**Submission of Answers to GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE FOCUS AREAS OF THE X SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING:**

**Country – Sri Lanka**

**Name of the Organization – HelpAge Sri Lanka**

**Focus Area: Social protection and social security (including social protection floors)**

Sri Lanka has covered some fragments of the older people under the various social protection support scheme, contributory and non-contributory pension scheme. But Sri Lanka doesn’t have a universal pension scheme which covers the all older people in the country. Currently, 621,516 government pensioners are covered under the government pension schemes. Samurdhi and public assistance schemes cover another part of older people. Elders who are above 70 years old and with no other means of income have been covered under the elder’s allowance which provides around 11 dollars per month. Around 416,000 older people are getting this allowance according to current statistics. Other than this disabled older people can claim under the disability support scheme which provides around 17 dollars per month. These support schemes have been created under several parliamentary acts and budgetary allocations.

The Social Security board of Sri Lanka provides social security to self-employed persons during their older age and on disability. Upon the death of the employee, the dependents are provided relief as per the different schemes. All persons who are not entitled to receive a pension or are not holding pensionable posts are eligible to enroll in these schemes. This is a contributory pension scheme for self-employed persons (For the latest details of the schemes please refer extraordinary Gazette notification from the government of Sri Lanka – No. 1464/5 dated 25th September 2006.)

Currently, Sri Lanka has not taken any steps to create universal pension schemes for older people. Also, existing noncontributory schemes are not sufficient to fulfill all their needs. But Sri Lanka has introduced universal health services. Any person can obtain health services free of charge from government hospitals and MOH offices. That has created very supportive steps in older age. Also, the government has a few elders’ homes which provide protection, food, accommodation and other facilities for needy elders. National Secretariat of Elders and Social Services Department are providing some support to needy elders through various schemes and improve community protection through Senior Citizen Committee network.

To ensure the accessibility of information on the above social security schemes there should be more awareness programmes and proper systems need to be adopted. Currently, information can be taken from the each Divisional Secretariat. Some older people are unable to access these offices due to their mobility and transportation issues.

Currently, Sri Lanka has introduced a Senior Citizen committee network around the country. 11,905 village level Senior Citizen Committees (SCC) have formed. These village-level SCCs get-together and formed divisional level, District Level, Provincial level and National level Senior Citizen networks. These networks have been utilized to get thoughts from the senior citizens to develop national policy on aging during 2017. But the political interest and proper interest in creating universal pension and proper social protection mechanisms have to be improved.

To ensure nondiscrimination universal pension schemes need to be adopted. Considering the existing elders allowance, currently older people who are 60-70 years old don’t have any other means of income and are made more vulnerable because they are not entitled to the elder's allowance because of their age. According to the current statistics, about 150,000 elders have been qualified for this elder’s allowance, but they are not selected for the scheme because of the lack of fund allocation by the government budget.

Currently, there are no special monitoring and evaluation systems for these pension schemes and effectiveness and accountability framework. The Government Auditor General Department and parliamentary committees are doing monitoring of these schemes. Also, the central bank reports and the Ministry of Finance is doing final monitoring and reporting. Each organizations' websites and annual reports disseminate statistics and information.

The National Secretariat of Elders and Maintenance board is currently working to support elders to claim their rights from children and responsible persons. Any entitlement or protection issues can be redressed by the general laws and any violation of rights can also be informed to the Human Rights Commission.

**Focus Area: Education, training, life-long learning and capacity-building**

Currently, Sri Lanka doesn’t have a proper programme for life-long learning and capacity building of older people. But training and capacity building is carrying out by HelpAge Sri Lanka from last 33 years working history. Also, the National Secretariat of Elders (NSE) conducts some capacity building training for senior citizens. HelpAge Sri Lanka conducts Youth Education programmes to educate the youth on elderly issues and how to prepare for older age. NSE also conducts and supports the Divisional Secretariat to conduct school children education programmes.

Elders don’t have access to schools, university, and other formal education systems. But they can sit for general examination conduct by the ministry of educations. There are some parts of the older population who don’t have literacy skills even though Sri Lanka has a good literacy rate currently. Also, elders don’t have IT knowledge. Education on aging and how older people need to adjust their lifestyle to stay in good health and lead a happy life are also essential. Also technical and vocation training on different livelihoods is important to improve the livelihoods.

Hence education is a very essential need in older age. Hence lifelong learning opportunities should to be introduced in Sri Lanka and all over the world and will be an advantage for every human being.

Sri Lanka has taken some steps to provide a village level training programme for self-employed people through various ministries and ongoing development programmes. But there are no proper elderly-centered training programmes.