-friendly infrastructure development, and investment needs for older persons.

GUEST SPEAKER
E. L. Sunethra J. Perera

**Chair Professor of Demography
Department of Demography,
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka**

E. L. Sunethra J. Perera is the Chair Professor of Demography at the Department of Demography, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. She is also serving as the current president of the Population Association of Sri Lanka (PASL). She obtained her PhD in Demography from Mahidol University, Thailand, and her Masters in Economics from the University of Colombo. Her research focuses on population ageing, international migration, internal migration and urbanization, and fertility dynamics. She received the Senate Award for research excellence in 2017 from the University of Colombo. Her collaborative research work with the Asian region has been published in international volumes as book chapters. Her contribution on population census data analysis to the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) and the UNFPA on thematic areas such as 'internal and international migration' and 'ageing population of Sri Lanka' is noteworthy.

Date: January 27, 2024
Time: 02:00 - 03.00 PM (IST)

Session Chair
Prof. Suresh Sharma
President
IASP

Welcome Note
Vote of Thanks
Dr. Ajay K. Singh
Joint Secretary,
IASP

<https://iassp.ac.in/>

Join on WebEx

POPULATION ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA

NEWSLETTER

ARTICLE:

COUNTING PEOPLE AND HOUSES; NOT AN EASY TASK



- Dr. Indu R. Bandara

(Former Director General of the Department of Census and Statistics
and Vice President of the Population Association of Sri Lanka
2023/2024)

It is a great pleasure to provide this article to the newsletter of the Population Association of Sri Lanka 2024 as person with a firsthand experience conducting number of Population and Housing Censuses (CPH) in Sri Lanka. Many of you have heard about this massive operation of CPH in Sri Lanka through various demographic training programmes. As you all know, the Department of Census and Statistics is the agency responsible for providing official statistics to satisfy many needs of the country. The DCS is operating under two ordinances namely Census Ordinance (http://www.statistics.gov.lk/about_us/censusordanance) and Statistics Ordinance (http://www.statistics.gov.lk/about_us/statisticsordinance#gsc.tab=0).

These ordinances protect people who provide information and DCS in two ways ie. people of this country are responsible to provide the required information for the Censuses and Surveys conducted by the DCS while DCS cannot release any individual level information to a third party. That means DCS can provide only summarized information and cannot provide any individual identification information to any other party. This article attempts to provide an insight to the hard work that the (DCS) is made responsible in conducting a CPH to some extent. There are many publications about the history of Census taking in Sri Lanka which were published by DCS time to time, and it is recommended to visit DCS library physically which is located at Battaramulla or by accessing e - library facility through www.statistics.gov.lk website to persons who are eager to know more about the history.

According to the United Nations definition of the CPH in a country is defined as "A population census is the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analysing and publishing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country". Lets focus now on some important features in conducting the CPH in Sri Lanka.

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Field data collection is very challenging in the present society. One may not have any idea about the difficult experiences faced during this strenuous exercise. This is applicable not only to the Censuses conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) but also relevant to all the other surveys conducted by DCS. Therefore, anyone using DCS data will acknowledge the services of the dedicated staff of DCS who make it possible.

CPH is a series of activities performed by the staff of the DCS, engaging many other stakeholders. These activities are conducted in several stages such as planning stage, mapping stage (updating Grama Niladhari level maps), listing stage (listing all the building units), data collection stage and data dissemination stage. To conduct the CPH successfully, officers in the district administrative structure from the District Secretary to Grama Niladhari should collectively work with the DCS staff from beginning to the end of the process. DCS should provide all the technical guidelines in collecting data as they are the experts in Census taking while district administrative staff of the Ministry of Home affairs should support all the administrative support at ground level because at the end, the data will be disseminated at the Grama Niladhari Division level, which is the smallest administrative level in Sri Lanka.

Each activity is a time-consuming affair and need thorough engagement of different level of staff in the DCS. Planning stage should commence at least 2-3 years before the Census year. After conducting the Population and Housing Census, DCS is responsible for the conducting of an Economic Census which cover agriculture and industrial sectors of the country which is the next important task of the DCS. In addition, DCS is conducting several island wide surveys parallel to these tasks. Most regular surveys are quarterly labour force survey, quarterly industry survey, Bi-annual Household Income and Expenditure survey and the collection of information on prices of goods and services from different markets to compile quarterly inflation rates of the country. DCS must compile national accounts statistics quarterly and annually even during the heavy workload of conducting the CPH.

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In addition, there are some ad-hoc surveys and special surveys and censuses that DCS is conducting depending on the requirement of different data users. Coming back to the Census planning stage. The first thing of this stage is to decide the data collection methodology because all the other activities are depending on the methodology. In the past CPH, DCS has used paper-based methodology (i.e. used questionnaires) to collect data and for the latest CPH (2024), tablet computers are using instead of questionnaires for data collection. This technology is termed as 'Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) technology'. Data processing technology also advanced during the past decades. In 2012 CPH questionnaires were scanned using image-based processing technology. The latest CPH (2024) adopting CAPI technology is very much advanced than the previous technology where there is no need of a separate data capturing effort.

In CAPI, all the data could be saved immediately after conducting the interview process. Scanning technology which used in the 2012 CPH required large storage places to store the questionnaires after data collection. Many countries in the world use CAPI technology for their CPH in 2020's. Even though data entry time reduced, lot of time was devoted to developing the computer programming for CPH (2024) which also included in-built checking facility for enumerators to maximise the accuracy of data during the collection process. For more information about the past CPHs conducted in Sri Lanka please read the publication 'Experiences of Population and Housing Census Taking in Sri Lanka, 2020' written by W.L.D.P. de Alwis Goonatilleke.

Developing of the CPH questionnaire is a responsibility of the technical officers of the DCS who are competent in many subject matters. The preparation of the CAPI software is done by the IT staff attached to the DCS. After finalising the questionnaire according to the recommendations and guidelines provided by the UN statistical commission, the questionnaire will be pre-tested in the field before organising the stakeholders' meetings for further discussions. Normally, CPH includes only the basic demographic and Housing information of the country, however, due to high demands and considering the importance of the local requirements few additional questions will be added depending on the available budget.

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Budget planning of CPH is not an easy task. All the activities should be identified in detail with number of days needed and man days required for each sub activities. In addition, cost for other major activities such as the cost for items to be purchased, logistic and transport cost, cost for training programs, translations, publicity, and printing of instructions manuals etc. Then this budget should be approved by the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

This also take long time due to the unstable political situation experienced during the recent past. The entire process was required to be explained to the authorities, only to experience a whole new authority has taken charge at short notice, requiring the entire explanation to be done once again. The severity of this political instability was such that this process had to be done very many times. Without due approval received in time, no further actions could be taken, delaying the CPH considerably. In most countries, Census taking activity is granted the fullest support and top priority by the governments because they plan everything according to the official statistics provided by the respective authorities. In contrast, our situation has left the officials of DCS to face lot of challenges at every stage and are at the mercy of the data users and other stakeholders due to the excessive delays in conducting the CPH. From the viewpoint of the outside, the lack of accurate and up to date data from Sri Lanka will be a huge issue.

Preparation of Grama Niladhari Division (GN) maps also is a massive operation (there being approximately 14,021 GN divisions in the country) collaboratively done by the DCS staff and the respective Grama Niladhari. These maps were digitised and used to identify the enumeration areas correctly.

After completing the mapping stage, preparation of the CAPI programme and training stages, the enumerators should do the listing of all the building units by allocating a number for each unit using a red label so that to facilitate the final data collection stage. Sometimes Census officers may have visited your housing unit by now as they have already started this process for CPH 2024. When considering data collection, urban sector is very difficult to accomplish than the rural sector. Field officers should visit several times to obtain the required information in urban areas. To maximise the public support, DCS has taken many publicity programmes about Census taking. DCS is using the provisions available in the Census act to obtain information from the public.

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In addition to the data collection from the people living in houses, collective living quarters and apartments, counting will be done for the homeless people on the Census night which again is not an easy task. In 2012 Census, I was appointed as a coordinator of the Gampaha district, and our team has encountered a physical attack from a group of homeless people and spend the whole night in a hospital getting treated for the injuries caused by the attack.

The listing stage activities of the 15th CPH in Sri Lanka is currently moving in the field, across the country. We have commenced the planning activities of 15th CPH in year 2018. However due to the COVID 19 pandemic all the activities were postponed. I have contributed to the planning activities of this 15th Census as an Additional Director General and later the Director General of the Department and retired in 2021 from the DCS completing nearly 34 years of service to the DCS. However, I continue to observe the progress of the CPH as a citizen of Sri Lanka with a great pleasure. Conducting a CPH across the country is a much difficult task than a researcher analysing the precious data resulting from a CPH in an air-conditioned room. It is a collective effort of many officials and the people in this country. These valuable data should analyse properly and should provide the basis for policies formulated for the betterment of the people in the country especially by the policy makers and related officials.

List of References

I. Definitions, essential features and uses of population and housing censuses
<https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/97892II56I593s005-c002>

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