

2.4 Informal Economic Activity of Women in Sri Lanka

Namal Balasooriya

Department of Economics, University of Kelaniya

ABSTRACT

The concept of the informal sector has been debated since its "discovery" in Africa in the early 1970's. Now, the Informal Economy has been variously described in the literature like, Unorganized Sector, Unregistered Economy, Third Economy, Parallel Economy, Shadow Economy and Underground Economy etc. Despite this description or perhaps because of them, the definition of Informal Economy has remained elusive if not controversial. So, we can say it is a dynamic process which includes many aspects of economic and social theory. However Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1993 defined the informal economic sector as follows: the informal economic sector is regarded as a group of household enterprises or unincorporated enterprises owned by household that includes, informal own- account enterprises and enterprises of informal employers.

Informal employment is generally a larger source of employment for women than for men in the developing countries. 60 per cent or more of women workers in the developing countries are in informal employment. In sub-Saharan Africa 84 per cent of women non- agricultural workers are informally employed. In Asia the proportion of women and men non-agricultural workers in informal employment is roughly equivalent. Although participation of women's labour force rate is lower than men's, the limited data available point to the importance of women in home based work and street vending in developing countries, 30-90 per cent of street vendors, 35-80 per cent of all home based workers and 80 per cent or more of home workers are women.

Sri Lankan informal sector is also similar. It is economic activity that is neither taxed nor monitored by government and is not included in that Government Gross National Product (GNP) as opposed to a formal economy. So I used primary data and secondary data for this study. Primary data was taken from Stratified Random Sample by using questionnaire and observation. In this paper will be discussed the real status of informal economic activity of women in Sri Lanka.