



The Estate Workers' Dilemma: Tensions and Changes in the Tea and Rubber Plantations in Sri Lanka

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The Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) was established in 2001 as an independent institute providing professional services on poverty related development issues. CEPA provides services in the areas of applied research, advisory services, training and dialogue and exchange to development organisations and professionals. These services are concentrated within the core programme areas that currently include: Poverty Impact Monitoring, Poverty and Conflict, and Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management.

Neranjana Gunetilleke, MPhil (Sussex) received her training in economics at the University of Colombo and moved on to development studies at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex. She has about ten years professional experience working with development programmes to maximise their impact on poverty. **Sanjana Kuruppu** has a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Kelaniya and worked as Professional in the PIM team until May 2006. She now works for MAS Holdings as the Manager of the GAP Go Beyond programme. **Susrutha Goonasekera** MSc (SOAS) studied development economics and worked as a Professional in the PIM Team until January 2007. He currently works for the World Bank in Colombo.

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We also thank the World Bank team, particularly Ambar Narayan and Princess Ventura for their support, encouragement and constructive feedback. We hope the study will provide fresh insights to the World Bank's thinking on poverty as it did to ours.

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It's taken two years to get this book out, by which time some of us have moved on to work on other issues and to other institutions. We carry with us the learning we gained from this study, and we hope that by sharing the outcomes we are helping make positive changes in the lives of the plantation workers, which is what this is all about.

Neranjana Gunetilleke
Sanjana Kuruppu
Susrutha Goonasekera

Foreword

Poverty in the estates has come to the forefront of research and policy debates on poverty in Sri Lanka in recent years, especially since the results of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey or HIES (2002) of the Department of Census and Statistics were published. The survey indicated a rising trend of consumption poverty in the estate sector between 1990-91 and 2002, at odds with the trend of declining poverty in both the urban and rural sectors. Other indicators of welfare in the estates, including indicators in education attainments and health status, while improving over the decade, still lagged considerably behind rural and urban Sri Lanka in 2002.

Why poverty has persisted in the estates is a question that has proved hard to address, primarily because of the unique nature of the sector – including its labor market, history and socio-cultural aspects – in comparison to the rest of the country. The relatively small share of the estates in the national population also implies that national surveys like the HIES are mostly inadequate to analyze the causes or determinants of poverty within the sector. Understanding the nature and drivers of poverty in the estates therefore requires studies designed especially for the sector, which are also able to analyze the constraints facing the estate poor in the broader context of their links to the “outside” world. “The Estate Workers’ Dilemma: Tensions and Change in the Tea and Rubber Plantations in Sri Lanka” is a comprehensive study using qualitative methods that goes a long way towards filling this need.

CEPA’s work on the plantations has been used by the World Bank to inform the Bank’s Poverty Assessment report for Sri Lanka that was published in 2007, and will also feed into a wider Bank study, “Moving out of Poverty”, for 16 different countries. The study complemented, contextualized and in many cases, helped explain the findings of a quantitative survey of around 1000 households drawn from a cross-section of estates fielded around the same time as the CEPA study. Among its many contributions, perhaps the most important has been the insights it provides into how the socio-cultural conditions of the estates, often shaped by their history of marginalization from the country’s “mainstream”, affect the economic decisions of individuals and households. These insights in turn help understand how poverty traps in the estates are formed, how aspirations take shape and what factors enable households to break out of these traps – all of which are critical to inform the design of effective policies at the micro or macro level.

The messages of the study that have emerged from the words and aspirations of a large cross-section of estate residents deserve a wide audience. This

has already happened to some extent. Many of the findings have been reflected in CEPA publications and articles in the print media. A series of events, organized as a part of the dissemination for the World Bank Poverty Assessment, stimulated discussions with policymakers, academics, the tea and rubber industry, worker unions and external donors. Early findings were shared with individuals drafting the Sri Lanka National Plan of Action for Social Development on the Estates. The fact that the National Plan of Action is now being operationalized makes the publication of this study all the more timely. Given the relevance of its messages, I hope this publication achieves wide readership among all who have a stake in Sri Lanka's development, including those who play a role in shaping and/or implementing the country's poverty reduction policies.

Ambar Narayan
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBSL	Central Bank of Sri Lanka
CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CDR	Crude Death Rate
CEPA	Centre for Poverty Analysis
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSE	Colombo Stock Exchange
CTL	Community Time Line
CWC	Ceylon Workers' Congress
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka
DSD	Divisional Secretariat Division
EPF/ ETF	Employees' Provident Fund/ Employees' Trust Fund
EWCS	Estate Worker Co- operative Society
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAQ	General Arts Qualifying Exam
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HH/HHH	Household/Head of Household
HIES	Household Income Expenditure Survey
ID	Identity (cards)
IFI	International Finance Institution
Lbs	pounds
INGO	International Non – Governmental Organisation
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
JEDB	Janatha Estates Development Board
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
kg	kilogram
km	kilometre

LOL	Ladder of Life
LRC	Land Reform Commission
MA	Managing Agent
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOP	Moving Out of Poverty
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OBI	Office Based Information
PDSP	Plantation Development Support Programme
PHDT	Plantation Human Development Trust
PHSWT	Plantation Housing and Social Welfare Trust
PRP	Plantation Reform Project
PSG	Programme Support Group
PSTP	Plantation Schools Training Programme
RPC	Regional Plantation Company
Rs	Rupees (Sri Lankan)
SDD	Social Development Divisions
SLPA	Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment
SLSPC	Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation
SPC	State Plantations Corporation
SWP	Social Welfare Programme
TCI	The Competitiveness Initiative
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United State Agency for International Development
WUSC	World University Service Canada

Executive Summary

Introduction and scope of study

This study of the estate sector carried out by the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) during 2005, sought to inform the World Bank's Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment (SLPA) and its global study on 'Moving out of Poverty: Understanding Growth and Freedom from the Bottom Up' (MOP).

The SLPA's¹ focus was drawn to the estate sector because the national poverty statistics released by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) highlighted an increase in the head count index of poverty in the estates over the last 15 years, in contrast to a national trend of gradually reducing poverty.

The CEPA study has two core research questions:

- Why has the estate sector shown increasing levels of poverty?
- Why and how do some poor people move out of poverty and stay out of poverty, while others fall into poverty or remain trapped in chronic poverty?

This study uses the same definition of the estate sector as the Department of Census and Statistics that defines plantations as areas with more than 20 acres in extent and more than 10 residential labourers. Using this definition the study draws its data from 20 tea and rubber plantations.

The context of the estate sector in Sri Lanka

Large plantations growing tea and rubber were introduced to Sri Lanka during the British colonial period. The sector was set up as a self-sufficient enclave structure with very little integration into the national socio-economy. Capital, labour and management were all imported and land was the sole local resource. All the services required for profitable commercial functioning were built into the system.

People were brought in from South India to work on the plantations and were confined within the structure, creating a pool of 'residential labour' which was totally dependent on the management for all aspects of their lives.

Considerable changes have taken place in the estate sector since independence as a result of direct, targeted policies and as a response to national changes.

¹ Poverty Assessment for Sri Lanka: Concept Note, September 2004. South Asia Region, World Bank.

The importance of plantation crops in the national economy has fallen, ownership has moved from foreign companies to national, the labour force have been granted Sri Lankan citizenship, and the rigidity of the estate structure has been eroded.

The latest statistics on poverty show that on the estates there is increasing consumption poverty alongside improving human development indicators. This contradiction or 'puzzle' forms the basis of the research questions for this study. It aims to unravel factors that contribute to poverty, in order to inform policy.

What helps and hinders people's movements out of poverty

The dynamic aspects of change, i.e. the forces and circumstances that create upward and downward pressure on a given household were identified by community and individual households, and households categorised by respondents themselves along a continuum of their ability to move out of poverty. A number of factors help and hinder movement by combining with each other as well as reacting to a given situation. Hence a given factor can help as well as hinder over a period of time or in different circumstances.

Wages, availability of work and cost-of-living

For all the estate workers the sample, the incessant rise in the cost of living and the fact that wage increases do not match this pace was the strongest factor in preventing upward movement and creating stagnation at low levels of wellbeing.

The access to or availability of work, increase in productivity requirements following re-privatisation, and the slow increase in wage rates were all seen as factors which retarded earning capacity. There was slight variation between the tea and rubber sector as the workers in the rubber sector identified improved work availability due to changes in agricultural techniques and marketing.

The high percentage of household spending on food was identified as aggravating the impact of the rising cost of living.

Diversifying the household livelihood portfolio

The most popular as well as most successful method of coping with and moving out of poverty is by diversifying the household livelihood portfolio. The ideal diversified livelihood portfolio would incorporate estate and non-estate work, migration, and skilled and non-skilled labour.

The members of dynamic households took a conscious decision to include estate work in their household livelihood portfolio in order to maximise the

advantages of accessing the remuneration and housing package. Contrastingly, 'bottom', and 'medium' households that were stagnating or deteriorating saw the estate employment structure as restricting freedom. The lack of choice and frustration with a highly structured system, which they were unsuccessful in manipulating, was central to their dissatisfaction.

In terms of the non-estate segment of the portfolio, overseas employment, predominantly in the Middle East, was the most successful upward driver. Migration within the country has a similar but less immediate impact. Longer term migration is most successful as it allows the household to develop a sustainable source of income as well as non-income dimensions such as networks.

Management and the unions

Throughout the study, residents expressed little satisfaction with any form of estate management. The lack of competence in agriculture and production, and the lack of care in human resource management were seen as downward drivers in all but a few estates. While trade unions were acknowledged to be representing the workers to the management, there was heavy criticism of the self-serving nature of the unions and leaders and the lack of true representation.

Health and access to healthcare

The type and quality of healthcare available within the estate was identified as an indicator of the conditions on the estate. Assessments were mixed and were influenced directly by the specific situation of different estates. However, in most group discussions participants saw a direct link between changes brought about by privatisation and the deterioration of health facilities. The female focus groups were particularly critical of the changes which directly affected their care giving role, which they have to balance with their role as the primary providers of estate labour.

Issues relating to ill health - and death of a family member – were significantly more important at the household level than at the community level. Health was such a strong factor for households that it frequently overrode strong upward drivers such as a diversified livelihood portfolio and low number of dependents.

Access to education and other facilities

Overall, access to better quality education both within the estate and in the larger towns was seen as a positive change. The greater value placed on education was also identified as a factor that exerted upward pressure on individuals as well as the community as a whole.

However, the cost of education was frequently identified as a downward driver. Although there was a strong belief that better education led to better employment opportunities, the lack of evidence to substantiate it created some doubt about the real role of education as an upward driver. However, the role of education in enabling greater integration with the national socio-economy was strongly articulated, particularly by young people.

Housing and utilities

At the community level the general condition of estate housing (particularly line rooms) is seen to be a contributing factor to poverty. However, at the household level the stock of housing is seen to have improved, predominantly due to individuals' own efforts, although some acknowledge contributions from management. However, residents had a strong sense that they were entitled to better housing and greater access to land.

Personal and social factors

Personal factors such as hard work, money management and planning, were discussed as upward drivers. Though not discussed as much at the household level, the focus group discussions identified negative personal attributes such as laziness and lack of initiative as causing households to remain in poverty.

The personal attribute most often discussed and seen to have an all-pervasive negative effect was alcohol consumption. Alcoholism was seen as a hindering factor in a range of issues, affecting households' income earning capacity and expenditure, obstructing educational attainment of children, creating intra household conflict, and disrupting community life.

Many better-managed RPCs were attempting community level solutions to the problem, and frequently sought the participation of young people in such programmes.

Impact of the estate sector's structure on movement out of poverty

Analysing the perceptions of households, management and other key stakeholders, in the overall context within which the estate sector operates, it is evident that the structural form of the sector is a critical element in moving out of poverty.

The structure of the 'plantation system' as it stands today creates non-economic forms of poverty within the sector, which in turn influences household economic decisions. It is also less than successful in creating a dynamic and profitable industry, and this additionally constrains the upward mobility of residents within the sector.

Despite the many transformations since Independence, many fundamental features of the traditional plantation system as a self-contained structure separate from the national socio-economy, remain. This creates very serious contradictions and tensions within the system.

The strongest area of tension lies in the contrasting perspective of economic efficiency on the one hand, and the rights of the workers on the other hand. This undermines the effective functioning of the system.

The tensions created by this polarised perspective are particularly obvious with regards to housing. The residents take the position that it is their home and that they therefore have the right to decide how they live and work; while the management takes the position that the housing is workers' quarters, hence, at the very minimum the household head should be working for the estate. Both positions are equally legitimate, but contradictory.

The residents' feeling of exclusion and marginalisation from the mainstream socio-economy is a direct and critical consequence of the plantation system. It is a dimension of poverty in its own right. Even households that have incomes significantly higher than the poverty line feel strongly that they are members of a sector that is being given a 'raw deal' in comparison to the mainstream socio-economy.

In addition, this sense of marginalisation and exploitation influences economic and livelihood decisions of estate households. Closely linked is the adversarial /dependent relationship with the estate management, and the popular view that estate work is degrading and unsuitable. This leads many residents to shun estate work and attempt external employment. Households are thus unable to take full advantage of the available earning capacity on the estate, because even when it is available, estate work is not taken up.

The decrease in estate work identified by the residents is also influenced by the manipulation of the system by the management. While seasonality is an inbuilt agricultural variation, many estates also attempt to maintain more casual labour than registered labour, thus feeding the cycle of labour-management tensions.

Perceptions of change

A clear differentiation exists in the resident workers' perception of improvement at the community level and the household level. The majority saw the community – or the estate in which they live – as having deteriorated or

stagnated over the past 15 years. This perception was particularly strong in the tea sector and seen as worse in privately owned estates. In contrast, at the individual household level consensus was of improved conditions. This sentiment was even prevalent among those household that saw themselves as the bottom of the ladder. While looking to the future, majority believes that positive change will not happen at the estate level.

The contrasting perceptions of deteriorating community conditions but improving households can be understood using triangulated data.

- Perceptions of deterioration at a community level/estate level are influenced by a comparison against an 'ideal type.' This refers to alternative forms of management experienced over the years, as well as the influence of the total institutional structure, which historically created a paternalistic/dependent relationship between the management and the workers. More recently management-worker relationships have developed into an adversarial, rights-based culture associated with ethno-political unionised labour. In this context, any improvements seen within the community are compared against a past ideal and found to be wanting.
- The vital role of non-estate employment in diversified household livelihood portfolios has successfully separated the fortunes of the household from that of the estate community. While the chances for a given household to increase their wellbeing are greater in circumstances where the estate is doing well, households in deteriorating environments can increase the percentage of their income from external sources and therefore move upwards quite independently of conditions on the estate.

Seeking solutions

Attempts to accelerate the process of moving out of poverty of the estate sector population can be considered on a continuum of structural change of the plantation system. The study concludes by suggesting that solutions to the problem of estate sector poverty can be sought using three different strategies:

- *Strengthening the existing structure:* Within the existing structure, solutions to address poverty should focus on increased access to work and to methods of coping with the high cost of living; increasing access to and quality of health and education; improving housing and access to land; and better communication among all stakeholders.

- *Accepting and encouraging natural change:* The gradual breakdown of the rigid 'plantation system' can be ignored, restricted or encouraged. Given the strength of change factors and the positive impact this breakdown is having on households moving out of poverty, a positive approach would be to accept change. This would include both encouraging the factors that have a positive impact on households as well as those that minimise risks, through facilitating mobility and migration; encouraging self-employment; developing alternative skills; and expanding the provision of state welfare services. Developing a positive image of the sector as an employer is key in attracting labour to the estates as well as giving dignity to estate employment in the eyes of the larger socio-economy.
- *Actively mainstreaming the sector:* Unless some of the most fundamental factors of the structure that characterise the 'plantation system' are addressed, only a limited amount of movement can be achieved by estate sector households. The captive feature of the plantation system is the most critical factor that limits movement and, more importantly, creates a strong feeling of marginalisation. The most enduring link to the enclave plantation system is the housing system - the fact that labour continues to live within commercial property. Separating housing from the estate would relieve management of welfare responsibility towards the estate population. Equally it would relieve residents of the obligation of having to provide labour to the estate. The estate sector would therefore become part of the mainstream economy, working on the basis of a conventional employer/employee relationship.

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ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ දර්ද්‍රතා තත්ත්වය පිළිබඳ ඇගයීම වතුකරය කෙරෙහි යොමු වූයේ ජනසංඛ්‍යාන ලේඛණ දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව විසින් නිකුත් කරනු ලැබූ සංඛ්‍යාන අනුව, පසුගිය අවුරුදු 15 ක කාලය තුළ, ජාතික දිළිඳු බව ක්‍රමක්‍රමයෙන් අඩුවේගෙන යද්දී වතුකරයේ දිළිඳුන්ගේ සංඛ්‍යාව වැඩි වන ප්‍රවණතාවයක් උද්දීපනය වූ බැවිනි.

'සේපා' අධ්‍යයනයෙහි සාරාප්ත වූ පර්යේෂණ ප්‍රශ්න දෙකක් විය.

- වතුකරයේ දිළිඳු බව වැඩිවනු ප්‍රවණතාවක් පෙන්නුම්කරනු ලැබුණේ මන්ද?
- ඇතැම් දිළිඳුන් දිලිඳු බවෙන් ගොඩ වද්දීත්, දිළිඳු බවෙන් බැහැරව සිටියදීත්, තවත් පිරිසක් උග්‍ර දිළිඳු බවේම සිර වී සිටින්නේන් මන්ද?

'වතුකරය' අර්ථකථනය කිරීමට ජනසංඛ්‍යාන හා ලේඛණ දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව භාවිතා කරනු ලබන නිර්වචනය වන, අක්කර 20 කට වැඩි භූමි ප්‍රමාණයක හේවාසික කම්කරුවන් 10කට වැඩි පිරිසක් සිටින පෙදෙස් වතු යායක් ලෙස සැලකීම, මේ අධ්‍යයනයේදී ද භාවිතා කෙරිණි. මෙම නිර්වචනය අනුව යමින්, මේ අධ්‍යයනය, සිය දත්ත තොරතුරු තේ හා රබර් වතු 20 කින් ලබාගනී.

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ වතුකරයේ පසුතලය

තේ හා රබර් වගා කරන වතුයායවල් ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට හඳුන්වාදෙනු ලැබුණේ බ්‍රිතාන්‍ය අධිරාජ්‍ය පාලන සමයේදී ය. මේ ක්‍ෂේත්‍රය පිහිටුවාලන ලද්දේ, පවතින ජාතික-සමාජ ආර්ථිකය හා නොබැඳුණු, ස්වයංපෝෂිත බිම් කඩිත්තක් පාදක වූ ව්‍යුහයක් වශයෙනි. මේ සඳහා යොදවනු ලැබූ, මූල ධනය, ශ්‍රමිකයෝ සහ කලමණාකාරීත්වය ද ආනයනය කරන ලද්දාහුය. මෙරටින් සැපයුණු චකම සම්පත වූයේ භූමිය පමණි. වාණිජමය කාර්යයක් සඳහා අවශ්‍ය වූ සෑම සේවාවක්ම මෙම පද්ධතියට අනුබද්ධ කරන ලදී.

වතුයායවල වැඩ කිරීම පිණිස දකුණු ඉන්දියාවෙන් ශ්‍රමිකයන් ගෙන්වනු ලැබූ අතර, ඔවුන් මේ ක්‍රමයෙහි ව්‍යුහගත වූහ. ඔවුහු සෑම ජීවන අවශ්‍යතාවයන් සඳහා ම කළමනාකාරීත්වයෙන් යැපෙන්නන් බවට පත්වූහ.

රටට ස්වාධීනත්වය උදා වූ තැන් පටන් මේ වතුකරයේ සෑහෙන වෙනස්කම් සිදුවී ඇත.

සෘජුවම ඉලක්කගත ප්‍රතිපත්ති මෙන්ම, ජාතික මට්ටමේ වෙනස්කම්වලට ප්‍රතිචාර වශයෙන් ද, මේ වෙනස්කම් සිදුවිය. ජාතික ආර්ථිකය කෙරෙහි වැවිලි කර්මාන්ත නිෂ්පාදනවල වැදගත්කම අඩුවිය. වතු අයිතිය, විදේශීය ව්‍යාපාර සමාගම් අතින් ජාතික අයිතියට මාරුවිය. ශ්‍රම බලකායට ශ්‍රී ලංකා පුරවැසිකම ලැබුණි. වතු පාලන ව්‍යුහයේ තිබුණු දුරදඬු බව සෝදාපාලිවට ලක්විය.

අළුත්ම සංඛ්‍යාලේඛණයන්ගෙන් පෙනී යන්නේ, වතුකරයේ මානව සංවර්ධනයේ ප්‍රගතියක් සිදුවන අතරම ඊට සමගාමීව, පරිභෝජන දර්ශකවය ද වැඩිවන බවයි. මේ පරස්පරය නොහොත් “ප්‍රගේලිකාව” මෙම අධ්‍යයනයේ පර්යේෂණ ප්‍රශ්නයන්ගේ පදනම වෙයි. එහි එල්ලය වන්නේ ප්‍රතිපත්තිදායකයින්ට දැන්වීම පිණිස, දර්ශකවයට දායක වන සාධක මොනවාදැයි නිරාවරණය කර ගැනීමයි.

ජනතාව දිළිඳුබවින් ගොඩඒමට වැළැක්වීමට ඉවහල් වන්නේ කුමන කරුණුද?

වෙනස්වීමේ ක්‍රියාවලියේ, එනම්, යම් ගෘහස්ථයක පීඩනය ඉහළ හෝ පහළ දැමීමට හේතු පාදක වන බලවේග මොනවාදැයි, ප්‍රජාමට්ටමින් මෙන්ම, පුද්ගල මට්ටමින් ද, මෙම අධ්‍යයනයට ප්‍රතිචාර දැක්වූවන් විසින්ම වර්ගීකරණය කරවන ලදී. දර්ශකවයෙන් ඉවත්වීමට උදව්වන හා බාධා කරවන සාධක ගණනාවක්ම ඇති අතර, ඒවා එකිනෙකට සම්බන්ධව මෙන්ම ඒ ඒ අවස්ථාවන්ට ප්‍රතික්‍රියා වශයෙන් ද ක්‍රියාත්මක වේ. එබැවින්, යම් කාල පරිච්ඡේදයක් තුළ හෝ විවිධ කරුණු කාරණා යෙදෙන ආකාරය තුළ හෝ එකම සාධකයක්, දර්ශකවයෙන් ගොඩඒමට උපකාරී විය හැකි වූවා මෙන්ම, බාධාකාරී ද විය හැක.

වේතනය, වැඩ ලැබීම හා ජීවන වියදම අතර ඇති අනවතර බැඳියාව

අනවතරයෙන් වැඩිවන ජීවන වියදම හා සමග සමකරන කළ, වේතන වැඩිවීම ඊට සමාන නොවේ. මේ කරුණ, පුද්ගලෝත්තමය වළක්වාලීමට හේතු වන ප්‍රබලතම සාධකය මෙන්ම ජීවන මට්ටම එකතැන පල් වීමට හේතු කාරකයක්ද බව සෑම වතු කම්කරු නියැදියකින්ම හෙලි විය.

වැඩ නොලැබීමත්, පුද්ගලිකකරණයට හසුව, වැඩ නිපැයියාවක් ඉල්ලීමත් වේතන වර්ධන වේගය මන්දගාමී වීමත්, මුදල් ඉපැයීමේ හැකියාව අඩාල කිරීමට ඉවහල් වේ. තේ හා රබර් වතුකර අතර තත්ත්වයේ මද වෙනසක් දක්නා ලදී. ඊට හේතු වශයෙන්, රබර් වතු කම්කරුවන් විසින් හඳුනා ගන්නා ලද්දේ, වැවිලි ක්‍රමවේදය සහ අලෙවි කිරීමෙහි ලා ඇති වූ වෙනස්කම් ය.

ගෘහස්ථ වියදමින් වැඩි ප්‍රතිශතයක් ආහාර සඳහා ම වැයවීම, ජීවන වියදමේ බලපෑම උග්‍ර කරවීමට හේතු වන බව හඳුනාගන්නා ලදී.

ගෘහස්ථ ජීවනෝපා චක්‍රව විවිධාංගීකරණය

ගෘහස්ථ ජීවනෝපා චක්‍රව විවිධාංගීකරීම, දිළිඳුකමින් ගොඩවීමෙහිලා වඩාත්ම සාර්ථක හා ජනප්‍රිය ක්‍රමයයි. වඩාත් උචිත විවිධාංගීකෘත ජීවනෝපා චක්‍රව වන්නේ, වත්තේ වැඩි සහ නොවතු වැඩ ද, සංක්‍රමණය ද හිපුන සහ නොහිපුන ශ්‍රමිකත්වය ආදිය ඊට ඇතුලත් කිරීමයි.

වතු සේවයෙන් ලබා ගත හැකි මුදල් හා හිවාස පහසුකම් වන් වූ ප්‍රතිලාභයන්ගෙන් උපරිම වාසිය ලබාගනුවස්, වත්තේ වැඩත්, තම ගෘහස්ථ ජීවන මාර්ගයන්ට අඩංගු කිරීම, ක්‍රියාශීලී ගෘහ කුටුම්භයන්හි හිශ්චිත තීරණයක් විය. එකතැන පල්වෙන හා පරිභාහිතට පත්වෙමින් සිටින “පහළ” හා ‘මැද’ මට්ටමේ ගෘහ ලාභීන් මීට ප්‍රතිවිරුද්ධ ලෙස දුටුවේ, වතු ව්‍යුහය තමන්ගේ නිදහසට සීමා පනවන්නක් බවයි. ඔවුන්ගේ කළකිරීමට මූලික හේතුව වූයේ, විකල්ප හීන වූ අතිශයින් ව්‍යුහගත වූ වතු සේවය හසුරුවා ගැනීමට තමාට තිබුණු නොහැකියාව ද හිසාය.

ඔවුන්ගේ ජීවනෝපාය චක්‍රවේ ‘නොවතු’ අංගයන් අතරින් වඩාත්ම සාර්ථක වූයේ පිටරට සේවා නියුක්තියයි. මෙහිදී, මැද පෙරදිග සේවය වඩාත්ම වැදගත් විය.

රට ඇතුළත සංක්‍රමණය ද ලබාදෙන්නේ ඊට සමාන වූ එහෙත් වඩා කල්යාමක් ඇති බලපෑමකි. දිගුකාලීන සංක්‍රමණය වැඩි සාර්ථක ක්‍රමයකි. එයින් ගෘහස්ථයකට කල්පවන්නා ආදායමක් ගොඩනගා ගැනීමට හැකි වන අතර ම, විවිධ අවශ්‍යතා සපුරා ගැනීමට සමාජ උපකාර වන ජාලයක් ගොඩනගා ගැනීමට ද විය උපකාරී වේ.

කළමණාකරණය සහ වෘත්තීය සමිති

මේ මුළු අධ්‍යයනය පුරාම, වතුවාසීහු තම වතු කළමණාකරණය කෙරෙහි ඔවුන් තුළ ඇති කලකිරීම ප්‍රකාශ කළහ. වතු කිහිපයක හැර, අන් සෑම තැනකම පාහේ පහළ යවනයක් වශයෙන් කළමණාකාරීත්වය තුළ, කෘෂිකර්මය හා නිෂ්පාදනය පිළිබඳ නිපුණතාවයක් නොමැතිකම, මානව සම්පත් කළමණාකරණයෙහි ලා දැක්වෙන නොසැලකිල්ල අදී කරුණු හඳුනාගනු ලැබුවේය. කළමණාකරණය සමග ගනුදෙනු කිරීමේදී වෘත්තීය සමිති, තමන්ගේ නියෝජිතයන් වන නමුදු එම නියෝජිතයන් කෙරෙන් නිර්ව්‍යාජ නියෝජනයක් ඉටු නොවීමත්, ඔවුන්ගේ ස්වාර්ථ සාධන ස්වභාවයත් මේ පිරිසගේ නිර්දය විවේචනයට ලක්විය.

සෞඛ්‍යය සහ සෞඛ්‍ය සාධන ලබාගැනීම

වතුයායක් තුළ ලබා දී ඇති සෞඛ්‍ය පහසුකම්වල ස්වභාවය සහ ගුණාත්මක බව, ඒ වතුයායේ පවත්නා ජීවන තත්ත්වය පිළිබඳ හිඳුර්ශකයක් වශයෙන් සලකන ලදී. මේ පිළිබඳ ඇගයීම, ගුණාගුණ වශයෙන් මිශ්‍ර වූ අතර, විවිධ වතුයාය වශයෙන් අවස්ථානුකූලවත් ඇගයීම ද වෙනස් විය. එසේ වුවද, වතු පෞද්ගලිකකරණය හා සෞඛ්‍ය පහසුකම් පිරිහීම අතර සෘජු සම්බන්ධතාවයක් ඇති බව අප හා සාකච්ඡාවට සහභාගී වූ බොහෝ දෙනෙක් දුටු හ. මෙහිදී, වැඩිම විවේචනය එල්ල වූයේ කාන්තා කණ්ඩායම් විසිනි. ගෘහනියක හා ප්‍රධාන ආදායම් උප්පාදකයා යන තුමිකා දෙකම තුලනය කිරීමට අවශ්‍ය වතුකරයේ කාන්තාවන් සෞඛ්‍ය සේවාවන් අධිපණ වීම තමාට සෘජුවම බලපාන බව පැවසීය. අසනීප හා පවුලේ සාමාජිකයන්ගේ මරණය ආදී ප්‍රස්තුතයන්, ප්‍රජා මට්ටමේදී ට වඩා, ගෘහ්‍යය මට්ටමින් අතිශයින් වැදගත් විය. සෞඛ්‍යය, ගෘහජීවිතයේ කෙතරම් වැදගත් සාධකයක් වීද යත්, බොහෝවිට එය ඉහළ යවනයක් වන, විවිධාංගීකෘත ජීවනෝපා විකතුව හෝ පවුලේ යැපෙන්නන් ගණන අඩු කරගැනීම හෝ ආදී අවශ්‍යතාවයන් ඉක්මවා ගියේය.

අධ්‍යාපනය හා අනෙකුත් පහසුකම් ලබාගැනීම.

සමස්තයක් වශයෙන් ගත් කල, වතුයාය ඇතුළතදී, ආශ්‍රිත නගරවලද වැඩි ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපනය, සාධනීය වෙනසක් ලෙස දැකිනු ලැබිණි. අධ්‍යාපනය කෙරෙහි උද්ගත වූ වැඩි අගය ද, පුද්ගලික මට්ටමින් මෙන්ම පුළුල්ව ප්‍රජා මට්ටමින් ද, පුද්ගලෝද්ගමනය කෙරෙහි ප්‍රබල පීඩනයක් ජනිත කළේය. එසේවුව ද, අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා වියදම් දැරීමට සිදු වීම ගෘහස්ථ ආර්ථිකය පහළ යවනයක් විය.

වඩා හොඳ අධ්‍යාපනයක් මගින්, වඩා හොඳ රැකියා අවස්ථා ලබාගත හැකි බව දැඩි සේ විශ්වාස කරනු ලැබුවත්, ඒ අදහස තහවුරු කෙරෙන සාකෂි නොමැති බැවින් පුද්ගලෝද්ගමන සාධකයක් වශයෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ තුමිකාව පිළිබඳ යම් සැකයක් ජනිත වේ.

එහෙත්, ජාතික සමාජ - ආර්ථිකය සමග අනුගත අධ්‍යාපනයෙන් විශාල පිරිවහලක් ලැබෙන බව ප්‍රබල ලෙස, වෙසෙසින්ම, තරුණ පෙළ විසින්, ප්‍රකාශ විය.

නිවාස සහ උපයෝගීතා

ප්‍රජා මට්ටමින් සලකන කල, වතු නිවාසවල වෙසෙසින් ම, ලයින් කාමරවල තත්ත්වය දිළිඳුබව අනුග්‍රාහක සාධකයක් ලෙස දැකිනු ලැබීය. එසේවුව ද, ගෘහස්ථ මට්ටමෙන් ගත් කල, නිවාස තත්ත්වයෙහි දියුණුවක් සිදුවී ඇති බව පෙනේ. ඒ වැඩිකොටම, පෞද්ගලික ආභාසයේ ප්‍රතිඵලයක් වශයෙන් සඳහන් කළත්, සමහරු කළමනාකාරිත්වයේ අනුග්‍රහය ද ලැබුණු බව පිළිගනිති. කෙසේවුව ද තමනට මීට වඩා හොඳ තත්ත්වයේ නිවාස ද ඉඩම් ද ලැබීමට අයිතිසික් තිබෙන බව නිවැසියන් තුළ පැවති ප්‍රබල අදහසක් විය.

පෞද්ගලික හා සමාජයීය සාධක

මහත්සි වී වැඩ කිරීම, මුදල් කළමනාකරණය සහ සැලසුම් සහගත වීම ආදී පුද්ගල සාධක ද ඉහළ පුද්ගලෝද්ගාමකයන් වශයෙන් සාකච්ඡාවට භාජනය විය. ගෘහස්ථ මට්ටමින් සාකච්ඡා නොවූවත් කණ්ඩායමේ සාකච්ඡා වලදී කම්මැලිකම, ඉදිරිපත් වීමක් නොමැතිකම වැනි අසුභවාදී ගුණාංග ද ගෘහස්ථයක් දිළිඳුබවේ රැඳවීමට හේතුවන කාරණා බව හඳුනාගනු ලැබුණි.

මේ සියලු කරුණු අතිබවා යන අතිශ්ට බලපෑම ලෙස නිතර සාච්ඡාවට බඳුන් වූ පෞද්ගලික ගුණාංගය වූයේ, බීමත්කම යි. බීමත්කම වනාහි ප්‍රස්තුතයන් ගණනාවකට ම බාධකයක් වන සාධකයක් ලෙස දැකින ලද්දකි. ගෘහස්ථයක ධනෝපායන ශක්තිය සහ වියදම, දරුවන්ගේ අධ්‍යාපන දක්ෂතා පරිභාහියට පත්කිරීම, ගෙවල් අතර සන්ඩුසුරුවල් ඇති කිරීම හා සමාජ ජීවිතයට බාධා පැමිණවීමට ආදිය වී කරුණුය.

වඩා හොදින් කළමනාකරනු ලැබූ පුද්ගලික සමාගම්වලට අයිති වතුයායන්, (RPC) ප්‍රජාමට්ටමින් මේ ගැටළුවට පිළියම් යෙදීමට වෑයම් කෙරේ. විවැනි වැඩසටහන් සඳහා තරුණ පිරිසගේ සහභාගිත්වය ලබාගැනීමට ඔවුහු කටයුතු කරති.

දිළිඳුබවින් ගොඩවීම කෙරෙහි වතුකර ව්‍යුහය බලපාන අයුරු

වතුකර ක්‍රියාකාරීත්වය සිදුවන සාර්වික පසුතලයක් තුළ බහා ගෘහස්ථයින්ගේ හා කළමනාකාරීත්වයේ ද අනෙකුත් ප්‍රධාන පාර්ශවකරුවන්ගේ ද දක්නාමානයන් විශ්ලේෂණය කරන කළ, එහි ව්‍යුහාත්මක හැඩය, දිළිඳුබවින් ගොඩවීමෙහිලා මූලිකාංගයක් බවට පත්වන බව පෙනී යේ. අද පවත්නා වතු කර්මාන්ත පද්ධතියේ ව්‍යුහය, එම ක්ෂේත්‍රය තුළ ආර්ථික සාධකයන්ගෙන් ඔබ්බට ගිය දිළිඳු බවක් නිර්මාණය කරයි. මේ තත්ත්වය ගෘහස්ථ ආර්ථික තීරණ කෙරෙහි ද බලපෑම් කරයි. නිවැසියන්ගේ පුද්ගලෝද්ගමනයට ඇති ඉඩකඩ ද හීන කරයි. මේ ව්‍යුහය ජවන්මක මෙන්ම ලාභදායී වතු කර්මාන්තයක් නිර්මාණය කර දීමට ද අසමත් වෙයි.

නිදහස ලබාගැනීමෙන් පසු සිදුවූ බොහෝ වෙනස්කම් මැද වුවත්, ප්‍රධාන සමාජ-ආර්ථිකයෙන් අන් වූ ගතානුගතක වතු පද්ධතියේ ඇති ස්වයං පෝෂිත ව්‍යුහයේ මූලික අංගෝපාංග බොහොමයක් තවමත් පැවතේ. මේ තත්ත්වය, මෙම පද්ධතිය තුළ බැරැරැම් පරස්පරතාවක් සහ ප්‍රතිරෝධී නිර්මාණය කරයි.

බලවත්ම ප්‍රතිරෝධයන් දක්නා ලැබෙන්නේ දෘශ්‍යමානයන්ගේ පරස්පරතාවයෙනි. එනම්, ආර්ථික කාර්යක්ෂමතාවය සහ කම්කරු අයිතීන් දැකින ආකාරයේ ඇති ප්‍රතිරෝධය යි.

මෙම පරස්පර ද්‍රෂ්‍යමානයන් විසින් ඇති කෙරෙනු ලබන පීඩනයන් වඩාත් කැපී පෙනෙන්නේ වතු ශ්‍රමිකයන්ගේ සම්බන්ධයෙන්ය. මෙම නිවාස තම පවුලේ නිවහන ලෙස සලකන වතුකර

ජනතාව, තමා යෙදෙන රැකියාව පිළිබඳ තීරණ හා පදිංචිය අතර අනන්‍ය සම්බන්ධයක් නොදකී. මේ පිළිබඳව වතු කළමනාකාරිත්වය ගන්නේ මීට ඉඳුරාම වෙනස් ස්ථාවරයකි. එනම්, වතු නිවාස වනාහි, ශ්‍රමික නිවහන් වන අතර, එහි නිවැසියන් අතුරින්, අවම වශයෙන්, ගෘහමූලිකයාවත් වත්තේ වැඩට ආයුතු බවයි. මේ ස්ථාවර දෙකම යුක්ති යුක්තවුව ද, පරස්පර වේ.

වතු පද්ධතියේ සෘජු ප්‍රතිඵලයක් වන්නේ, තමන් සමාජ-ආර්ථික ප්‍රධාන ප්‍රවාහයෙන් ඉවතට විසිවුණු පිරිසක් ලෙස නිවැසියන්ට පෙනීමයි. මෙය දර්ශනවයට ම ආවේණික එක් මානයකි. සමාජ-ආර්ථික ප්‍රධාන ප්‍රවාහයේ පිරිස් හා සමකරන කල, තමන්, අසාධාරණ ලෙස, අවාසිදායක තත්වයකට පත් කරනු ලැබුවත් පිරිසක් ලෙස, දර්ශන රේඛාවෙන් බොහෝ ඉහළ ආදායමක් ලබන ශ්‍රමිකයෝ පවා ප්‍රබල ලෙස අදහස් දරති.

මේ හැරුණුකොට, මොවුන්ගේ මෙම කොන්වා හැඟීම සහ සුරා කෑමට භාජනය වේ යන මානසිකය වතුකරයේ ජීවිතාව හා ආර්ථික තීරණය කෙරෙහි ද බලපායි. වතු කළමනාකාරිත්වය සමග ඇති පසම්තුරු මෙන්ම, යැපුම් බැඳී සම්බන්ධතාවයට ද මෙය හේතු වී ඇත්තේ වත්තේ වැඩ කිරීම නොසුදුසු පහත් රැකියාවකි යන ප්‍රචලිත හැඟීම් ද මීටම බද්ධ වූ කරුණකි. මේ හේතුව නිසා, වතු නිවැසියන් බොහෝ දෙනෙක් වත්තේ වැඩ මගහැරීමටත් පිට වැඩ සොයාගැනීමටත් පෙළඹෙති. විඛේපිත්, බොහෝ නිවැසියෝ වතුයාය තුළ ඇති, ජීවිතාව උපයාගැනීමේ අවස්ථාවන්ගෙන් උපරිම එල නෙළා නොගනිති. එනම් වත්තේ වැඩ ඇති කලටත් ඔවුහු එහි නොයෙදෙති.

නිවැසියන් හඳුනාගත් ආකාරයට, වත්තේ වැඩ අඩුවීම ද කළමනාකාරිත්වය විසින් එම පද්ධතිය හැසිරවීමේ බලපෑම කරණ කොට ගෙන සිදුවන්නෙකි. කාලානුරූපව වත්තේ වැඩ අඩුවැඩි වීම හා වෙනස් වීම කෘෂි කාර්මික විචල්‍යතාවයෙහි ස්වාභාවික ලක්ෂණයක් වන අතර ම බොහෝ වතු කළමනාකාරිතු ලියාපදිංචි ශ්‍රමික පිරිසට වඩා තාවකාලික ශ්‍රමිකයන් පිරිසක් පවත්වා ගැනීමට වැයම් කරති. මෙයින් සිදුවන්නේ ශ්‍රමිකයන් හා කළමනාකාරිත්වය අතර ඇති ප්‍රතිරෝධය වැඩි වීමේ වක්‍රයට අනුබල සැපයීම ය.

වෙනස්වීම පිළිබඳ අදහස්

වත්තේ නිවැසි කම්කරුවන්, ප්‍රජාමට්ටමේ සහ ගෘහස්ථ මට්ටමේ දියුණුව දකින ආකාරයේ පැහැදිලි විවිධත්වයක් ඇත. ඔවුන් බහුතරය දුටුවේ තමන් වසන වත්තේ තත්වය පිරිහී ඇති බවයි. එසේ නොමැති නම් පසුගිය වසර 15 තුළ එකතැන පල්වෙන බවයි. මේ දැකුම, තේ වතුකරයේ වඩා ප්‍රබලව කැපී පෙනුණි. එහෙත් ඔවුන්ගේම ගෘහස්ථ මට්ටමේ දැකුම මීට පටහැනි ය. එනම්, එහි ජීවන තත්වය ඉහළ ගොස් ඇති බව වැඩිදෙනාගේ පිළිගැනීම වේ. මේ හැඟීම දුප්පත්කම අතින් පහළම නිතිපෙන්නේ සිටින්නන් අතර ද දකින්නට හැකිවී ය. අනාගතය දෙස බලන කළ ඔවුන් සිතුවේ, මන්තට යනපත් වෙනස්කම් වතු මට්ටමේ ඇති නොවෙනස් වෙනසක් ඔවුහු විශ්වාස කළහ.

ප්‍රජා මට්ටමේ පිරිහීම හා ගෘහස්ථ මට්ටමේ දියුණුව පිළිබඳ විකිහෙකට පටහැනි දැකුම් වටහාගත හැක්කේ ත්‍රිකෝණාශ්‍රිත දත්ත භාවිතා කිරීමෙනි.

- ප්‍රජා මට්ටමෙන් හා වතුමට්ටමෙන් බලන කල පරිහානියක් ලෙස දකිනු ලබන්නේ, පරමාදර්ශී තත්ත්වයකට සාපේක්ෂව බලන කල්හි ය. බොහෝ කලකට පෙර අත්දකිනු ලැබූ වෙනස් ආකාරයේ කළමනාකාරිත්ව ශෛලීන් මෙන් ම, විකල කළමනාකාරිත්වය හා කම්කරුවන් අතර පැවති පීතෘ-දාරක සම්බන්ධතාවයකට අනුබද්ධ වූ, යැපීම් මානසික ලක්ෂණ සහිත ආයතනික ව්‍යුහයේ බලපෑම ද, මෙවැනි දකුමක් පැවතීමට හේතුකාරක වේ. මෑත කාලයේ දී කළමනාකාරිත්වය හා කම්කරුවන් අතර මේ සබඳතාවය, අයිතීන් පාදක කොටගත්, වර්ගවාදී දේශපාලනික පසුබිමක් සහිතව සංවිධානය වූ වෘත්තීය සංගම්ගත කම්කරු පිරිසක් සමඟ ඇති පසම්බන්ධතාවයක් බවට පත් වී ඇත. මේ පසුතලය තුළ, පෙර කල පරමාදර්ශයට සාපේක්ෂව ගත්කල, වර්තමානයේ සිදු වී ඇති දියුණුව දකිනු ලබන්නේ අඩු ලංසුවකිනි.
- විවිධාංගීකෘත ජීවනෝපා විහිදුම්පතෙහි, වතු බාහිර රැකියාකරණයේ භූමිකාව, විවැනි පවුල් වතුකරයේ පොදුජන ප්‍රජාවෙන් වෙන්කොට හුවා දැක්වීමට සමත් විය. මෑතකදී ආදායම් උපයනු ලබන වතු වල, ගෘහස්ථ වල යහපීවන තත්ත්වය ඉහළ යාමේ ඉඩකඩ වැඩි වන අතර, පිරිහෙන වතු වාතාවරණයන්හි, ගෘහස්ථයින්ට වත්තෙන් බැහැර ආදායම් මාර්ග මගින් සිය ආදායම් මාර්ග ප්‍රතිශතය වැඩි කර ගැනීමට හැකි වී ඇත. විඛාලීන් ඔවුන් වත්තේ තත්ත්වයෙහි බලපෑමෙන් හිදුනස්ව ඉහළට යාමට සමත් වෙති.

පිළියම් සෙවීම

වතුකර ජනතාව දිළිඳුකමින් ගොඩවීමේ ක්‍රියාවලිය ඉක්මන් කරවීමේ ප්‍රයත්නය වූ කලී, මුළුමහත් වැවිලි කර්මාන්ත පද්ධතිය ම ව්‍යුහාත්මකව වෙනස් කිරීමේ වැඩිදුර ගමනයක්ම වේ. මෙම අධ්‍යයනය අවසානවන්නේ, වතුකර දිළිඳුකම පිළිබඳ ගැටළුවට පිළියම් සෙවීමෙහි ලා, ත්‍රිවිධ වූ ක්‍රමෝපායක් මගින් යෝජනා කරමිනි.

- පවත්නා ව්‍යුහය සවිමත් කිරීම.
පවත්නා ව්‍යුහයට ඇතුළතින් පිළියම් යෙදීමේ දී අවධානය යොමුවිය යුත්තේ වත්තේ වැඩි ලබා ගැනීමේ අවස්ථා වඩා සුලබ කරවීමට ද ඉහළ යන පීවන වියදමට ඔරොත්තුදීමේ ක්‍රමවේද සැපයීම, ගුණාත්මක සෞඛ්‍ය හා අධ්‍යාපන පහසුකම් වැඩිකරලීම, ඉඩම් සහ නිවාස සුලබ කර දීම මෙන්ම, පර්ශවකරුවන් අතර වඩා හොඳ සන්නිවේදනයක් සලසා දීම ආදී කරුණු කෙරෙහි ය.

■ ස්වාභාවික වෙනස්වීම් පිළිගැනීම හා දිරිමත් කිරීම

පෙර සිට පැවති දරදඬු වැවිලි කර්මාන්ත ක්‍රමය බිඳවැටීම නොතකා හැරිය හැක. සීමිත කළ හැක. එසේ නොමැති නම්, ඒ බිඳ වැටීම දිරිමත් කළ හැකිය. වෙනස් වීමේ සාධකවල ශක්තිය සලකන කල මෙන්ම ගෘහස්ථයින්ගේ දිළිඳුබවින් ගොඩඒමෙහිලා මෙම බිඳවැටීම ඇති කරන සාධනීය බලපෑම ද හමුවේ සාධනීය ප්‍රවේශයක් වන්නේ, මේ සිදුවන වෙනස්වීම් පිළිගැනීමය. ගෘහස්ථයින් කෙරෙහි සාධනීය බලපෑමක් ඇති කරන සාධක දිරිගැන්වීම මෙන්ම, එහි අවදානම අඩු කරවන සාධක ද දිරිගැන්වීම, මේ ප්‍රවේශයෙන් ඉටු විය යුතුය.

ඒ උදෙසා, සංක්‍රමණය, ස්වයං රැකියා ආදී කරුණු සඳහා පහසුකම් සලසන අතර විකල්ප නිපුණතා වර්ධනය හා වතුචල සුබසාධක සැපයුම ද පුළුල් විය යුතුය. වතුකරය, රැකියා ස්ථානයක් වශයෙන් ආකර්ශණීය වීම පිණිස, ඊට සුබවාදී ප්‍රතිරූපයක් ලබාදීම ද වැදගත් පියවරක් වන අතර, සමාජයීය ආර්ථිකයේ මහා සම්මතයේ ඇසින් බලන කළ, වතු රැකියාවට අභිමානයක් ලබාදීම ද අවශ්‍ය වේ.

■ වතුකරය සක්‍රීය ලෙස ප්‍රධාන ප්‍රවාහිකරණය වීම

වැවිලිකර්මාන්ත පද්ධතියෙහි ව්‍යුහයේ දක්නට ලැබෙන ගති ලක්ෂණ මූලික සාධක කෙරෙහි අවධානය යොමු නොවුවහොත්, වතුකර ගෘහස්ථවල යම් වෙනසක් සිදුකර ගත හැක්කේ ඉතා සීමිත වශයෙන් පමණි. වැවිලි කර්මාන්ත පද්ධතියේ 'හිරකාර' ගතිය මේ වෙනස් වීම සීමා කරන කේන්ද්‍රීය සාධකයකි. එහි වඩාත්ම වැදගත් සෘණ කාරණය වන්නේ එයින්, ප්‍රබලව දනවන කොන් වූ මානසිකය නිසා ය. වැවිලිකර්මාන්ත බිම් කඩිත්තට මිනිසුන් බැඳ තබන තදබල පුරුක වන්නේ, එහි නිවාස ක්‍රමය යි. එනම් කම්කරුවන් දිගටම ජීවත්වන්නේ වාණිජය ඉඩමක් ඇතුළත වීමයි. වත්තෙන් විදුක්ත වූ නිවාස ක්‍රමයකින් වතු ජනතාව ගේ සුබසාධන වගකීමෙන්, එහි කළමණාකාරීත්වයට හිඳහස් විය හැක. එසේම නිවැසියන් විසින්, වත්තේ වැඩට කම්කරුවන් සැපයීමේ යුතුකමින් ද ඔවුන් මිඳෙනු ඇත. ඒ අනුව වතුකරය, ගතානුගතික සේව්‍ය-සේවක සබඳතාවය මත පමණක් පැවැත්වෙන ප්‍රධාන ආර්ථික ප්‍රවාහයේ කොටසක් බවට පත් වනු ඇත.

நிறைவேற்றுச்சுருக்கம்

அறிமுகமும் கற்கை வீச்சும்

வறுமை ஆராய்ச்சி நிலையத்தினால் (cepa) 2005 ஆம் ஆண்டில் மேற்கொள்ளப்பட்ட வறுமையிலிருந்து மீளல் பெருந்தோட்டத்துறை கற்கையானது உலகவங்கியின் இலங்கைக்கான வறுமை மதிப்பீடு (SLPA) மற்றும் அதன் உலகளவிலான கற்கைக்கான வறுமையிலிருந்து மீளல் அடிமட்டத்திலிருந்து வளர்ச்சியையும் சுதந்திரத்தையும் புரிந்து கொள்ளல் என்பவற்றிற்கு தகவல்களை வழங்கும் நோக்கில் அமைந்துள்ளது.

தேசிய ரீதியில் வறுமை குறைவடைந்துவரும் பாங்கிற்கு மாறாக கடந்த 15 வருடங்களில் பெருந்தோட்டத் துறையில் தலாவறுமைச்சட்டானது அதிகரித்துவருகின்றமையானது குடித்தொகை மற்றும் புள்ளிவிபரவயல் திணைக்களத்தால் வெளியிடப்பட்ட வறுமை புள்ளிவிபரங்களிலிருந்து தெளிவுபடுத்தப்பட்டதால் (SLPA) இன் கவனம் பெருந்தோட்டத்துறையில் பின்திருத்தப்பட்டது.

வறுமை ஆராய்ச்சி நிலையத்தின் கற்கையானது இரண்டு பிரதான ஆய்வு வினாக்களை கொண்டுள்ளது.

ஏன் பெருந்தோட்டத்துறை அதிகரித்துவரும் வறுமை மட்டங்களை காட்டுகிறது?

ஏனையோர் வறுமையில் வீழ்ந்தோ அல்லது தொடர்ச்சியான வறுமைக்குள் அகப்பட்டோ இருக்கும் போது ஏன் எப்படி சிலரால் மட்டும் வறுமையிலிருந்து மீளவும் வறுமையிலிருந்து விலகி இருக்கவும் முடிகிறது.

இக்கற்கையானது, குடித்தொகை மற்றும் புள்ளிவிபரவயல் திணைக்களத்தால் வரையறுக்கப்பட்டுள்ளபடி, 20 ஏக்கருக்கு மேற்பட்ட பயிர்நிலத்தையும், 10க்கு மேற்பட்ட வதிவிட தொழிலாளர்களையும் கொண்டுள்ள பயிர் நிலங்களை பெருந்தோட்டங்கள் என்று வரையறுக்கின்றது. இந்த வரையறையை பயன்படுத்தி இக்கற்கையானது 20 தேயிலை மற்றும் இறப்பர் பெருந்தோட்டங்களிலிருந்து அதன் தரவுகளைப் பெற்றுக் கொள்கிறது.

இலங்கையில் பெருந்தோட்டத்துறை களநிலை

இலங்கையில் பிரித்தானியர் குடியேற்ற ஆட்சிக்காலத்தில் தேயிலை மற்றும் இறப்பரை பயிரிடும் பாரிய பெருந்தோட்டங்கள் அறிமுகப்படுத்தப்பட்டன. இத்துறையானது, தேசிய சமூக பொருளாதாரத்துடன் மிகக் குறைந்தளவிலான ஒருங்கிணைப்புடன் தன்னிறைவான. தனித்துவமான ஒரு கட்டமைப்புடன் உருவாக்கப்பட்டது. மூலதனம், பணியாளர்கள் மற்றும் முகாமைத்துவம் என அனைத்தும் இறக்குமதி செய்யப்பட, நிலம் மட்டுமே உபயோகிக்கப்பட்ட உள்நாட்டு வளமாக இருந்தது. இப் பொறிமுறையினுள் ஒரு இலாபகரமான வர்த்தக செயற்பாட்டிற்கு தேவையான சகல சேவைகளும் கட்டியெழுப்பப்பட்டன.

பெருந்தோட்டங்களில் பணியாற்றுவதற்காக மக்கள் தென்னிந்தியாவில் இருந்து கொண்டுவரப்பட்டு, கட்டமைப்புக்குள் கட்டுப்படுத்தப்பட்டு, அவர்களின் வாழ்வின் சகல அம்சங்களும் முகாமைத்துவத்தின் கையில் தங்கியிருக்கும் வகையிலான வதிவிடத் தொழிலாளர் குழு உருவாக்கப்பட்டது.

சுதந்திரத்துக்கு பின், நேரடியான அல்லது மறைமுகமான கொள்கைகள் காரணமாகவும் தேசிய மாற்றங்களின் பிரதிபலிப்புக்களாகவும் பெருந்தோட்டத்துறையில் குறிப்பிடத்தக்க மாற்றங்கள் ஏற்பட்டுள்ளன. தேசிய பொருளாதாரத்தில் பெருந்தோட்டப்பயிர்களின் முக்கியத்துவம் வீழ்ச்சியடைந்துள்ளது. வெளிநாட்டு நிறுவனங்களிடம் இருந்து உள்நாட்டு நிறுவனங்களுக்கு உரிமை கைமாறியுள்ளது. மற்றும் பெருந்தோட்டக்கட்டமைப்பின் இறுக்கம் தளர்த்தப்பட்டுள்ளது.

வறுமை மீதான பிராந்திய புள்ளிவிபரங்கள், பெருந்தோட்டத்துறையில் நுகர்ச்சி வறுமை அதிகரித்துவரும் அதே வேளை, மனித அபிவிருத்தி குறிகாட்டிகள் மேம்பட்டுவருவதைக் காட்டுகின்றன. இந்தப் புதிர் அல்லது முரண்பாடானது இந்தக் கற்கைக்கான அடிப்படை வினாவின் அடித்தளமாகும். இது கொள்கைகளுக்கு தகவல் தெரிவிப்பதற்காக, வறுமைக்கான காரணிகளை வெளிப்படுத்தும் நோக்கில் அமைந்துள்ளது.

மக்கள் வறுமையிலிருந்து மீண்டு வர உதவுவதும் தடுப்பதும் என்ன?

மாற்றத்தின் இயங்கு நிலை அம்சங்கள், அதாவது தரப்பட்ட ஒரு குடும்பத்தின் மீதான மேல் நோக்கிய மற்றும் கீழ்நோக்கிய அழுத்தங்களை உருவாக்கும் விசைகளும் சூழ்நிலைகளும் சமூக ரீதியாகவும் குடும்பரீதியாகவும் அடையாளம் காணப்பட்டு பதிலளிப்பாளர்களினால் குடும்பங்கள் வறுமையிலிருந்து தொடர்ச்சியாக மீட்சிபெறும் ஆற்றலின் அடிப்படையில் வகைப்படுத்தப்பட்டன. பல காரணிகள் ஒன்றோடுஒன்று இணைந்தும் சூழ்நிலைக்கு ஏற்பவும் வறுமையிலிருந்து மீளல் நகர்வை ஊக்குவிக்கவும் தடுக்கவும் செய்கின்றன இதிலிருந்து குறித்த காரணி ஒரு குறித்த காலப்பகுதியில் வேறுபட்ட சூழ்நிலைகளில் உதவிபுரியவும் தடைசெய்யவும் கூடும் என்பது புலனாகிறது.

ஊதியம், தொழில் வாய்ப்பு மற்றும் வாழ்க்கைச் செலவு இடையிலான தொடர்பு

எல்லா தோட்டத் தொழிலாளர்களுக்கும் விரைவாக அதிகரித்துவரும் வாழ்க்கைச் செலவுக்கேற்ப ஊதியங்கள் அதிகரிக்கப்படாமையானது அவர்களின் மேல்நோக்கிய நகர்வைத் தடுக்கும் பிரதான காரணியாக அமைவதுடன் நல்வாழ்வின் அடிமட்டத்தில் தேக்க நிலையை உருவாக்குகிறது.

தொழில்களுக்கான பிரவேசம் அல்லது தொழில் வாய்ப்பு மீள்தனியார் மயப்படுத்தப்படுதலைத் தொடர்ந்து உற்பத்தித் திறனுக்கான தேவை அதிகரிப்பு, மற்றும் சம்பள விகிதங்களின் மெதுவான அதிகரிப்பு என்பவை உழைக்கும் ஆற்றலை பாதிக்கும் காரணிகளாக நோக்கப்படுகின்றன.

இறப்பர் தோட்டத் தொழிலாளர்கள் மாற்றம் அடைந்துள்ள விவசாய முறைகள் மற்றும் சந்தைப்படுத்தல் காரணமாக மேம்பட்ட தொழில் வாய்ப்புக்களை அடையாளம் கொண்டுள்ளதால் தேயிலைத் தோட்டத் துறைக்கு இறப்பர் தோட்டத்துறைக்கும் இடையில் சிறிய வேறுபாடு காணப்படுகிறது. குடும்பங்களின் உணவுக்கான அதிக செலவினமானது வாழ்க்கைச் செலவு அதிகரிப்பை மோசமடையச் செய்துள்ளதாக அடையாளம் காணப்பட்டுள்ளது.

குடும்ப வாழ்வாதார தொகுதியை பன்முகப்படுத்தல்

வறுமையை சமாளித்து மற்றும் வறுமையிலிருந்து மீட்சி பெறுவதற்கான மிகப்பிரபலமானதும் மிக வெற்றிகரமானதுமான முறை குடும்ப வாழ்வாதாரத் தொகுதியை பன்முகப்படுத்துவதாகும். இலட்சிய பன்முகப்படுத்தப்பட்ட வாழ்வாதாரத் தொகுதியானது தோட்ட மற்றும் தோட்டம் சாரா தொழில், புலம் பெயர்வு, திறன் மற்றும் திறன்சாரா தொழிலாளர் என்பவற்றை உள்ளடக்கும்.

துடிப்பான குடும்பங்களின் உறுப்பினர்கள், ஊதியம் மற்றும் வீடமைப்பு தொகுதிகளின் பெற்றுக் கொள்வதன் மூலம் நன்மைகளை அதிகரிப்பதற்காக தமது வாழ்வாதார தொகுதியில் தோட்டப்பணியையும் உள்ளடக்குவதற்கான அறிவார்ந்த முடிவை எடுத்துள்ளனர். தேக்கநிலையில் அல்லது மோசமடையும் நிலையிலுள்ள அடிமட்ட மற்றும் நடுத்தர வர்க்க குடும்பங்கள் பெருந்தோட்ட தொழிற் கட்டமைப்பானது சுதந்திரத்தை கட்டுப்படுத்தும் ஒன்றாக நோக்கியுள்ளனர். குறைந்தளவிலான தெரிவுகள், விரக்தி மற்றும் மாற்றியகைக்க முடியாத இறுக்கமான கட்டமைப்பு என்பன திருப்தியற்ற நிலைக்கான மையக்காரணியாகும்.

தோட்டம் சாரா துறையில் வெளிநாட்டு வேலைவாய்ப்பு பெரும்பான்மையாக மத்திய கிழக்கு வேலைவாய்ப்பானது மேல் நோக்கிய உந்துணைக்கான வெற்றிகரமான பிரதான காரணியாக உள்ளது.

உள்நாட்டுக்குள்ளான புலப்பெயர்வானது இதை ஒத்த ஆனால் குறைந்தளவு உடனடி தாக்கத்தை உருவாக்கிறது. நீண்ட கால புலப்பெயர்வானது குடும்பங்களை நிலையான வருவாய் முதல்களை உருவாக்கிக் கொள்ளவும் வருவாய் சாராத வலையமைப்புக்கள் போன்ற பரிமாணங்களை அமைத்துக் கொள்ளவும் வாய்ப்பளிப்பதால் அதிகளவில் வெற்றிகரமானதாக அமைந்துள்ளது.

முகாமைத்துவ சீர்திருத்தமும் நிர்வாகமும்

இக்கற்கை முழுவதும் வதிவிட மக்கள் எந்த வகையான தோட்ட முகாமைத்துவம் தொடர்பாகவும் குறைந்தளவு திருப்தியையே வெளியிட்டுள்ளனர். தோட்டங்களில் எல்லாத் தொழிலாளர்களும் விவசாய மற்றும் உற்பத்தி திறன்குறைவு, மனிதவள முகாமைத்துவத்தில் குறைந்தளவு அக்கறை என்பவை கீழ் நோக்கிய செலுத்துகை காரணிகளாக காணப்பட்டன. தொழிற்சங்கங்கள் தொழிலாளர்களை நிர்வாகத்திற்கு பிரதிநிதிப்படுத்துவதாக அறியப்பட்ட போதிலும் அவை சங்கங்கள் மற்றும் தலைவர்களது சுயநலப்போக்கில் செயல்படுவதாயும் உண்மையான பிரதிநிதித்துவம் இல்லாமலும் இருப்பதாய் கடுமையான விமர்சனங்கள் எழுந்தன.

சுகாதாரமும் சுகாதார சேவைகளுக்கான வாய்ப்பும்

பெருந்தோட்டங்களில் கிடைக்கும் சுகாதார சேவைகளின் வகையும் தரமும் தோட்டங்களின் நிலையை எடுத்துக்காட்டும் குறிகாட்டிகளாக அடையாளம் காணப்பட்டுள்ளன. மதிப்பீடுகள் கலக்கப்பட்டிருப்பதுடன் வேறுபட்ட தோட்டங்களின் குறித்த நிலவரங்களினால் நேரடியாக பாதிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன. எவ்வாறாயினும் பெரும்பாலான குழுக்கலந்துரையாடல்களின் பங்கேற்பாளர் தனியார்மயமாக்கலால் ஏற்படுத்தப்பட்ட மாற்றங்களுக்கும் சுகாதார சேவைகள் மோசமடைந்ததற்கும் இடையிலான ஒரு நேரடித் தொடர்பைக்கண்டனர். கலந்துரையாடலில் கலந்துகொண்ட மகளிர் குழுவினர் தோட்டத்துறையின் பிரதான மாற்றங்கள் தம்மை நேரடியாகப் பாதித்துள்ளதாகவும் முக்கியமானது ஒன்றாகவும் நோக்கியுள்ளனர்.

குறை ஆரோக்கியம், குடும்ப உறுப்பினர்களின் மறைவு என்பன சமூக மட்டத்தை விட குடும்ப அளவில் பெரும் முக்கியத்துவத்தையும் பாதிப்பையும் ஏற்படுத்தியுள்ளன. குடும்பங்களின் மேல் நோக்கிய உந்து சக்திகளான பன்முகப்படுத்தப்பட்ட வாழ்வாதாரத்தொகுதி மற்றும் குறைந்த எண்ணிக்கையிலான தங்கி வாழ்வோர் என்பவற்றை அடிக்கடி தடைசெய்யும் உறுதியான காரணியாக ஆரோக்கியம் உள்ளது.

கல்வி மற்றும் ஏனைய வசதிகளுக்கான வாய்ப்புக்கள்

தோட்டத்தினுள்ளேயும் பிரதான நகரங்களின் தரமான கல்வியை நுகர்வதற்கான புரணமான வாய்ப்பானது ஒரு பெரும் மாற்றமாக நோக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது கல்வி மீது வைக்கப்பட்ட பெரும் மதிப்பான தனிமனிதர்கள் மற்றும் ஒட்டுமொத்த சமுதாயத்தின் மீதும் மேல் நோக்கிய அழுத்தத்தை பிரயோகிக்கும் ஒரு காரணியாக அடையாளப்படுத்துகின்றது. எவ்வாறாயினும் கல்விக்கான செலவானது அனேகமாக ஒரு கீழ் நோக்கிய செலுத்தியாக அடையாளம் காணப்பட்டது. சிறந்த கல்வி வேலைவாய்ப்புக்கு வழி அமைப்பதாகவும் உறுதியாக நம்மப்பட்டாலும் அதற்கு சிறந்த சாட்சிகள் இல்லாமையால் உண்மையில் கல்வி ஒரு மேல் நோக்கிய செலுத்தி எனும் ஐயப்பாடு தோன்றியுள்ளது. எவ்வாறாயினும் தேசிய சமூக பொருளாதாரத்துடன் ஒன்றிணைப்பதில் கல்வியின் பாத்திரமானது குறிப்பாக இளைஞர் யுவதிகளினால் உறுதியாக தெளிவுபடுத்தப்பட்டுள்ளது.

வீடமைப்பு, ஏனைய பயன்பாடுகள்

சமூக மட்டத்தில் தோட்ட வீடுகளின் (குறிப்பாக லயங்கள்) பெதுவான நிலையானது வறுமைக்குப்பங்களிப்புச் செய்யும் காரணியாக நோக்கப்பட்டது. எவ்வாறாயினும் குடும்பமட்டத்தில் வீடமைப்பின் நிலையானது பிரதானமாக தனிப்பட்ட முயற்சிகளாலும் ஓரளவு முகாமைத்துவத்தின் பங்களிப்பானது மேம்பட்டுள்ளது. எவ்வாறாயினும் குடியேற்ற வாசிகள் தங்களுக்கு இதைவிட சிறந்த வீடமைப்பும் காண்பிப்பயன்பாட்டையும் அனுபவிக்கும் உரிமை உள்ளது. எனும் உறுதியான விழிப்புணர்வைக்கொண்டுள்ளனர்.

தனிப்பட்ட மற்றும் சமூக காரணிகள்

தனிப்பட்ட காரணிகளான, கடின உழைப்பு, பண முகாமைத்துவம் மற்றும் திட்டமிடல் என்பன மேல் நோக்கிய செலுத்திகளாக கலந்துரையாடப்பட்டன. குடும்ப மட்டத்தில் பெரியளவில் கலந்துரையாடப்படாவிட்டாலும், கவனக் குழுக் கலந்துரையாடல்கள் சோம்பல் மற்றும் குறைவான முன்னெடுப்புகள் போன்ற தனிப்பட்ட இயல்புகள் குடும்பங்கள் வறுமையில் தொடர்ந்து சிக்கலடைந்துபதற்கான காரணங்களாக அமைவதை அடையாளம் கண்டன.

அதிகளவில் கலந்துரையாடப்பட்டதும் பரவலான எதிர்மறை விளைவை ஏற்படுத்தியுள்ளதும் மதுப்பாவனை உள்ளது. மதுப்பழக்கமானது, குடும்பத்தின் வருவாய் ஈட்டும் ஆற்றல் மற்றும் செவினத்தை பாதித்தல், சிறுவர்களின் கல்விவாய்ப்பைத் தடைசெய்தல், குடும்ப உள் முரண்பாடுகளை உருவாக்குதல் மற்றும் சமூக வாழ்விற்கு இடையூறு செய்தல் போன்ற பல்வகைப்பிரச்சினைகளின் காரணியாக உள்ளது.

சிறப்பாக முகாமைத்துவம் செய்யப்படும் பல RPC கள் இப்பிரச்சினைக்கு சமூக மட்டத்திலான தீர்வை காண முயற்சிப்பதுடன், இந்நிகழ்ச்சித்திட்டங்களில் இளைஞர்களது பங்களிப்பை வேண்டி நிற்கின்றன.

வறுமையிலிருந்து மீட்சியில் தோட்டத்துறைக்கட்டமைப்பின் தாக்கம்

பெருந்தோட்டத்துறை இயங்கும் ஒட்டுமொத்த களத்தில் குடும்பங்கள், நிர்வாகம், மற்றும் ஏனைய முக்கிய பங்குதாரர்களுடைய நோக்குகளை அலசியதில், வறுமையிலிருந்தான மீட்சிக்கு தோட்டக்கட்டமைப்பானது ஒரு பிரதான காரணியாகும்.

இன்றுள்ள தோட்டக்கட்டமைப்பானது, இத்துறையினுள் பொருளாதாரம் சாரா வறுமையை உருவாக்கி, குடும்பங்களின் பொருளாதார முடிவுகளில் செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துகிறது. மேலும் இது துடிப்பானதும் இலாபகரமானதுமான தொழிற்துறையை உருவாக்குவதில் வெற்றியளிக்காததுடன் இத்துறையினுள் வசிப்போரின் மேல் நோக்கிய இயக்கத்தையும் தடுக்கிறது.

சுதந்திரத்திலிருந்து பல மாற்றங்கள் ஏற்பட்டிருந்தாலும், பாரம்பரிய பெருந்தோட்டத்துறையின் பல பிரதான அம்சங்கள் தேசிய சமூக பொருளாதாரத்திலிருந்து புறம்பான தனியான பொறிமுறையாக மிஞ்சியுள்ளன. இது இம்முறையினுள் மிகத்தீவிரமான எதிர்ப்புக்களையும் பதற்றத்தையும் உருவாக்கியுள்ளது.

பொருளாதாரத்தின் இருபுறத்திலும், தொழிலாளர்களின் உரிமைகள் மறுபுறத்திலுமான இரு வேறு வேறுபட்ட நோக்குகளில் இறுக்கத்தின் பிரதான பகுதி கிடக்கின்றது. இது தொகுதியின் சமூகமான இயக்கத்தை வலுவழக்கச்செய்கிறது.

இத்தகைய விடயங்களில் துருவப்படுத்தப்பட்ட மனப்பாங்கின் காரணமாக பதட்டம் ஏற்படுவது குறிப்பாக வீடமைப்பு தொடர்பான வெளிப்படையாகும். குடியிருப்போர் அது

தமது இல்லம் ஆதலால் அவர்களுக்கு எவ்வாறு வாழ்வது மற்றும் தொழில் புரிவது எனத் தீர்மானிக்கும் உரிமையுள்ளது என நினைக்கும் அதேவேளை நிர்வாகமானது இது பணியாளர் விடுதியாதலால், ஆகக்குறைந்தது குடும்பத்தலைவன் தோட்டத்தில் தொழில்புரிய வேண்டும் எனக் கூறுகிறது. இரண்டும் சட்டப்படி சரியானவை ஆயினும், ஒன்றுக்கொன்று முரண்பட்டவையாகும்.

குடியிருப்பாளர்கள் பிரதான சமூக பொருளாதார நீரோட்டத்திலிருந்து ஒதுக்கப்பட்டுள்ளதாகவும் தாம் புறக்கணிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளதாகவும் கருதுவது தோட்ட முறையின் ஒரு நேரடியான மற்றும் இக்கட்டான விளைவாகும். இந்நிலையில் இது வறுமையின் ஒரு பரிமாணமாகும். வறுமைக் கோட்டிலிருந்து கணிசமானளவு மேல்மட்டத்தில் வருமானமீட்டும் குடும்பங்கள் கூட தாம் பிரதான சமூக பொருளியல் நீரோட்டத்தில் ஒப்பீட்டளவில் கடினமான நிலைக்குள்ளாகப்பட்ட ஒரு துறையில் உறுப்பினர்கள் என உறுதியாக உணர்கின்றனர்.

இதைவிட இது போன்ற ஒதுக்கப்படல் மற்றும் பராபட்சம் பற்றிய உணர்வானது தோட்டக்குடும்பங்களின் வாழ்வாதார முடிவுகளில் செல்வாக்குச்செலுத்துகின்றது. தோட்ட நிருவாகத்துடனான எதிர்மறைவான தங்கியுள்ள உறவு மற்றும் தோட்டத் தொழிலானது தரங்குறைந்து வருதல் மற்றும் பொருத்தமற்றது எனும் பிரபல நோக்கு என்பன நெருக்கமாக தொடர்புபட்டுள்ளன. இது பல குடியிருப்பாளர்களைத்தோட்ட வேலையை கைவிட்டு வெளி வேலை வாய்ப்புக்களுக்கு முயற்சி செய்யத்தாண்டியுள்ளது. இதனால் குடும்பங்களின் தோட்டங்களிலுள்ள உழைக்கும் வாய்ப்பை முழுமையாக அனுபவிக்க முடியாமல் போகிறது ஏனென்றால் அது கிடைக்கின்ற போதும் அது எடுக்கப்படுவதில்லை.

தோட்டப்பகுதி மக்கள் தோட்டத்தொழில் ஈடுபடுவதால் ஏற்பட்ட விழ்ச்சியில், நிருவாகம் தோட்டக்கட்டமைப்பை கையாளும் முறை செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துகிறது. அதே வேளை, உட்பொதிந்துள்ள விவசாய மாற்றமான பருவநிலையால், பல தோட்டங்கள் நிரந்தரத்தொழிலாளர்களை விட, தற்காலிக தொழிலாளர்களையே பயன்படுத்த முயற்சி செய்வதன் மூலம், தொழிலாளர் முகாமைத்துவ இறுக்கசக்கரத்தை சீர்படுத்துகின்றன.

மாற்றம் தொடர்பான பார்வை

வதிவிட பணியாளர்களின் சமூக மட்டத்திலான முன்னேற்றம் மற்றும் குடும்பமட்டத்திலான முன்னேற்றம் பற்றிய பார்வைக்கிடையிலான ஒரு தெளிவான வேறுபாடு காணப்படுகிறது. பெரும்பாலானவர்கள் அவர்கள் வாழும் சமூகம் அல்லது தோட்டமானது கடந்த 15 ஆண்டுகளுக்கு மேலாக பாதிப்புக்குள்ளாக்கப்பட்டு அல்லது தேக்கநிலைக்குள்ளாக்கப்பட்டுள்ளதாகக் கருதுகிறார்கள். இப்பார்வையானது குறிப்பாக தேயிலைத் தோட்டங்களில் உறுதியானதாகவும் தனியாருக்குச் சொந்தமான தோட்டங்களில் மிக மோசமானதாகவும் உள்ளது. மறாக குடும்பமட்டங்களில் முன்னேற்றமடைந்த நிலை காணப்படுவதாக கருதப்படுகிறது. இத்தகைய கருத்து தாம் வளர்ச்சிப்படியின் அடிமட்டத்திலிருப்பதாகக்கருதும் குடும்பங்களால் கூட முன்வைக்கப்படுகிறது. எதிர்காலத்தை நோக்கும் போது பெரும்பான்மையினர்

தோட்ட மட்டத்தில் சாதகமான மாற்றம் நிகழாது என்றே நம்புகின்றனர். பாதிப்பும் சமூக நிலையும் ஆனால் முன்னேற்றம் அடையும் குடும்பங்களும் எனும் வேறுபட்ட பார்வைகள் முக்கோணப்படுத்தப்பட்ட தரவுகள் மூலம் புரிந்து கொள்ளப்படலாம்.

சமூக/தோட்ட மட்டத்தில் சீர்கேடு பற்றிய மனப்பாங்குகளில் இலட்சிய நிலையுடையான ஒப்பீடு செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துகிறது. இது கடந்த காலங்களில் அனுபவித்த வேறுபட்ட நிர்வாக வடிவங்கள் மற்றும் வரலாற்று ரீதியாக நிர்வாகத்திற்கும் தொழிலாளர்களுக்குமிடையே அடித்தியாளும் தங்கி வாழும் உறவை உருவாக்கி நிறுவன கட்டமைப்பின் செல்வாக்கு என்பவற்றின் மூலம் உருவாகிற மிகஅண்மையாக நிர்வாக தொழிலாளர் உறவானது, மிக மோசமான இன அரசியல் ரீதியான தொழிறி சங்கங்களுக்குட்பட்ட, தொழிலாளர்களுடன் தொடர்புபட்ட, உரிமை அடிப்படையிலான கலாச்சராமாக உருவாகி உள்ளது. இச்சூழ்நிலையில் சமூகத்தில் ஏற்பட்டுள்ள எந்த மாற்றமும் இலட்சிய நிலையுடன் ஒப்பிடப்பட வேண்டியதாக அறியப்படுகிறது.

பன்முகப்படுத்தப்பட்ட குடும்ப வாழ்வாதாரத்தில் தோட்டம் சாரா தொழில் வாய்ப்புக்கள் வெற்றிகரமான சாத்தியக்கூறுகளை தோட்டச் சமூகத்திலிருந்து வேறுபடுத்தியிருக்கிறது. தோட்டம் சிறப்பான நிலையில் இருக்கும் போது குடும்பங்களின் நிலை மேம்பட வாய்ப்புக்கள் இருக்கும் அதே வேளை மோசமான சூழலிலுள்ள குடும்பங்கள் புறவருவாய் முதல்கள் மூலம் தோட்டத்தின் நிலையுடன் தொடர்புபடாது வருவாயை பெருக்கும் வாய்ப்புக் கிடைப்பதால் சுதந்திரமாக மேல் நோக்கிச் செல்ல முடிகிறது.

தீர்வுகளை தேடல்

தோட்டத்துறையில் வறுமையிலிருந்து மீட்சிச்செயன்முறையை துரிதப்படுத்தும் முயற்சியாக பெருதோட்ட முறையின் கட்டமைப்பு மாற்றம் கருதப்படுகிறது. இது முன்று வேறுபட்ட உபாயங்கள் மூலம் தோட்டத்துறையின் வறுமை பிரச்சினைகளுக்கான தீர்வுகளை சிபாரிசு செய்கிறது.

■ தற்போதுள்ள கட்டமைப்பை வலுப்படுத்தல்
தற்போதைய கட்டமைப்புக்குள்ளான வறுமைக்கான தீர்வுகள், அதிகரித்த தொழில் நுகர்ச்சி, மற்றும் உயர் வாழ்க்கைச் செலவுடன் வாழும் முறை என்பவற்றை கவனத்திலெடுக்க வேண்டும் தரமான கல்வி மற்றும் சுகாதாரத்தின் வாய்ப்புக்களை அதிகரித்தல், நிலப்பாட்டையும் வீடமைப்பையும் நிலம் தொடர்பான அணுகுதலையும் அதிகரித்தல், சகல பங்குதாரர்களுடன் சிறந்த தொடர்பாடல் என்பன குறிப்பிடத்தக்கவை.

■ இயற்கை மாற்றத்தை ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளலும் ஊக்குவித்தலும்
இறுக்கமான தோட்ட கட்டமைப்புடன் பிரிப்புக்கள் புறக்கணிக்கப்படலாம், தடுக்கப்படலாம் அல்லது ஊக்குவிக்கப்படலாம். இப்பிரிவானது குடும்பங்கள் வறுமையிலிருந்து மீள்வதில் ஏற்படுத்தும் சாதகமான தாக்கத்தையும் மாற்றக்காரணிகளின் பலத்தையும் தந்து மாற்றத்தை ஏற்றுக்கொள்வதற்கான சாதகமான அணுகுமுறையாகவும் இருக்கலாம். இது குடும்பங்கள் மீது சாதகமான தாக்கத்தைக் கொண்ட

காரணிகளை ஊக்குவித்தலையும் ஒழுங்கு மற்றும் புலப்பெயர்விற்கு வாய்ப்பளித்தல், சுயஊக்குவித்தல், மாற்றுத்திறன்களை விருத்தி செய்தல், அரசு நலன்புரி சேவைகளை விரிவுபடுத்தல் போன்ற பாதிப்பை குறைக்கும் காரணிகளை உள்ளடக்கலாம்.

■ தோட்டத்துறையை துடிப்பாக்கக்கருத்தொருமிக்க செய்தல்

தோட்டத்துறையை குறிக்கும் பல அடிப்படை காரணிகள் கருத்தில் கொள்ளப்படாமல், தோட்டக் குடும்பங்களாக சிறியளவிலான முன்னேற்றம் மாத்திரமே எட்டப்பட முடியும். தோட்டத்துறையின் சிறைப்படுத்தப்பட்ட இயல்பு முன்னேற்றத்தை தடுக்கும் முக்கியமான காரணியாக உள்ளதுடன் மிகமுக்கியமாக புறக்கணிப்பு பற்றிய உறுதியான உணர்வை ஏற்படுத்துகிறது. தோட்டமுறையின் மிகத்துயரமான இணைப்பு அதன் வீடமைப்பு முறையாகும் உண்மை என்னவென்றால் தொழிலாளி தொடர்ந்தும் வர்த்தக சொத்தினுள்ளேயே வாழ்கின்றான். வதிவிடத்தை தோட்டத்திலிருந்து பிரித்தல் தோட்ட மக்களின் நலன்புரி பொறுப்பை முகாமைத்துவம் செய்வதை இலகுவடுத்தலாம். சமமாக அது குடியேற்ற வாசிகள் தோட்டப்பணிக்கு ஆட்களை அனுப்ப வேண்டிய கட்டாயத்தையும் குறைக்கும் இதனால் தோட்டத்துறையும் பிரதான போருளாதாரத்தின் ஒரு பகுதியாகி பாரம்பரிய தொழிலாளர் முதலாளி உறவுமுறையில் பணியாற்றலாம்.

Background to the Study

Introduction

“We know that the children can’t go through the same thing we went through. We want to buy land, build a house and move out of here. Even if the children study if we stay here it won’t serve any purpose. The sacrifice we make will not be worth it. We have to get out”. (Male, Private Estate, Kalutara)

The estate sector in Sri Lanka has a history of almost 150 years. The British started the industry in the 1800s with ‘imported’ indentured labour from South India. Today’s estate population are descendants of this labour that continued to be brought into the country until the 1940s. Sri Lanka’s success as a lead exporter of tea in the 1960s and 1970s ensured the continuation of the industry despite manifold changes in the form of nationalisation, re-privatisation and the rise of the smallholder. Although the sector has evolved, it still retains aspects of the enclave structures and conditions that existed at its inception.

Isolation and limited mobility has marginalised workers in the tea and rubber estates, and they have not reaped the benefits of development to the same extent as workers in other productive sectors of the economy. Households in the estate sector are among the poorest in the country. However, even though the development discourse frequently emphasises the marginalisation and backwardness of the sector, it must be acknowledged that conditions have improved. Estate structures are less rigid and factors such as trade union activism, state interventions, sector specific development programmes, increased interaction with rural and urban sectors and greater integration with the mainstream economy, have resulted in noticeable micro level improvements. Despite these improvements the estate sector still lags behind in almost every indicator of poverty in Sri Lanka.

Prompted by the release in 2004 of the official poverty line and poverty measures², the research on which this book is based, was carried out in 2005 to inform two World Bank studies on poverty: the Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment (SLPA) and the global study on “Moving out of Poverty: Understanding Growth and Freedom from the Bottom Up” (MOP)³.

² Department of Census and Statistics, 2004

³ The MOP study is a global initiative by the Poverty Reduction Economic Management Unit of the World Bank. The study “aims to select 10-16 countries on the basis of four characteristics which are deemed to be especially important as determinants of the extent of poverty transitions and the way in which these transitions occur.”

The structuring of this publication is influenced by its research orientation. In this background chapter we have described how the study took place and introduced the methodology for the study. Chapter 1 is a review of the historical context of the plantations, Chapter 2 presents a profile of poverty on the estates. In Chapter 3 the different factors that drive estate workers in and out of poverty are identified while Chapter 4 focuses on the structural impediments to mobility. The concluding chapter brings together the findings and describes options for seeking solutions to address the problems of poverty in the estate sector.

This publication also comprises three annexes. Annex 1 provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology. Annex 2 describes estate workers' perceptions of poverty and the definitions they used and Annex 3 comprises a special case study on Youth, titled, 'Youth Aspirations and Challenges'.

Research design and methodology

Rationale and study objectives

Poverty indices calculated by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) and empirical research in the estate sector show that in contrast to the national trends there is a significant rise in consumption poverty, measured by the headcount index⁴, parallel to improving human development indicators. This contradiction or 'puzzle' has influenced the formulation of the research questions for this study. The questions aim to unravel factors contributing to the increase in poverty, in order to inform policy that seeks to arrest the trend.

The study considered **two core research questions:**

- What is the story behind the headcount index that shows an increasing trend in estate sector poverty?
- Why and how do some poor people move out and stay out of poverty while others fall into or remain trapped in chronic poverty?

CEPA understands poverty as a more multidimensional phenomenon that takes into account consumption and assets (i.e. the economic aspects) as well as human development, socio-cultural, political, protective aspects of deprivation or wellbeing (Abdul Cader, 2007) This study was conceptualised using this

⁴ The Headcount Index is defined as the percentage of people below the poverty line.

multidimensional approach to understand the phenomenon of poverty in the estate sector, and pays particular attention to household level variables that aggravate or mitigate poverty within the sector.

Key terms and definitions

The estate sector: Generally, the definition of ‘estate’ is fluid and depends on the context of the discussion. As this study was motivated by an attempt to understand the rising poverty levels indicated in the data from the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), it uses the same definition of the “estate sector” as used by the DCS. The DCS defines the sector as made up of plantations with areas greater than 20 acres in extent and with more than 10 residential labourers. While there is no crop restriction in this definition, the study focuses on the two crops that dominate the sector: tea and rubber.

The community: The term “community” has been contextualised to reflect the vast areas that fall under a given management unit. Hence, in large estates an estate division was defined as a ‘community’ whilst in small and medium estates, respondents viewed the entire estate as a ‘community’. In practice, the boundary of the ‘community’ was decided based on the common usage by the given group of people and their interactions in daily life.

The household: A household was defined as all people living within a given structure and sharing expenses. This included those who were not physically present but who contributed to the household and retained membership by virtue of not maintaining another dwelling unit.

Characterising households: Households were characterised as experiencing different levels of poverty by the focus groups from the community. The households assessed as being poorest or at the ‘bottom’ were those who faced long-term deprivation. The ‘middle’ group was those who did not have key deprivations but were lacking some key parameters of wellbeing and felt ‘there are some better off than us and others who are worse’. The ‘top’ level was characterised by progressive movers whose wellbeing factors outweighed the deprivations; they saw themselves as better than most in the community.

The period of change: The study looked at change over a 15 year time frame in order to correspond to the macro level trend of increasing poverty, which forms the point of departure of the study and to include 1992, a key milestone. This was when the sector was re-privatised and this policy change was considered to be crucial in the timeline developed with central level stakeholders during the study design stage.

The Sampling Framework

The study used a qualitative methodological approach and employed a multistage purposive sampling technique. The sample categories were developed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of a range of variables that support and or suppress households from moving out of poverty. The total sample comprised 20 estates. (See annex 1 for a detailed explanation on the sampling frame applied and the sample profile)

The sample of sites within the high producing tea and rubber districts were selected purposively, based on management categories – estates managed by a cooperate body Regional Plantation Company (RPC), privately (individual or family) owned and managed estates and State owned and managed estates⁵. Within the Regional Plantation Company (RPC) estates, specific estates were further selected based on variation in size of resident population, proportion of resident labour, access to urban areas.

Data collection tools

Within the 20 estates, data was collected from three primary sources, the households, the community, and the management. The following tools were used for data collection at field level:

Office Based Information (OBI): to obtain quantitative data from the management on demography, workforce and type of work, wage structures, trade unions, welfare packages/community welfare facilities, infrastructure facilities, education and social mobilisation.

Community Time Line (CTL): to identify key policies and events, explore dimensions (and dynamics), correlates of poverty in the given estate. The tool aimed to “understand community level factors that have helped or hindered movement out of poverty” from the perspective of the management which included senior level staff such as estate Managers and operational staff such as Welfare Officers.

Ladder of Life: used with community and households to identify characteristics, trends, spread of poverty at community and household levels, trace a community timeline of significant events that impacted community development (both positively and negatively), identify livelihood sources and patterns and construct/collapse a ‘ladder of life’ to aggregate households at various steps and assign characteristics for each of the given steps.

⁵ State owned companies only exist in the tea sector and account for a very small percentage of the composition based on management style. Therefore, only one such company fell within the sample.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD): to explore with the community, their perspectives on change, identify opportunities and challenges at community, estate and country level, with men, women and youth.

Individual Life Stories: to explore with the households the characteristics and trends in wellbeing and poverty, mobility/relapse in relation to the broad thematic areas of economic history, occupational history, educational history, social and cultural history and sketch income-expenditure patterns.

Key Person Interviews: structured interviews with selected informants at the estate level and central level. At the estate level, to collect information on estate wide issues as well as those specific to a particular estate considered as significant by the field team. At the central level, to contextualise, validate and clarify field findings on specific issues within the broader framework of industry, policy level decision-making and implementation.

Limitations of the study

Sampling: The lack of centralised data on the estates, variance between available data and actual ground characteristics, the locations of the sites, constraints in obtaining permission from management/owners impeded the rigour of sample selection. Available lists, including those provided by the quantitative sample framework⁶ were found to be inaccurate when checked at the field level. For example, a selected estate in Badulla overlapped the districts of Badulla and Moneragala, as it was a ‘cluster’ estate, which had merged two smaller estates. The extent of cultivation of tea and rubber in dual cropped estates varied from the given statistics. These characteristics were noted only on arrival at the field sites. To ensure that the sample criteria were met irrespective of the differences in estate data, the study team followed a principle of picking a division within the estate that most closely corresponded to the sample criteria by which the estate was initially identified.

Primary data collection: Accessing respondents within estates is substantially different to collecting data in rural villages as the team had to enter worker’s housing within private company premises. Owners/managers were not always open to providing access to the research teams. Obtaining permission to enter the estates was a precondition to all sites. The team maintained transparency in all communications and discussed the study with the respective head offices and in detail with the management (on site) prior to commencing discussions

⁶ This refers to a quantitative study that was carried out by the Sri Lanka Business Development Centre (SLBDC).

with respondents. Most estates reiterated the need for anonymity whilst some stated it as a precondition to provision of access, whilst others requested the questionnaires/tools to be provided prior to granting permission to enter. Access to private estates proved to be most difficult. Personal contacts had to be frequently used to persuade owners to allow the study to be conducted. A total of 32 estates were approached for permission to enable the study team to complete the sample of 20 sites.

Respondent fatigue was clearly evident. Estates are a highly researched sector, and the respondents were not particularly interested in participating in the study. Frequently they did so only out of habit of agreeing to requests by the management. In addition, there were severe time constraints in application of the data collection tools due to the structured nature of work hours and the need – primarily of women – to attend to household duties.

Chapter 1

The Context of the Estate Sector in Sri Lanka

The estate sector has been a focus of study and attention almost as long as it has been in existence. This level of attention can be attributed to the fact that the sector is a core part of the Sri Lankan economy and to its unique historical, social and political aspects.

At the time of carrying out the study four main sources of information were available:

- Quantitative data based information, predominantly from the national surveys of the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL). The data enables a comparative analysis of the sector within the national context and down to the household and per capita level.
- Socio-political analysis of the sector carried out by social scientists focusing on the population that lives and works within the estates, their historical origins, transformation, rights, welfare, national policies that effect the population, etc.
- Intervention based studies focusing on project design and problem identification for welfare-based interventions of the estate population. These are frequently commissioned or carried out by donor related institutions. The significant information available with the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) falls into this category.
- Industry based information that focuses on competitiveness in world markets, productivity and profitability, alternative management structures, national policies that impact the industry etc. Information is available through industry statistical sources, RPC annual reports, Sri Lanka Planters' Association and various other programmes initiated for the development of the plantations.

This chapter draws on all the above sources and attempts, very briefly, to focus on the industrial, policy and socio-political aspects that set the estate sector in context within the study's focus of moving out of poverty. Further elaboration of particular aspects of the sector is included in the analysis as needed.

1.1 The Industry: its origins and development

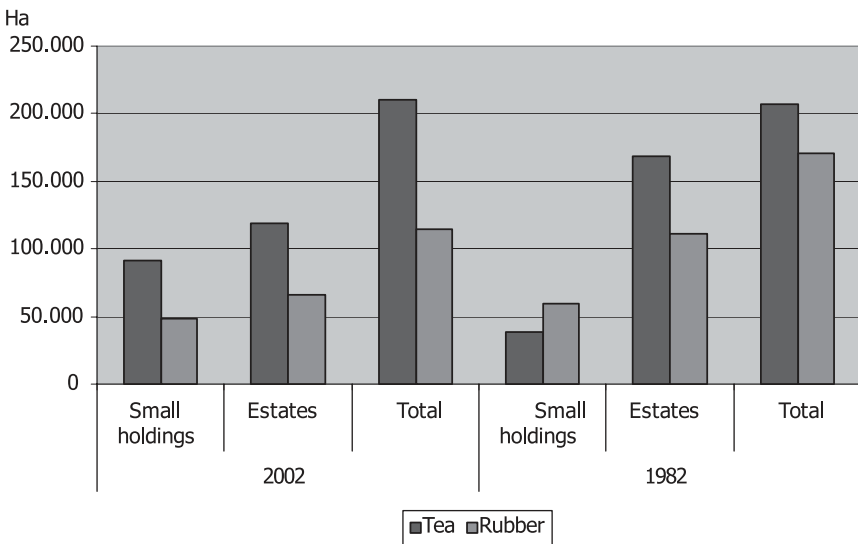
“In structural terms, the estate sector was developed under the colonial administration as an enclave separated from the rest of the economy due to the plantations depending mainly on foreign entrepreneurship, immigrant labour from South India, and either imported or reinvested capital. They utilised just one important indigenous resource – land suitable for the cultivation of tropical tree crops. This land was cheap, plentiful. Immigrant labour was organised on modern commercial lines in a capitalised and technologically advanced but highly labour and land intensive system. The estates were supported by a variety of commercial, financial, transport, communications and other services undertaken by the private sector and the (colonial) government” (Snodgrass, 1966: 4).

The estate sector in Sri Lanka was established during the colonial period as a ‘plantation system’ as defined by Beckford (1972:5-13). The ‘plantation system’ covers all the institutional arrangements surrounding the production and marketing of a crop and is characterised by an all pervasive social system stratified along ethnic lines as a result of importing labour, and an economic system which extended in a linear manner from the location within which it was situated to the wider world economy. The practice of commercial agriculture, crop specialisation, and the employment of a large resident labour force directed by highly skilled supervisor-managers were also characteristic features of plantations.

As a result of the commercialisation of tea and rubber cultivation by the British in the 1800s, Sri Lanka was a primary commodity exporting economy at the time of its independence in 1948. Liberalisation in the early 1980s saw the gradual diversification of the Sri Lankan economy and by the 1990s cash crops became of secondary importance in export earnings next to a thriving garment industry and migrant remittances. In 2006, the textile and garment industry was the leading exporter (44.8% of export earnings) while tea remained an important export crop (12.8% of export earnings), its contribution to the GDP was just 1.1% (CBSL: 2006). Rubber diversified into a local manufacturing base initially in the 1950s and expanded rapidly as a value added industrial export in the late 1970s. There was a decline in the late 80s, due to the low prices for raw rubber in the world market coupled with increasing production costs and introduction of alternatives to natural rubber. However, by the turn of the century, improvements in crop management and the production process, and increased demand for natural rubber products rejuvenated the industry. In 2006, rubber registered a growth of 4.6% registering the highest production since 1996 (CBSL: 2006).

The recent decades have seen a major change in the size of estates. The proportion of smallholdings has more than doubled in the tea sector (from 19% in 1982 to 44% in 2002). In the rubber sector too, the gap between small holdings and estate holdings has narrowed, along with a fall in the total extent cultivated. The estate sector share of agriculture dropped from 27% in 1982 to 20% in 2002, while the share of total tea and rubber holdings has also seen significant reductions (down 14% to 325,302 ha in 2002), over the past two decades (CBSL: 2006).

Figure 1.1: Changing patterns of tea and rubber cultivation



Source: Census of Agriculture, DCS: 2002

The reduction in the amounts cultivated in the estates has not, however, dented the profit base of the tea industry. Data published by the Ministry of Plantation Industries (2003) give clear indications that a major proportion of the profit margin is being absorbed by the exporting companies, leaving the producers with less than a 20% margin from the FOB price. This is less prevalent in the rubber sector due to its direct trading with the local manufacturing base.

1.2 Labour in the estate structure

“The plantation system had relied, on the one hand, on strict regimentation of workers whose wages had been kept at the lowest possible levels and, on the other, on lavish incentives in the form of high salaries, bonuses and a variety of fringe benefits to those performing supervisory and managerial functions, from whom the system demanded personal accountability.” Peiris (1996).

The historical ‘plantation system’ operates as an enclave with most services needed by the labour force offered within the boundaries of the estate. As the employer, the estate is responsible for the welfare of its workers and their households, from ‘cradle to grave’. As housing is provided within the estate boundaries it gives rise to the concept of ‘resident labour’. This system binds the workers to the estate as workers and residents, thereby blurring the boundaries between work and home.

Due to a range of socio-political and commercial issues, rather than employing Sri Lankan labour, the British transferred labour from South India to work in the plantations. During the initial stages of the plantations, the labour was supplied on a contract basis where the workers returned to India on the completion of the contract, but a gradual change resulted in families migrating to work on specific estates. Today the estate population is made up of their descendents who are resident on estates and whose main source of wage employment is on the plantation.

Over the last two decades, labour force participation in the plantation sector has experienced a decline of more than 50%, from a peak of 541,971 workers in 1980. The Ministry of Plantation Industries estimates the current figure at 268,145 workers⁷ (DCS, 2004: Statistical Abstract).

Significant changes have occurred, but many fundamental features of the ‘plantation system’ have survived into the 21st century and the sector is reacting organically to changes that predominantly originate externally.

Table 1.1 provides a timeline of the key change events that had an impact on labour within the estates.

⁷ Out of a total Indian Tamil population of 860,099 (Census of Population and Housing, 2001: DCS) The figures provided are for state sector estates only

Table 1.1 : Summary of key events affecting the industry and labour

Year	Event
1840	The Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance No. 12 of 1840: The colonial government acquires all 'waste' land and distributes these lands to colonial commercial companies.
1867	Commencement of transfer of labour from South India.
1931	Sri Lanka receives universal franchise under dominion status.
1947	In preparation to receiving independence Sri Lanka and India commence discussions on citizenship, primarily focusing on Indian Tamil immigrant workers.
1948	After Independence, the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948 passed. Indian Tamil workers on estates classified as temporary immigrants.
1949	Ceylon Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act disqualifies Indian Tamil worker's franchise in Sri Lanka.
1950s	Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) becomes successor to the Ceylon Indian Congress Labour Union.
1960-65	S. Thondaman appointed as a Member of Parliament to represent the stateless Tamils.
1964	The Sirima-Shastri Pact paves the way for the repatriation of 600,000 persons on Indian Tamil origin to India and for 375,000 to be accepted as franchised citizens of Sri Lanka.
1972-77	Transfer of estate schools to the national education system. Increased focus by government on improving health standards among estate workers.
1972	Land Reform Law No.1 of 1972: Ceiling of 50 acres on private ownership of land is set and excess land redistributed.
1975	Through the Land Reform (Amendment) Law No. 39 of 1975 all privately owned plantations were nationalized and transferred to state agencies. Tea Small Holdings Authority set up.
1976	Establishment of Janatha Estate Development Board (JEDB) and State Plantations Corporation (SPC) to manage the nationalised estates.
1978	CWC members enter parliament, leader S. Thondaman appointed to cabinet portfolio.
1984	Unions win demand for 300 working days a year for every registered worker, and equalization of wages for men and women.

Table 1.1: Summary of key events affecting the industry and labour (contd.)

1988	Sirima-Shastri Pact curtailed and Citizenship for Stateless Persons Act provides Sri Lankan citizenship to Indian Tamils remaining in Sri Lanka.
1992	Re-privatization of the management of estates. 23 Regional Plantation Companies provided an initial lease for 4-5 years, at Rs 500/-
1993	Plantation Housing and Social Welfare Trust – a tripartite agency (government, estate management, trade unions) set up under the under the Ministry of Plantation Industries
1995-96	Lease lengthened to 50 years and the lease fee increased.
1997	A separate ministry for estate infrastructure development established.
1998-2000	CWC leader A. Thondaman holds cabinet portfolio of Minister of Housing and Plantation Infrastructure.
2006	Formulation of National Action Plan for Social Development of the Plantation Community 2006 – 2015.

1.3 The policy setting for estate ownership and management

The overall policy orientation of national governments, as well as policies that have been especially targeted the estate sector, has affected both the manufacturing and labour components of the plantations. Estate sector targeted policies resulted in changes to the ownership and management of the plantations, and can be categorised into three major historic phases: the colonial phase, the nationalisation phase and the re-privatisation phase.

Table 1.2: Main changes in the management of tea plantations in Sri Lanka

Phases of change	Ownership of immovable property		Management of property
	Owning entity	Type of ownership	
Colonial administration	Foreign companies & Local companies	Freehold	Agency houses Owners or Agence
Land reform: Phase I and II	Land Reform Commission (LRC)	Freehold	LRC/ Co-ops / Usawasama / JEDB / SLSPC
Post-land reform	JEDB / SLSPC	Freehold	JEDB / SLSPC

Table 1.2: Main changes in the management of tea plantations in Sri Lanka (contd.)

Privatisation Phase 1: Privatization of management	JEDB / SLSPC / RPC	Freehold	Managing Agents (MA) selected from the private
Privatisation Phase II: Sale of 51% of share Capital to private sector firms	RPC	Leasehold	RPCs themselves or MAs within the group

Source: Extracted from: Information Review, CARE Sri Lanka: 2003

1.3.1 Colonial period

During the colonial period and first two decades of independence (1830 to 1972) the estates of Sri Lanka were owned either by foreign ('sterling') companies registered under British law or by local ('rupee') private companies registered under Sri Lankan law. Local 'Agency Houses' managed the properties of foreign companies as well as some local companies. The sector was highly land and labour intensive. Land was obtained through a series of Acts and Ordinances, which most often acquired land with little or no compensation paid to owners/users. Critics of this structure also argued that the plantations deprived the rural Sri Lankans of their land and seriously affected their sustainability as peasant farmers.

1.3.2 Nationalisation

Growing criticism of the foreign domination of the sector culminated in the introduction of land ownership policies to end foreign ownership and unequal distribution of land and to improve the conditions of the dispossessed peasantry (Information Review, CARE Sri Lanka: 2003). The Land Reform (Amendment) Law No.39 of 1975 resulted in the nationalisation of all privately owned estates (tea, rubber and coconut). With the land reform legislation taking effect, the estate land owned or possessed by public companies totalling 417,957 acres were vested in the Land Reform Commission (LRC). At the time, this represented about 63% of the country's tea acreage, 32% of the rubber acreage, 11 % of the coconut acreage and 1% of the paddy acreage (Alailima, 1988: 341). The management of these entities was handed over to government organisations.

In 1976, the government established the Janatha Estates Development Board (JEDB) and the State Plantations Corporation (SPC) – state institutions that carried out a plantation-style management in order to make use of economies of scale.

1.3.3 Re-privatisation

Re-privatisation happened in two distinct stages. In 1992 a major structural change occurred with the privatisation of the management of tea, rubber and coconut plantations owned by the government. Altogether, 449 (318 tea and 131 rubber) state-owned plantations, from a total of 502, were handed over to 22 (20 mixed crop, 2 rubber only) private Management Companies. "The objective of the privatisation of management was to upstage the commercial viability of this vital sector by raising productivity, improving quality and reducing overhead expenditures" (CBSL Annual Report, 1992).

The restructuring process was overseen by the Plantation Restructuring Unit (PRU), set up under the Ministry of Finance. In the first phase, only management of the estates was transferred, for a nominal annual rent of Rs.500. Initially 22, and later 23, state owned Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) were created by the government. The RPC's then entered into an agreement with a private company, namely the Management Agent (MA), chosen through an open bid procedure. Only Sri Lankan bidders were allowed for an initial period of 5 ½ years with provision for a further 5 year extension subject to financial performance. However, due to the short-term nature of the lease agreements, the newly formed MAs found it difficult to raise money to run the plantations (Manikam, 1995: 16).

A second stage in the re-privatisation occurred in February 1995 when the newly elected government moved towards fuller privatisation of the plantations and announced a programme for the sale of controlling interests in the RPCs in June 1995. The framework for the sale consisted of the following elements: a) the reduction of the lease period from 99 years to 50 years and the nominal lease rentals to be increased substantially from Rs.500 per year per estate and revised annually; b) 51 per cent of the shares sold on an all or nothing basis; MAs of RPCs that had shown operational profits were eligible to purchase 51 per cent of the shares at the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) market price; c) 20 per cent of the shares offered for sale to the general public through the CSE; d) 10 per cent of the shares distributed free of charge among the employees of the RPC; e) the remaining 19 per cent to belong to the government for the time being; and f) government to own a Golden Share in each of the RPCs in order to exercise control over certain affairs (Shanmugaratnam, 1997: 29).

1.4 Policies targeting labour welfare in the estate sector

1.4.1 Colonial period

The structure of the estate sector, which set it apart from the rest of the country and contained labour in a controlled enclave, meant that labour welfare was historically separated from the mainstream interventions. During the colonial period welfare provision for the estate workers was far more progressive than for the rest of the country and correspondingly the health indicators of the estate sector at independence and in the early post independence period were significantly better than the rural sector in Sri Lanka.

”Legislation specifying education and health standards and providing social security was first introduced in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) for the Indian immigrant in the organised agricultural estate sector in order to compensate them for the change in social and economic conditions they experienced. The main impetus to improve living conditions on the estates came from the gradually increasing requirements of the government of India, which were incorporated into labour legislation in the early 1900s.” (Alailima, 1988: 51).

The immediate post-independence period, however, saw a rapid deterioration of conditions of the estate population. Firstly, the Indian Tamil population in Sri Lanka became stateless persons as the Ceylon Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act of 1949 disqualified them from the right to franchise (Hollup, 1994: 42-43). Secondly, the changing political and economic climate and the expectation that the estates would be nationalised led private plantation companies to make severe cuts to welfare spending.

1.4.2 Nationalisation period

The period after the nationalisation in 1975 saw an upturn in welfare conditions. Under the 1975 Land Reform Bill, responsibility for workers' welfare was transferred into the hands of the state. By 1976, over 300 estate schools were under the Ministry of Education which led to their integration into the national curriculum. There was also a sharp increase in teachers due to special recruitment and training schemes such as the Plantations Schools Training Program (PTSP). Most of these teachers were from the plantation sector itself. The number of teachers almost tripled from 1,148 in 1984 to 4,843 in 1994. Colleges of Education were also launched to enhance teacher training (Little, 1997).

Health was a particular focus during the period of state management and a concerted effort was made to increase the general health of the estate

population, with a special focus on women and children. The rise in health indicators in the estate sector and the gradual closing of the gap with the rest of the country was a significant achievement during this period.

1.4.3 Re-privatisation

Despite the re-privatisation of the estates, the state retained responsibility for education within the sector. In 1994, the Ministry of Health was requested to take over the 54 estate hospitals and had successfully taken over twenty such hospitals and maternity wards/dispensaries by the year 2000. Prior to 1994, the estate population was served through a network of estate hospitals, maternity homes and dispensaries in addition to the national health services. All estates, however, still maintain some type of health facility and have modified their services accordingly. In addition the government also created the following institutions:

- The Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT), was established in 1993 under the Ministry of Plantation Industries as a tripartite organisation of employers, unions and the government. This was set up to deal with the social welfare needs of the estate community after privatisation. According to the terms of the agreement the RPCs would finance the recurrent expenditure and the government would channel support as well as donor funding to the plantation sector through this Trust. This recognised that the substandard living and working conditions inherited by the estate workers had to improve in order to stem the flow of migration, improve labour productivity, and maintain stability in the sector.
- In 1997, a separate ministry was established for estate infrastructure development, based on a recommendation made by a committee appointed to study the problems faced by this community. The main objective of this ministry is to “ensure incorporation of the estate community into the mainstream of development towards social equity” (CBSL, Annual Report, 2001), by initiating programmes and activities in human resource development and employment generation, social infrastructure development and housing development in the estate sector.

1.5 Welfare interventions in the estate sector

As the discussion on policy shows, although the plantations are privatised, the government still retains some responsibility for the development of the plantation workforce. CARE Sri Lanka, in its Information Review (2003), estimates that a total of USD 10 million was invested in social development

in the plantation sector during the period 1978 to 1999. Initially the Social Development Divisions (SDDs) of the two public institutions (JEDB and SLSPC) implemented most development programmes, but PHDT took on this role after re-privatisation.

Foreign assistance to the Plantation sector started as early as the mid 1970s with support for improvements to housing, mother and childcare, water and sanitation by UNFPA, UNICEF, several IRDPs and the World Bank. Since the 1990s donors including the ADB, CIDA, GTZ, JBIC, JICA and the Dutch and Norwegian governments have supported social welfare, productivity and resource management programmes that have been implemented in collaboration with State and non-state agencies.

Table 1.3 Key donor funded welfare programmes

Year	Programme
1985 – 1995	Social Welfare Programme I (SWP I) – Dutch/Norwegian funding
1996 – 2002	Plantation Reform Project - ADB and JBIC
1998 - 2002	Estate Forest and Water Resources Development Project – GTZ
Since 2000	Plantation Development Support Programme, Estate Housing Development Project, Plantation Schools Development Program – Multiple donors channelled through PHSWT
1999 - 2005	Tea Development Project – ADB
2000 - 2008	Plantation Communities Project – CIDA
2003 - 2006	Tea Estate Assistance Project – JICA and CARE
2003 - 2008	Plantation Development Project – ADB

Sources: Donor reports and websites, Ministry of Estate Infrastructure and Livelihood Development

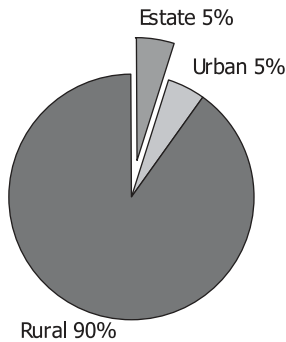
As for the contribution of RPCs, a study conducted during the period 1993-1999, by the Programme Support Group (2000), estimated the capital investment in social infrastructure by the then 20 RPCs to be a mere 8%. This compared with a 62% capital investment for field development. The investment on social infrastructure was mostly comprised of donor funding and grants; housing accounts for the bulk of the spending (45%), followed by water supply (19%) and sanitation (18%). Other areas such as crèches, schools, health facilities, estate/approach roads, electrification etc. comprised the balance 18%.

Chapter 2

A profile of poverty in the estate sector

The nature of poverty in Sri Lanka is characterised by the dichotomy of high consumption poverty (affecting approximately 25% of the population) coupled with the attainment of high Human Development Indicators. Aggregated national figures, however, hide large regional and sectoral differences, and mask the situation in the estate sector.

Figure 2.1 Sectoral distribution of total poor (2002)

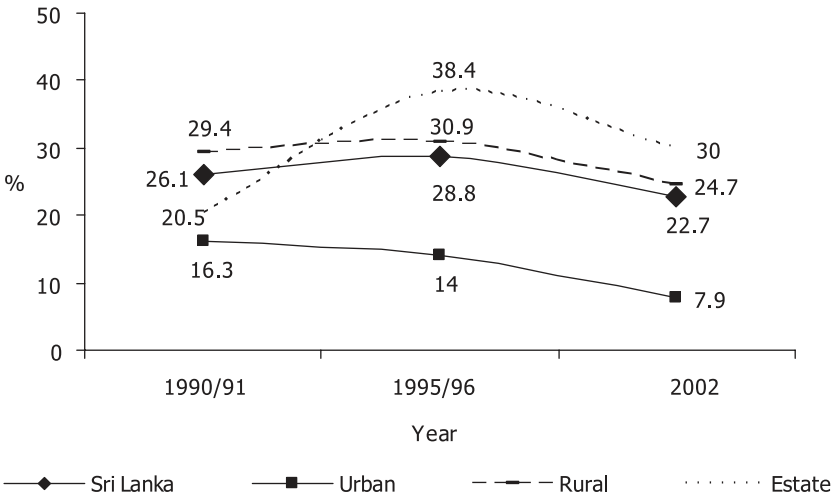


Source: Department of Census and Statistics, website (2006)

2.1 The narrow definition: income and consumption poverty

Despite the fact that in overall terms a small percentage of the poor live in the estate sector, the estate sector has the highest incidence of intra sector poverty (DCS 2003). While poverty in the estate sector followed the general national trend, increasing between 1990 and 1996 and then decreasing between 1996 and 2002, it has gone against the national trend in failing to fall below the 1990/91 levels in 2002. As shown in Figure 3.3 below, estate poverty has risen over rural levels after 1992 and the estate sector now has the highest level of sectoral poverty in Sri Lanka.

Figure 2.2: Poverty trends 1990-91 to 2002



Note: Data sets exclude the North and East Provinces.

Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey 1990/91, 1995/96 & 2002

Combining the Head Count Index with indicators of depth of poverty⁸ and inequality show that the majority of the poor hover near the poverty line. The implication of this is that the estate poor are highly vulnerable as the slightest change in their consumption pattern can push them below the poverty line.

2.2 The broader definition: the multi-dimensional nature of poverty

Recent survey data reveals a general improvement in many aspects of health, education, and housing in the estate sector. However, a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty extends beyond this to encompass people’s dignity and protection. Although citizenship rights have generally improved in the estate community, the rate at which ID cards and other basic documents are

⁸ The depth of poverty is the average shortfall between an individual’s level of consumption and the poverty line, where the shortfall for individuals whose consumption falls above the poverty line is zero. For more information about poverty measurements see Gunewardena, 2004

issued is still not meeting the demand. Non-possession of identity documents is a major constraint for youth seeking employment outside the estate (CARE Sri Lanka 2003) and is an example of how much more remains to be done.

Health

The Estate Sector Health Bulletin⁹, published by the Plantation Human Development Trust (2005), shows a gradual improvement in the health trends in the sector. As the table below indicates there have been sharp declines in historically high infant mortality rates and the number of maternal deaths since the 1980s, due to greater investment in welfare.

Table 2.1 Literacy rate by sector

Trend	Urban	Rural	Estate	All sectors
1986/87	93.0	89.5	68.5	88.6
Male	94.7	92.8	80.0	92.2
Female	91.3	86.5	58.1	85.2
1996/97	94.5	92.3	76.9	91.8
Male	96.1	94.4	87.2	94.3
Female	93.0	90.4	67.3	89.4
2003/04	94.8	92.8	81.3	92.5
Male	95.9	94.7	88.3	94.5
Female	93.8	91.1	74.7	90.6

Source: Consumer Finance Survey (CFS), CBSL: 2005

Housing

The estate sector's housing stock consists of a wide array of residential accommodation that include single houses, attached houses and annexes, line rooms and row houses, and shanties. Single houses increased from 10% in 1996/97 to 28% in 2003/04, a nearly three-fold increase. This reflects the combined efforts of the government and estate sector management to improve the living standards of the estate workers by allocating more resources to their housing needs. However, at the time of the study the proportion of line rooms and row houses was still high. It is also worth noting that the occupation of single unit houses has been low and there is a tendency for people to rent/lease/sell the houses. A number of social factors such as family security, a sense of belonging to an 'extended family' and the mutual help available in the line houses, have influenced the low rate of occupation of the single housing units.

⁹ Captures only RPC estates working with the Trust

A number of government and donor-funded programmes have provided improved housing facilities for the estate community through the Plantation Human Development Trust. Self Help Housing (SHH), for example, is a fund channelled through the Estate Worker Cooperative Societies (EWCS) to provide technical support and loans of up to 60,000 at low interest rates while the estate management provides the required land.

Table 2.2 Changing pattern of housing stock in the sector (percentage)

Type of housing unit	Estate		All sectors	
	1996/ 97	2003/ 04	1996/ 97	
Single house	10.2	28.1	88.5	91.2
Condominium / Flat	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.3
Attached house / Annex	0.0	7.9	9.7	2.8
Line room / Row house	83.2	63.4	0.0	3.9
Shanty	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.8
Other	6.4	0.2	0.5	0.1

Source: CFS, CBSL: 2005

Chapter 3

What Helps and Hinders People's Movement out of Poverty

Understanding what the different groups of estate workers mean when they are discussing poverty is a finding in its own right as well as vital to understanding the upward and downward movements.¹⁰

The concept of relativity is critical in the characterisation of poverty by estate households. Poverty was perceived in absolute terms only by the chronically poor. All the others viewed their own standard of living in comparison to another group as well as within the frame conditions of the estate sector - or in most cases even more narrowly focused on the particular estate in which they lived and worked.

The most consistent feature in the characterisation of poverty and wellbeing is its multi-dimensional view. Even though income aspects and consumption, (e.g. wages, household expenditure), are at the core of the characterisation of poverty, other elements such as health and personal attributes were very strongly articulated. Multiple pressures were cited as deciding the ultimate position of a household on the ladder of life, reflecting a holistic view of interconnecting factors. Rarely was one factor so strong as to overpower all others. Exceptions were ill-health or death of the main income earner as a disabler and a very successful livelihood portfolio as an enabler.

The homogeneity of the estate sector is reflected in the very marginal differentiation between main sample categories of crop, district, and management type in the characterisation of poverty. This was particularly true of the characteristics of the 'bottom' or the chronic poor. In the case of the 'middle' and 'top' there is a tendency for the characteristics assigned to upper steps of the 'middle' level households in the rubber sector to correspond to those of the 'top' level households in the tea sector.

The greater ability of upper middle and top-level households to withstand external/sudden shocks and stresses was attributed predominantly to savings, multiple and secure sources of income, support systems and networks. However, households who were previously in the upper middle and top level but had relapsed into poverty did so because of insurmountable external shocks such as death, chronic ill-health or poor money management when investing in livelihoods.

¹⁰ See Annex 2 for a fuller discussion of workers' perceptions of poverty

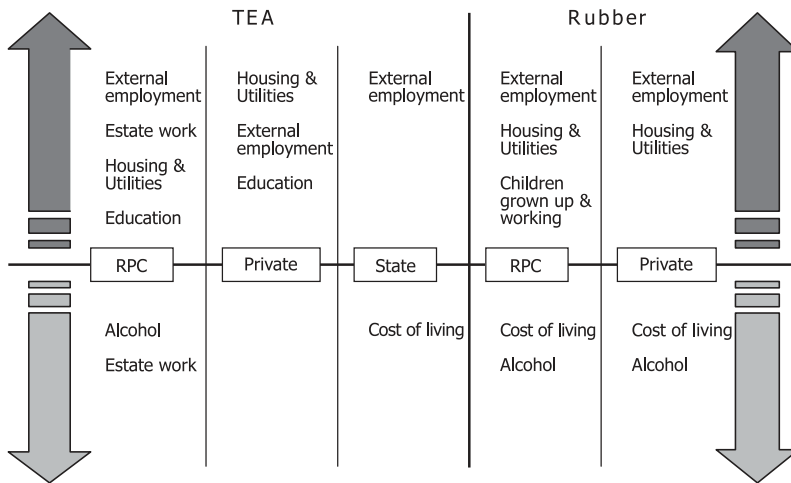
The vulnerability of the ‘bottom’ level was seen to be aggravated by inertia, apathy (“they live for the sake of living”, “they have no future plans”), lethargy and laziness in sharp contrast to attributes such as self-confidence, motivation” and the “will to develop” which were characteristics of the upper middle and top levels.

While characterisation of poverty has a static orientation, moving in and out of poverty has a fundamentally dynamic focus. The pressure of the gap between wages and cost of living was a primary downward driver. For estate workers in all sample categories, the continuous rise in the cost of living and the fact that wage increases did not match this pace was the strongest factor in preventing upward movement and creating stagnation at low levels of wellbeing.

The situation is aggravated by the very high level of monetisation of the sector. There is a keen awareness that the communities live in a total cash economy where a high percentage of income is spent on food. The opportunities for subsistence farming, such as home gardens, were extremely limited. The availability of extra work on the rubber estates acts as a double-edged sword particularly for women as it eats into time that could be spent on food production.

“Everything has to be paid for. In addition to food and the children’s education, their daily travel cost of Rs.20 has to be paid. There is a season ticket but there are no [state] buses for that. So we have to pay and go in the private bus. For occasions such as weddings, funerals, we need money”. (Female, Rubber, Private Estate, Kegalle)

Figure 3.1: Upward and downward drivers identified in focus group discussions



Note: State owned rubber estates were not part of the sample

Production and agriculture related factors, the weather, world market demand and prices, labour issues, and competition, aggravated the downward pressures in the tea sector, but the same factors were viewed in a positive light in the rubber sector due to better markets. Favourable world market conditions in the rubber industry in the years preceding the study and the lack of 'middleman'/agency houses have increased the availability of work, and possibly explain why respondents in the rubber sector tended to separate agricultural/managerial factors from issues of wages and the cost of living.

Changes in productivity standards and labour management, driven by a desire to increase profits since privatisation, were identified as important contributors to the reduction in the quantum of work, and hence lower earnings, especially in the tea sector.

“Those days we didn't have any problems. Lots of women worked. Those days we were asked to pluck a maximum of 150 bushes. But now they are asking us to pluck 500 bushes. We have only two hands. They select the best part of the pluck and without a minimum of 22 kg per day our names are not ticked on the roster. Now they are very strict about being on time and if we get late they send us back.” (Female, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

While the negative pressure was less in the rubber sector, the shortfalls in managing agricultural aspects of the estates as well as new measures taken to increase productivity and diversification were seen as causes for downward movement by workers in both sectors.

The majority of rubber sector workers felt that productivity and market related changes had increased their earning potential and created more secure and continuous work. Specific changes such as the provision of rain guards that enabled tapping of rubber during the rains, linking of factory production to a direct and secure market, were seen as contributory factors to their improvement.

Box 3.1: Women’s view on the changes in the rubber production process and income

The changes made to the production process and its overall positive impact on the earning capacity was discussed in detail by female focus groups in two of the ten rubber estates. In general women in the rubber sector seemed more aware of changes to the entire production process. This could be due to the fact that in the rubber sector females participate in all stages of the production process – from tapping to the final product packed for shipping. In one of the rubber estates visited, the study team was introduced to the factory production process by a female factory manager. She is however, an outlier in the sector.

Importantly, respondents saw no prospect of change in the pattern of rising costs and the inability of wages to meet the costs:

“Earlier we didn’t have such difficulty, as costs were not high. Look at the cost of a rice kilo... A length of cloth is so expensive. When we were small, Rs.5 was enough to bring stuff for the house for a week, in my 40’s Rs.50 was enough but today even thousand rupees isn’t enough.”
(Female, Rubber, Private Estate, Kalutara)

“We are having this much of difficulties, how can we say that it’ll be better for our children? For them it’ll be worse, living expenses will be higher, it will get more difficult” (Female, Rubber, Private Estate, Kalutara)

3.1 Diversifying the household livelihood portfolio

The most popular and successful method of coping as well as moving out of poverty is by diversifying the household livelihood portfolio, in particular incorporating non-estate work. The average number of income earners per household in the sample was 2.6, which included household members who were working outside the estate. While it is possible to increase the number of workers per household through estate work only, the vast majority of the households developed their livelihood portfolios with the inclusion of non-estate work. This enabled a household to combine estate work with more financially lucrative forms of employment available outside while also allowing them access the services and welfare provided by the estate. This strategy was common to all categories of household – ‘bottom’, ‘medium’ and ‘top’.

However, the attitude towards retaining estate work in the livelihood portfolio differed quite dramatically between household categories. Members of dynamic

households took a conscious decision to include estate work in their household livelihood portfolio as it provided stable employment and offered considerable freedom¹¹ through the shift system. The lower cost of living on the estate due to free access to water, energy and housing was also an important factor in a household's decision to remain on the estate.

"I was born in this estate. When I was 10 years I went to Jaffna, and later to Colombo where I got a job in a hotel in Maradana. I got a good salary but my expenditure was high. I didn't like that. We have to work according to the shop owner, when there is breakage we have to pay from our pocket. I heard that in the estate they were providing work so I came back. Here we have housing, water and when somebody is sick, the estate provides transport. I want to start a cultivation plot. I want to secure some additional income to support the family. My wife and sister are abroad." (Male, 33, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

"If we work on the estate we can save something – EPF, ETF. I've thought a lot about this and decided to stay on the estate and work. If we go outside we can earn about Rs.150 more every day, but we finish it off. If we work here we can save something at least for our children." (Male, 32, Rubber, Private Estate, Kegalle)

In contrast, the 'bottom' and 'medium' households saw the estate employment structure as restricting freedom. A number of persons complained about the 25 day working requirement as impinging on their freedom and creating too much restriction. The lack of choice and frustration with a highly structured system which they were unsuccessful in manipulating, were central to their dissatisfaction.

3.1.1 External employment

External employment is included in the livelihood portfolios not only to improve life conditions, which can lead to upward mobility, but also for coping with expenditure that cannot be met by estate employment alone. All the households that had moved out of poverty had at least one member in non-estate employment. Undoubtedly, external employment is a primary upward driver. However, many 'bottom' as well as 'medium' non-mover households also have one or more member in external employment, suggesting that external employment may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for moving out of poverty.

¹¹ While the meaning of freedom was asked specifically in the FGD, it was not directly discussed in the HH questions. However, it was frequently mentioned in relation to occupation.

When households used external employment – particularly migration-based employment – as a coping strategy, it was seen as needs based and temporary, frequently linked to specific points in the household life cycle. What matters to a given household is an injection of cash during the difficult periods of the life cycle, and/or the ability to withstand unexpected shocks such as ill health or death. The impact of external employment on the household is contingent upon the household's position when workers migrate, the stage of the household life cycle, and which members migrate.

A typical view of 'bottom' households with members in external employment is :

“My husband and I are both retired. My husband's EPF was spent on our son's wedding and mine was spent on food. So there's nothing left now. Our son is working in a Bandarawela shop, he helps occasionally”
(Female, 44, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

Migration overseas was seen less often as a coping strategy; however, a few households sought overseas employment as a response to a specific problem faced by the household.

“I fell ill often so she decided to go abroad and work. I can't exactly say we have moved up but it has helped. If we go up one month we are down for two months, we have no hope for a definite future. Now that my wife is abroad, I hope it will be better in the future” (Male, 53, Private Estate, Kegalle)

3.1.2 Overseas Employment

Amongst non-estate employment, overseas employment, predominantly in the Middle East was a key agent of change. Many respondents referred to it as an escalator that allowed them to climb many steps in succession as well as assisting in maintaining the momentum. The primary role of overseas employment in creating upward movement was the extraordinary injection of income. Households in which overseas migration had taken place as long as 10 years ago still considered it a milestone in the development of their family.

“We are in this situation because I went to the Middle East. If we still worked in the estate we would still be poor. We could educate our children because of our improved economic situation. My husband does not drink – that helps a lot.” (Female, 44, Tea, Private Estate, Nuwara Eliya)

Box 3.2: Life History: upward mobility due to continued external (self) employment

“Only our determination brought us success. Until 1990 our mother was the only registered earner of the family since our father was ill and whatever she earned was not enough to sustain our family of six. I only studied up to the 5th grade because of these difficulties. There have been some job offers but I lacked the qualifications. I tried wage labour in the estate until 1990 but it was not paying enough to cope with the gradually increasing expenses of the family. From 1990 to 1994 through the help of a known mudalali (trader) I was in Moratuwa (suburb of Colombo) working in a te kade (roadside tea kiosk). Apart from the fact that I had to be away from home it did increase my income. I managed to come home twice a month and could save Rs.2000 but the boutique closed down and I returned to the estate in 1995 and did wage labour for a few months. Meanwhile in 1993 my sister left for Lebanon for two years and it is with her help that we built the house to its present condition.

Realising that the estate won't help me come up in life, I made use of an opportunity through a friend from the estate to start my current business as a pavement vendor selling toys in 1995. As the estate community does not own any assets it is always hard to get a loan from a bank and it was Janasaviya (a previous government's poverty alleviation programme) that helped us save some money to start the business. Now I have something that I can call my own and my next desire is to buy a vehicle and improve my business since I cannot come back to estate work or sell kadala (gram)”.

Male, 39, Married, Regional Plantation Company, Rubber sector, Kalutara

As in other sectors in Sri Lanka, high yielding overseas income creates step-ups through improved housing and investments in income generating assets, which increases future potential.

“Both of us are working and we have a small boutique that we manage after working hours. Our eldest son is working and he looks after his own expenses even though he is not in a position to help us financially. The other two sons are schooling and I can afford to give them a good education. I worked abroad in Maldives from 1992-2000 as a hotel garden supervisor and it helped us a lot.” (Male, 48, Rubber, Private Estate, Kalutara)

Many households use the injection of income for immediate and short-term improvements in consumption, household asset accumulation as well as meeting life-cycle obligations. However, very few households have slipped back to their previous position following overseas employment irrespective

of whether the extra income was used for housing and tiding over the low periods of the household life cycle, or on livelihood investments. The existence of secure employment on the estate that is easily accessible to the returned migrant and other members of the household, enables the household, to maintain, at the very minimum, the achieved higher level of wellbeing.

Where the diversified livelihood portfolio does facilitate a move out of poverty, it is primarily when the head of the household or the wife has been in long-term external employment. Households where adult children go out to work also see some improvement, depending on the composition of the household. Longer periods of employment by adult children can also help to stabilise the parental household position at a higher level, however the children's marriage will then impact both households.

3.1.3 In-country migration

Migration within the country has a similar but less immediate impact. Most of the households combine the benefits of migration of multiple members and engage in consecutive periods of migration. Unlike in the case of overseas employment, internal migration brings about a slower and more gradual change in the circumstances of the household. The length of the period in which the given household members are in external employment seems to be more critical than the exact type of employment, and the latter can also vary during this time. The norm is to change the location and sometimes the type of employment at least every two years. Few households have developed a very long-term relationship with a single employer.

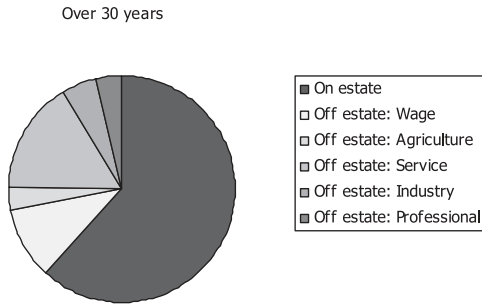
In the final analysis, the ideal diversified livelihood portfolio would incorporate estate and non-estate work, internal and external migration, and skilled and non-skilled labour. Households securing such diversified livelihood portfolios attain greater mobility that they can sustain over time.

3.1.4 Youth migration

The study found that the greatest concentration of household members working outside the sector is males under 30¹², with the bulk being between the ages of 20 and 25. The trend of returning to estate work starts at the age of 30, with most women returning even earlier due to marriage.

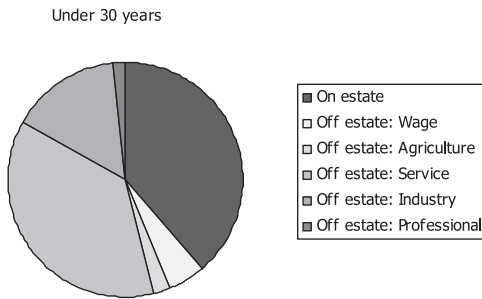
¹² Hence the cut-off point of age 30 for youth is used in analysing on and off estate employment.

Figure 3.2 (a): Spread of employment types of over 30 year olds



Total number 264 – Note: this is not a statistically representative sample.

Figure 3.2 (b): Spread of employment types of under 30 year olds



Total number 223 - Note: this is not a statistically representative sample.

Box 3.3: Special Focus: Youth Perceptions and Aspirations

A special focus group discussion was conducted with youth on their perceptions and future aspirations and the key points are summarised below:

- Overall the youth considered their own situation to be significantly better than when their parents were young. Improvements were seen in relation to greater access to education, health standards, infrastructure, mobility and integration with the rest of the socio-economy.
- While acknowledging better infrastructure, facilities and amenities, limitations of these facilities were also identified as factors which perpetuated poverty by restricting access to income generating opportunities, quality healthcare services and education.
- The youth acknowledged the benefits of education but its impact in raising the potential for income generation was debated because of constraints to accessing employment.
- There was a marked preference for off estate work (more so in the rubber sub sector), because of the stigma associated with being an estate labourer. Marginalization resulting from their Indian Tamil ethnicity and the 'estate worker' identity were frequently cited by the young people as an obstacle to progress, even in instances where they possessed the required qualifications and expertise.
- Migration of youth was common, with 90% of youth in the rubber sector and 60% of youth in the tea sector working off the estate in their 'prime' years. However, salaried employment in the non-estate sectors was not easily available to those with improved levels of learning, relegating them to openings at a low level. A minority are able to secure jobs as semi-skilled workers. Youth also opted to stay unemployed or take up ad hoc jobs such as gem mining while awaiting a job that matched their aspirations.

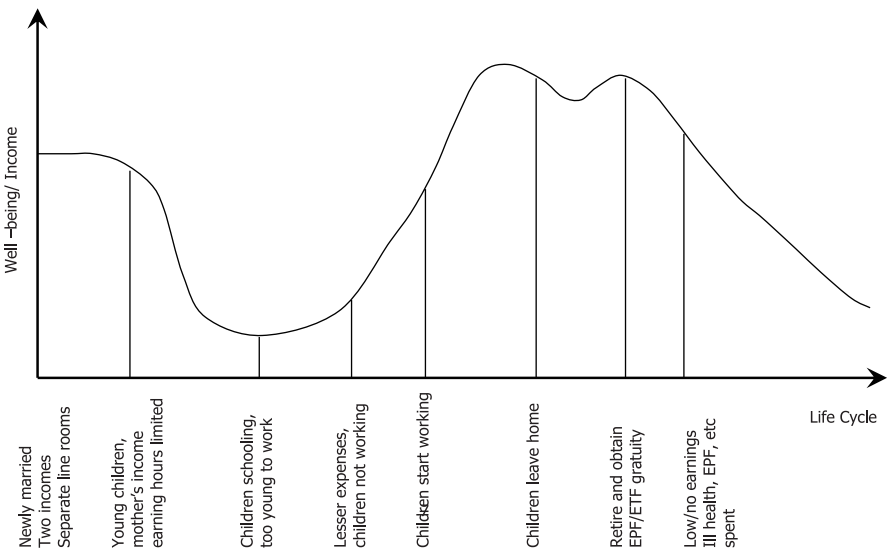
In both tea and rubber estates the highest prevalence of out migration of youth is among the middle income group. The high level of migration from this group reflects tensions faced by households in maintaining their standard of living through the life cycle dips, and the need to consolidate household earnings with the help of adult children. In cases where households maintain a medium standard through the difficult periods of the life cycle, i.e. when children are young and expenses are high, multiple external employments for shorter periods (e.g. having two adult children in external employment) can have a positive impact.

3.2 Impact of the household life cycle

The demographic cycle of a household has a strong impact on its mobility, causing both upward and downward pressures depending on the stage of the cycle.

The point at which a newly married couple starts moving up would depend on pre-marital employment status and income levels. From any given level an average couple would move up due to the combined income. The household will continue to improve or maintain a good standard of living until the second or third child is born. The birth of the first child rarely pulls a household down if the mother is working on the estate as maternity benefits are provided and expenses are not overpowering¹³.

Figure 3.3: Household Life Cycle and its impact on the household economy



The dip occurs as the number of children increases. The most 'difficult' years are when the children are young and at school. The expenses are highest and care-giving requirements from the mother are at a peak. This dip will last until the children leave school, which given the high dropout rate in the estate sector is generally within 10 years.

¹³ The birth of the third child accrues lesser maternity benefits so it is difficult for the mother to go back to work. Expenditure is also higher.

The factors that enable at least a slow pace of upward movement even during this 'dip' period are:

- Regular employment by the male head of household (HHH) and wife
- Support from an external source either through an extended family member or male head of household working outside

On average a youth leaving school doesn't seek employment immediately. It is common for youth to remain unemployed by choice for a limited period after leaving school as the employment is available on most estates and can be obtained with little effort. This period will be reflected in the static levels of household expenses. Once they enter the work force, the household starts the 'pick up phase'. How quickly and effectively the household picks up depends on how quickly the adult children go into regular employment. Slow absorption of adult children into productive employment also means the parents' asset accumulation lessens; conversely secure employment aids expansion of parental asset bases.

Those households identified as 'movers' tend to have adult children in external employment for a period of approximately 3-5 years. Those who manage to achieve longer term stability and are less vulnerable to life-cycle fluctuations are those that have one member, often the male head of household, continuing in longer-term external employment. A downward trend starts as adult children get married and their income is removed from the household.

A third peak occurs when the male head of the household / wife retires and has access to his/her payment from the Employment Provident Fund (EPF). From this point a gradual deterioration occurs with health being a critical deciding factor in the level of wellbeing. For an extended family structure, the access to a retirement fund and accumulation of savings/access to credit could lead to a pick up stage for the whole family.

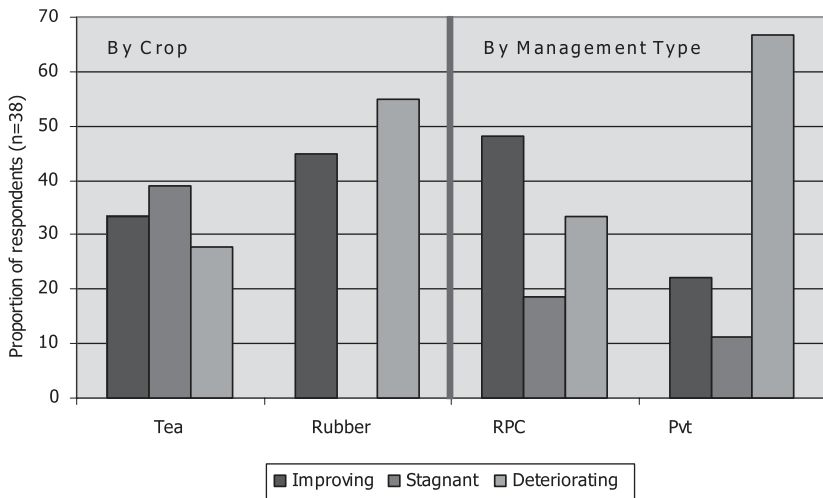
While this 'average' cycle operates there are also factors which cause additional upward and downward pressures at different points in the cycle. For example, young married couples can face downward pressure at the start of the household cycle from looking after dependents such as parents, younger siblings, older siblings' families, or other dependent members of the extended family. In one noteworthy case a couple at the beginning of the cycle took the decision to stabilise economically prior to entering the 'dip' period:

"Soon after our marriage we didn't have children. We cut down on our expenses and saved money. We were able to buy land for vegetable cultivation. We took out loans to cultivate the land and made a good profit from our vegetable crops. As the expenses were increasing I started a grocery shop and began to make an extra income as well." (Male, 37, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

3.3 Impact of Management Systems

Opinions of changes in the estate management over time in both the tea and rubber sectors were divided, with some pointing to a clear improvement and others to deterioration. In contrast, when it came to management type, there was a very clear difference in perceptions between the RPCs and private estates. In the privately owned and managed estates, there was a strong consensus of deterioration over time, whereas in the RPC's, the majority felt conditions had improved, or at worst, remained stagnant.

Figure 3.4: Community perceptions of change over time (1990-2005): by Crop and Management Type



Management shortcomings in estate governance and the lack of competence in agriculture and production were linked to the deterioration of community livelihoods:

“We cannot hope for a good future for the estate. The management is responsible for that. They are not caring for the tea bushes (no pruning, fertilising) and the crop is going down every year. Along with that our income is going down too. The management has no knowledge and the bushes are not maintained properly. They have grown tall and it is difficult to pluck. Weedicide is not a long term solution – it is not good for the bushes.” (Male, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

There was a general tendency to see the past as better than the present or future, particularly in terms of estate ownership.

“Freedom [independence] might not be suitable for Sri Lanka. The [colonialists] did not give us freedom but they did a better job.” (Male, Tea, Badulla)

“In the 60’s, under private ownership, workers were treated well. During Corporation [state] time we could at least talk to them. After privatisation it has deteriorated further. No improvement at all”. (Male, Rubber, Kalutara)

“In 1992, after it was privatised, it’s been worse than government time. In the government time there was someone to take care of children, only the men had to work.” (Male, Rubber, Ratnapura)

Productivity related measures introduced after privatisation were regarded to have brought about adverse consequences for labour.

“Before privatisation, there were 52 labourers/ha for pruning, now there are only 32; there were five labourers for weeding, now there are only 2; earlier the daily plucking quota was 22 lbs, now its 22 kg. So work and income from the estate has decreased. Some people are stealing leaf to survive.” (Key informant, Tea, Badulla)

Going against a general feeling of deterioration in management, were examples of individual managers who were cited as being good and having made a positive difference to the community. In such cases the workers relate to the specific manager ‘mahathaya’ rather than the management in the abstract.

“Compared to other factories this factory is better because the officers take care of us. If someone does not have a job they provide them with some job in the estate... The estate is in a better condition now; the officers are better and help the people.” (Female, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

The trade unions are an important element of governance in estate sector. Their existence seemed to be accepted and was not directly identified as a driver. However, considerable discussion took place on role of the trade unions and links to the membership.

The traditional role of the trade unions were articulated by the workers as,

"It is easy to talk to the officials of the estate through the union to solve job related issues. If a worker loses his job he can discuss the matter with the management via the union leader. But this depends on the conditions on the estate, mostly how the manager is and how active the union leader is." (Female, RPC, Rubber, Kegalle)

Most workers saw unions as part of the patron-client structure, and a means by which they (the workers) can manipulate the system to obtain benefits. However the effectiveness of trade union governance revolved around its representatives, transparency and fairness in union dealings.

"Nowadays unions don't do anything for us. Those days the communists did a lot for us. Then there were rules but now there aren't any rules. Those days the government was scared of the unions but now the company is not scared." (Male, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

"The situation in the estate is not democratic. It is autocratic. The estate managers control us. Having votes here is not democracy. We are given votes only for the benefits of the politicians and trade unions." (Male, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

"All of us have to be members, but we don't get help worth Rs. 35 per month. If two different members go to the Thalevar [union leader] to solve a problem, the decision may depend on whether he or she is a friend of the Thalevar." (Male, Rubber, RPC, Ratnapura)

Members do not necessarily remain passive, but their attempt to access benefits usually entails moving between unions. This was particularly the case in the rubber sector where trade union representation is weak.

3.4 Health and access to healthcare

The poor quality of the health services available on the estate which leads to high expenditure to obtain alternatives, was seen as a factor contributing to the deterioration of the community. While the buildings themselves remained, the availability of trained staff, drugs and functioning equipment were considered to have worsened. The level of dissatisfaction with access to health care was far greater in the tea sector than the rubber sector. The residents saw a direct link between changes brought about by privatisation and deterioration of health facilities.

"Before privatisation, the hospital was in good condition. There was a maternity ward. Now if we go there they will only give us aspirins. We

have to take private medical treatment, which is very expensive. The estate doesn't have an ambulance and they give us a lorry only after finishing their work. There is only one doctor for five divisions." (Male, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

The deterioration of roads was linked to the difficulties in renting transport to convey patients in the absence of an ambulance that belonged to the estate. The lack of an ambulance was highlighted since some estates do provide this service to patients.

Occupational health of estate workers was also perceived to be more at risk:

"People who do the weeding get sick more often because the company does not provide them with gloves or masks to protect themselves. Earlier [prior to re-privatisation] they were provided everything by the JEDB [state company]."(Male, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

The female focus groups were particularly critical of the changes which directly affected children and women, such as the halting of free provision of nutritional supplements to children and changes in maternity related care. These were linked to new productivity standards and other rules introduced by the privatised management in recent years, and articulated by the workers in an extreme form.

Key informants provided an alternative perspective.

"It is not correct to say that estates have not improved. By whose yardstick are you measuring development? There have been significant changes over the past 10 to 15 years. The incidence of diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery, tuberculosis and scabies has lessened. Those days the estate was a breeding ground for infection, now the situation has improved, there is a better interest, awareness and receptivity for family planning, births are spaced out and family planning practices have improved. Improvements can be attributed to education (especially of youth) and the media; almost every house has a TV. Now most families on this estate are developed. Overall, there are few 'destitute poor'" (Key informant, Rubber, RPC, Ratnapura).

The sector statistics also reflect this perspective that during the period under of state management, addressing health conditions of the estate residents was a priority and considerable improvements were made. With the change in management to RPCs, the main drivers of change were activities of the PHDT, estate management and continued state input. In the tea sector a significant

minority also acknowledged the role of NGOs in improving living conditions, health, sanitation and education.

Such improvements were not totally undervalued, by women in particular:

"We have water and a crèche now. We have opportunities to work in the nearby colonies [village resettlements]. Our children are studying more and getting better jobs. We have got electricity and toilets." (Female, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

The privately owned and managed estates were without doubt the most adversely served in terms of health facilities.

"We don't have a crèche, no midwife and welfare officers, the doctor rarely comes. There is no dispensary in the estate so we have to go outside." (Female, Rubber, Private, Kalutara)

Issues relating to health were significantly more important at the household level than at the community level and were identified as one of the strongest push down factors that frequently overrode strong upward drivers such as a diversified livelihood portfolio and low number of dependents. While short-term illness was not seen as critical, specific instances of chronic debilitating sickness was seen to have led to the long term deterioration of the household due to a decreased earning capacity combined with increased health expenditure. Chances of recovery from such deterioration in the household welfare were very slim. Serious sickness could kick start a cycle of indebtedness which can affect even the extended family and trap households in a stagnant/deteriorating position for long periods of time.

"During our child's illness we took a lot of loans and pawned my sister's and my jewellery. We took loans from everyone we could. We haven't been able to pay any of this back. The jewellery that has been pawned has not been retrieved yet. We must retrieve my sister's jewellery as she has four children and her husband has left her. She is currently working in the Middle East." (Female, 28, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

Death of a family member brought about downward mobility due to the expenses involved with funerals, in addition to it being often closely linked to preceding high expenditure on sickness. Despite the fact that many RPCs provide assistance to the household - e.g. provision of the coffin – the cultural rituals surrounding a funeral often make families resort to taking out loans or pawning jewellery. Downward mobility is compounded if the death is of the breadwinner of the family.

3.5 Access to education

At the community level, the quality of education provided on the estate and access to better quality education were seen as factors influencing the perception of wellbeing and change.

At the household level, the cost of education was identified as a downward driver although the need for education was not disputed. There was a strong feeling that better education was an upward driver, but the lack of evidence created some doubt about the real role of education.

Accessing better quality education within the estate schools or in the region's towns was seen as having a positive impact on the community. A commonly held view was that education was valued much more than 15 years ago. However, serious shortfalls in the provision of education services were identified:

“School teachers are not sufficient. Year by year the number of students increase but the teachers don't. One schoolteacher is coming all the way from Ragala. They won't employ our educated children as teachers”.
(Male, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

The value placed on education was linked to multiple forms of improvement, including improving the chances of more successful external employment, better integration into the national socio-economy, and shedding the traditional features of being 'estate workers'.

The life experience of households, however, differ in terms of education being a key factor in moving up, thus creating doubt and confusion as to whether education actually does help in obtaining better employment:

“I should have studied more. I was foolish then and did not want to go to school. To walk 2 km did not seem worth it. Neither of my sons completed their education. The elder one lived for some time with an aunt and did not go to school. My younger son stayed at home when his father fell ill. If they went to school they could have got a job, but my daughter-in-law has studied up to O' Level but did not get a job”. (44, Female, Rubber, RPC, Ratnapura)

Success of welfare interventions were measured by improved levels of awareness especially in relation to good practices in health, and prioritising the schooling of children. The community timelines¹⁴ also demonstrate changes

¹⁴ A community time line: see section on Data Collection Tools p4

in behaviour patterns as a strong facilitator of movement out of poverty. Programmes which focused on changing current attitudes and behaviour patterns to maximise usage of available health and educational facilities and entry into mainstream society were identified as important contributors to change.

3.6 Housing and utilities

At the community level the general condition of estate housing (particularly line rooms) is seen to be a contributory factor to poverty. However, at the household level the stock of housing is seen to have improved predominantly due to people's own efforts, although some acknowledge support from the management. Nevertheless, the residents felt that they were entitled to better housing and greater access to land.

Some variation in the trends were seen in tea and rubber estates:

Rubber sector respondents tended to feel that:

“Housing conditions are better now than in the past. Now the Co-op housing scheme provides better houses for estate workers, there are welfare programmes and health programmes and volunteer groups that have helped the community in many ways.” (Female, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

The tea sector communities were on average more negative regarding changes:

“The estate won't repair our housing. Lots of people are living in temporary huts. They won't build new houses or line rooms; about three or four families live in one line room. About 75% of us are living in line rooms with difficulty. The other estates have developed their housing but ours remains the same.” (Male, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

Despite the fact that conditions were perceived to be deteriorating at the community level, data collected for the individual life stories confirms that the housing and related facilities have improved and this is frequently identified as a milestone in moving up.

Interestingly, there is little variation between poverty categories in terms of occupation of line rooms or individual units. However, despite continuing to live in line rooms, upward movers actually occupy much bigger, less crowded spaces than households in the 'bottom' level. Movers often secured two line

Box 3.4: Housing conditions in sample, Overall housing status in sample

Housing Status	percentage
Permanent roofing (asbestos, tiles and tin sheets)	100%
Permanent roofing - high quality (Asbestos or tiles)	58%
Cement flooring	80%
Access to toilets	92%
Electricity	56%
Line rooms	60%
Individual/twin houses	40%
Management Owned	74%
Self-help housing schemes	4%

District variation is minimal and reflects the aggregate conditions in housing and access to facilities. A greater level of variation in quality is visible in housing conditions when disaggregating estates by management type.

	RPC	Private
Asbestos roofing	22%	9%
Size (compared)	Bigger	Smaller
> than 4 rooms	50%	40%
Management Owned	71%	87%
Line room occupancy	58%	68%

rooms, usually back-to-back, and created houses with larger rooms and separate entrances and exits. All (100%) of the self-assessed 'top' category had three to five room houses with two or less persons per room. In contrast, most of those who assessed themselves as 'bottom', occupied two room houses with at least three persons per room.

Cash injections required for housing improvements were accessed via external sources (overseas employment, children in external employment or long term external employment by older members), estate employment based sources (EPF/ETF) and other miscellaneous sources.

“Earlier all of us used to live in a line house. But then we bought this land in 1996 with the income from the vegetable plot. Both of us took loans from the ‘gurusettha’ [teachers] loan scheme and built the house. This was all the effort of both of us. We moved out of the line house and now we have more space.” (Female, 39, Tea, RPC, Kegalle)

While the residents still expect the management to provide the community with good housing, they admit that it is the less rigid management control that has allowed individual households to make improvements.

“We can extend the houses the way we want to unlike in those days when you were not allowed even to mend the pavement outside your line. Officers help us and now we can apply for loans. New plots of lands were given in 1996 and 20 new houses were built”. (Female, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

However, the deterioration in housing conditions was also linked to the same change from the rigidly structured line room format towards the less controlled more self-driven format.

“The houses are not maintained by the company but the people have to take care of that too from the small incomes they get.” (Male, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

All RPCs visited by the study team had carried out basic repairs to housing in terms of roofing, while many had much bigger schemes such as Self Help Housing Schemes, line room upgrading, water and sanitation schemes etc. However, an important issue, especially when considering acceptable levels of change, is that workers had high aspirations of good housing and infrastructure.

“The temporary houses should be demolished and the estate should build new houses for us. There should be a school near the estate. Roads should be developed. There must be a bus service.” (Male, 38, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

Interestingly, discussions on housing improvements rarely included land, except in the cases of occupants of the Self Help Housing scheme. However, when discussing future changes, respondents discussed land and housing together. Future aspirations are linked with ownership of land, current improvements are linked to housing improvements.

3.7 Personal attributes and social factors

A considerable number of households saw hard work, self-confidence and good household management as important motivating factors for upward mobility.

“We worked hard as long-standing labourers in the estate. We did not waste money, saved some of it and helped our son to buy an electric saw. Then my husband moved out of estate work and went into business – gem mining. We were able to extend the house and purchase electrical equipment. It was hard work, perseverance and his untiring effort that enabled my husband to do well.” (Female, 40, Rubber RPC, Ratnapura)

“We got to this position due to our effort. Our children work outside the estate. We cultivate vegetables. We lead a decent life. We are not indebted to anyone. We can see what’s happening in the world and we wanted to improve too.” (Female, 48, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

Linked to the issue of personal habits is the issue of alcoholism. While not consuming alcohol or giving up/reducing consumption was seen as having a direct upward pressure on household wellbeing, addiction was seen as a primary cause of poverty.

“Within the estate we have two bars. When men get their salary the first thing they do is to go to the bar. The family comes after that. People are addicted to ‘kassippu’ (moonshine).” (Female, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

Men - who are the primary consumers - tended to underplay alcohol consumption, abuse and its effects, while women, youth, welfare officers and the estate management discussed it at length.

“A major problem on our estate is alcoholism. If you sit here, you can see four-legged men. They shout and harass family members. Very often we have to send our children to find their fathers. After drinking, they have fallen flat on the road or under a tree.”(Female, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

Youth were particularly critical of parental/adult alcohol consumption and negative social consequences. They regarded it as a direct reason for deterioration within the community, and as an obstacle to the educational attainment of children. Intra household conflict, the inability to meet basic household expenditure such as food, and disruption to community life were all aspects which were highlighted.

“Most of the parents are addicted to alcohol and children face lots of problems due to this. This causes lot of problems in the night and children can’t even study properly. The problem is getting worse day by day. In some families both parents drink.” (Youth, Tea, RPC)

In terms of factors leading to deterioration, the management and welfare officers tended to highlight the impact on the productivity of the sector in addition to the debilitating impact on the household earning capacity and the community harmony.

The increasing availability/supply of alcohol was seen as a strong contributory factor that created and increased the demand. The workers' increasing orientation towards working outside the estate was seen as a 'push down' factor as it led to greater access to alcohol.

"When talking of poverty, alcohol is a big issue. Kassippu (moonshine) is brewed and sold in the neighbouring villages, now even 'ice' is available. Lax laws contribute to its continuance. Fine (for brewing and sale) is Rs.10000 – the dealer sends one of his assistants to prison and continues to sell. The vendors are seen hovering around on paydays to collect debts. Smoking fires (brewing) are visible all around on pay day!" (Male, Rubber, RPC, Ratnapura)

Many better-managed RPCs were attempting community level solutions:

"Though both males and females drink, the incidence is lower here than other estates. We worked with the people and took the initiative to arrange for police interventions. Children's education and awareness has led to them playing a lead role on educating their parents on the ill effects of alcohol. The police station is close to this division – this may have also contributed to the success of the programmes." (Male, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

Interestingly, there was some disagreement at the female focus group discussion as to whether it was a community problem or a personal problem, and to what extent the community should be expected to – and in fact could - control the problem.

"Men work for one day, get drunk at the end of the day with that money, and for the next two days they can't go to work because they can't get up. Alcoholism is a personal problem it's up to the person who drinks. It's not the fault of the community." (Female, Rubber, Private, Ratnapura)

"If one can put a stop to the alcohol problem that is the biggest help we want. In Mathugama (another estate) they do not allow people to drink or sell in the estate. But here it is the other way around. We cannot beat them up no? After 6 o'clock we cannot step out of the houses because everyone is drunk." (Female, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

Box 3.5: Specific Issues of women workers

A large proportion of the estate labour, particularly in the tea sector, is female. Men engage in rubber tapping but they do not pluck tea. Most issues discussed for all workers have greater relevance to women. Certain issues are very specific to women and their role within the estate community. The discussions identified limited access to alternative forms of income generation due to social norms, alcohol addiction, sexual harassment, and skewed gender relations within the home as some of the issues women have to contend with.

“As women we are dependent on estate work, while men have more access to outside work. We are trying our level best to improve but no use. Most of the females do not have male support. Some females went to work in garment factories but have returned” (Female, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

“Women are drinking as well. When women complain about the hard work, the men give them alcohol.” (Female, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

“There is partiality in weighing leaf. Kanganis [supervisors] are womanisers and favour some above others.” (Female, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

Youth FGDs confirmed some of the problematic gender issues in estate communities:

“Women face a lot of domestic violence due to alcoholism and in most of the families they have become the sole bread winners as the husbands spend all they earn on alcohol.” (Youth FGD, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

The discussion on savings raises interesting issues, that brings together the high prevalence of females in the labour force, the use of traditional methods of asset accumulation and the roles played by persons with power.

“When we pluck overtime or pluck above average 50-60 days, we were always encouraged by the Kangani to buy jewellery instead of wasting it. If the person is not sick she can earn about Rs.5000 per month. There are people earning like that”. (Female, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

Box 3.5: Specific Issues of women workers (contd.)

The central role played by women in the economic viability of the household was reflected in intra-household relationships. The need for women to work hard to maintain the household was frequently articulated, especially when discussing the issue of freedom. Many women spoke of freedom as synonymous with personal free time, reflecting the very high intensity of the double burden borne by women in the sector.

"People always try to do well however many problems we have. The women all work. They are very hard working." (Female, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

Chapter 4

Moving Out of Poverty: Structural Impediments

The frequent debates in the government and business sectors about the poor profitability and competitiveness of the estate sector, could portray a misleading impression that there is a lack of work and potential earning capacity within the estates. The opposite is frequently the case. Many tea and rubber estates actually record shortages of labour, and the earning potential of estate work based on the wage rate negotiated under the Collective Agreement at the time of writing this report¹⁵ was considerably higher than the minimum wage, comparable with the average rural wage rate but lower than the market rate of economically dynamic areas of the rural sector. The earning capacity of an estate worker in a well-managed estate can be considerably higher than the poverty line of Rs.1423. ¹⁶According to management, workers can earn a maximum of Rs.7000 per month during the peak seasons, and a minimum of Rs.1500¹⁷ per month during the off season.

The capacity of a household to increase its earnings through diversification of the portfolio with non-estate work enables households to move out of poverty. A pattern of out-migration has been developing since the period of nationalisation, and has increased more rapidly over the last 15 years. The proportion of the estate sector labour force engaged in self-employment has increased from 3% to 10% and participation in the informal private sector increased from 19% to 34% between 1996/97 and 2003/04 (CBSL: 2005).

Despite the potential to move out of poverty using a diversified livelihood portfolio anchored in productive estate work, this has not always happened. Few households reach the earning potential of estate work and many households in the estate sector have very low earnings from estate work. Even though the majority of households earn an external income, household incomes remain low averaging around Rs.7346 per month (56% of the national median monthly

¹⁵ Note that the collective agreement in the estate is an outcome of a highly politicised process, and has been renegotiated several times between the time of carrying out field work, writing the report and publishing this study.

¹⁶ It must be noted that all figures quoted are valid at the time of writing the report in 2005. Though the figures themselves would change with newer data (e.g. the more recent household income and expenditure surveys of the Department of Census and Statistics) the relative significance of these figures and the relationships they illustrate are not likely to have changed in any major way between the time of writing this report and its publication.

¹⁷ Average of wage bills provided by the individual estate offices in the sample.

household income (HIES, 2002)). Moreover, while real household incomes increased by 10% between 1996/97 and 2003/04 nationally, the increase in the estate sector in the same period was only 5% (CBSL: 2005).

This chapter explores the structure of the estate sector and its ongoing transformation and how this impacts on mobility out of poverty. It studies how individual actors (managers, households, trade unions) operate within the bounds of this structure, and analyses the methods used by individual households to cope with the 'total institution' structure or to break way from it through individual actions.

4.1 Continuing boundaries: facilitating perceptions of marginalisation

While there have been significant changes that have blurred the boundaries, the plantation sector has yet to be fully integrated into the mainstream socio-political structure of Sri Lanka. Originally a captive immigrant labour force, plantation labour gained citizenship rights by 1986 and now has the legal right to move out of the estate structure. While large numbers do migrate out for employment, the estate remains the home space of the population. The residents of the estates feel strongly that they are still excluded from the benefits of the changes that take place in the rest of the country.

These perceptions of exclusion are further strengthened by the stratification of the estate population along ethnic/racial lines. The identity of the workforce is based on their historical immigrant status, and Indian Tamil ethnicity.

"The political process has helped to develop other people but not us."
(Male, Rubber, RPC, Ratnapura)

"Estate Tamils are cornered by everyone. No-one respects us. We are considered as a caste of the lowest status." (Youth, RPC, Ratnapura)

"Here people receive facilities based on their ethnicity. The estate favours the Sinhalese. There is a playground for them. They don't allow us to play there." (Youth, Tea, RPC, Ratnapura)

The unionisation of the estate sector is yet another factor that differentiates it from other sectors in the country. It has given them a worker or proletarian identity that is absent elsewhere in the rural sector, and provided them with a vocabulary to articulate their grievances. The major estate trade union, the Colombo Workers Congress (CWC) is different in that it is the only trade union that is a powerful political party at the national level – other political parties

have trade unions which they support. It is also the only industry based collective bargaining agreement at present in Sri Lanka. Despite being one of the most successful trade union movements in the country, the changes in the sector are reflected within the trade union structure, with the monopoly of the powerful CWC giving way to a greater spectrum of unions.

“The main problem of the Collective Agreement is that only 70% is represented and it is dominated by CWC, LJEW. The other 30% is a question because there is no equal participation from other unions and they are excluded from decision-making. Collective agreement is not a transparent process and access to it is limited. The information we get is average” (Trade Union leader)

4.2 Legitimate tensions: the economic perspective and the rights perspective

The structure of the plantation system polarises the positions of the different stakeholders (the management and workers, as well as the trade unions) and tension is evident in the many instances where stakeholders take equally legitimate, but contrasting positions.

As an industry, the sector has to ensure economic efficiency and productivity. Export crops in Sri Lanka have suffered in the face of fluctuating world market prices, changes in world market preferences, the entrance of new competitors and the loss of its market leader position. Within the national industry, reforms have led to the re-privatisation of management. The RPCs face high debt-ratios, rising production costs, and profits being skimmed off to brokerage houses. This combination has led RPCs to focus on increasing the productivity and profitability of the sector.

Box: 4.1: The welfare package: good or bad?

In the estate sector wages and welfare are combined into a holistic remuneration package that has not always been advantageous due to:

- Access to a significant proportion of the welfare requiring some contribution from the workers leads to deductions from the pay resulting in the actual cash to hand being very unfavourable in comparison to cash to hand of other market based wages.
- Perpetuation of the idea that estate management is responsible for welfare of the families.
- Dissatisfaction with the welfare services due to actual standard of service or the perceived ideal.

Box: 4.1: The welfare package: good or bad? (contd.)

The actual cost of welfare to the sector is another point of confusion. When questioned on the impact on wages if there was zero spending on welfare, the answers were varied. At the estate level, managers felt it would be minimal as the wage bill constitutes over 80% of their costs while at RPC central management level, a potential wage increase of as much as 20% was predicted. While the estate workers see welfare provision explicitly as an advantage, frequent comments implied that they would rather have higher wages and fewer deductions, at the cost of reduced welfare provisions. Given this confusion and resulting tension, both the management and the workers try to manipulate the system with little satisfaction.

Differences of welfare packages exist across management types. The RPCs combine the compulsory welfare package with other benefits (Company, State and NGO initiatives) to attract and retain workers. The method has been successful to the extent that the workers see the additional benefits as one of the primary advantages of working for the estate rather than finding external employment. In the private estates (in the sample), only the compulsory package is given and the estates did not have welfare officers, dispensaries, child development centres etc. The manager of one private estate had resorted to a cash incentive method to attract and retain labour. Not surprisingly, the highest level of dissatisfaction was in private estates with serious conflicts between the management and residents.

The attitudes of workers from surrounding villages who seek employment on the estates, raises yet another view of the issue. Villagers choose to work on the estate due to the security of employment and access to the welfare structure. In addition, villagers in more isolated locations are attracted to estate labour due to better wages and easier access to services.

While historically consideration of the estate population has been primarily as a factor of production, the estate workers regard the estate as a 'home' or 'village' rather than a commercial unit. Thus their estate house is the home base from which, migrant workers go out and return to.

"My sons don't want to move out either. My elder son works as a tapper and the younger son wants to stay on in the estate but does not want to work here. He wants to work outside while living here. He has worked at a garage as a helper. But he did not like living outside, so he came back and hopes to find work at a garage close to home."(Female, 44, RPC, Ratnapura)

The tensions caused by the different perspectives and motivations of the labour force and the management are particularly manifest with regards to housing. The residents take the position that it is their home therefore they

have the right to decide how they live and work, while the management takes the position that housing on the estates is workers' quarters requiring at the minimum the employment of at least one household member on the estate. Both positions are equally legitimate, but contradictory. The position is further complicated as the historical structure of the plantation system leads residents to expect housing improvements to be carried out by the management. At the same time, the significant reduction in residents providing labour to the estate means that it is now unproductive for the management to carry out overall maintenance as they previously did.

The contradictions and tensions which cause housing disputes run right through the structure and implementation of the worker remuneration and welfare package. The total package is an outcome of the historical paternalistic structure and the subsequent unionised collective agreements of the industry.

The wage rates are set out in the Collective Agreement and welfare incentives are tightly linked to the estate sector remuneration package; the workers receive efficiency based incentives that are agreed as part of the Collective Agreement, state regulated labour benefits, and specific incentives decided by individual RPCs and estates to attract labour. This can include insurance schemes, loan schemes, health, education and child care benefits which are tied to participation in the estate work force. Housing, however, has been provided by the estate management to its labour from the start of the plantation system. Housing, together with health/childcare, continues to be the single most important welfare item.

While the management feels that it is providing a package that very few other employers provide, the residents view many elements of this package from a rights perspective and strongly feel that they are exploited and forced to stay on the estates, primarily through housing which ties them to the estate.

"Half the estate youth work in Colombo and in nearby towns. The management does not give us proper work on the estate but they don't like us working out either. They threaten to take back our houses if we don't come back and work. So some of us are forced to come back and work on the estate." (Youth, Rubber, Private, Kegalle)

Another example that highlights the difference in perception is the mandatory provision of a minimum of 25 days of work. This minimum provision of work is seen by those who negotiated the Collective Agreement as a major contribution towards workers' security. However, workers who wish to retain the full benefits of working on the estate while also benefiting from the flexibility of working outside complained bitterly:

“We work hard and don’t get paid. How can we work for 25 days? It’s inhuman to ask us to work for 25 days a month. The managers - they do nothing and get paid.” (Female, 35, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

“We get paid only if we work. If we stay at home a month we’ll die of hunger and no-one will care.” (Female, 24, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

Such factors can lead to serious dissatisfaction among labour, tensions with the management and very separate expectations and realities. It leads to situation in which both the management and the workers try to manipulate the system to their advantage, and neither party is satisfied with the outcome.

The tensions arising from a system under change are felt not just by the labour force but by the management staff as well. Between 2002 and 2004, the RPCs have seen a turnover rate of over 350 management staff. Most disturbingly, the 52% of those who have left the sector are in the age group of 26 to 40¹⁸. Ironically, as for the estate workers, most of the difficulties among the managerial staff were attributed to conditions of work and salaries being unable to keep up with the rising cost-of-living. As with the workers, the dissatisfaction is causing them to look outside the sector for employment.

“Previously, status, responsibility and control were one hundred percent. All aspects of the plantation were under their control. The managers were ‘petty kings’. Planting was a way of life. Now it has become a job. Superintendents (managers on the estates) have to carry out decisions made in the head office. The power to make instant decisions is gone. Cost of living is a serious issue for young planters who have to maintain two homes so that their children can get a good education.” (Central Level, Key Person Interview)

4.3 Breaking out of the ‘Plantation System’: Impact on poverty and moving out of poverty

It is clear that a considerable portion of the estate worker population has already moved out and will continue to move out of the estate, while most households will attempt to keep one foot in the estate and one foot elsewhere. It is important to realise here that ‘moving out of estates’ rarely means permanent physical migration. While many travel daily from the estate others live outside but come back for long periods between jobs, for festivals, etc. A significant number of respondents in the study were those who had ‘left’

¹⁸ Industry presentation made at the Ceylon Planters Society, 2005.

the estate for employment elsewhere – but happened to be present when the study team visited. The very strong articulation of the need to improve roads and transport is linked to the movement out of the estate, in search for better quality and mainstream education and jobs.

4.3.1 Push factors

Just as decisions to stay within the estates are a combination of socio-cultural and economic factors, so are the factors influencing their movement out of the estate. The main ‘push factors’ are:

- **Low income:** The need for greater cash income was the most common reason for seeking employment outside, often in combination with other factors. However, the cost of external employment could outweigh the earnings.

“We have to spend all we earn – can’t even think of saving. Even though we go out for work, when the food and transport expenses are considered there’s nothing left.” (Youth, RPC, Badulla district)

- **Shocks:** Loss of the main source of income through death or ill health is a common reason;

“When we were young we had a comfortable life. Then my father met with an accident. Only my elder brother was working and had to spend for all of us. So I stopped schooling and went for a job in a garment factory.” (Female, 28, RPC, Kegalle)

- **Better education leading to higher aspirations:** The educational attainments of the estate sector have been improving rapidly over the last 15 years. Along with school education, there has been a much greater opening up of the sector through access to media, networks and trade union activity.

“Our parents had confined lives; their world was the estate, nothing else. Our parents did not learn so they were not aware of the opportunities that existed. We have a better idea of managing money than our parents. Schools are better today – there are more teachers and the subjects are interesting. We are aware of the opportunities we have.” (Youth, RPC, Badulla)

- **Social status of non-estate employment and aspirations for mainstreaming:** Many are not interested in working in the estate and share a perception that other avenues are open to them to be upwardly mobile. Their aspirations have become similar to youth from other sectors in the country.

“There are schools in Kahawatte, Balangoda. The ‘watte miniha watte enna onne’ (the man on the estate should stay on the estate) attitude is waning. Employment in the factories is seen as more glamorous – the girls wear nice dresses and lipstick and go to work.” (Male, RPC, Ratnapura)

4.3.2 Pull factors

At the same time, a number of ‘pull’ factors work to attract estate labour to seek their fortunes outside. They include:

- **Expanding opportunities:** The rapid expansion of the non-estate economy has opened up diverse options at all levels.

“We are more educated. We try for jobs outside the estate to improve our life – some work in communication centres. We go out of the estate to see what is happening outside. The country is developing and a lot of houses have access to TV so we can see what is happening outside the estate”. Youth 15 years ago were not educated like us. Very few did jobs outside the estate, they were mostly domestic servants or sales assistants. Their life was very much restricted to the estate. They only had radios.” (Youth, RPC, Ratnapura)

- **Integration and networks:** Networks is the most critical facilitator for moving out of the sector. While it is seen most frequently in operation in securing employment it is also important in accessing better education. While the more isolated communities had less access to opportunities, to a large extent networks overrode the constraints that could be created by isolation.

“I will go back to Colombo as soon as they call me. If not the same job I can get another job at the food court itself. I know a lot of people there. It is not a problem to find a job at one of the stalls. Getting jobs in Colombo is easy. I got the first job through my brother’s contacts in Colombo.” (Male, 19, RPC, Kegalle)

- **Language skills:** The ability to work in Sinhala, and even English, opened up the rest of the economy and vastly increased opportunities for employment and progressing in other sectors.

“No, I did not pass the exams but I had a good education, especially in languages. I can speak, read and write Sinhala well, also some English. It helped with the job in Colombo.” (Male, 24, RPC, Kegalle)

- **Changing expectations of welfare:** In addition to moving away from the estate structure when seeking employment, an important shift is in moving the responsibility of welfare out of the sector on to the State. These expectations are independent from the state being the owner or manager of the estate.

“With the help of the government I want the children educated and doing good jobs. The government should consider our problems”. (Male, 37, RPC, Badulla)

“I want to go abroad and do something. We need help from the government, if we can live in this level without going further down that’s more than enough.” (Male, 32, RPC, Kalutara)

4.3.3 Feelings of marginalisation and exploitation

The feelings of marginalisation and exploitation are inherent in the plantation structure and the constraints imposed by the industry as a whole all have a direct impact on the poverty of households and their ability to move out of poverty. This feeling can be regarded as a dimension of poverty in itself. Even households that have incomes significantly higher than the poverty line feel strongly that they are members of a sector that is being given a ‘raw deal’ in comparison to the mainstream socio-economy. In turn, the sense of isolation influences economic and livelihood decisions of estate households. The adversarial/dependent relationship with the estate management and the popular view that estate work is degrading and unsuitable, leads many residents to shun estate work and look for external employment. Households are therefore unable to take full advantage of the available earning capacity on the estate because even when it is available, estate work is not taken up. The result is that a large number of tea estates report deficit labour even though the residents maintain that,

“Job opportunities are decreasing. Even the educated do not have proper jobs. We don’t have work in the estate. About 45% of us are unemployed. If we don’t work for 19 days they reduce the daily wage to Rs.135. There is land with water nearby but the estate does not let us cultivate vegetables.” (Male, RPC, Badulla)

The decrease in estate work identified by the residents is also influenced by the manipulation of the system by the management. While seasonality is an inbuilt agricultural variation, many estates also attempt to maintain more casual labour than registered labour, thus aggravating labour-management tensions.

“Registration in the estate is not done properly. Most of the time only casual labour is given. We’re given work for 2 months and then it is stopped. So it is better to work outside since there is no permanency. Thalevars [estate union representatives] are the people who don’t get us registered. My name was registered and the Thalevar cancelled it.”
(Youth, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

The structure of the plantation system as it stands today creates non-economic forms of poverty within the sector, which in turn influences economic decisions of the households. The sector has been less than successful in creating a dynamic and profitable industry, which once again constrains the upward mobility of residents within the sector. Even though the majority of households interviewed in this study believed that conditions were improving they attributed this primarily to employment outside the sector.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

5.1 Main findings

The majority of the population living on the estates feel that while conditions on the estate have deteriorated over the last 15 years, the living conditions of individual households have improved significantly. At a general level this variance in perception can be explained by the fact that households have developed livelihood portfolios with high levels of non-estate input and have thereby separated household fortunes from those of the estate. A further contributory factor is the tendency for workers to compare conditions on the estate to an idealised view of the past. Other significant factors are the workers' high welfare expectations and their sense of marginalisation and exploitation as a result of the plantation system structure.

More specifically, the main drivers of household improvement have been,

- Access to external sources of income enabling most households to develop a diversified and more lucrative household livelihood portfolio
- Greater institutional provision of health, education and welfare services in both the state and estate sector.

However, these improvements have not been sufficient to bring the standards of the estate population on par with the majority of the country. In addition to the chronically poor households, most households continue to fluctuate around the poverty line and are extremely vulnerable. This is primarily due to the fact that their cash income does not keep pace with the rising food and non-food expenditure of households, let alone allowing households to make savings enabling them to move up the poverty ladder.

The vulnerability of households – even those that have moved up the ladder – is reflected in their limited ability to withstand shocks (such as illness or death of a family member), in the strong links between household wellbeing and its lifecycle position, and in the high impact of behaviour patterns, such as alcoholism, hard work or good household management, on household wellbeing.

The majority of those who have moved out of poverty have done so by combining a strong bias towards external employment with the advantages the estate system offers. (Households that moved out of poverty by physically moving off the estates were not part of this study).

Despite the preoccupation with external employment, estate work remains a very important component of household livelihood strategies, and many people return to the estates after periods of external employment. The advantage of estate employment, as often articulated by the residents, is the stable and secure nature of work.

The relatively low wages paid within the sector are seen as a critical problem by the residents. The wages remain fixed at the level decided by the Collective Agreement and tied to the plantation system structure which blurs the boundaries between work and home through the 'cradle to grave' welfare concept. This total remuneration package is attractive to those households fluctuating around the poverty line, as evidenced by the village labour that chooses to work on estates, particularly where the estate wage rates are higher than that available in the village. Estate wages alone, however, do not give the estate population the ability to significantly improve their living standards to a level perceived as acceptable in the rest of the country.

Looking at the bigger picture, Sri Lanka has moved away from being a primary commodity exporting economy and its socio-political structure has been transformed. Despite multiple changes that have enabled estate residents to have a high level of employment mobility, the sector remains a structural outlier both in the Sri Lankan economy and society. The feeling that the current estate workers have of being marginalised, exploited and 'different' result primarily from the forces that bind them to a structure which minimises choice in relation to many economic and non-economic aspects of life. Any advantages the system may offer are constantly undermined by the fact that the institution is 'forced' upon them.

5.2 Key drivers in moving out of poverty

The drivers that enable households to move out of poverty could be grouped into two: issues that are industry related, and issues that are household related.

5.2.1 Industry based drivers

- **Continuous work, good price and new techniques:** Significant variations were noted in the availability of work in rubber and tea. While new productivity standards introduced after privatisation were perceived negatively and were attributed as a cause for the decrease in wages in both the tea and rubber sectors, a majority in the rubber sector felt strongly that productivity and market related changes had increased their earning potential and created more secure and

continuous work. Specific changes such as the provision of rain guards that enabled tapping of rubber during the rains, linking of factory production to a direct and secure market, and crop diversification was seen as contributory factors to improvement that in turn resulted in upward mobility for the community.

- **Management type:** The types and changes in management (RPC, State and Private) were perceived as factors in the conditions (productivity and wellbeing) of the estate. Although conditions in the RPCs were seen as poor, this was in relation to the past and with better-managed RPCs. However, it was the complete lack of service provision in the privately run estates that were seen to create the very poor conditions seen on these estates.
- **Factors that decide incomes:** A major factor determining the incomes of the estate workers is the profitability of the estate/company. Different methods adopted by the three management types to gain maximum profit have, on the whole, caused deterioration in the estate community. The current lack of care and competence in the management of crop, was seen as a factor that will push the estate worker to a worse-off position in the future. Contrastingly, well managed estates, which succeed in providing continuous work to the labour force has been a contributory factor in households moving out of poverty.

5.2.2 Household level drivers

- **Livelihood portfolio of the household:** Enhanced mobility of the estate residents due to improved security, greater awareness of non-estate requirements, language skills and the cumulative impact of peer migration, has significantly aided them to take advantage of opportunities for work outside the estate. The main factors that drive residents to look for work outside the estate revolves around the need to increase the income of the household together with the aspirations – particularly of youth – to be free of the ‘estate’ and enter the mainstream socio-economy.
- **Housing and utilities:** Better housing conditions and access to utilities were also seen as an improvement in living standards, and mentioned as a milestone in moving up. Three modes of facilitating these improvements were mentioned where ‘own effort’ took precedence, especially through external incomes. The other modes included management facilitated improvements and housing and loan schemes.
- **Personal attributes:** Hard work, perseverance and self-belief were some of the personal attributes identified to influence upward mobility. Almost all households that had seen upward movement were seen to

have a positive outlook that would have been, in most cases, generated through a determination to provide a better, improved future for their children.

- **Education and an aversion to alcoholism:** The movers highlighted the importance of education and language as a determining factor for upward mobility. This was seen, mainly, in terms of gaining outside employment. A majority of the movers were averse to alcoholism and identified it as a primary push down factor in the estate sector.

5.3 Seeking solutions

The successive reforms in the estate sector reflect the constant search for solutions to both industry and labour problems. The impact of changes resulting from these reforms, as well as other changes in the economy, are reflected in the strategies households use to cope with and move out of poverty. When considering which solutions will facilitate such strategies, it is critical to take into account the structure within which change can take place, what attempts are currently being tried, and most importantly, what future households aspire to.

Attempts to accelerate the process of moving the estate sector population out of poverty can be considered on a continuum of structural change. At one extreme would be the complete mainstreaming of the sector, in such a way that the plantations will reflect business norms in other sectors in Sri Lanka. Despite the risks involved, this proposal reflects the estate residents' desire to enter the mainstream and will address the strong feeling of marginalisation which affects all aspects of household decision making. Other less extreme scenarios for improvement would fall within the existing structure of the employer-worker/household relationship. Here, we present three potential solutions along this continuum of structural change.

5.3.1 Strengthening the existing structure

If the solution lies within the existing estate structure the primary issues to be addressed are access to and the quality of the drivers for moving out of poverty.

- **Increased access to work and methods of coping with the cost of living:** The income from working on the estate is insufficient to meet the needs of households, mainly due the lack of regular work. This could be due to the estate not providing sufficient work or the workers opting not to take available work. Both factors need to be addressed.
- **Ensure a worker earns the maximum possible over a year:** Steps need to be taken release pressure on household expenditure,

particularly on food. Other aspects that increase the cost of living and the indebtedness of households also need to be addressed, such as alcoholism and buying household assets on credit.

- **Increasing access to and quality of health and education:** The quality of on-estate services is an area that is receiving considerable attention and a range of stakeholders are running many programmes. However, much improvement is needed. Residents are increasingly accessing both health and education services outside the estates and improved transport would enable better access and provide residents with greater choice.
- **Improving housing and access to land:** Multiple programmes are being piloted to improve housing and the residents themselves are also carrying out improvements. Land is usually used for housing, or for income generation, as in the case of cultivable land. A variety of initiatives are also underway to provide greater access to land. These programmes should gradually improve the stock of housing and access to land.
- **Improving communication:** This is an area that requires greater attention at all levels and from all stakeholders. Communication between managers, workers, trade unions, state, development programmes and donors needs to improve. Efforts need to be made to reduce the adversarial relationship between most stakeholders in the sector and ensure everyone provides clear, factual information. This will reduce misunderstanding and conflict.

5.3.2 Accepting and encouraging natural change

The gradual breakdown of the rigid plantation system can be ignored, restricted or encouraged. Given the strength of change factors and the positive impact this breakdown is having on households moving out of poverty, a positive approach would be to accept change. This would include both encouraging the factors that have a positive impact on households as well as those that minimise risks.

- **Developing a positive attitude towards the sector:** Within the industry, particularly in tea, the advantages of positive associations of the brand 'Ceylon Tea' are well known and accepted. In the current scenario of changing markets the industry has the potential to market a positive image based on quality. However, it is not only at the end of the production line that a positive image of the sector has to be built up. The negative image of the estate sector as an employer and the low status of estate labour is also an important area to focus on. It is critical for

the industry to overcome the very negative image of estate labour and develop a sense of self-worth and dignity within the sector. This will go a long way towards aiding households to move out of poverty, as well as assisting the industry to overcome labour shortages. This however, needs to be an industry-wide strategy rather than the ad hoc company or estate level efforts seen currently.

- **Facilitating mobility and migration:** Mobility is greatly facilitated by increased security, and possession of citizenship and identification documents. In addition, mobility can be actively encouraged by improving transport services, and focusing on the factors that facilitate external employment such as education, exposure to life outside the estates, employable skills and language skills. Other options include setting up centres to provide information and links to employment opportunities. This would give workers greater access than they have when relying exclusively on their own networks.
- **Encouraging self-employment, alternative skills development:** A few projects are currently in operation to encourage self-employment. It is essential to expand such initiatives, targeting not just youth but also those households which are at a critical period in their lifecycle. Particular attention needs to be paid to developing skills which enable more secure and higher income employment.
- **Expanding the provision of state welfare:** State welfare programmes which target the poor are rather limited in this sector. As well as improving state provision of services, there is a need to target the chronically poor, the chronically sick and the elderly. Programmes should ideally be built to reflect the fluctuating fortunes of households during the life cycle.

5.3.3 Actively mainstreaming the sector

Unless some of the most fundamental factors of the structure that characterise the plantation system are addressed, only a limited amount of movement can be achieved by estate sector households. The captive feature of the system is the most critical factor that limits movement and, more importantly, creates a strong feeling of marginalisation. Moving the sector into the mainstream economy appears to be a prerequisite to ensuring households are able to move out of poverty and progress up the ladder.

The most enduring link to the enclave plantation system is the fact that labour continues to live on commercial property. This issue lies at the crux of the employer employee relationship and the blurring of household boundaries. As the estates are a profit motivated, commercial entity they, legitimately, consider

the population living on the estate to be 'labour'. On the other hand, the population that lives on the estate considers it to be their home and therefore expect to make choices independent of the estate.

Separating housing from the estate would relieve management of any responsibility towards the estate population. Equally it would relieve residents of the obligation of having to provide labour to the estate. The estate sector would therefore become part of the mainstream economy, working on the basis of a conventional employer/employee relationship. Households would be responsible for their own welfare, and the state would be responsible for macro level service provision, as is the case in the rest of the country.

These options have been discussed and piloted to a limited extent at various times. However, the fact that wholesale change has not occurred can be explained by the risks that all stakeholders face in the breakdown of such an institution. The estates risk labour shortages, the trade unions risk losing their constituency, the state risks losing foreign exchange earnings and budgetary pressures, and the population risks losing the safety net provided by the current structure both in terms of employment and welfare. These risks are certainly important issues that need to be factored into any plans. However, the current structure is the most fundamental feature limiting people's movement out of poverty and any serious attempt to facilitate movement out of poverty requires a mainstreaming of the estate sector with the rest of the socio-economic landscape of Sri Lanka.

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Annex 1 :

Sampling framework

The study followed a stratified purposive sampling method with the stratifications allowing the spatial targeting while the variables within the stratifications were driven by the hypotheses that the study team intended to explore further.

The sample was stratified at the three levels: district, estate, and household. Within these strata the purposive sampling took place on the basis of:

- District: Type of crop and its spread, head count index of poverty.
- Estates: Management type, size of estate in terms of acreage, labour, revenue, level of remoteness and mix of resident/non-resident labour.
- Households: High, medium and low levels wellbeing based on criteria developed by the community.

In addition, members of focus group discussions, and key person interviewees were also selected based on purposive sampling criteria.

Selecting the sample districts

Ten tea and ten rubber estates were included in the sample. Although tea accounts for a larger proportion of estate sector cultivation, production and labour, the study team took the decision to equally sample the crops as it became evident from the literature survey and stakeholder discussions at the central level that existing research on the estate sector was highly biased towards the sub-sector of tea.

Once the representation of the crops within the sample was purposively decided, the districts were selected on the basis of the extent of cultivation of each crop. Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Kandy are the top three tea cultivating districts while Kegalle and Kalutara are the top rubber cultivating districts. Ratnapura which has an equal spread of tea and rubber was included in the sample to enable an exploration of factors effecting poverty while holding factors unique to tea and rubber constant.

Table 1 : Base sample criteria and population figures, 2002

Crop	District	Extent of cultivation of tea/ rubber*		Poverty level**	Spread of the estate sector population ***		
		National rank	Hectares	Percentage of poor HHs - 2002	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Estate (%)
	National			22.7	14.6	80	5.3
Tea	Nuwara Eliya	1	46,222	23%	6.1	40.5	53.3
	Badulla	2	25,023	37%	6.8	72.8	20.4
	Kandy	3	14,990	25%	12.3	80.4	7.3
	Ratnapura	4	12,918	34%	5.8	84.1	10.1
Rubber	Ratnapura	3	12,137				
	Kegalle	1	20,250	33%	2.2	90.6	7.1
	Kalutara	2	16,590	20%	10.6	86.1	3.3

Source: * Census of Agriculture, 2002 ** Housing Income & Expenditure Survey, 2002 *** Census of Population & Housing, 2002

These districts were checked against national poverty levels before final inclusion in the sample. All the main estate districts with the exception of Kalutara have a poverty rate that is higher than the national average. Kalutara is one of the three districts in the most dynamic and prosperous region of Sri Lanka – the Western Province. Its poverty levels though lower than the other ‘estate’ districts is much higher than the rate in Colombo (6.4%) and in Gampaha (10.7%) which make up the Western Province.

Selecting sample estates

The selection of estates¹⁹ was based on two sets of purposive criteria that sought to ensure that the field sample captured all aspects of the study focus.

Primary criteria

- Management/ownership type of estate: estates owned by Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs), state (JEDB and SLSPC²⁰) and private

¹⁹ Names, locations and other identity markers have been omitted in order to maintain anonymity of estates and respondents.

²⁰ JEDB: Janatha Estates Development Board, SLSPC: Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation

individuals (i.e. non-corporate ownership), were considered and selected to reflect the national spread of ownership. State owned rubber estates were not sampled as there is only one JEDB owned rubber estate.

- Size of estate: extent of cultivation, and size of resident population.
- Level of remoteness: the distance to the nearest town was used as a proxy for remoteness.
- Labour supply: resident and non-resident labour, resident labour as a percentage of resident population.

Secondary criteria

- Potential for alternative employment: estates with and without/limited opportunities and access to off estate work, the proximity to townships, district capitals, level of economic dynamism of the districts was considered here.
- Reinvestment: high and low level investment in productivity enhancement and maintenance by the management/ owners.
- Welfare interventions: estates with and without donor/state assisted projects/programmes and investments in human resources and welfare.
- Ethnicity: spread of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim population.

Selecting sample households

Households were sampled based on the objectives of the study, the homogenous nature of the sector and the experience of the pilot study. There was a negative bias on the poorest households and the choice was two 'low', three 'medium' and three 'top' households. The households representing each category were selected on the basis of nominations at the male and female Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) carried out with that particular community. During the interview, the household respondents were requested to rate their household using the same categories of 'low', 'medium' and 'top' to determine intersections and divergences from community assessment²¹.

²¹ The sample constituted primary and secondary level respondents. This included 158 individual primary level respondents of which 90 were heads of households. Focus Group members numbered 126 males and 128 females and 118 youth Focus Group members whilst Community Timelines (CTLs) were conducted with 61 respondents.

Table 2: Self-Assessment of households at FGD and household level

Crop	Community assessment (FGD level)			Self assessment (household level)		
	Top	Medium	Bottom	Top	Medium	Bottom
Tea	27	30	23	14	50	16
Rubber	25	27	25	13	40	24
Total	52	57	48	27	90	40
Total interviews	157(1 HH not assessed)			157(1 HH not assessed)		

Selecting respondents to focus group discussions, and key person interviews

In addition to selecting sample households, the study method required selection of participants for the focus group discussions and key person interviews.

Focus group discussions at the estate level

Participants of focus group discussions were selected initially based on gender and age (youth/non-youth). Within these sample categories the team ensured representation of resident and non-resident estate labour, of a cross-section of engagement in different types of work (e.g. factory, plucking/taping, clearing) and of varying age groups.

Table 3: Participation at Focus Group Discussions

FGD (Ladder of Life)				
Crop	Gender		Age	
	Male	Female	Below 30	Above 30
Tea	59	49	24	68
Rubber	67	79	37	104
Total	126	128	61	172

The sub category of youth was defined as those between the ages of 15 and 30. In selecting respondents for the youth focus groups, an attempt was made to select a sample that was representative of the given estate's youth constituency. The FGDs consisted of male and female youth between 15 and 29. They also included employed (on and off-estate) and unemployed youth, schooled and non-schooled youth with varying educational attainment.

Table 4: Profile of Youth Focus Group Discussants

Crop	Gender		Status		
	Male	Female	Employed	Unemployed	Students
Tea	36	15	19	23	05
Rubber	30	26	16	15	25
Total	66	41	35	38	30

Focus group discussions at the national level

Participation was sought to represent the state sector – both in terms of industry and welfare, the industry – in terms of associations representing the management, plantations, as well as individual companies, associations representing the workers – primarily trade unions, non-state national and international agencies involved in welfare, rights based activist associations.

Key person interviews

At the estate level, the respondents were selected using a purposive sampling method and included senior managers such as Group Managers, Estate Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, operational staff such as Chief Clerks, Welfare Officers, Field Officers and Midwives. In addition, the estate or division level Trade Union leaders were also included in the sample. Thirty-three interviews were carried out at the estate level under the categories of senior management and operational staff.

At the national level, key persons were sampled in line with their specialised knowledge on the sector and included: policy makers, activist, industry key players, trade union leaders.

Annex 2:

Household perceptions on poverty.

This annex provides greater detail on the findings using the household self characterisation and 'Life histories' method. The characteristics of the households were discussed in relation to the immediate community and seen in terms of a continuous ladder along which households move up and down, and on which some households were currently at top and others at the bottom.

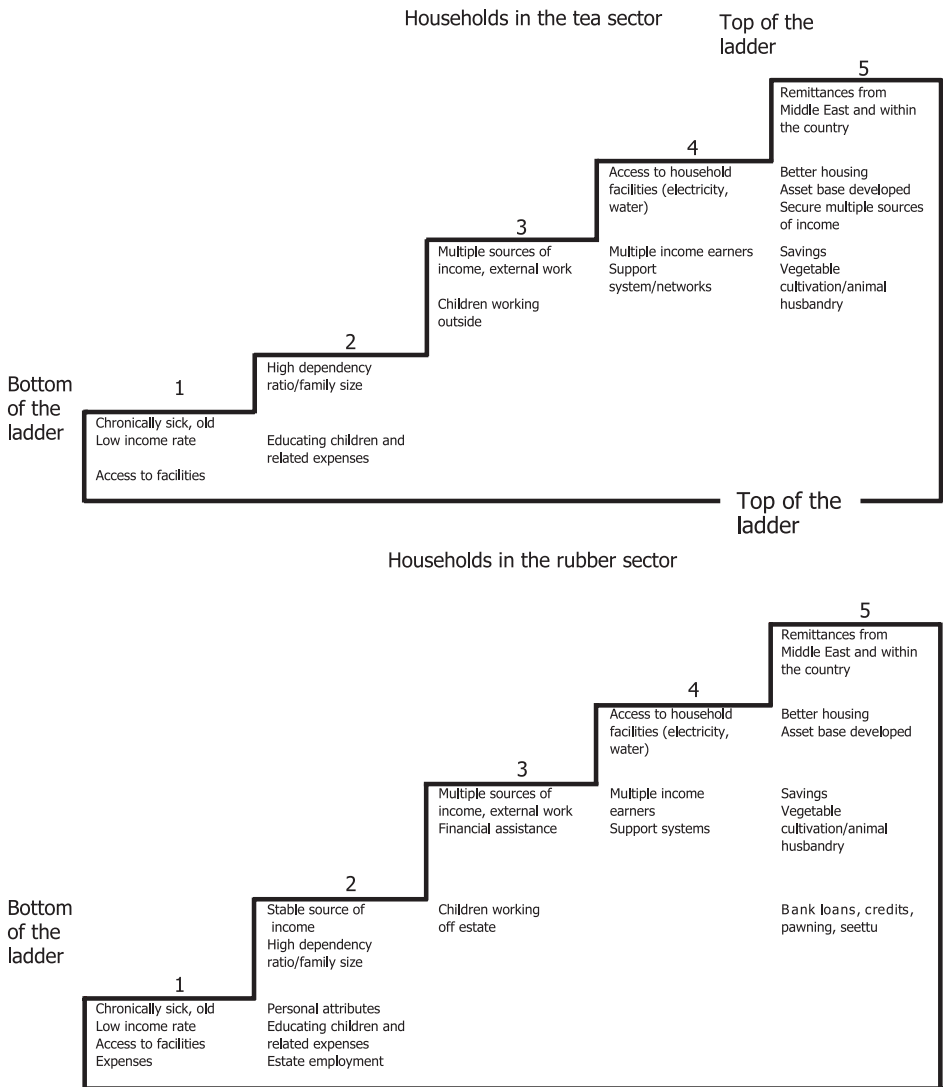
Characteristics of households at the 'bottom of the ladder'

The characteristics in this group were the most consistent between all sample categories confirming the hypotheses of a high degree of homogeneity among the poorest households.

Priority characteristics

- In terms of prioritisation the **ratio of income earners to dependents** was cited by both male and female FGDs as the primary cause of poverty at the 'bottom' level. A single earner tended to support a disproportionate number of dependents, leading to a disabling gap between income and expenditure and preventing households from saving. High dependency ratios were particularly impoverishing when the dependents were young children, or invalids, that necessitated high expenditure as well as significant care giving effort. External shocks such as sudden cessation of work renders the given household destitute especially in instances where there is a single source of income.
- **An unstable/ limited source of income** was identified as the second key cause of poverty. This variable was characterised by two groups; residents who engage in sundry work and who are not entitled to the full benefits of estate employment and permanent estate employees whose work attendance is erratic.
- **High incidence of illness** resulting in high expenditure on health, especially where breadwinners were invalid. Aged and invalid (chronically ill) dependents who incurred high expenditure debilitated a poor household's opportunities for even marginal movement out of poverty.

Figure 1: Characteristics of households along the ‘Ladder of Life’



Frequently mentioned characteristics

- **Dilapidated houses, poor and deteriorating housing utilities** were identified as characteristics of the stark ‘visual poverty’ of ‘bottom’ level households. Families living in very apparent bad conditions were the most easily identifiable as poor.
- **Alcoholism** as a creator of poverty was discussed primarily by female respondents both at community and household level. Alcohol dependence also resulted in the creation of other negative variables that impacted stagnation and aggravated poverty such as inhibition of earning capacity, indebtedness, social stigma, and doubling the burden of other household members, in most instances women.

Other characteristics

- **Low spending on education** due to low income combined with high expenditure, leading to a focus on meeting basic needs such as food and clothing. This was articulated in statements such as “*children don’t go to school*”, “*unable to educate children*” and “*cannot afford to send child to school*”.
- **Personal attributes** that contributed to poverty as discussed in the FGDs. Factors such as “*laziness*” “*disinterest*”, “*no motivation to develop*”, “*they want to stay where they are*” and “*lack of life experience and exposure*” were also mentioned by respondents when looking beyond income and consumption aspects of the worst-off households.
- **A self-defeatist outlook** with a tendency to blame outside events and actors for their predicament was evident in the focus group discussions. At the household level this translated into statements such as “*They give us money only if we work the whole day*”, “*I don’t like to work, today I didn’t go to work, we have to work once a week in the factory*”, “*there is nobody to help us*”, “*I could have managed if I had a son, but I have a daughter*”.
- **Networks and social capital** in the form of family, neighbours, friends and contacts provided valuable links to the household members that allowed to them utilise their potential and engage in various income generating schemes. Those who do not have such forms of support cite this deficit as an impediment to improvement: “*nobody to help us with looking after the kids, no external family. Those days I was working in Colombo, wife was in the Middle East for 4 years and my mother looked after the kids*”. Links to trade unions and other power bases were impacted by poverty levels and or employment. Exposure, knowledge and awareness levels were weak in poor households, particularly visible in the low use of credit/finance institutions, Housing Cooperative etc.

- **Female-headed households** were classified as poor not only because of low income but also because of increased vulnerability and limited bargaining power - “*no one to speak to trade union leaders/ management*”. Gender equity is low in the sector and was seen as compounded when a female has to manage a household on her own.
- Three out of ten male focus groups in the tea sector in the Badulla and Nuwara Eliya cited **lack of land** as a characteristic of those at the ‘bottom’. Cultivation (on leased and self owned small holdings) as a means of supplementary income was resorted to by an increasing number of households. At the household level the issue of unavailability of land and inability to obtain/purchase land was seen frequently as contributing to their classification at the ‘bottom’ level.
- **Exhausted or misspent/ poorly invested EPF/ ETF** was identified as a characteristic of poverty at the household level. This is very pronounced in households that were positioned at the end of the of the demographic life cycle curve²². Relocation and a lack of support from adult/employed children further aggravated this situation. Terminal benefits were applicable to all three levels, but poor or short-term use of these funds on life cycle events such as wedding ceremonies or settling long-term loans meant that this injection of cash did not assist upward movement.

Box 1: Life History: Poor investment of EPF funds

Respondent: Female, 44 years, Tea, RPC, Badulla.

HH composition: Wife and the Husband (both retired)

Self-Assessment: Household is currently at the bottom of the ladder and show a stagnating trend

“We are both retired and are in a very difficult situation because there is no income at the moment. Both of us got EPF. My husband’s was spent on our son’s wedding and mine on food. So there’s nothing left now. At the moment my son helps once in a while and other than that we have nothing to rely on. I was living in Uri estate in Akkarathenna until I got married in 1978 and came to Pingarawa. Living conditions were much better there and I liked it. In the beginning our per diem was less than Rs.100 and at the time my husband retired in 2004 he was paid Rs.135. My EPF came to about Rs.100000 and I could not do anything with it. We spent the whole amount on food since my husband’s was spent on our son’s wedding. Our son works in a shop in Bandarawela and he is also not earning much. We pawn my jewellery if we need a bigger amount and do not ask from him. All my jewellery is now pawned as we had to pawn some for the wedding as well. Since there is no income at the moment I’m hoping for some sort of a casual labour work in the estate like easy weeding”.

²² See page 33

- **High levels of indebtedness** – *“Whatever we earn is spent to settle credit. We have to buy flour and tea leaves on credit”*. This was observed only in poor households in the tea sector; households in the rubber sector acknowledged financial constraints but did not state that they had resorted to taking out loans to meet household expenditure. Indebtedness also contributed to stagnation at ‘bottom’ and ‘lower middle’ levels.

Box 2: Life History: Multiple pressures of poverty

Respondent: Male, 24 years, Rubber, Private, Ratnapura

HH composition: Tamil/Sinhala family, 2 young children, grandmother.

Self Assessment: Household is currently at the bottom of the ladder and show a stagnating trend

“I am in a difficult situation. When I was small my father hit me with a stone and I was in the Peradeniya hospital. When I was 10 my father married again. Mother could not support us so I went to work in a house. Then I worked in a shop in Colombo for many years. I could not study. If I studied I could have opened a jewellery shop or clothes shop. My father was the main obstruction. That is why we are still in the estate.

I got married to this girl and there is no one to help us. Now we have two small children. We can't ask money from the management every day. I have to work 20 to 30 days to improve our life. I work on the estate and in the village to earn extra. There is no other way. What we earn is not enough to eat. All of it goes to the shop over there. Some days we eat jack fruit.

Till last year we worked at a different estate. We did not like it there as the work was difficult. When my second child was born they did not give any money. They said I have to work for 240 days for 2 years. But they said they can give money if my daughter has a health problem. We have more freedom here. One of my relatives arranged this. But in the previous company estate [RPC] we are given a house, and EPF. Here whenever they ask we will have to move, we don't get EPF. I want to send my wife abroad. But my children are too small”.

Characteristics of households at the ‘middle of the Ladder’

Those in the ‘lower middle’ poverty level were not obviously poor - they had some assets, better living conditions, and were more educated and aware. However, although they were better off than their counterparts at the ‘bottom’, they had no foreseeable possibility of moving up owing to the prevalence of push down factors. This group managed a careful ‘balancing act’ with an equal number of ‘push up’ and ‘pull down’ factors. Sudden windfalls through gratuity payments or the employment of an additional household member

could result in the elevation of previously poor (bottom level) households to the middle, but the ability to remain there depended on longer-term and secure strategies.

The key characteristic of 'middle' level households was their ability to balance positive and negative variables to retain their position. However this balancing act also meant that while they did not 'fall back', they did not 'climb up' either. Some even shared characteristics of 'upper' level households such as receiving remittances and other benefits. However, these benefits were diluted or did not enable rapid development owing to intra-household variables such as its composition (dependents), single source of income, and high levels of expenditure. This was very visible in comparison with the 'top' level households with few dependents who maximised remittances and benefits for development and were able to move from 'middle' to 'top' as a result.

The presence of some positive variables and the absence of others also combined to position households at the 'middle' level: "*We are not that rich. Of course we get food everyday but we don't have land.*"

Acceptable income negated by high expenditure as indicated by the following statement was another feature of 'middle' level households; "*Both of us are working, we earn about Rs.5000 per month. Our children are still schooling so we have to spend a lot on them... we have to buy books and uniforms*"

The demographics of the households and ratio of income earners to dependents, while better balanced than in 'poor' households, was still considered to be a disabling factor. These 'middle' level households were able to provide for young children/dependents/invalids in terms of income, but the presence of these high expenditure dependents also disabled savings and developments such as house renovations, expenditure on non-essential items such as clothes, extra food and entertainment. Sudden and unforeseen exigencies and external shocks heightened the risk of a relapse into poverty.

Priority characteristics

- **Higher number of income earners** (both husband and wife work, adult children employed in other/service sectors), more than one income generating scheme, a secure/salaried source of income for at least one household member, **combining livelihood strategies** such as estate employment and wage labour, supplementary sources of income (off-estate wage labour, remittances from members employed in non estate jobs, i.e. garment factories, sand mining; "People work outside, hardware shops, drivers, both work"). Regular cash flow (from at least a single source – salaried/self employment, off-estate work,

remittances) served as a fall-back in instances of high expenditure and also enabled retention at the 'middle' level. They also benefited from **remittances** (out of Province/overseas). Remittances were the most frequently mentioned characteristic.

- **Demographics of the household** older children who contribute through earning or are not a burden due to education expenditure, lesser number of dependents and a more equal balance in the earner to dependent ratio.

Frequently mentioned characteristics

- **Prioritisation of education** (even by those with economic difficulties) was a common characteristic of 'middle' level households and this served to differentiate them from poor households. The positioning of a household at the upper middle level indicated possession of abilities and capacities that were out of reach for those at the lower level.
- **Recurrent debt cycle** stemming from the need to balance upward and downward pressures. Cash inflow was not always smooth and at any given point these households maybe faced with some level of loan repayment (obtained mostly through informal sources).

Other characteristics

- **Capacity to access services** such as paid health care, communication, **improvement of housing** with amenities such as water and electricity, **ownership of assets** such as household goods (e.g. furniture), electronic goods such as TVs, stereos, VCD players.
- **Enabling personal attributes:** Hard work, effort and the will to develop and thrive were cited by respondents as factors that enabled them to afford a 'decent' standard of living. Characteristics such as: *"I work outside the estate, father earns and save money, we work continuously, we don't spend money unnecessarily", "We don't buy on credit. We rarely owe more than Rs.20 to the shop", "We don't take credit, don't drink", and "don't waste money and time"* were also highlighted.

Box 3: Life History: Balancing the household through mobility

Respondent: Female, 50 years, Rubber, Private, Kegalle

HH Composition: two females, four males

Self-Assessment: Household is currently near the middle of the ladder and show an improving trend

“Everybody in my house goes to work. We can’t stay at home. We have to earn to live. Our expenditure comes to about Rs.5000. My daughter and her husband are also working, my husband and I earn around Rs.4000. I do rubber tapping and my husband works in private places. We worked hard to bring up the children and today they are doing well. My daughter is married and the two unmarried sons are working in a private factory. We were at the estate in Ethurapola until 2004 and came here because of my daughter. The condition of the rubber trees here is not good at all and in Ethurapola we had a factory and better processing facilities but I have no hope of going back there because here I have my daughter to take care of me. I left Ethurapola with all its facilities to be near my daughter. I have saved some money for the children in the Rural Bank and have saved Rs.5000 for myself and also my pension. In case of an emergency we withdraw from the bank. We took a loan of Rs.10000 once for our daughter’s marriage and we managed to pay it back from our salary. When taking important decisions we consult my son-in-law. We are all in the same union but they haven’t done anything for us. I want to work hard and live peacefully and I cannot say anything regarding the estate because I’m not from this estate. The estate must be developed and everybody should live a peaceful life”.

Characteristics of households at the ‘top of the ladder’

While a good household income was the key characteristic, it combined with a range of other factors that varied quite substantially at the household level. The interface between positive variables in key areas such as income, education and living conditions contributed to the positioning of a household at the ‘top’ level by the community. Households in this group were better able to counteract negative variables with positive ones, managing the negative efforts of sudden or external impacts (e.g. a cut back in designated working days or illness) and time variant causal factors for example children’s education expenses.

Priority characteristics

- **Stable high-end income derived from multiple sources** placed households at the top of the ladder. The income portfolio was made up of on and off-estate wage labour and salaried employment, self employment (retail shops, three wheelers), retail stores, animal husbandry, vegetable cultivation (in the tea sub sector), cash transfers

such as gratuity / EPF / ETF. A high household income was seen as being able to counter the negative effects of variables such as demographics and external shocks.

- **Remittances from those employed overseas:** Regular lump sum cash transfers especially from members employed in the Middle East at present (or within the past ten years) also served to locate households at the top level and sustain a high standard of living. Middle East employment by a member of the HH at any given point of the household's life cycle served as stand alone factor in positioning a household at this level; other factors such as sound investment enabled the household to retain this achieved position.

Box 4: Life History Remittance investment

Respondent: Female, 44 years, Tea, Private, Nuwara Eliya

HH composition: Wife, husband, and three children

Self-Assessment: Household is currently near the middle of the ladder and show an improving trend

"We are in a better situation because I went to Middle East, if not we would still be poor and totally dependent on the estate salary. The children could get a good education without interruption. The estate management changes all the time and there are no salary increments. So one cannot think at all of getting ahead in life with what we get from the estate.

In the case of my family, my husband does not drink and he looked after the family and managed the finances well while I was away. At the moment my younger son who stopped schooling after O/L is in Colombo, working in a garage and he is looking after his expenses. The elder son is getting ready for his A/L and our daughter is in grade nine. We are hoping to start a business closer to the town. We haven't decided what sort of a business and before that we want to buy a piece of land somewhere and build a house. My husband has an idea of going abroad this time because I prefer to stay back and be with the children".

- **Sufficient income to meet expenditure** was explained by non-procurement of loans, financial assistance and ability to manage household expenses with the household income. These households were also able to apportion income (for daily expenditure, savings including *seettu*). They also had disposable finances for entertainment, communication, travel etc.

- **Networks and social capital**, demonstrated through interaction with external communities such as villages and townships was higher amongst this segment, with many members of the household engaging in frequent travel for a variety of reasons. This exposure served to provide them with additional opportunities and also contributed to enhanced awareness; *“If we stayed back in the estate we would never have achieved this much, Colombo exposure and education”, “I take no alcohol this has led to this improvement”*.

Frequently mentioned characteristics

- **Housing and utilities:** All the ‘top’ level households were seen to have well maintained, extended line rooms or houses. They had secured individual electricity and water supply and had access to sanitation and private toilets. Household asset bases included furniture and electronic equipment.
- **Investments and loan:** The upper deciles took out large scale loans for equipment/businesses for which they had collateral and methods of repayment. Financial investment was generally directed towards a secondary income generation scheme (retail stores, three wheelers, obtaining leased land for cultivation etc.). They also invested in savings, jewellery and land and production related assets such as bicycles or three wheelers. Ownership and leasing of land was mentioned, especially in the tea sector.
- Many **aspects of education** including the number of educated members in the household, particularly primary breadwinners who in turn prioritised education, continued education of younger children, and educated adult children up to post secondary level were cited by respondents as justification for placing their respective households at the ‘top’ level. Some sent their children to schools in the nearby townships. Unlike the ‘middle’ and ‘poor’ categories where most children dropped out of school after the lower secondary level, children of ‘top’ level households continued with higher education.
- **Demography of households/ dependency ratio:** Heterogeneity in household composition was seen as working positively for these households, as did the lifecycle of the primary family. They tended to have a small number of children or dependents supported by a greater number of income earners, coupled with the high earning capacities of the earners.

Other characteristics

- **Personal attributes** - 'Top' households also attributed their position to social aptitudes and skills – “we live a decent life”, “we know how to behave” “we have to live well, like proper human beings.”

Box 5: Life History: Stabilising at a higher level

Respondent: Female, 33 years, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle

HH Composition: HH, spouse, three children still in primary school

Self-Assessment: Household is currently at the top of the ladder and show an improving trend

“Compared to other line room people we have a better income. Both of us are working in the estate and from 2004 onwards my husband maintains his brother’s boutique since he is abroad. This reduced our problems. We used to work in the estate even before marriage and had some savings. My husband started working as a sundry worker in 1984 and started tapping rubber in 1986.

So by the time we got married in 1995 my husband had the line house in his name so we didn’t face any problems with housing. His parents live nearby and at the moment his parents look after the children while we are at work. We earn about Rs.4500 from rubber tapping and that is enough for the children’s expenses; I work two shifts a day and husband only the morning shift. Sundays and Poya days are holidays. The shop, which we got from my brother-in-law, is in a part of the house and during the daytime we open it if people come to buy goods, but in the evenings it is opened throughout since my husband is at home after doing his morning shift. Income from the shop is about Rs.5000. We have better relations with the people after I started the shop. Getting stocks is the only negative point as travelling is difficult.

If my brother comes back my husband is hoping to open his own shop. We save money for the future in National Savings Bank branch in Eheliyagoda [national level state bank at nearest township]; it is safe there in every way. If we have money in our hands we feel like buying something. At the moment we have about Rs.15000 in savings. More if you add the EPF. In case we need money in an emergency – like with the funeral of my mother-in-law, we pawn something or withdraw from the Bank. We are members of the funeral co-operative for which Rs25 is deducted monthly from the salary and also we are part of the CWC union. I haven’t had any benefits from the union so far since I do not have any problem with the management”.

ANNEX 3:

Case study: Youth aspirations and challenges

Within the Sri Lankan context, any attempt to understand the causes of stagnation or deterioration, mechanisms for moving out of poverty, and more importantly, sustained movement out of poverty, requires some focus on the issues facing youth.

Box 1: Youth in Sri Lanka

Reflecting the fluidity of the definition of youth in the development context, the understanding of what 'youth' is in Sri Lanka varies. "The United Nations General Assembly defined 'youth', as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years, inclusive of both years. This definition was made for International Youth Year held in 1985. The World Youth Report also uses this definition. In the Sri Lankan context, the parameters which influence this definition include civil status, employment, intra household status (head/primary breadwinner), and area of residence (urban, rural and estate). Secondary factors, which determine the time span during which a person is considered 'young' are schooling (for example, a school-goer of 17 years would be classified as a youth as opposed to an employed youth of the same age), and the socio-economic well being of his family (how long they can afford to allow/support him as a youth). Education and employment are significant areas in the youth related discussions. The duration of 'youth' in the estate sector is limited, primarily because of early entry into the labour force. Youth are viewed in a variety of ways, from 'troublemakers' and 'rebels' through to 'the future of the country'.

Beneficiaries of a universal free education system, youth literacy rates of 97% percent show that youth in Sri Lanka are well ahead of their regional counterparts and have already achieved this Millennium Development Goal.

Young people are not proportionally represented in politics, possibly due to the perception that older people are more able and more suited to the role. However, young people make up a significant and influential voter base and political structures tend to manipulate youth on the one hand whilst simultaneously fearing rebellion from them on the other. Youth representation in politics is changing with the resurgence of the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP) (People's Liberation Front). A rural Sinhalese youth based movement, the Front, as a political party, espouses an ideology combining leftist populism and Sinhala nationalism as a political party. 39 JVP candidates entered parliament at the last general election with the party supporting the current President thus auguring a change in political

structures. At the decentralised level youth representation is considerably higher.

Youth in the plantation sector

Youth in the plantation sector is generally characterised by high dropout rates and low levels of educational attainment, limited mobility because of ethnicity and identity ('estate worker'), and limited access to information and resources. Recent studies and policies highlight the high levels of youth frustration in the estate sector citing expanding horizons through increased awareness, unwillingness to engage in 'estate' work and improved education as causal factors for high levels of youth unemployment. Economic constraints at the household level compel youth to take on the role of breadwinner, or in some instances to provide supplementary income for the support of dependents. Although indicators for youth development in the sector are lower than the urban and rural sectors, intra-sectoral improvements show that young people are more educated, upwardly mobile and have broken away from the confines of the estate, the main causal factor being off estate/ self employment in nearby townships and outside the region.

This is particularly true for the estate sector where the socio-economic structure is undergoing a process of transformation. As a demographic group, it is the youth in the estate sector are the primary drivers of change. The increasing levels of education, mobility and awareness of other forms of socio-economic structures in Sri Lanka, and opportunities to access the socio-economy outside the estate have all contributed to youth becoming agents of change. However, as with other young people in Sri Lanka, the increased aspirations of estate youth have to be tempered against the constraints they face in fulfilling those aspirations.

1. Youth views on the estate community

"Today the youth think for themselves. The (colonialists) brought everything to their (parents') feet those days so there was no need for them to think." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

"The estate should understand that we, especially the youth also see what is happening outside the estate and would like to have a similar lifestyle. The estate should help us to obtain better jobs outside the estate (by giving recommendation letters) rather than obstructing us. We also want to have the same life style that is enjoyed by the people of this country" (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Ratnapura)

Youth perceptions of their communities are influenced by the experiences of their parents, the community and their knowledge of conditions outside the estates. They see an improving trend as compared with 15 or more years ago and consider their own situation significantly better than when their parents were young. Improvements were seen in relation to greater access to education, better health standards, better infrastructure, and mobility and integration with the rest of the socio-economy.

“The education opportunities in our parents’ time were low. They didn’t think it was advantageous. They never thought about the future. They just spent it on doing day-to-day work. They didn’t think ahead” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

“We want to have a good education no matter what happens; 15 years ago education was not a priority, as soon as they had financial problems they stopped education and started working”. (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, Private, Nuwara Eliya)

Nevertheless, compared with changes taking place in the rest of the country, the estates were seen as restrictive, lacking in opportunities and perpetuating poverty. They drew their conclusions from their association and interactions outside the estates through employment, travel and social activity.

“The very poor people are trapped, there is no way out for them. Some people drink and waste their money, in some instances the families have broken up which means even school going children have to work”. (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

Limitations in infrastructure, facilities and amenities were identified as factors which perpetuated poverty. The lack of proper infrastructure such as roads and transport impact many areas of community life, such as access to income generating activity and related markets, quality health care services and education. This view was particularly strong in the privately managed estates where it was felt the potential for improvement through management intervention was low.

“When we are sick the doctor is not there, when the doctor is there (visiting doctor who comes thrice a week) we don’t have any sickness” (Youth, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

“Transportation facilities are so bad that we have to walk most of the time even when we are critically ill. Sometimes there is no bus for days on end.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, Private, Kegalle)

“Every one has electricity these days except us. The management does not realize that we also have to develop with time. We have to spend a lot on kerosene oil and we cannot use a TV” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, Private, Kandy)

Alcoholism within the estate generated some of the most animated discussions. Behavioural issues arising from alcoholism ranged from low intensity issues such as noise and unpleasantness to serious issues of abuse and violence, and were seen as dragging down the community, binding them into a cycle of poverty and degradation.

“Kassipu (moonshine) problem is a curse that obstructs the development in the estate. Almost all the men are addicted and women go through a lot of problems due to that. Men spend what ever they earn on drinking and women have to work extra to make the ends meet. We are young but looking at what our mothers and aunts go through we are scared of getting married now”. (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, Private, Kalutara)

“So many fathers and mothers drink. It is a problem all the time. Drunken people disturb us. They use filthy words. Other people do not scold them because they fear them or don't mind. There are illicit liquor spots in the estate and a lot of people drink”. (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber RPC, Kegalle)

“Every man drinks. This causes domestic violence. They use cigarettes. There are children who try to get their parents out of it but they won't listen.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

In the community at large it was the women and youth who were most critical of the use and supply of alcohol and saw the need to control it. As a result many anti-alcohol programmes facilitated by external institutions together with the estate management targeted youth groups as potential users as well as change agents.

“We are currently running a programme with the police to control alcoholism. Alcoholism is a curse which affects families, the worker productivity and drags down life in the estates. We work with the children and young people. Some adults and the youth are very forthcoming. If they can be influenced they will influence the older people. We use new methods such as drama where the children and youth act. We have had good experiences. No poverty alleviation can happen unless this is controlled” (Management member, Rubber, RPC, Hunuwala)

While the majority of the youth, even the youngest group of respondents (the 11 to 14 age group), was very critical of adult alcohol consumption and felt that the youth should take a role in changing the situation, a minority were more accepting.

“We drink for happiness and for sadness. If we sell Arrack, the police come and arrest us. They give permits only to the Minister’s people. Not to us. The midwife takes a ‘shot’ while she is waiting for the baby to be born. When there is a funeral we have to give Arrack so people will come. If we give them only tea they’ll stay only for a short while.”
(Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

2 Own aspirations

The majority of the youth respondents were optimistic and forward looking in their outlook, envisioning a better life for themselves than their parents. This was not limited to employment but also included education, living conditions and aspirations. Higher levels of education, increased levels of awareness and information were cited as enablers to development and upward movement. Whilst many stated that they were far behind their urban and rural counterparts, they did envisage the possibility of improving within the sector. Many pointed to progress compared with those in the same age group ten years ago; for example, an increase in prioritisation of education to the extent that some students attend ‘tuition’ (supplementary fee based classes). They also acknowledged the ripple effects of the movement out of the estate by youth of the previous generation which played an important role in shaping the aspirations of current youth. Their ambitions were influenced by what they saw in this previous generation. Among the youngest respondents who were still in school the desire to be of service to the community also played a role in their job aspirations.

‘If I become a teacher I can give tuition free of charge for poor children. As a doctor I can treat poor patients.’ (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

Employment aspirations varied between the tea and rubber sectors and were significantly different from the popular view of aspirations of estate youth. The diversification from estate work to off estate work was evident in the increase in the number of those who wanted to work in the private sector/engage in self-employment. However, whereas employment in the private sector and to a slightly lesser extent, state sector, was the preference for rubber sector youth, remaining in estate employment was the overwhelming preference of the tea sector youth respondents.

Figure 1a: Youth aspirations in relation to employment: rubber estates

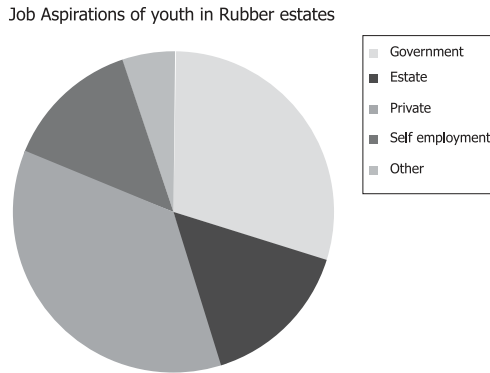
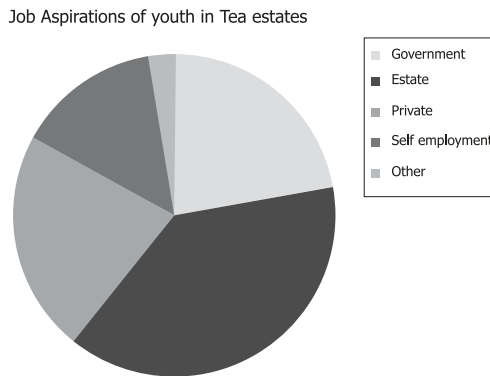


Figure 1b: Youth aspirations in relation to employment: tea estates



The reasons given for preferring to remain in the tea sector revolved around the desire to remain 'at home', a feeling of familiarity with the work, and their awareness that they lacked the qualifications to carry out any other work²⁴. The location of tea estates (based on the nature of the crop) also results in a higher level of isolation, which translates into a lower degree of awareness and opportunity for youth in the tea sector in comparison to their counterparts in the rubber sector.

"We feel comfortable in the estate since that is what we have been doing for generations; we also want to go to work from home, as we have to take care of our parents." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

"We have not got much of an education and this is where we belong. Whatever it is we are safe in the estate." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, State, Kandy)

"This is the life we know and when we go out of the estate we face a lot of problems like not having IDs and end up in the remand. In the estate we do not face these problems so if we are paid properly and given a proper place in the community this is where we like to be." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Pvt, Kegalle)

Government sector jobs were sought primarily due to the stability of employment and security offered through the pension system. The private sector was preferred for the perceived higher levels of income. The youth in some of the estates in both the tea and rubber sectors (irrespective of level of remoteness) were qualified and saw the private sector as being able to provide opportunities that matched their aspirations and in some less frequent instances, qualifications. Many worked in preparation for obtaining such positions.

"Almost all the youth are doing commerce for A/L in order to do chartered [accountancy] or other professional courses in the future. The idea is to work in the private sector." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC Kalutara) – non remote estate

In terms of gender parity in employment, female mobility was less than that of males. Off estate work was limited to wage labour in smallholdings or as

²⁴ The tea sector youth discussions tended to be dominated by male participants, hence the ideas expressed did not sufficiently capture the voice of the young women who, as reflected in the macro level conditions, form the greater majority of youth working on the estate

salaried employees in garment factories. Although some adult females worked as domestics in houses in the surrounding villages, female youth were less likely to do so. Female youth also did not shift to jobs that required them to change residence. The 'work out' period was limited to between 2 to 4 years for females who returned to estate work after marriage in contrast to males who continued to work out and in other regions for a longer time. As shown in the previous chapter, the typical pattern for out-migration is in the age group of 20 years with a return to the estates in the 30s.

"Girls go to garment factories; they see this as the only way to access external employment at least till they get married" (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Ratnapura)

In addition to formal sector employment, an increasing number of youth show an interest in self-employment with a considerable number possessing the primary skills required. Youth are the most highly mobile group in the sector and they have a good understanding of the market needs of the estate and the periphery.

Attempts to develop a strong livelihood portfolio lead many youth to work both on and off estate, especially in the tea sector where they engaged in wage labour on smallholdings or in vegetable cultivation. The latter was carried out by some as a business enterprise where they leased the land and controlled the entire production process from cultivation to sale.

3. Challenges in realising aspirations

Given that employment and education formed the core of youth aspirations, provision of education and its link to employment is a key issue in achieving youth aspirations.

Education in terms of access, service delivery, quality, usage, trends and application were central in the discussion of the youth FGDs. The state takeover of 'estate schools' in the 1970s saw a mainstreaming of education. As part of the national education system they should then have been afforded the same opportunities and standards as the rest of the country. However, historically the standard of estate schools was remarkably low; although there have been improvements, the quality of education does not match the standard of urban and rural sectors. The estate sector schools which often fall into the category of 'difficult' schools based on the level of isolation and the small population served are faced with severe shortages of teachers and facilities which affect the quality of education. With the exception of private estates, most estates have primary schools, the larger estates have secondary schools, and children in estates/divisions, which are closer to outside facilities, access state schools outside the estate.

“The estate school has classes up to grade five after that we have to go to the school in Kalutara, that’s far and so it costs more.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

“There is a lack of teachers; they cannot come to work due to lack of transportation facilities.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

“The estate school is only up to grade 6 and for further education we have to go Dehiovita (nearest township) and most of the children cannot do that. The fact that we have to go out of the estate to attend further schooling discourages most of the people” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

In addition to quality constraints, a critical constraint identified by youth in relation to education was the high level of poverty, which meant that schooling was unaffordable for those households. This was corroborated in the individual life stories where respondents assessed their households based on the school going status of eligible children. The majority of dropouts were due to the inability of parents to meet the costs of education such as books, uniforms, transport. Expenditure related disruptions were seen in households facing death and health related shocks as well as an inability to handle the expenses due to low incomes, and large families.

“Aiya (older brother) and Akka (older sister) go to school, others (siblings) don’t go” (Youth, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle) This 13 year old male respondent was upset that he was not going to school. Other respondents stated that he liked to learn but his household could not afford to educate all children

“Poverty - the poor people are trapped; there is no way out for them. Some people drink and waste their money, in some instances the families have broken up which means even school going children have to work” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

“Most of the children are leaving school and they are looking for jobs. They go out of the estate to look for better jobs than rubber tapping and they do not like to do it also. Parents also cannot afford to give them a better education” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, RPC, Kegalle)

Other reasons for dropping out of school included disturbance due to household level shocks, and attitudinal or behavioural issues

Household level shocks primarily related to death of a parent or serious sickness, which disrupts the household income pattern and necessitates care giving, was very frequently cited as a reason for dropping out of school.

“When we see the difficulties at home we drop out of school to support the family” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

“I studied up to grade 6, things were difficult so I stopped schooling and went to work – both parents were working but my mother was sickly. Now I am better off” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

Behavioural issues were linked to alcoholism of parents, negative attitudes of parents and students. It was interesting to note that certain divisions within estates were identified as ‘more developed’ by key informants based on the levels of educational attainment and school attendance of its youth populace. Youth who attended school and were part of a minority group in their divisions stated that general conditions such as loud music, drunken brawls, created an environment that was not conducive to study.

“No privacy at all and when the next door switches on the radio the children cannot study on the other side” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

“I have 8 members in my family. Only mother did a job. Father was a drunkard. We did not think of school” (HH interview, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

“We went on vacation to see my aunt; I did not come back for some time ...so I did not go back to school” (HH interview, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

Despite these difficulties, the youth felt strongly that the estate sector is rapidly catching up with national rates for primary enrolment and years of education, with some students pursuing education up to tertiary level. This was also substantiated in the individual life stories where respondents assessed their households’ income earning capacities and potential for mobility based on the current/future level of education of its members.

“Now it is not like those days, there are children who go to school and are exposed” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

“Parents are more concerned about education now and they do not want their children to end up in the same way” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, Pvt, Kegalle)

Debate amongst the youth participants highlighted the central relationship between education and movement. Whilst some placed a high premium on education as an enabler of mobility and development, others did not identify it as a cause of increased potential for income generation or overall development. This could be attributed to the bottlenecks experienced by educated youth in securing employment. Hence, education was not viewed as a stand-alone 'push up' factor. Access to opportunities, information, social networks and capital, and life skills such as entrepreneurship were also viewed as important for a smooth and secure transition to adulthood and associated responsibilities.

“Young people without qualifications have good jobs. Even if they do get a good education they don't get suitable jobs. Even if we have a good education we don't get good jobs, we end up in the tea bushes.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

“Most of us are educated up to O/L but we don't have jobs to match our qualifications. Also we are not willing to work as tea pluckers but a minimum of at least 10% end up working in the estate” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

“Yes, more education would have helped to get job. But then, look at this cousin - he went to school only for four years but he got a job in the hardware store in Dehiwita. I have studied for 10 years and I am doing wage labour” (Male, 24, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

Box 2: High Achievers of a remote estate

Macro level conditions of an estate, which impacted overall development trends for the community, also trickled down to its youth constituency. For example, despite being a fairly remote estate, this 'model' estate in the Central Province had a high percentage of highly educated youth.

“We have all studied up to A/L and some have even done the external degrees. We have gone for training on soil testing and can do research in other areas as well. I finished the GAQ at the Open University. I am working as a teacher in an informal educational institute; also involved in an UNICEF project to educate the illiterate”. (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

This estate is an outlier in that it is a well developed tea estate in a remote location. Despite this disadvantage the youth on the estate have shown remarkable progress thus reinforcing the benefits of macro level structural changes and reinvestment.

Obtaining external employment frequently does not call for more than basic literacy due to the nature of employment currently sought. Overseas employment, which is one of the strongest employment related push up factors, does not seem to require a greater number of years of education; both men and women within the sample with less than 8 years of education as well as one with no education, were currently overseas in the capacity of unskilled labour. This is in comparison to those in the rural and more specifically the urban sectors who go overseas as semi skilled/skilled labour.

Migration for employment is age selective and 90% of youth in the rubber sector and 60% of youth in the tea sector work off estate during the 'prime' years. The strong dislike for taking up estate work was evident in the many number of FGD respondents who were temporarily employed in ad hoc ventures such as gem mining²⁵ and those who were voluntarily unemployed, awaiting a job that matched their aspirations.

However, the relationship between levels of education and employment is not always clear. The achievement of O' levels and A' levels was closely linked to external or white collar employment, with all such achievers working off estate or in skilled occupations on the estate such as that of crèche attendant. Professional employment such as teaching or nursing required A' levels. Garment industry required at least education up to the O/Level.

All other levels of education were associated with mixed occupations and did not necessarily give the person a comparative advantage. The weak link between education at levels lower than O/Level and securing non-estate employment arises primarily from the fact that the type of work accessed does not demand high levels of education, possibly also because employment is sought primarily in the informal sector.

"I had my primary education here and then for 5 years in St. Mary's College, Kegalle, which is a better school. I am satisfied with my education, but I do not think it helped in getting my job. I got it because I am talented/clever (dakshai). What is needed is vocational training to get a proper job." (Male, 24, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

In terms of securing higher-level positions in the private sector, apart from those who focused on their education with the aspiration of gaining access to the private sector, the perception of the majority was that the sector was

²⁵ This cohort of youth (RPC, Ratnapura) engaged in illegal gem mining on the estate

inaccessible to them as estate youth who have to compete with better-positioned urban and rural peers.

Access to sources of seed capital was the biggest barrier cited by those who were considering starting small scale business activities. Secondly, the lack of support systems in the form of technical training and capacity building was highlighted. It was evident that youth in non remote estates had given considerable thought to and spent time planning business activities, possibly because of the opportunity to engage with those in the same or similar industries. Youth in remote estates stated that they would like to engage in self-employment schemes but did not substantiate their ambitions. The reduced level of youth initiative in remote estates could be attributed to the availability of fewer opportunities for such ventures and constraints in infrastructure, facilities, equipment etc.

“We want to start businesses on our own; a tailor shop, a video shop, buy a three wheeler, start sewing” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

Increased opportunities led to improvements in youth mobility especially in the rubber sector where the estates are located close to rapidly developing townships. The decade 1995–2005 saw considerable large scale investment in these areas in industries such as garment factories. The expansion of the service sector industries, such as communication centres, retail stores, restaurants, has provided opportunities for young people to move out of estate work. Some venture to the capital of Colombo while others go to the Middle East. Some young people also engaged in wage labour outside the estate. There was a marked preference for off estate work, because of higher levels of education and the stigma associated with being an estate labourer²⁶.

“Most of the youth in the estate are educated and they do not get any training to make them employable. We do not want to do rubber tapping like our parents with leeches everyday”. (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, Private, Kalutara)

The preference for non-estate work was identified by the Presidential Commission for Youth²⁷, which cites the “secondary school leaver who wants to leave the estate” as a specific target group for planning and service provision.

²⁶ The stereotype is generally associated with unskilled, uneducated labor force who are limited to manual labour

²⁷ The Commission which was convened by the then President to look at youth issues in Sri Lanka presented its findings in March 1990

Migration and movement of youth in the sector has been the focus of many studies and has become a point of agitation for a variety of stakeholders for different reasons. For example, management is faced with severe labour shortages because of current trends, which see estate youth being employed in other sectors and showing a marked disinterest in entering the sector (this was more pronounced in the rubber as opposed to the tea sector). Some companies had put in place initiatives to attract and retain their youth labour force. Trade Unions on the other hand were criticized by youth respondents for failing to develop and implement youth focused development mechanisms. This could be attributed to a hidden desire on the part of trade unions to retain youth on the estate for fear of losing their voter base.

Off estate work was not always viewed as sustainable and continuous, echoed in sentiments such as “there is no continuation in Colombo jobs”. In terms of skills development the responses reflected a high level of discontent in relation to opportunities for training and, especially in relation to income generation/vocational training.

“There is nobody to recognize our needs and push us forward. We like to start some sort of self-employment but we do not have the necessary training for that. The children stop schooling halfway and so they have no other option but to work in the estate in the end” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

The lack of avenues to secure capital for small scale self-employment activity was a crucial problem for youth in this sector. Some donors such as WUSC have recognized this limitation and have started support programmes for entrepreneurial activity. Salaried employment in the non estate sectors was not easily available as estate youth had to compete with better educated and socialised/exposed peers from the rural and urban sectors who were clearly preferred by employers, relegating them to openings at a low level as domestic workers, shop assistants or construction workers. A minority is able to secure jobs as semi-skilled workers, e.g. drivers, mechanics. The high levels of literacy and education achieved by their rural and urban counterparts serves to further underscore the limited education and awareness of estate youth.

“No one is helping us and we have not completed our education as well. So we are badly in need of training for employment of some sort” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

“The estate has no loan scheme designed for people and since we are estate people we can't get loans from the banks” (Youth Focus Group Discussion FGD, Rubber, Private, Kalutara)

“No one believes us enough to give us loans, we are branded as poor”
(Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

Many respondents cited marginalisation because of ascribed status as an obstacle for progress, even in instances where they possessed the required qualifications and expertise. Problems resulting from their Indian Tamil ethnicity and their identity ('estate worker') were cited recurrently by the youth FGDs.

“No one is there to give us a helping hand, our identity as estate workers is the biggest obstacle for improvement” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Ratnapura)

The high economic and cultural transaction costs of labour migration were identified as barriers to looking for employment outside the sector:

“We have to spend all we earn – can't even think of saving. Even though we go out for work, when the food and transport expenses are considered there's nothing left.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

“There are some who go out of the estate to work but the girls can't because they often face a lot of gossip, this becomes a problem at the time of their marriage.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

“There are people with driving licenses. But when we go for interviews they ask us what our parents are doing. If the parents are labourers, then we also have to be labourers.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

“We can start some sort of a self employment scheme but the estate does not have enough facilities or space to do that kind of thing.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

4. Youth as drivers of change

Young people identified themselves as an able and active group with 'raw' potential. There is a need to hone this potential by enhancing and updating skills (technical, vocational and educational) to match the demands of the job market and better position their entry into the labour force.

Respondents describe mobility in the broad context of increased opportunity, income, awareness and understanding and living conditions. While the benefits of education were acknowledged in other areas, “education has helped us

– it has taught us about the ill effects of alcohol and we in turn educate our parents”, its impact in raising the potential for income generation was debated because of constraints to accessing employment. Educated youth were not willing to work on the estate. Increased interaction with the non estate sectors through employment, education and social activity combined with increased access to media and telecommunications (young people are the highest user group) has led to broader diversification of awareness, outlook and trends.

In comparison with their parents’ era many youth stated that while their parents focused on meeting basic needs, today’s youth had better life chances in terms of access to outside opportunities and increased awareness. Some deliberated on this and cited these ‘improvements’ as a cause of high levels of discontent arising from an inability to meet these aspirations.

5. Understanding of power, democracy and freedom

The study also explored young people’s understanding of power, democracy and freedom.

Freedom

Freedom was explained at two levels; in relation to personal space and in relation to its operation in society. “Freedom means one’s own freedom; the freedom to do what we want”.

Freedom was also defined as lack of restrictions and impositions:

“If we go off the estate and if the government takes over the estates we will be free” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

“Our lives are very tiring! We get up to go to school, then it’s tuition till late night. Even the weekend and holidays are full of tuition. We hardly have time for play / hobbies. We don’t have any freedom – for us freedom means having some time to ourselves.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kalutara)

The chores and responsibilities of daily life were viewed as an impediment to freedom and the enjoyment of available freedom. Freedom of opportunity and choice was discussed in a comparative framework which contrasted the estates and villages - those in the estate don’t have as much freedom as those in villages (freedom of opportunity/choice), they have better access – computer classes, facilities, interactions. Youth being the most mobile cohort in a given estate were aware of the facilities and opportunities that were available outside.

It was seen as an abstract metaphoric concept - "it is good we have freedom", "Getting away from being under domination or being caged is freedom" - and as a tangible right that was accessible or restricted.

"We have the freedom of movement but not where we want to live. We don't have the freedom to choose the job that we want to do." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC)

Freedom of movement was discussed extensively at the FGDs not only in relation to freedom but also in terms of its positive impacts on mobility and access to opportunity:

"We can go anywhere now. Earlier they used to check IDs and other documentation. But now we are not scared. So we have our freedom now." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya).

The signing of the Ceasefire Agreement in 2001 saw a drastic rise in the number of youth venturing out of the sector not only to surrounding regions but also to Colombo, which is the perceived epicentre of opportunity ("*in Colombo if you step out to the pavements it's money no?*") for employment. Prior to the Ceasefire Agreement and resultant cessation of hostilities, estate youth were under the constant supervision of security personnel because of their ethnic identity, hence only a minority who were in possession of complete documentation ventured out for employment²⁸.

Youth in two of the tea FGDs put forward the premise that the structure of the estate sector was designed and continues in a manner which confines the workers to the estates and actively limits their freedom.

"All the things are provided for the people inside the estate – school, hospital, barber saloon. It is one way of preventing us from going out of the estate." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

Democracy

The discussion on democracy was closely linked to politics and was also synonymous in many instances with inequality. Although there was a lack of clarity in defining democracy the negative outcomes arising from a lack of democratic practice was elucidated.

²⁸ The research for this study was conducted in 2005. With the resumption of hostilities in 2006 and increased security measures, it is conceivable that these perceptions and out-migration pattern would have reversed.

"We can vote, talk any language and practice any religion. We can travel around and now we can go anywhere freely." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, Private,)

"Estate Tamils are cornered by everyone. No one respects us. We are considered as a caste of the lowest status." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

"Democracy is good; only the ministers have given it a foul meaning. Though we say that Sri Lanka is a democratic country what we see is a democracy for some; there are double standards." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

"We can't talk about democracy because we do not have the voting rights. In this estate only 180 out of 500 have voting rights." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

Power

The discussion on power was negative as many felt that they were 'powerless'. Collective powers and enhanced capacities as a result of working together were emphasised.

"We have no power. We live under someone and their power. If we get together there is power. If we achieve something by ourselves that is our power." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

"It is a motivation. If someone is powerful that person can do anything. One has to believe in oneself." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Badulla)

"If you have power you can do anything ...If you have connections with ministers you can get things done." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

Outlier definitions of power:

"Power is talent. Talking about mother's power when she asks me to go and work when I don't want to go for work." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

The lack of power as a characteristic of vulnerability:

"What power for us we are sucked out even by the leeches." (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, State, Kandy)

Inter-linkages between various aspects of power, democracy and freedom were elucidated in the following discussion:

“We have been ignored as a useless group of people and it’s the fault of the management. The problem is with the management. They think only about themselves. They don’t think about the youth’s education or wages. We don’t see any union working for us as well. The pay sheet is in English. They deduct money for so many things and think we don’t realise. The workers don’t know the reasons for the deductions and when they question they just give false reasons. We are not strong enough to protest. We are scared of losing our jobs. To get our EPF, we have to bribe the EPF brokers. They know a bit about these things. If we get Rs.300000 we have to give them Rs.50000. Sometimes the excuse for not giving the EPF is a wrong name.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Tea, RPC, Nuwara Eliya)

Poverty and escaping poverty were also seen in terms of entrapment and lack of power:

“Poverty is an obstacle to progress and development. The very poor people are trapped, there is no way out for them. Some people drink and waste their money, in some instances the families have broken up which means even school going children have to work.” (Youth Focus Group Discussion, Rubber, RPC, Kegalle)

The key point of discussion in the youth FGDs across both sub sectors centred on youth mobility. The shift from estate work to off estate based occupations was underscored by many youth who discussed many reasons for this shift ranging from higher aspirations, better educational attainment and the exposure and wider interactions that off estate work enabled. Whilst a majority acknowledged intra sectoral developments they also highlighted deficits in services provision, infrastructure and facilities.

Poverty among Sri Lanka's plantation sector workers has been a problem that has been difficult to address, mainly because of the unique nature of the sector. "The Estate Workers' Dilemma: Tensions of Change in the Tea and Rubber Plantations in Sri Lanka" is a comprehensive study that uses qualitative methods to understand the nature and drivers of poverty in the estates. It has important insights for the industry, for policy makers, and for civil society organisations working with estate workers.

இலங்கையின் தோட்டத்துறைத் தொழிலாளர்களிடையே உள்ள வறுமை ஒரு தீர்க்கப்படக் கூடியமான பிரச்சினையாக உள்ளது. இதற்குப் பிரதான காரணம் தோட்டத்துறையின் தனித்துவமான இயல்பாகும். "தோட்டத் தொழிலாளர்களின் தடுமாற்றமான நிலை: இலங்கையில் தேயிலை, இறப்பர் தோட்டங்களில் மாற்றத்தினால் ஏற்படும் புதற்றம்" என்பது பண்பு சார்ந்த முறைகளைப் பயன்படுத்தி தோட்டத்துறையில் உள்ள வறுமையின் இயல்பு, காரணங்கள் என்பவற்றை விளங்கிக் கொள்வதற்காக மேற்கொள்ளப்பட்ட ஓர் விரிவான ஆய்வாகும். தோட்டத் தொழிற்றுறை, கொள்கை வகுப்பாளர்கள், தோட்டங்களில் கடமையாற்றும் பொது சமூக நிறுவனங்கள் போன்றவற்றிற்கு இவ்வாய்வு ஆழமான கருத்துக்களை வழங்குகின்றது.

ශ්‍රී ලාංකීය වතු කම්කරුවන් අතර පවතින දරිද්‍රතාවය, එම ක්ෂේත්‍රයටම සුවිශේෂ වූ ස්වභාවය නිසා විසඳුම් සෙවීමට අපහසු ගැටළුවක් බවට පත්වී ඇත. "වතු කම්කරුවාගේ උභතෝකෝටිකය: ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ තේ සහ රබර් වැවිලි ක්ෂේත්‍රයේ අවිනිශ්චිතතාවයන් හා වෙනස්කම්", වැවිලි ක්ෂේත්‍රයේ පවතින දරිද්‍රතාවයේ ස්වභාවය හා දරිද්‍රතාවය පවත්වාගෙන යන දර්ශක අවබෝධ කරගැනීම සඳහා ගුණාත්මක විධිමත් භාවිතා කරනු ලැබූ පුළුල් අධ්‍යයනයකි. වැවිලි කර්මාන්ත ක්ෂේත්‍රය, ප්‍රතිපත්ති සම්පාදකයින් සහ වතු කම්කරු ජනතාව හා එක්ව කටයුතු කරන සිවිල් සමාජ ආයතන සඳහා මෙමගින් ඉතා වැදගත් කරුණු උකහා ගත හැක.

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