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**ජනප්‍රිය, පෝෂණ සහ දේශීය වෛද්‍ය අමාත්‍යාංශය**  
**சுகாதார, போஷணை மற்றும் உள்நாட்டு மருத்துவ அமைச்சு**  
**National Elderly Health Policy - Sri Lanka**

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**Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine**

## Contents

	Page
Preface	38
1 Policy Framework	39
2 Policy Objective	40
2.2 Policy Principals	40
2.3 Policy Statement	41
Strategies	43

## Preface

Sri Lanka's population is rapidly ageing. The government has recognized the demographic changes in the population of the country and the need for changes in the health care services.

Improving health services to elderly require coordinated efforts of various agencies like social services, education sector, provincial councils, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, donor agencies etc. in addition to the health sector. As significant reforms in institutional capabilities, human resources, administrative systems are required to provide satisfactory care to elderly, and the involvement of various stakeholders a need for a coherent policy for elderly health care is being recognized. Government commitment to ensure comprehensive elderly health care services is reflected in the National elderly Health care Policy. The National Elderly Health Care Policy had been approved by the cabinet of Ministers of Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on 03rd, January 2017.

## National Elderly Health Policy of Sri Lanka

### The need for national elderly health policy

Sri Lanka's population is rapidly ageing. According to projections, the share of the population aged 60 years and more will increase from its current proportion of 12% to 16% by 2020 and 29% by 2050, before peaking at 34% by 2080. At the same time, there will be a process of aging of the old people, as the oldest old people aged more than 80 years, who are the ones most likely to be frail and dependent, will increase from one tenth of the old people population to almost one third. By 2050, the 80+ year age group will account for more than 5% of the overall national population.

Rapid fertility decline since the 1950s and increasing life expectancy is the most important drivers of Sri Lanka's population aging, with life expectancy already higher than in some OECD economies.

Prevalence of NCD is high among ageing populations which contributes to the disabilities faced by elderly. In addition, isolation, lack of dignity and independence, economic instability and inadequate social security systems are other social issues faced by elderly which negatively affect their health. Traditional family support to old people will be over strained with the rapid aging and modernization of life styles.

Sri Lanka also provides universal health care to its population, but adapting the system to caring for an increasingly old population is becoming a serious and immediate requirement. However, present health system in Sri Lanka is not adequately oriented towards elderly health care which requires different models such as long term care, stronger rehabilitative services, day care services and home based care.

### 1. Policy Framework

Elderly health policy shall conform to the national development objectives of the government of Sri Lanka.

## **2. Policy Objective**

National elderly health policy reflects the commitment of the government to ensuring comprehensive elderly health care services to all senior citizens of Sri Lanka. This policy supports other related policies and is intended to be complementary and not to replace or undermine them.

### **The major policy objectives are as follows.**

- 2.1.1 Ensure that, a comprehensive package of health care services is available for elderly individuals so that ageing individuals maintain optimum levels of health.
- 2.1.2 Ensure that health promotion and preventive health services are available throughout life course for the entire population so that ill health and disabilities are minimized during old age.
- 2.1.3 Encourage and guide all elderly health care providers including private sector and Non-Governmental Organizations.
- 2.1.4 Ensure that elderly health care services are delivered in an equitable manner.
- 2.1.5. Ensure that well trained human resources are available to manage elderly health care which include preventive, curative, Palliative care, rehabilitative and long term care.
- 2.1.6. Empower elderly care societies, volunteers, community at large, in all aspects of elderly care.

## **2.2 Policy Principals**

- 2.2.1 Sri Lanka shall place utmost importance on providing elderly health care services.
- 2.2.2 Sri Lanka recognizes the need of health promotion, provision of preventive, curative, Palliative care, rehabilitative and welfare services for elderly and mental and psychological wellbeing of the elderly.
- 2.2.3 Sri Lanka recognizes the importance of health services for younger age groups so that optimum healthy ageing is attained.
- 2.2.4 Sri Lanka will reinforce its traditional family support system in developing its elderly health care services understanding that in some situations family support systems may be over burdened.

2.2.5 Sri Lanka recognizes the effects of catastrophic health expenditure due to serious illnesses of elderly on individuals, their families and society and the need of protective mechanisms.

2.2.6 Sri Lanka recognizes the need of integration of primary prevention with primary health care for the elderly.

2.2.7 Sri Lanka recognizes the necessity of re-orienting the existing health system to facilitate care of the aging population.

2.2.8. Sri Lanka recognizes the strengthening of the health information system to deliver information and evidence required to support and monitor the responses to aging.

## **2.3 Policy Statements**

- Recognizing the demographic and epidemiological changes and importance in fostering healthy ageing,
- Realizing the economic and social consequences of inadequate elderly care systems,
- Understanding the need for developing capacity for healthy ageing and elderly health care services,

2.3.1. Currently available health promotion, preventive, curative, rehabilitative, palliative and welfare services for elderly shall be strengthened.

2.3.2 Multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral approach towards healthy ageing shall be ensured.

2.3.3 Traditional family support system shall be strengthened and culture specific age appropriate interventions for promotion of healthy ageing will be encouraged.

2.3.4 Family support system shall be further augmented by provision of day care and respite care in instances where family cannot cope up with uninterrupted care or for the individual preferences.

2.3.5 Primary prevention and primary health care services for the elderly shall be integrated to the optimum level.

2.3.6 Quality, safety, Productivity and efficiency of the elderly health services shall be monitored routinely.

2.3.7 Health information system shall be further strengthened to deliver the information and evidence required to support and monitor the responses to aging.

2.3.8 Priorities in human resource development shall be assessed, identified and developed.

2.3.9 Institutional capacities shall be improved, including tertiary care long term care, community based care and home based care.

2.3.10 Public awareness of healthy ageing and elderly health care, long term care, home care shall be enhanced.

2.3.11 Advocacy on elderly health care to policy makers, legislators, administrators, the community leaders and private sector shall be instituted.

2.3.12 Research on elderly health care shall be supported and promoted.

2.3.13. Appropriate knowledge bases on ageing and elderly health care shall be established and developed.

## Strategies

1. Establish a mechanism to strengthen policy guidelines and service delivery measures for comprehensive health care service for older persons.
2. Establish Multi-disciplinary and Multi-sectorial coordination at all levels on care of older persons.
3. Ensure optimal facilities and human resource provision to provide equitable, integrated curative, preventive and rehabilitative services at every service level.
4. Ensure planning, implementing, monitoring & evaluation of culture specific age appropriate interventions to promote Healthy Ageing at all levels.
5. Establish a mechanism to build capacity of health and other relevant service providers for care of older persons.
6. Promote research and adoption of evidence based information to practice.
7. Establish information systems including old age disabilities to support care of the elderly

**Strategy 1. Establish a mechanism to strengthen policy guidelines and service delivery measures for Comprehensive Health Care Service for older persons**

**Major Activity Areas**

1. Establish high level steering committee with the participation of National, Provincial and District Level Multi-disciplinary stakeholders which will be chaired by the Secretary Health to strengthen policy guidelines on health care for older persons.
2. Establish technical advisory committee with the National & Provincial Level experts to provide technical support to health programme of older persons.
3. Incorporate elderly health care activities in periodic strategic and implementation plan at all levels.
4. Strengthen the Directorate of Youth, Elderly & persons with Disabilities at National level.
5. Integrate Healthy Ageing indicators for monitoring and evaluation frame work at all levels and periodical reviews at National, Provincial, and District Levels.
6. Advocate authorities to mobilize adequate funds for National, Provincial & District Level.
7. Develop / adopt minimum packages/ Standards/Guidelines on providing Elderly Health Care including managing common physical & Mental illnesses among elders.

**Strategy 2. Establish Multi-disciplinary and Multi-sectorial coordination at all levels on care of older persons**

**Major Activity Areas**

1. Establish provincial level Multi-Stakeholder Technical Advisory Committees to strengthen provincial level elderly health activities.
2. Ensure representation of each provincial level advisory committee in the National Technical Advisory Committee.
3. Establish divisional level committees on Elderly Health Care with the participation of relevant government sectors, private sector, professional organizations, non-governmental organizations, media and elderly groups and caregivers.

4. Develop a mechanism to strengthen participation of relevant stakeholders to address cross cutting issues like income security and gender specific issues in ageing, social welfare and protection, supportive environment, cultural/spiritual needs, consumer protection and community participation for elderly health care.

5. Conduct regular review meetings to share best practices pertaining to elderly health care at all levels.
6. Review and strengthen existing health services to cater to the needs of older persons.
7. Establish mechanisms to link community based elderly care with Health Institutional based elderly care.
8. Ensure multi-stakeholder involvement to promote health education to upgrade knowledge and skills of the elderly.

**Strategy 03: Ensure optimal facilities and human resources to provide equitable, integrated curative, preventive and rehabilitative services at every service level**

**Major Activity Areas**

1. Strengthen old age health care facilities at all health institutions including community based care institutions.
2. Establish aged friendly wards with suitable accessibility facilities in Health Institutions.
3. Establish long term care, intermediate care / Half-way homes with facilities including rehabilitation services for the older persons.
4. Establish a National Centre for ageing in order to promote post graduate training/research in health care for older persons.
5. Ensure availability of trained Health Service providers for older persons in an equitable manner at every service level including community based health facilities.
6. Strengthen training facilities and human resources for identified health institutions for training of elderly health care professionals island wide.

7. Establish a mechanism to mobilize and distribute trained human resources of all categories on elderly health care on par with existing mechanisms in an equitable manner.
8. Identify district level coordinators on elderly health care to work with relevant stakeholders.

**Strategy 4.Ensure planning, implementing, monitoring & evaluation for culture specific age appropriate interventions to promote Healthy Ageing at all levels.**

**Major Activity areas**

1. Plan/ Implement activities to empower communities on promotion of Active Healthy Ageing through culture specific approaches.
2. Establish an effective communication mechanism for advocacy on promotion of Active Healthy Ageing using Information Technology and Mass media.
3. Advocate to promote Active Healthy Ageing ensuring elder participation as a resource group.
4. Advocate disability prevention and rehabilitation among elders including low cost interventions.
5. Promote incorporation of information on promotion of Active Healthy Ageing to school/under graduate/ post graduate curricular.
6. Develop / Implement / Monitor and evaluate programmes to promote positive attitudes towards elders in the community through inter-generational participation.
7. Create public awareness on Policies / Acts / Action Plans and Elder Rights.

**Strategy 5.Establish a mechanism to build capacity of health and other relevant services providers on care of older persons.**

**Major Activity areas**

1. Develop / adopt standard guidelines and training packages on elderly health for different target groups.

2. Adopt innovative methodologies to develop skills of Health and Non Health Service providers on Elderly Health Care.
3. Ensure inclusion of Elderly Health to in-service training and continuous professional development programmes.

4. Undertake capacity Building of Community Based Organizations, Private sector, Non-Government Organizations, Caregivers on Elderly Health Care.

**Strategy 6.Promote research and utilization of evidence based information in to practice**

**Major activity areas**

1. Conduct research to identify unmet needs of elders, social and financial factors affecting health, elder abuse and elderly care related low cost interventions.
2. Advocate financial authorities to allocate funds for research on elderly health care.
3. Strengthen mechanisms to share evidence based information on elderly care among multiple stakeholders.

**Strategy 7. Establish information systems including old age disabilities to support care of the elderly**

**Major Activity Areas**

1. Establishment of a management information system on Elderly Health Care.
2. Develop monitoring and evaluation systems of all programmes on Elderly Health Care.
3. Integrate indicators developed on Elderly Health Care to relevant existing monitoring and evaluation systems at all levels.
4. Develop a mechanism to share service information on Elderly Health Care with other stake holders.