

# Looking Beyond the Numbers: Youth and Development in Sri Lanka

Centre for Poverty Analysis  
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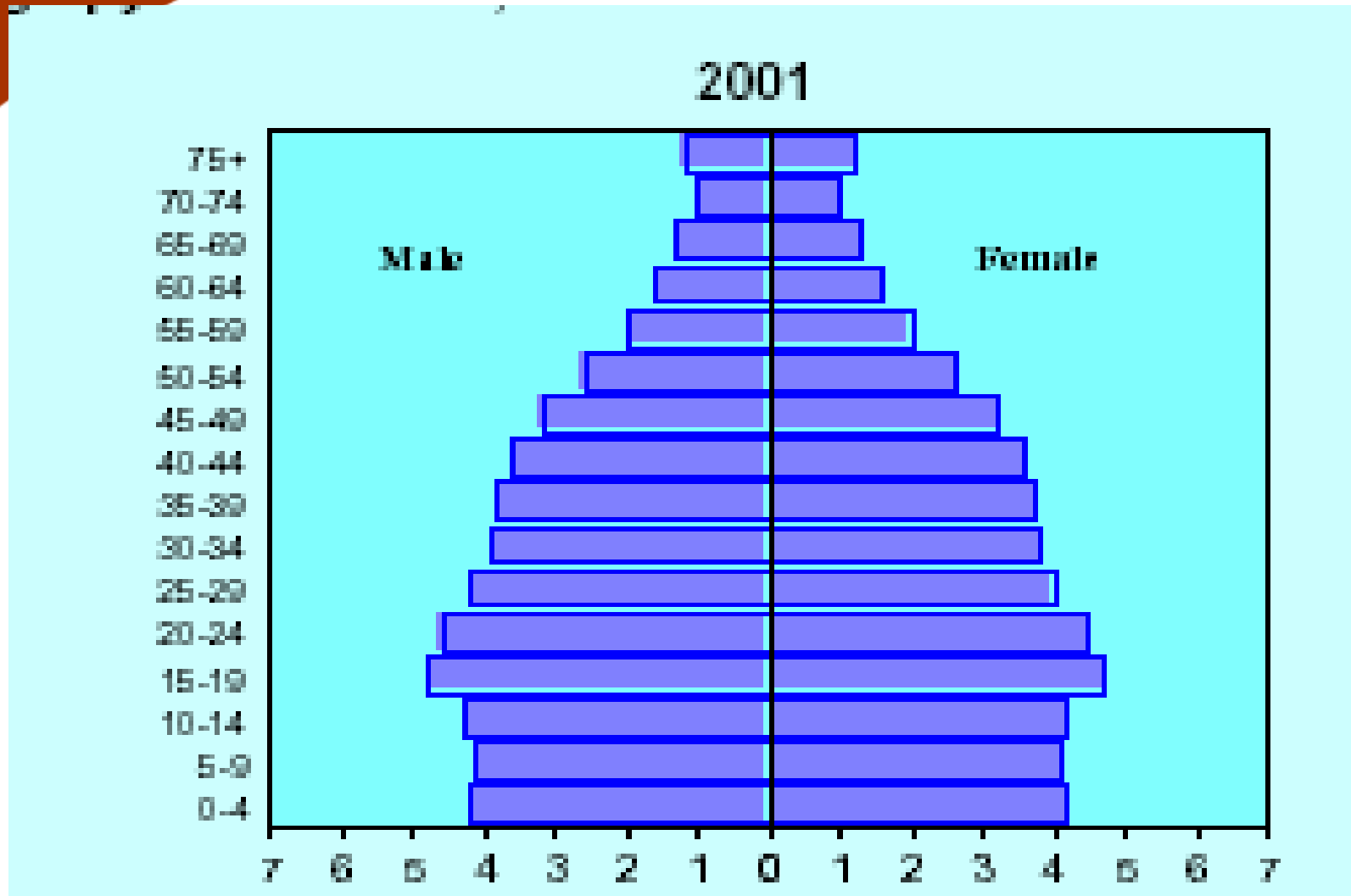
# Structure of the presentation

- CEPA studies on youth
- Introduction- Youth in Sri Lanka- The Numbers
- From "leaving school" to "entering the labour market"- Youth, Employment and Education
- "Becoming Good citizens"- Youth, politics and political culture
- Youth and Development
- Conclusions

# Data sources

- CEPA - is a professional service provider providing a better understanding of poverty related issues, works with qualitative methodologies and analysis in Applied, Advisory, Dialogue & Exchange & Training
- Poverty and Youth Survey and work of the Poverty and Youth Programme (445 youth)
- Moving out of Poverty: Estate and conflict affected areas ( ongoing)

# Population age pyramid - DCS, 2001



# Percentage of population by age - Census 2001

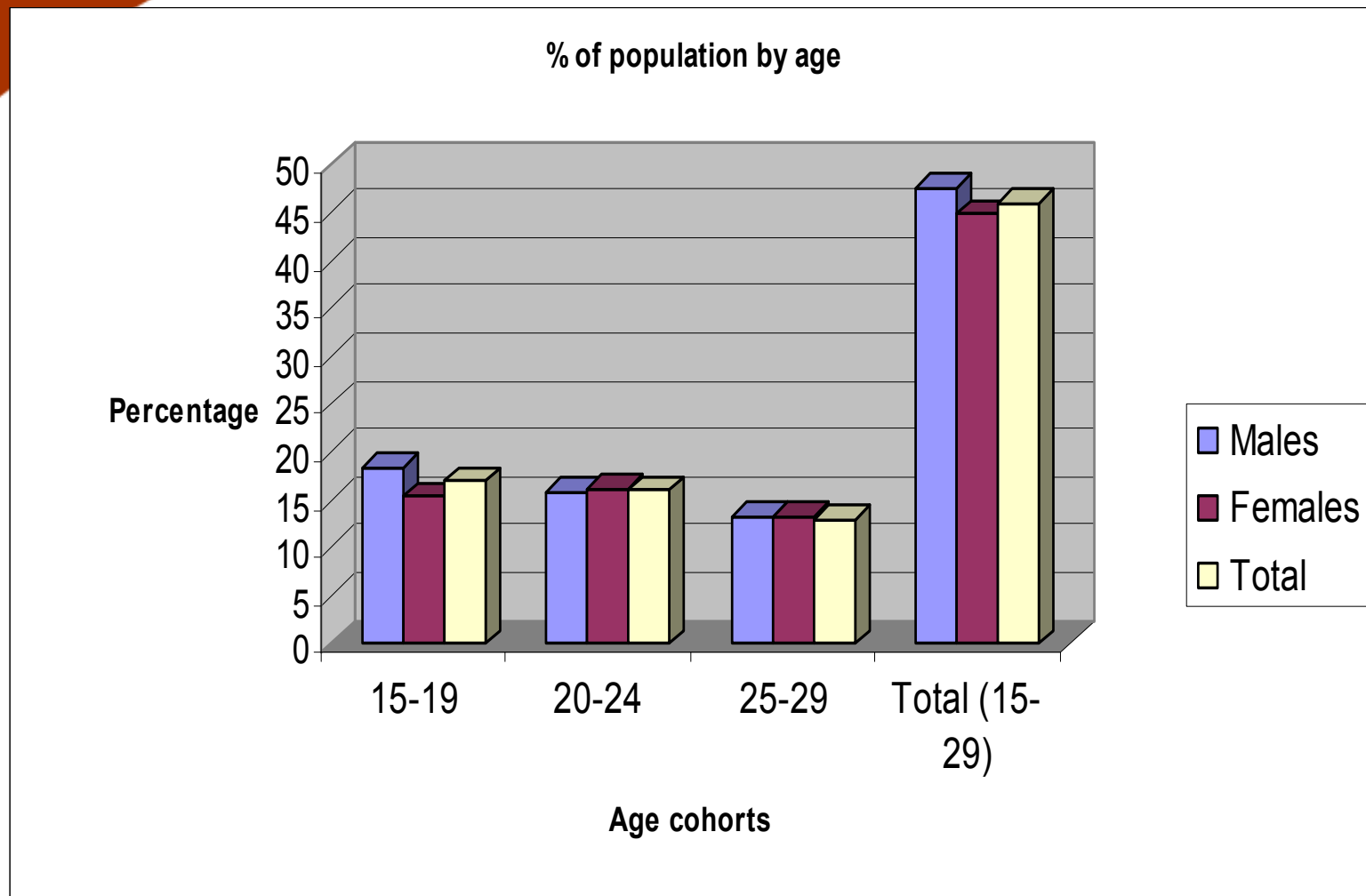
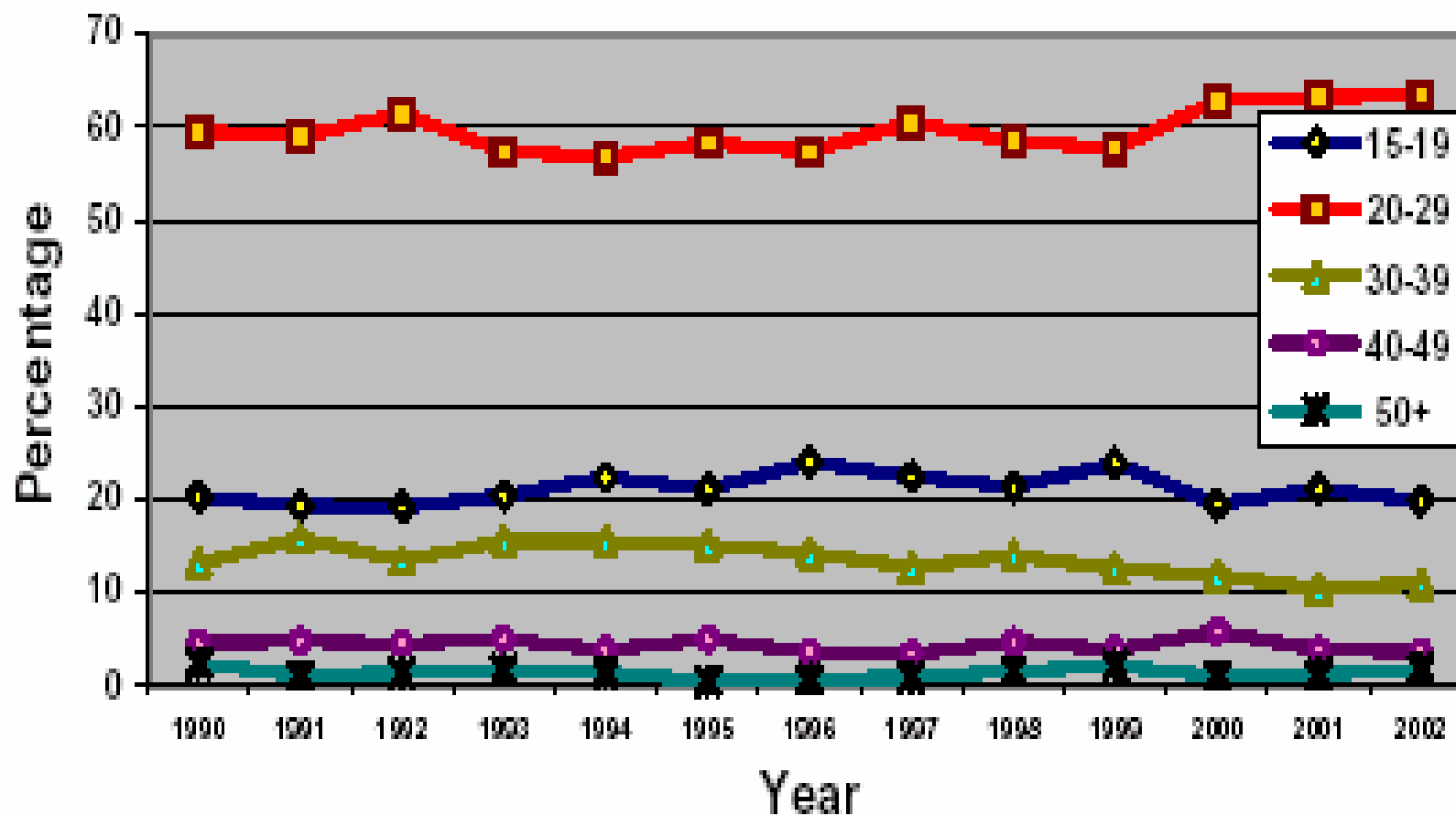


Figure 5 - Percentage of Unemployed Population by Age - 1990 to 2002



# Leaving school- Entering the labour market

## Role of the education system

- “I don’t think the education system prepares you for a job. It should make you proficient in English and train you in specific areas.” (Male, 21 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- “It varies from school to school; it is not a consistent system and needs to change. Rural schools are especially disadvantaged.” (Male, 19 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- “A formal education though essential is insufficient. Today, most employers look for practical training and other skills such as knowledge of English and computers. A young person today should look for opportunities to learn about these things.” (Male 21 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)

# Leaving school- Entering the labour market contd..

## Constraints to education

- "There is a lack of teachers; they cannot come to work due to lack of transportation facilities" (Youth FGD, RPC, Kegalle, MOP: Estates )
- "The estate school is only up to grade 6 and for further education we have to go Dehoivita (nearest township) and most of the children cannot do that. The fact that we have to go out of the estate to attend further schooling discourages most of the people"(Youth FGD, RPC, Kegalle, MOP: Estates)

# Leaving school- Entering the labour market contd..

## Constraints to education

- “Most of the children are leaving school and their looking for jobs. They go out of the estate to look for better jobs than rubber tapping and they do not like to do it also. Parents also cannot afford to give them a better education” (Youth FGD, RPC, Kegalle, MOP: Estates)
- “When we see the difficulties at home we drop out of school to support the family” (Youth FGD, RPC, Badulla, MOP: Estates)
- We lost our education. We consider, education is one of our main goals.. We lost that because of wars and conflict and also because of the economic situation of our family. **(MOP conflict Ampara J2 block)**

# Leaving school- Entering the labour market contd..

## Youth Attitudes towards employment- Voluntary unemployment

- "People with a lot of qualifications feel it's demeaning to take on a job that requires lesser qualifications. This could be a shortcoming in the educational system." (Male, 21 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "Yes, they do think certain jobs are too low. Because they are qualified, they don't want to take jobs that are beneath them." (Male, 17 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "Educated people don't do small jobs because they feel it belittles them." (Female, 25 years, Colombo, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "Most of us are educated up to O/L but we don't have jobs to match our qualifications. Also we are not willing to work as tea pluckers but at least 10% end up working in the estate" (Youth FGD, RPC, Badulla, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "We have done A/L but we are still at home jobless. For us to get a job in the (estate) office, our parents being rubber tappers even if we are qualified we can't work in the estate" (Youth FGD, Kalutara, MOP: Estates)

## Leaving school- Entering the labour market contd..

### Youth attitudes towards employment- Social Acceptance

- “We want to start businesses on our own- a tailor shop, a video shop, buy a three wheeler, start sewing” (Youth FGD, , Kalutara, MOP: Estates)
- “Most of the youth in the estate are educated and they do not get any training to make them employable. We do not want to do rubber tapping like our parents with leeches everyday”. (Youth FGD, Pvt Kalutara, MOP: Estates)

# Leaving school- Entering the labour market contd..

## Sectoral preferences

- “There is too much of interference and influence and you need to have connections in the government sector. The private sector on the other hand is relatively hassle-free.” (Female, 29 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- “In the private sector, it is easier to advance, get promoted and you get a better income, and [getting a job] doesn't depend on connections or influence. The promotions are merit-based.” (Male, 19 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- “ [I prefer] self-employment because it would mean you could improve yourself. You get stuck in the government sector and you need connections to advance. Self-employment is more risky, it is less stable, but it depends on your own effort as well.” (Female, 24 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)

# Leaving school- Entering the labour market contd..

## Traditional Livelihoods

- "We have not got much of an education and this is where we belong. What ever it is we are safe in the estate". (Youth FGD, , Kandy, MOP: Estates)
- My father is making bricks blocks. I am helping him. He invested money to do this job in our own place. Clay has to be brought here. All the other raw materials that are needed are available. We can make 1000 bricks per day. One block cost is 3.50/= but with travelling charge it increases up to 5/=. We spend 4000/= to make 2000 blocks.
- I have been doing brick making since I was young. We take clay from outside paying 1300/= per load. We have selected a place where water is available. I like to continue this job in future.(FGD M youth- MOP conflict Ampara J2 block)
- My parents are farmers. I'm sitting for my O/Ls this time and I hope to take up farming after my studies. (FGD M MOP conflict- Matara)

# "Becoming good citizens"

## Youth Views of Politics and Politicians

- [Here there aren't people openly campaigning for politicians. They don't 'step out and work for them' One's vote is private and confidential. We carry out our duty during elections and that's all. (*Mehe eliyata behela weda keranne nehe. Thamange chandaya pudgalikai, rahasigathai. Chandayedi yuthukam itukaranawa echcharai*)
- People's dislike for politics is growing everyday. The villagers don't like lies. They do not like to get in to politics and lie, or be lied to. (*Game ayeboruwata akkemethi. Othanegihilla boru karanne kemathinehe*)
- There is no interest in politics and elections now. People have lost their interest and we have decided not to vote anyone unless they fulfil the promises they gave first. We don't have people (candidates) who are directly doing politics. But there are people who support political parties; they don't focus on common issues they get their personal things done. [Jaffna: 231 - 236]

# "Becoming good citizens" contd..

## Youth views of politics and politicians contd..

- Yes we have been (involved in politics) but not anymore because it is useless working for them. Because when they get elected they won't care about us or our village. We pasted posters during the election time and we organized meeting to aware the people to vote the candidates. But it was useless after they got elected. The only benefit we got from it was those days we didn't had to bother about our food and we didn't had to trouble our parents for food (Youth M, MOP: Conflict).
- It is very interesting in that time and it is very fun at that time. We pasted posters during the election time and we organized meeting to aware the people to vote the candidates. Those days we didn't have to bother about our food and we didn't have to trouble our parents for food. There were even times when we got arrested for election related activities (Youth M, MOP: Conflict).

# "Becoming good citizens" contd..

## Opportunities to influence politics

- "Politicians create opportunities that are beneficial to them. Youth get involved in canvassing for votes because of the lure of promised jobs but they never materialise." Male, 21 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "In reality youth are always cheated. During elections politicians make youth their puppets to gain their vote after the election they are forgotten." (Female, 29 years, Vavuniya, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "Youth have an opportunity during elections but after elections are over they do not have an opportunity to influence politics." (Female, 28 years, Hambantota, Poverty and Youth Survey)

# "Becoming good citizens" contd..

## Opportunities to influence politics contd..

- "No, they do not have good opportunities, and as a result most of the youth are joining the LTTE." (Female, 24 years, Batticaloa, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "They don't have the opportunities unless they join the JVP. They have no influence. Many young people are unemployed and discontented." (Female, 24 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)
- "The only party with a branch office in the area is the JVP. They are very active and many young people are involved." (Male, 17 years, Galle, Poverty and Youth Survey)

## "Becoming good citizens" contd..

### Youth Views of Democracy

- It's only something that is at the beginning of our countries name and nothing more."
- "Democracy is good; only the Ministers have given it a foul meaning. Though we say that Sri Lanka is a Democratic country what we see is a democracy for some; there are double standards.
- The only thing the local government did was to put a bus even that is like the rain you can only see it once a month (FGD, Youth, MOP: Conflict )
- It is because of democracy (in the name of democracy) that there is no development. People (politicians) are only talking they show no action. (FGD, Youth, MOP: Conflict )

## Other development issues

### Conflict

- Because of the Civil war youth are living in fear, we used to run to the jungle during the night to hide from terrorist we could not study properly, the education opportunities are very low we don't have good schools, if we get good infrastructure specially roads we can develop the village ourselves. (MOP conflict- Ampara)
- War is one of the main reasons. Still we are very scared at night. No one wants to start a business ("*kisima kenakuta busness eakak karanne hithak ne*") because they don't know when they have to give up. When we had that attack I was one of the person who escaped (Thushari) they tried to take me away ("*mawath allagena yanna haduwa*"). (FGD, Youth, F)

# Other development issues contd..

## Substance Abuse

- “*Kasippu*”(illicit alcohol) is one of the main problems. “*Ganja*” (Cannabis) is popular among the youth. But it's not that popular. The Tamil people are the once who are doing it. There are some agents of this in the village. Even the son and the father drink together (“*Thathtai puthai eakata bonne*”) this happens on large scale. The security forces catch them, but when they are released they come back and do the same business again. They are doing it for easy money. If people can find easy money they will do anything here.  
(FGD, Youth, F) (MOP conflict- Ampara)

# Other development issues contd..

## Debt, credit and other economic issues

- Main problem is with the economic situation. Our parents don't care much about these problems. When we take interest about this and when we tell them they don't want to listen. (FGD, Youth, F)
- There is paddy everywhere; it's hard to get away from debt (*"wee hamathanama thayanawa, naya barin nida has wenna amarui"*). (FGD, Youth, FMOP: Conflict)

# Conclusions

- Youth as “special group”
- Integrating Youth issues into mainstream development
- Wider development issues
- Changing development to deal with youth