

Rural Poverty and Environment in Sri Lanka (With Reference to Kurunagala District)

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The majority of the world's poor are rural. This is expected to remain so for the next several decades. This is perhaps why many poverty reduction programs in Sri Lanka are generally focused on rural people. Rural people are characterized by the fact that they usually live on farmsteads or in groups of houses containing large numbers of people. Most rural people spend much of their time on farms. Rural areas are more significantly affected by climate changes such as droughts and floods, and illness and high mortality.

Several barriers affect the elimination of rural poverty, including among others, the lack of social services, the lack of education and the lack of power to influence decisions. There are four sectors of poverty in Sri Lanka. Those are Rural, Coastal, Urban and poverty in plantation sector.

The average family income in Sri Lanka is significantly different among the three major sectors, urban, rural and estate, while the income distribution is skewed more towards the high income categories as indicated in the Household Income and Expenditure Surveys undertaken by the Department of Census and Statistics. Nevertheless, poverty has declined during the last twenty years though it is still high.

The preliminary findings of the Consumer Finance and Socio Economic Survey undertaken by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka also confirm the overall improvement in real income and widening income inequality in the country. Poverty has been a major economic problem in Sri Lanka. Despite various poverty alleviation programs implemented since independence in 1948. About 7% of Sri Lanka's population are poor according to the lower poverty line (one US dollar per day), and about 45% according to the higher poverty line (Two US dollar per day). This is based on the Household Income and expenditure Survey data of the Department of Census and Statistics.

Poverty in rural areas (31.3% of people) is more than three times that in the urban areas (8.6%). Over 90% of the poor live in rural areas. Therefore poverty in Sri Lanka is overwhelmingly a rural issue, especially where access to physical and social infrastructure is least developed.

The objectives of this study is to find out the reasons for rural poverty, identify the various sectors of poverty in Sri Lanka, identify the Impact of Environment on Rural Poverty in Sri Lanka and identify the solutions to mitigate or over come rural poverty. The problem of this study, is there any impact of Environment on rural poverty in Sri Lanka? It has been used both primary and secondary data for this study. Secondary data was collected from books, magazines and other relevant documents. Primary data was collected from the Manawa village in Kurunagala District in North Western Province in Sri Lanka. It has been selected 100 families from that village. The people in this village are employed as producing cane products. There are no raw materials for these products, no water and other facilities for their living. Therefore it can be said that there is an Impact of Environment on Rural Poverty in Sri Lanka according to the data collected, from this area. This study is limited to Kurunagala district and limited to one village.

The following recommendations can be made to reduce the rural poverty in Sri Lanka. Priority should be given to rural sector when it is making policies to develop the country. National economic plan should be drawn to uplift the rural economy, Establish the small and medium scale industries, improvement of infrastructure facilities including road building, drinking water facilities, motivate the rural poor to use new technology and giving facilities to use them, giving loan facilities at low rate of interest, increase market facilities for their products, granting education facilities and more attention should be paid to the development of rural agriculture

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