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**POPULATION POLICIES AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESS:
THE EXPERIENCE OF SRI LANKA**

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
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SRI LANKA

MARCH 1996

SYNOPSIS*

POPULATION POLICIES AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESS: THE EXPERIENCE OF SRI LANKA

The past 20-year period witnessed a number of changes in the field of population and development that helped to push the population issue to a more prominent place in the development agenda. To begin with, the development concept itself underwent a transformation during which the conventional yardsticks employed to measure development were supplemented by a more qualitative set of criteria like equity and social justice. The emphasis laid on the indicators of social development resulted in an increase in the demand for a more accurate and reliable database of demographic variables. Second, the international community became increasingly aware of the close relationship between development and population. The significant role played by population in the development process, which drew only an academic interest in the past, became widely known to almost everyone concerned with human welfare. The importance of population as a component of development was reiterated at the 1974 World Population Conference where population was recognized as an integral part of development. Third, an increasing number of governments, particularly of the third world countries, perceiving rapid growth of population as a threat to development adopted a multitude of measures and programmes to convince people that large families are economically and socially disadvantageous.

Today, the majority of the world population is affected by population policies of one form or another. A recent IPPF publication revealed that some 40 countries accommodating nearly 60 per cent of the world population adopted policies aimed at reducing their current fertility levels. Another 27 countries sharing 3 per cent of the world population, on the other hand, wanted to raise their already very low fertility levels.¹

*The approved synopsis by the Senate of the University of Peradeniya.

¹International Planned Parenthood Federation, "People Wallchart: Fertility and Family Planning, London, 1989.

Meanwhile, many countries have followed various measures to alter the distribution patterns of their populations perceived as undesirable.