

## **Youth emigration, ageing, and middle-class dynamics: Shaping Sri Lanka's socioeconomic future**

L. Dissanayake

*Department of Demography, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

This paper explores how youth emigration, population ageing, and evolving middle-class dynamics are interlinked forces shaping Sri Lanka's socioeconomic future. Persistent outflows of skilled and educated youth, combined with declining fertility and an ageing population, are driving significant demographic changes that impact labour markets, social services, and economic growth prospects. Using population projections and household income data, the study examines the scale and characteristics of the emerging middle class, highlighting its role as both a product and driver of these demographic shifts. The paper discusses the opportunities middle-class expansion offers for sectors like education, healthcare, and the digital economy, alongside risks such as workforce shortages and urban inequality. Policy recommendations focus on talent retention, diaspora engagement, urban development, and education reform to harness these trends for sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic progress in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Ageing population, Middle-class dynamics, Population projections, Socioeconomic development Sri Lanka, Youth emigration*