

SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF POOR IN KANDY CITY: PROCESS AND CONSEQUENCES

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Urban poverty is a major social problem worldwide. Large cities in Sri Lanka have also emerged as centers contributing to this issue. In-migration of largely unskilled labor and continuation of living within cities generate a vicious cycle of emergence; aggravation; and sprawling poverty. While the urban poor in Sri Lanka are concentrated in Colombo and the suburbs, Kandy city is the socio-economic center of central Sri Lanka and has continued as a popular attraction due to lack of opportunities in rural areas and easy access. A study to understand the nature of urban poverty in Kandy is a timely need. This study was conducted to describe the status of the urban poor in Kandy, to understand the drivers leading to the continuation of poverty, and to understand the drivers of aggravation of poverty. The study was conducted in the Bahirawakanda GN division using rapid appraisal methods in the first quarter of 2019. Kandy city limits have meager economic activities other than traditional market activities. Some households engage in a well-defined role within the economy of the study area. Household heads are prominently engaged in daily paid work. Activities engaged include retailing, working in restaurants and personal transporters, three-wheel drivers; sub-contractors of prepared food items for eating-houses and, food retailers; and wage labor for cleaning services for the construction sector. They have small houses with tiled floors, satisfactory levels of sanitation facilities, and piped born water. Population density is comparatively (1000:1Km²). Inadequate incomes despite having multiple income sources, uncertainty on income and probability of earning persists. They are also unable to join the main society due to most of them are illegal migrants with citizenship issues and limited access to law and justice. Despite the availability of 14 well-equipped schools within the legal distance for admission, children in the community are deprived of admission due to the inability of parents to prove legal titles to the dwellings. Students attend four schools availing minimum standards. The resultant low outcomes, lack of access to education pathways, and chances for interactions with other social groups deprive the community of progress. Consequences lead to the engagement of the already poor in activities such as dealing with drugs, prostitution, and illegal ways of earning. The vicious cycle continues and notable contributions to degrade the natural environment are also evident. Creating opportunities with more social inclusion, access to human resource development, and facilitation of social safety nets can be potential interventions to eliminate this vicious cycle.

Keywords: Livelihood Framework, Informal Economy, Social Development, Access to Education, Social Exclusion

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