Spatial dynamics of ageing population in Sri Lanka

RMSS Sanjeewani[1]

Population ageing is amongst the most critical and global demographic issues at present and the United Nations in 2013 proclaims that "Population ageing is taking place in nearly all the countries of the world". Similar to other countries, ageing phenomenon has become an influencing issue in Sri Lanka, incurring a number of social and economic consequences. Sri Lankan demographers identifies a vital increase in ageing population, and therefore it is of timely importance to identify the spatial dynamics of ageing population throughout the country. The main objective of this study is to ascertain the spatial trends and patterns of ageing population by districts from 2001 to 2012. The study uses Population Census data of 2001 and 2012 and aged population is identified as those who are 60 years or above. Geographical Information System and basic statistics are used to map and analyze the spatial patterns of the ageing population. The proportion of ageing population in the county in 2001 is 9.2 per cent and in the districts of Kegalle, Galle, Matara, Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Kandy and Kurunegala, the proportion is higher than the national. All the districts show an increasing trend in population ageing between 2001 - 2012and the national proportion has increased to 12.38 per cent. Similar to the scenario in 2001, the above districts, and additionally Ratnapura and Jaffna depict higher elderly proportions than the national figure for 2012. Among them Kegalle district records the highest (14.88%). Jaffna is also highlighted with a value of 14.46 per cent. Accordingly, it is evident that most of the wet zonal districts are facing the challenge of ageing population. Lesser influence is apparent in the districts of Northern Province excluding Jaffna, Eastern Province, North Central province and Uva province. Most of these districts belong to the Dry zone. Hence it is of much importance to consider the spatial trends of ageing in addressing the issue so as to achieve productive ageing as a developing country.

---

[1]Department of Transport & Logistics Management, University of Moratuwa