

## **SRI LANKA TOWARDS POPULATION STABILIZATION IN SOUTH ASIA**

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*Sri Lanka received its independence from England in 1948. A majority of about three-fourth of population is Buddhist, natives of the island, and minority is Tamil Hindu. The growth rate of population remained high, 2-3 percent during 50s and 60s and it declined to less than 1 percent during 90s with the present growth rate being 1.2 percent in 2007. Between 1980 and 1995 the IMR dropped by a third from 32 to 21 per thousand live births. Education has improved dramatically. Between 1965 and 1995, the percentage of young persons attending secondary school rose from 45 to 75 percent. The present paper examines various efforts, which have been made by Sri Lanka in the past decades to achieve the goal of replacement level fertility so as to accelerate the process of population stabilization, and India, which is still lagging behind.*

*The demographic transition in Sri Lanka is linked to the improved education for women, rising age at marriage, changes in the marriage rate, changes in fertility, and changes in the position of women in family and society. In Sri Lanka provision of education and utilization of educational opportunities, enrollment positive educational policies linked with social development policies have improved the quality of life for women, their families, and the wider community in Sri Lanka. Development of education and the improvement in the status of women are the key to the success of demographic transition inspite of the country lagging behind on the economic growth front. Sri Lanka's population growth rate of 2.8 percent per annum in the 1950s and 1960s gradually declined to 1.7 percent per annum during 1971-81. However through concerted efforts and the strong government policies Sri Lanka has achieved TFR 2.0 and a population growth rate of 0.83 percent per annum. The Sri Lankan government has adopted a two-way approach. One is extensive education awareness generation activity of family planning methods with the help of NGOs, which is reflected in the high level of awareness of contraceptive methods among Sri Lankan women and the other is an efficient delivery of contraceptives through public and private sector and retail outlets. The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka (FPASL) is active in all districts in village level motivational programme, contraceptive distribution programme, population education programme, research and evaluation programme. Thus the Sri Lankan government not only developed a fertility control policy over a period of time since 1950 but started investing in sectors like education and by the 80s population issues was placed above party politics with*

*all the parties supporting planned growth. The implementation of these policies has been decentralized while maintaining horizontal integration.*

*Sri Lanka's high literacy, high age at marriage, drastic reduction of mortality, and involvement of NGOs are the corner stones of success of attaining replacement level fertility inspite of lagging behind on the economic front. Some good governance practices adopted by Sri Lanka to improve its human and gender development index can be emulated by India to expedite the process of population stabilization.*