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New Dimensions of Gender and Poverty in Global and Sri Lankan Context

Dilan Gunawardane

Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale

*Correspondence- gunawardaned@gmail.com

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දුගීභාවය දියුණු නොදියුණු බේදයකින් තොරව හඳුනාගත හැකි ගෝලීය ප්‍රශ්නයක් වේ. ගෝලීය වශයෙන් දුගීභාවය හදුනාගැනීමේ දී ගොඩනැගී ඇති අසමානතාව ඉතා පුළුල් මට්ටමින් දැකගත හැකිය. බටහිර යුරෝපයේ කාර්මික රටවල් ඇතුළු ලෝකයේ සෙසු දියුණු රටවල් පිළිබඳ අවධානය යොමු කිරීමේ දී, ඇමරිකා එක්සත් ජනපදය, කැනඩාව, ජපානය, ඕස්ට්‍රේලියාව, ජර්මනිය සහ ප්‍රංශය වැනි රටවල් ධනවාදී සමාජ ලෙස දුගීභාවයෙන් තොරව හදුනාගත හැකිය. නමුත් අප්‍රිකා, ලතින් ඇමරිකා සහ කැරිබියන් මෙන්ම ආසියානු කලාපය ගත් විට එම රටවල දුගීභාවය ඉතා බරපතල ප්‍රශ්නයක් ලෙස වර්ධනය වී තිබේ. ස්ත්‍රී පුරුෂ සමාජභවය සහ දුගීභවය අතර ඇති සබඳතාව පරීක්ෂා කිරීමේ දී ස්ත්‍රී පුරුෂ වෙනස මත ගොඩනැගී ඇති දුගීභවය සංවර්ධනය වෙමින් පවතින රටවල බරපතල ප්‍රශ්නයක් වශයෙන් දක්නට ලැබේ. තොරතුරු මූලාශ්‍ර විමර්ශනය කිරීමේ දී පුරුෂයාට සාපේක්ෂව ස්ත්‍රීය සමාජ, ආර්ථික හා සංස්කෘතික සාදක මත දුගීභවයේ ඉහල අගයක් පෙන්නුම් කරයි. ශ්‍රී ලංකාව ඇතුළු අනෙකුත් දියුණු වෙමින් පවතින රටවල තත්වය පරීක්ෂා කරන විට පුරුෂයාට සාපේක්ෂව ස්ත්‍රීය දුගීභවය හේතු කොටගෙන විවිධ ගැටළුවලට මුහුණ දෙමින් සිටින බව අනාවරණය වේ.

මූලාශ්‍ර පද: දුගීභාවය, ස්ත්‍රී-පුරුෂ සමාජභාවය, අසමානතාව, සංවර්ධනය සහ උගත සංවර්ධනය

1. Introduction

Poverty can be identified as the major problem in the world that has received the attention of planners and policy makers. The number of people living in poverty is alarming; for instance in 2006, statistics show that 1.2 billion people still lived on less than a dollar a day, and 2.8 billion on less than two. (*World Development Report 2007*). Poverty rates in the regions can be identified as the share of people living on less than a dollar a day (%), South Asia 36%, China 20%, East Asia and Pacific 19%, Latin America and Caribbean 12%, Europe and Central Asia 8%, Middle East and North Africa 5%. (*World Development Indicators, 2004: page 01*). These statistical data reveal that South Asia has the highest poverty rate of the world, viz.36%. As per ‘Poverty Indicators – 2011’, the report of the Department of Census and Statistics, Estate Sector poor is 11.4% and the Rural Sector holds 9.4% and Urban poor is 5.3% as reported in 2009/10.(*Household Income and Expenditure Survey-2009/10, Department of Census and Statistics-Sri Lanka*).

While considering the gender and poverty in Sri Lanka, like in other Asian countries, women comprise disproportionately a larger percentage of the poor. According to the Head Count Index by sex of the household head, poverty in urban sector male headed household is 6% and female is 9.3%. In rural areas poverty in female headed household is 15.2%. By comparing the urban and rural, the poverty in female headed household is higher than the value of urban areas which records 9.3% and 15.2% in urban and rural sector respectively (*Number of poor persons and number of poor households by sector, province and district, 2006/07, HIES-2006/07, department of Census and statistic*). This is primarily due to gender based problems that cause women to be more deprived than men. Many women have to face unequal sharing of food, inadequate or lack of work, unequal wages, loss of employment, and persistent verbal and physical violence. Further, mainly in the rural sector, women have limited access to resources such as credit, land, inheritance, education and lack of supportive services and hence their participation in decision making is limited. Because of these gender based discriminations women are poorer than men. This phenomenon is commonly known as the “feminization of poverty” and has now become a universal phenomenon. If, Women is to be empowered, she needs access to material, human, and social resources necessary to make strategic choices in her life.

According to this statistical data and conceptual analysis gender inequality and poverty can be identified two serious problems for developing countries, where the majority of women have been victims of cultural, socio-political and environmental

impacts of development. The literature on women and poverty abounds with evidence that women are disproportionately subject to the economic and socio-cultural effects of poverty. In this background the study was conducted to analyze the pattern of gender and poverty in global and Sri Lankan context.

2. Research Objectives

The key objective of the study is to investigate what are the co-relations between gender and poverty in global context and Sri Lankan society. However, this key objective can be divided precisely by elaborating its scope of the research. They are:

01. To identifying poverty as a multi-dimensional concept
02. To understanding the nature of rural poverty in Sri Lanka
03. To understanding the women status of the global and Sri Lankan context
04. To identify the co-relationship between the gender and poverty in global and Sri Lankan context

3. Research Methodology

The key objective of this study is to investigate what are the relationship between gender and poverty in global and Sri Lankan context. Methodology applied in this study was literary survey. Therefore, quantitative methodology is used to identify the nature of poverty and relationship between gender and poverty.

The survey method, comparative method and statistical method were used as the research methods in this research. Survey method was used to identify the previous research and literature relating to the concepts of gender and poverty. Further, comparative method used to compare the data regarding, poverty and men as well as poverty and women. In addition, compare status of gender and poverty in Sri Lanka and gender and poverty in global context, comparative method was used. Finally, statistical method was used to analyze the secondary level data, that have been collected from secondary sources.

While considering the data collection techniques, the study was desk research its completely depend on secondary data, Secondary level data were collected from relevant books and websites. As well as resent studies relating to the gender and poverty were used for collecting to the secondary data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The definition of poverty

On a global basis, defining poverty is a difficult task because of conceptual problems and problems in acquiring comparable data from various nations. Economists and Sociologists agree that a meaningful concept of poverty should possess the attributes of measurability, objectivity, comparability and sensitivity to changes, yet they have not evolved a universally accepted concept of poverty. It depends on the approach adopted by the researchers to the phenomenon of poverty.

However, two radically different approaches to the definition of poverty have been advanced; on the one hand, the Culture of Poverty and on the other, the Economic Definition. The focus of the cultural concept of poverty is on the internal attitudes and behavior patterns of the poor with respect to the set of circumstances while the economic concept highlights the external circumstances that condition a person's behavior towards economic transactions.

The central point of the economic definition of poverty is that it is a property of the individual's situation rather than a characteristic of the individual or of his pattern of behaviour. However, for low income nations in a state of economic transition, data on income and levels of consumption are typically difficult to attain and are often ambiguous when they are available. Therefore, income disparities are not the only factors that define poverty and its effect on people.

Presently, the meaning of poverty has changed from its definitions based on economic indicators, to this new definition, and considers poverty to consist of components of material deprivation, low levels of health and education indicators, vulnerability and exposure to risk, noiselessness and powerlessness (*World Development Report 2000/2001*). This indicates the influence of structural and alternative development strategies in the identification of poverty and planning for its alleviation. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has mentioned,

Poverty is not a natural human condition. It may be caused by wars, corrupt governments, failed ideologies, and unjust laws; and it can be overcome through economic development. But, poverty encompasses not only material deprivation in terms of income or consumption levels below some minimally adequate levels, but also the deprivations arising from illiteracy, malnutrition, bad health, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to economic shocks, and lack of political freedom. While material deprivations are clearly

linked in many cases to these other types of deprivation, they are not all-encompassing (Asian Development Bank, Key Indicators, 2004).

Poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon; it may be defined in either of two ways, namely *Absolute poverty and Relative poverty*. Absolute poverty refers to a lack of basic necessities, such as food, shelter and income. According to this idea, people who cannot afford some minimum of food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities are considered poor regardless of how they compare with other people. Relative Poverty refers to a situation in which some people fail to achieve the average income or lifestyle enjoyed by the rest of society. Relative Poverty emphasizes the inequality of income and the growing gap between the richest and poorest (Guerrer; 2005; 224). According to the idea of relative poverty, people are poor only in comparison with others. Relative poverty always involves comparing one group with another group. One implication of this approach is that it will never vanish.

The concept of absolute poverty has been widely criticized. It is based on the assumption that there are basic minimum needs for all people in all societies. The problem is that needs exist both within and between societies. For example, within a society, the nutritional needs of a bank clerks and labourers are very different. Between societies, the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert have very different nutritional needs when compared to office workers in London. Furthermore, the concept of absolute poverty is very difficult to define when it includes cultural needs. These needs vary from time to time and place to place, so that any attempts to establish a fixed standard is bound to fail (Haralambos and Heald, 1980: 141).

According to the above factors, poverty has been used as multi-dimensional; some dimensions of poverty may be more closely interlinked than others. Therefore, it is difficult to separate each dimension. However, poverty is a global problem that is shared by every country – developed or underdeveloped and also it has to be the cause for a number of social problems. Therefore, in the UNO announced SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), the 1st is taken to Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger by 2030 (The Sustainable Development Goals Report, United Nations-2015).

4.2 Theoretical view of poverty

By explaining the concept of poverty, it can be identified as different types of theories that have been advanced. Two different perspectives to explaining poverty have emerged; one is an economic view and other one is a sociological view. Economists attempt to define poverty while relating to the economic factors and they highlight the external circumstances that condition a person's behavior

towards economic transactions. In identifying the poor sociologically, they try to define poverty through the social factors. The focus of social concept of poverty is on the internal attitudes and behavior patterns of the poor with respect to the set of circumstances.

The sociology of poverty has increasingly come to be studied within a complicit perspective. Complicit theorists argue that poverty continues to exist because society fails to allocate its resources fairly. According to the Marxists, poverty is a consequence of the ownership of capital by a few people, at the expense of the rest of the society. Inequality is essential to capitalism, and a consequence of its exploitative dynamic.

The Weberian view stresses the weak market position of the poor-their poverty is the consequence of lack of bargaining power. This is a common feature of those who are most vulnerable, particularly the unemployed, low-paid, single parents and the elderly.

Feminist have stressed the feminization of poverty, pointing out that those who suffer most from poverty are women. Women have always been particularly vulnerable to poverty.

From the Functionalist's point of view, if poverty is a prevalent feature of society, then it must in some way be functional, although it is clearly dysfunctional to those in poverty. Poverty must serve a social function. This argument has been elaborated by Howard Gans (1973). He delineates fifteen ways in which poverty can be functional, for example:

- Poverty helps to ensure that dirty, dangerous, menial and undignified work gets done.
- The poor help to uphold the legitimacy of dominant norms by providing examples of deviance
- The poor help to provide emotional satisfaction, evoking compassion, pity and charity, so that the affluent may feel righteous.
- Poverty helps guarantee the status of the non-poor
- The poor add to the social viability of non-economic groups

A functional analysis, he says, 'must conclude that poverty persists not only because it satisfies a number of functions but also because many of the functional

alternatives to poverty would be quite dysfunctional for the more affluent members of society.' 'Phenomena like poverty', he concludes, 'can be eliminated only when they either become sufficiently dysfunctional for the affluent or when the poor can obtain enough power to change the system to social stratification'. The poor, he suggests, will always be with us (Barnard and Burgess, 1996: 289-292)

Functionalists have mentioned that the poor are always present in society and they perform vital services for society. Therefore, poverty associating with positive functions makes possible the existence or expansion of respectable professions and occupations; for example, Penology, Criminology, Social Work, and Public Health. More recently, the poor have provided jobs for professional and para-professional 'poverty warriors' and for journalists and social scientists (Henslin, 1988: 328).

Symbolic Interactionists assert that just like any other aspect of society, inequality is sustained and created through interaction and definitions of the situation. Formal and informal socialization plays a major role in this process (Curry et al, 1997: 182)

According to the above theories discussed, sociologists try to explain poverty through their own perspectives. Each type of theory discussed above has both strength and weaknesses. But together, they enable us to understand better the cause for and cures to poverty.

4.3 Poverty in the global context

Poverty is a global problem that is shared by every country-developed or underdeveloped. The global pattern of inequality is even starker. According to the UN, 800 million people in the world are malnourished and 4 billion people, two-thirds of the world's population are poor, which is defined as lacking the ability to obtain adequate food, clothing, shelter, and other basic needs. Also, a fifth of the developing world's population goes hungry every night, a quarter lack access to even a basic necessity like safe drinking water, and a third live in a state of abject poverty-at, such a margin of human existence that words simply fail to describe it. The citizens of the 20 or so rich, highly industrialized countries spend more on cosmetics or an alcohol or ice cream or pet food than it would take to provide basic education, or water and sanitation, or basic health and nutrition for everyone in the world (Brym and Lie, 2005: 239).

Consider global inequality for a movement. The United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and a dozen or so Western European countries including Germany, France,

and the United Kingdom are the world’s richest post-industrial societies. The world’s poorest countries cover much of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia. Inequality between the rich and poor countries is staggering. Nearly one-fifth of the world’s population lacks adequate shelter, and more than one-fifth lacks safe water. About one-third of the world’s people are without electricity and more than two-fifths lacks adequate sanitation. In the United States, there are 626 phone lines for every 1000 people, but in Cambodia, the Congo, and Afghanistan there is only 1 line per 1000 people. Annual health expenditure in the United States is \$2765 per person, whereas the comparable figure for Tanzania and Sierra Leone is \$4 per person and for Vietnam it is \$3 per person. The average educational expenditure for an American child is \$11,329 per year, compared with \$57 in China, \$46 in Mozambique, and \$38 in Sri Lanka. People living in poor countries are also more likely than people in rich countries to experience extreme suffering on a mass scale (Brym and Lie, 2005: 239).

As Table 4.1 shows, many developing countries have large sections of their population living in extreme poverty, more than one-third in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Namibia, for example, and over 60 per cent in Rwanda and 70 per cent in Nigeria. Clearly, material conditions of life in the developed countries are very different from those in developing countries.

**Table 01:
Measures of Extreme Poverty, 2007 (Selected Countries)**

Country	Poverty (ratio living on US \$1 a day)
Australia	0
Bangladesh	36
Brazil	7.5
China	9.9
Czech Republic	0
Denmark	0
Egypt	3.1
France	0
Japan	0
Kenya	22.8
New Zealand	0
Mozambique	36.2
Namibia	34.9
Nigeria	70.8
Norway	0

Pakistan	17
Rwanda	60.3
Sweden	0
UK	0
USA	0

(Giddens, 2010: 481)

Even though the eighties and the nineties were periods of increasing wealth because of the development of new technologies, the gap between the rich and poor has grown wider, and the actual numbers of people living in poverty increased. The number of people living in poverty is alarming, for instance in 2006, statistics show that 1.2 billion people still lived on less than a dollar a day, and 2.8 billion on less than two (*World Development Report 2007*). Poverty rates in the regions which can be identified where the share of people are living on less than a dollar a day (%), Sub-Saharan Africa 50%, South Asia 36%, China 20%, East Asia and Pacific 19%, Latin America and Caribbean 12%, Europe and Central Asia 8%, Middle East and North Africa 5% (*World Development Indicators, 2004: page 01*). These statistical data reveal that South Asia has the highest poverty rate of the world, viz.36%. This background is clearly discussed by Quibria,

There are about 1115 million poor people in Developing countries, of which about 800 million are in Asia. Furthermore, among these 800 million poor, about 500 million are considered extremely poor. Poverty exists in both rural and urban areas; the problem in developing Asia is predominantly one of rural poverty. The percentage of the poor living in rural areas is almost 70 per cent in the Philippines, 80 per cent in India and Thailand, and 90 per cent in Indonesia. Rural Poverty continuous to pose one of the greatest development challenges in many Asian development economies, particularly in low income countries. A majority of the rural poor are marginal and landless farmers (Quibria, 1993: 01).

In addition, Quibria has mentioned the causes of Third World poverty. It can be seen that several factors contribute to the prevailing poverty levels in the Third World, such as:

- Third World countries lose out through unfair trade agreements, lack of technology and investment, and rapidly changing prices for their goods.
- When a country is at war (including civil war) basic services like education are disrupted. People leave their homes as refugees. Crops are destroyed.

- Third World countries have to pay interest on their debts. This means they cannot afford to spend enough on basic services like health and education; nor on things like transport or communications that might attract investment.
- Many people in the Third World have had their land taken over by large businesses, often to grow crops for export.
- Affordable or free healthcare is necessary for development. In poor countries the percentage of children who die under the age of five is much higher than in rich countries. HIV/AIDS is having a devastating effect on the Third World.
- Affordable, secure food supplies are vital. Malnutrition causes severe health problems, and can also affect education. Without education it is difficult to escape from poverty. This becomes a vicious circle – people who live in poverty cannot afford to send their children to school.

(Quibria, 1993: 04)

While considering these factors, poverty can be seen as the major challenge being faced by developing countries.

4.4 Poverty in Sri Lankan context

Sri Lanka is well known for achieving high levels of human development at relatively low levels of GDP per capita. Successive governments have invested heavily in education, health and welfare programmes and this has been associated with the country achieving levels of life expectancy and literacy that are comparable to other regional countries (Table 4.2).

Sri Lanka is ranked 92 out of 186 countries in the HDI published by the UN in the Human Development Report, 2012. The HDI is a composite measure that captures the three basic aspects of human development viz. longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living. It is devised to rank countries by the level of human development. Sri Lanka is grouped in the High Human Development category, occupying the 3rd position and first among the South Asian countries in the HDI. With a score higher than the South Asian average of 0.558, Sri Lanka ranks high in life expectancy, literacy rates and other social indicators.

Table 02:
A Comparison of Human Development Achievements for Sri Lanka and Other Countries - 2013

Country Group	Human Development Index (HDI) Value	Life Expectancy at Birth (Yrs)	Adult Literacy Rate	Mean Years Of Schooling	Expected Years of Schooling	Gross National Income (GNI) per Capita
Sri Lanka	0.715	75.1	90.6	9.3	12.7	5,170
Arab states	0.652	72.0	72.9	6.0	10.6	8,317
East Asia and the Pacific	0.683	71.7	93.5	7.2	11.8	6,874
Europe and Central Asia	0.771	71.5	98.0	10.4	13.7	12,243
Latin American and the Caribbean	0.741	74.7	91.0	7.8	13.7	10,300
South Asia	0.558	66.2	62.8	4.7	10.2	3,343
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.475	54.9	61.6	4.7	9.3	2,010
World	0.694	70.1	80.9	7.5	11.6	10,184

Source: Human Development Report, 2013

Furthermore, infant mortality has fallen from 17 per 1000 in 1993 to 15 per 1000 in 2009; life expectancy has risen from 63 years in 2007 to 75 years in 2011; and, population growth has halved from 2.8 percent in 1963 to 1.4 percent in 2011. However, these human development achievements and high levels of public expenditure on social welfare, have not eradicated deprivation. Over one-fourth of pre-school children still suffer from under nutrition and between a quarter to a third of the population experienced income poverty in the mid 2010. The country may have graduated from being 'low income' to 'lower-middle income' in 2011 when per capita GNI passed the US\$4000 hurdle but Poverty persists (Human Development Statistics, 2011).

After more than several decades of development efforts, poverty still remains as a major problem in Sri Lanka.

Table 03:
Poverty and inequality in Sri Lanka 1990 to 2010
(% of total population)

Poverty Indicators	1990-91	1995-96	2002	2006-07	2009/10
Poverty incidence	26.1	28.8	22.7	15.2	8.9
Poverty incidence by sector					
Urban poverty	16.3	14	7.9	6.7	5.3
Rural poverty	29.4	30.9	24.7	15.7	9.4
Estate poverty	20.5	38.4	30.0	32.0	11.4
Poverty incidence by region					
Western	21	18	11	8	4.2
North Central	24	24	21	14	5.7
Central	28	37	25	22	9.7
North-west	25	29	27	15	11.3
Southern	30	33	28	14	9.8
Sabaragamuwa	31	41	34	27	10.6
Uva	33	49	37	24	13.2

Household Income and Expenditure Survey period 1990 to 2010, Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka

According to the ‘Poverty Indicators -2011’ the report of the Department of Census and statistic, the Estate sector poor is 11.4% and the Rural sector holds 9.4% and Urban poor is 5.3% reported in 2009/10 (*Household Income and Expenditure Survey - 2009/10, Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka*).

The latest calculation of poverty indices shows that the poverty level of the country has further declined from 15.2% reported in 2006/07 to 8.9% in 2009/10. The 41% reduction reported in just 3 years is the highest drop ever witnessed and the previous highest was the exactly one-third drop, from 22.7% to 15.2% reported over the 4 years and 6 months period from 2002 to 2006/07 survey periods (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3, indicates that poverty level of rural sector has further declined from 24.7% reported in 2002 to 9.4% in 2009/10. The sharp drop of rural sector poverty reported since 2002 is the main contributor for the unprecedented drop of poverty at national level. Considering the poverty level of the estate sector, it has increased from the 30% reported in 2002 to 32% in 2006/07.

However, the bitter increase of poverty in the estate sector reported in 2006/07 was an eye opener towards the hardworking estate population who contribute heavily to the growth of the country’s export trade. According to Table 4.3, a two-

third drop of poverty in the estate sector almost equals the poverty HCR reported by the rural sector. It also reveals a significant drop in relative prices of food items and an increase of employment and wages in the estate sector since 2006/07 and mainly with it the estate sector poverty drop is justified.

Location-specific characteristics are fundamental in explaining the uneven pattern of development and poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. Poverty reduced much faster in the Western Province than elsewhere. Poverty in the Western Province declined from 21% in 1990/91 to 4.2% in 2009/10, while its decline in other regions was less pronounced. The region had superior endowments of infrastructure facilities such as a port and an international airport, the concentration of human capital resources, electricity and telecommunications, diversified markets of consumers and firms. New industrial enterprises were encouraged to locate to the metropolitan hub, people followed jobs and jobs followed people, thereby setting in train a virtuous cycle.

Table 4.4, shows that all the districts except Batticaloa and Ampara report significant poverty reductions since 2006/07. Nuwara-Eliya district shows the maximum relief where 3 out of every 4 poor escaped from poverty due to estate sector relief. Hambantota district continues its 60% drop of poverty reported from 2002 to 2006/07 reporting a 46% drop since 2006/07. Badulla, Moneragala and Ratnapura which were the poorest districts in 2006/07 also report around 50% reduction of poverty and yet the Moneragala district is the poorest among districts other than the Northern and Eastern districts. North Central districts are relatively rich but Vavuniya district which was used as the main transit point during the 2009/10 survey period has reported the least poverty. Batticaloa district which was partially covered in the 2006/07 survey shows the highest deprivation among all the districts and within the Northern and Eastern districts Jaffna also shows high poverty existence (16.1%).

Table 04:
Poverty headcount ratio by District and HIESs Survey Period
From 1990 to 2010

District	HIES Survey Period				
	1990/91	1995/96	2002	2006/07	2009/10
Colombo	16.2	12.0	6.4	5.4	3.6
Gampaha	14.7	14.1	10.7	8.7	3.9
Kalutara	32.3	29.5	20.0	13.0	6.0
Kandy	35.9	36.7	24.9	17.0	10.3
Matale	28.7	41.9	29.6	18.9	11.5
NuwaraEliya	20.1	32.1	22.6	33.8	7.6
Galle	29.7	31.6	25.8	13.7	10.3
Matara	29.2	35.0	27.5	14.7	11.2
Hambantota	32.4	31.0	32.2	12.7	6.9
Jaffna	-	-	-	-	16.1
Vavuniya	-	-	-	-	2.3
Batticaloa	-	-	-	10.7	20.3
Ampara	-	-	-	10.9	11.8
Trincomalee	-	-	-	n.a	11.7
Kurunegala	27.2	26.2	25.4	15.4	11.7
Puttalam	22.3	31.1	31.3	13.1	10.5
Anuradhapura	24.4	27.0	20.4	14.9	5.7
Polonnaruwa	24.9	20.1	23.7	12.7	5.8
Badulla	31.0	41.0	37.3	23.7	13.3
Moneragala	33.7	56.2	37.2	33.2	14.5
Ratnapura	30.8	46.4	34.4	26.6	10.5
Kegalle	31.2	36.3	32.5	21.1	10.8

Household Income and Expenditure Survey - 2009/10, Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka

4.5 Gender and poverty in Global Context

Gender inequality and poverty are two serious problems for developing countries, where the majority of women have been victims of cultural, socio-political and environmental impacts of development. The literature on women and poverty abounds with evidence that women are disproportionately subject to the economic and socio-cultural effects of poverty. Women are also known to be discriminated against in terms of economic security, basic needs support, work access, opportunities and remuneration.

Mayra Buvinic, who has served as a chief of the Women in Development Programme unit at the 'Inter American Development Bank', describes the women's status of the low income economies,

Most affected by poverty in low-income economies are women and children. Many women worldwide who face obstacles to increasing their economic power because; they do not have the time to invest in the additional work that could bring in more income. Also, many poor women worldwide do not have access to commercial credit and have been trained only in traditionally female skills that produce low wages. These factors have contributed to the 'global feminization of poverty', whereby women around the world tend to be more impoverished than men (Kendal, 2004: 223)

Literature in Sri Lanka and other countries has revealed that women are more likely to suffer from poverty than men and, it would seem likely, that women would experience poverty at higher levels than men.

Of the 1.3 billion people around the world living on \$1 a day or less, 1 billion of them are women. Of the estimated 854 million illiterate adults in the world, 64 percent of them are women (Brym and Lie, 2005: 239).

In many societies women and female children are discriminated against in the intra-household allocation of resources. Women from poor households often do not get their fair share of household consumption; on the other hand, they contribute more than their fair share of work, engaging in household activities such as housekeeping, child care, and home production as well as in activities outside the home on the farm or in the labour market. There is considerable evidence that the level of education of the mother and the resources she commands influence fertility as well as the health of her offspring, thereby affecting the family's chances of climbing out of poverty. The issue of women and rural poverty is therefore an important one (Quibria, 1993: 5).

In addition, when compared with status of women, several factors have contributed to women being impoverished than men.

- Women are less likely than men to have occupational pensions and income from investments.
- Married women are less likely to be working than married men.
- Women who are working are more likely than men to be low paid.
- More women than men work part time.

- More women than men rely on benefits as their main source of income.
- Lone parents are vulnerable to poverty, and about 90% are women.
- The majority of pensioners are women

(Haralambos and Holborn, 2002: 45).

In some Asian developing countries, these factors have converged, compounding female poverty.

Poor women are highly vulnerable to deprivation in terms of nutrition, health, education, asset accumulation, skill building and participation in collective organization because they tend to provide the “safety net” which protects their children and household against catastrophic poverty.

The violence which affects the lives of poor women in the Third World is better documented now than it used to be and shows the many facets of their powerlessness in the most elementary respects: millions of female babies destroyed at or soon after birth such that there is a big “population gap” in female vs male births in the Third World (Chambers, 1996); the sale of young girls into forced labor, prostitution or as child brides; the ritual mutilation of female sexual organs; and physical violence used to control women’s labor in the household. Other forms of social violence include abandonment of mothers to cope in female-headed households, denial of property rights (Ashby, 1999: 08).

The females are poor often suffer from many disadvantages arising from differences in access to infrastructure, productive inputs, education and training, and in mobility constraints. The specific detrimental effects of poverty on females, arising both from intra-household allocation processes and from the adverse household environment, are manifest in lower levels of nutrition and health, in limited access of the female juvenile poor to education, in chronic energy deficits of the female working poor from poor diets and hard work, and in fewer earning options compared with men, despite the fact that nutritional level of poor families depend substantially on female earning.

South Asian rural societies’ greater and longer standing stratification by ethnic, caste and religious divisions has produced pools of rural poor who are disadvantage both economically (in land, education, and other income-yielding assets) and socio-politically. The combination of multiple disadvantages (by class, caste, ethnicity and sex) is of particular significance in discussing gender aspects of poverty because at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, females tend to face stiffer obstacles in

gaining access to better employment options due to more severe lack of material and educational assets and of credit and other inputs. Furthermore, in much of South Asia, women's worse earning options and position in the labour markets can be seen as a matter of the basic needs of the female working poor, remaining unsatisfied and the gender gap in literacy and education being much wider at the low income level. According to those factors rural poverty especially female poverty can be identified as a major problem in the developing countries.

4.6 Gender and poverty in Sri Lankan Context

The situation of women in Sri Lanka has been influenced by patriarchal values embedded in traditional, colonial, and post-independence societies, by relatively liberal traditional laws and gender inequality reflected in the legal system, and by norms introduced during the British colonial administration. In the transition years following colonial rule, Sri Lankan policymakers introduced a social policy package of free health and education services and subsidized food, which dramatically improved women's quality of life. Compared to the rest of South Asia, Sri Lankan women are very well off, enjoying high life expectancy, near universal literacy, and access to economic opportunities, which are nearly unmatched in the rest of the subcontinent.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions—reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and adolescent fertility rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by each gender and attainment at secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the labour market participation rate for each gender. The GII replaced the previous Gender-related Development Index and Gender Empowerment Index. The GII shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions.

Sri Lanka has a GII value of 0.402, ranking it 75 out of 148 countries in the 2012 index. In Sri Lanka, 5.8 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 72.6 percent of adult women have reached a secondary or higher level of education compared to 75.5 percent of their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 35 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent fertility rate is 22.1 births per 1000 live births. Female participation in the labour market is 34.7 percent compared to 76.3 for men (Human Development Report-2012). Further, Figure 4.1 indicates more details relating to the status of women in Sri Lanka in the macro level.

<u>Total Population ('000) 2009:</u> 20,450 (100.0%)	<u>Life Expectancy (2007)</u>
Male : 10,148 (49.6%)	Average: 74.0 Years
Female: 10,302 (50.4%)	Male : 70.3 Years
	Female: 77.9 Years

Literacy Rate (2010)
Average : 91.9%

Labour Force (2010)
Total : 8,107,739 (100%)

Male : 93.2%
Female: 90.8%

Male : 5,317,553 (65.6%)
Female: 2,790,186 (34.4%)

Employed Population (2010)
(2010)

Labour Force Participation Rate

Total : 7,706,593 (100%)
Male: 5,131,986 (66.6%)
Female: 2,574,608 (33.4%)

Total : 48.1%
Male: 67.1%
Female: 31.2%

Women's Representation:

Parliament : 5.6% (2008)

Provincial

Councils : 4.2% (2008)

Local

Councils : 1.8% (2010)

Sources: (1) Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

(2) Central Bank of Sri Lanka

(3) Social Scientists' Association

Figure 01:
Women in Sri Lanka: A Profile

Feminization of Poverty in Sri Lanka, Marga Institute-2012

According to these factors Sri Lankan women represent a higher status than their counterparts Feminization of poverty in Sri Lanka, Marga Institute-2012

Gender disaggregated poverty-related data makes it difficult to compare female and male poverty quantitatively or to state definitively the degree to which it is increasing or decreasing. Macro income data that excludes information pertaining to women working and living in the harsh realities of the informal sector have been used to conclude in official documents that there is no major difference in the incomes of male and female "income receivers."

**Table 05:
Poverty by Sex of Head of the Households-2006/07**

Sector	Male	Female	Total
Urban	6.0	9.3	6.7
Rural	15.8	15.2	15.7
Estate	31.3	33.2	32.0
National	15.3	15.1	15.2

Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2006/07, Dept of Census and Statistic, Sri Lanka

The Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2006/07 reveals that about 23.3 percent of the population live in household headed by females. Table 06 shows that poverty in female headed households is not significantly different from male headed households at national level. However, sectoral examination of poverty show that in the urban sector female headed household is much higher than male headed households.

Although, the poverty in female headed households are similar to male headed households, women are more likely to suffer from poverty than men. This situation is the outcome of not only the lack of financial resources, but is also a consequence of gender biases and the deprivation of capabilities. In Sri Lanka, poor women, especially those who are household heads or old, face enormous hardships and must struggle to ensure their family's economic survival.

According to the Ministry of Social Services in Sri Lanka,

Women who are particularly vulnerable are migrant workers, female headed households, unpaid family workers, unwed and widowed women in poor families and elderly, single women with low income (Ministry of Social Services, 2000).

Macro data and micro studies indicate that their quality of life and employment conditions have deteriorated as a result of increased living costs which pushed women into low-skilled, low-paid jobs. As well as, the large number of women engaged in economic activities in the informal sector viz. home-based industries, domestic service, casual wage employment, and sub-contracted units fall outside the ambit of labour laws. Women at the lower end of the employment ladder and migrant workers from economically disadvantaged families are often victims of exploitative labour practices.

Especially, a large number of the women are working in the garment industry. As many of these industries are in urban areas, women have to find lodging outside their homes. These women's quality of life is quite poor. They have to manage their food, lodging and other expenses from their low wages and are exposed to social problems such as physical abuse and sexual exploitation.

Marga Institute has studied women who work in the Middle East. Only a small percentage of returnees are able to gain a sustained change in their economic situation. Many find that the remittances sent home are used by the husband or the family for consumption purposes, including house building, and not for economic activities. Many utilise the remittances for alcohol consumption and other vices, which in turn affect the children and family stability. Due to social pressures and oppression faced by these women at home many often prefer to return overseas (Marga Institute, 1996).

The prevailing demographic and socio-economic changes have increased the plight of the underprivileged women living in pockets of poverty and deprivation in remote areas of the country. The number of elderly women have been faced with various problems due to inadequate financial and other resources. The vulnerability of the elderly female population will be highest in the districts which have a higher poverty head count index viz. Batticaloa (20.3%), Jaffna (16.1%), Moneragala (14.5%) and Badulla (13.3%), (HIES, 2009/10).

Among the other vulnerable groups are female-headed households in low income families, victims of gender-based violence, women affected by the armed conflict including war widows, women in the affected districts- viz. the former border villages-including Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Puttalam and Moneragala and those in displaced families.

5. Conclusion

According to those factors poverty, especially female poverty can be identified as a major problem in the developing countries. The status of Sri Lankan women is at a higher level than other countries in the region. Sri Lankan women, more than men, enjoy high human development. However, poor women are facing several problems due to the unequal pattern of development. Therefore, poor women should be empowered to reduce these disparities. Accordingly, the main goal of the gender strategy for Sri Lanka should be to ensure that the benefits of economic growth and poverty reduction accrue to women. In particular, efforts must be made to reduce women's unemployment, which is double that of men, by increasing women's access to employment and/or productive assets.

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