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Rural-Urban Disparity in Sri Lanka

H.R. Anulawathie Menike

Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

This study is mainly based on rural and urban areas. To represent these areas I selected the poorest and the richest areas from two districts namely Colombo and Rathnapura in Sri Lanka. The paper highlights on disparities existing rural and urban area with the help of selected indicators. The study revealed that a vast unbalanced expansion of the development between the rural and urban sectors in the country. Among that, there is a wide gap can be identified with respect to income, savings, expenditure, level of education, language literacy and computer knowledge etc. However, the health situation of the people in both sectors was in a satisfactory level. But the majority of the people are suffering from a few diseases, such as heart diseases, high blood pressure, rheumatism, diabetes etc. are in the front and it was noted that such ailments were plentiful in the urban areas. As the rural sector personnel get engaged in work related to physical strain, there can be seen a decline of vulnerability of such diseases. Although both the sectors spend the maximum amount out of their income for consumer food, the amount of the families in the rural sector spend a very low figure relatively to that of the urban sector. The reason for this situation is that they do not get a sufficient income to eke out their living. Under such circumstances, it is clearly seen that the personnel in the rural sector do not gain at least the required amount of calories for a day.

Key words: Rural, urban, disparity, development, Sri Lanka

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural urban disparities, particularly in post-colonial countries, have for long been one of the causes of concern for the policy makers. The extent of disparities in rural and urban areas differ from country to country (Das and Pathak, 2012). Sri Lanka is a small island with the land area of 65,610 square kilometer located in the Indian Ocean close to the Southern end of the sub-continent of India. Sri Lanka was basically an agricultural country whose people were dependent on paddy cultivation. As well as island nation's economy was heavily depending on the export oriented plantation sector, Tea, Rubber and Coconut plantation. Post the adoption of open economic policy in 1977, private sector has been growing significantly with considerable contribution to the country's economy (Samayajulu, Abeyasuriya and Mukherji, 2005). Also, in the Island 83% of the total population live in rural areas, of which 5% referred to as the estate sector working and residing at plantation estates that include tea, rubber and coconut. The remaining 17% of the population of Sri Lanka live in urban areas (Department of Census and Statistics, 2013). The most developed core region in the country lies in the Western province. Most of the economic activities such as industry, trade, commerce and services take place within this region.

According to Dudley Seers, "the development is imposing required conditions for the development of human personality". He considered such conditions as reducing poverty, reducing unemployment and reducing social inequality. Accordingly, even if there is a speedy economic growth in a country, when these conditions are not fulfilled, there won't be a development (De Silva, 2004). When a country leads towards development, there should be a growth in all sectors. Therefore, the development is not only the growth of the national income, but also it is a collective effort exercised relevant to various features such as reducing poverty, reducing unemployment and under employment, equal distribution of the income, development in education, enhancing health facilities, advancement of nutritional prospects and attitudes (Lakshman, 1997). It clearly illustrates that the development should be qualitative as well as quantitative.

The economic growth and development of any country will entirely depend on the practices of the economic policies actively by the governments in power and on the success or failures on such efforts. Since Sri Lanka political independence in 1948, the inward-looking policy has been introduced and after 1977, it changed into an outward-looking policy (Dunham and Kelegama, 2005). Though various kind of development strategies have been implemented aiming at regional development, Sri Lanka is still experiencing increasing disparities and widening income inequalities between regions (Uduporuwa, 2007). Therefore, identifying such imbalance through selected several socio-economic indicators are expected by this study.

The Objective

To identify rural urban disparity on the basis of selected socio-economic indicators.

Data and Methodology

This study mainly based on primary data. Primary data were collected through household survey. The interview method, discussion method and observation method were adopted in this research. A structured questionnaire used at