

Economic Hardships Related to Livelihood of Female-headed Households in Rural Areas in Sri Lanka

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The modern households in both developed and developing countries have undergone significant transformations in its structure. In recent decades, Female-Headed Households (FHHs) emerged as a new structural form of household and this type of households have become significant phenomena. It has generally assumed that most cases of female headship have related to negative circumstances in particularly in the livelihood. Accordingly, main intentions of this research were to study the economic hardships related to livelihood activities and to identify root-causes and interrelationships among those hardships related to in rural areas in Sri Lanka. The empirical study is based on field data and the research was conducted in five *Grama Niladari* Divisions of Galgamuwa Divisional Secretariat in Sri Lanka. Data was collected from a hundred FHHs based on Purposive sampling. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as primary data collection techniques based on the survey and case study methods. Economic vulnerabilities related to their livelihood such as low level of income, high rate of dependents, tendency of making short-term money transactions with their kin or community members for daily needs, lack of water, lack of labour, inadequate agriculture extension services, lack of formal employment and income generating opportunities, lack of confidence for diversification of livelihood activities, limited access to the market, low rate of commodity price related to self-employment, inadequate capital to start income generating activities, lack of empowerment and motivation and prevalence of dependency mentality were major economic hardships of the study. As consequences, economic vulnerabilities and instability of livelihood have been created by these livelihood hardships and it could be also identified that there are inter-relationships of economic hardships with inadequate education, lack of trainings and professional qualifications, lack of formal employment, Instability of employment and livelihood activities, lack of infrastructures etc. Based on the findings, finally, this study signifies that typical rural development approaches mainly based on top-down supply had not responded adequately to the complexity of rural contexts in the past decades and suggests an approach to participatory and negotiated territorial development which offers concrete answers to the challenges of improving trust among female headed households in the research area, strengthening social cohesion and promoting a systemic territorial development.

Key words: *Economic vulnerabilities, Female-headed households, Livelihood, Participatory development*