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PAPER

Factors Affecting the Female Worker Out-migration from Up country Tea Plantations in Sri Lanka

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Tea is a major plantation crop in Sri Lanka which provides employment for over one million people. Labour is the most important input in tea production where sixty five percent of its workforce comprises female workers. Since the tea industry of Sri Lanka is intensely dependent on labour, chronic absenteeism has a major impact on worker productivity and cost, while workforce continuity and industry viability are threatened by out-migration for better conditions and a more fulfilling life outside the tea sector.

Therefore, this paper examines the reasons for female workers to out-migrate from tea plantations and identifies the actions to be taken by the management to reduce female worker out-migration.

A questionnaire based survey was carried out to collect data from female workers (n=60) from randomly selected five different corporate tea plantations from Badulla and Nuwara Eliya districts during April to June 2010. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square test was used to identify the relationship between out-migration with socioeconomic variables such as age, education level, income, marital status and income from outside of the plantation.

The results revealed that, there is a significant association between the out-migration status of female workers with the level of education and age of the workers. Further, it reveals that the lower social image of the occupation and harshness of work also had a significant impact on out-migration. The study suggests that raising the living standards, housing and working conditions for estate workers and the need to redress the low cultural esteem and existing class structures as possible measures of action. Therefore, proper government action is needed to incorporate a socio cultural approach to the management system in order to increase female worker commitment in the plantation sector.