

Double Troubles or Not? Factors Affecting the Role Performance of Rural Woman in Dry Zone Agriculture

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Sri Lankan agriculture is a culture itself. Rural woman plays a key role in it. Rise in women's participation in agriculture was evident by 34% in 1996 and by 41% in 2006 (Census and Statistics, 2007), revealing a rising trend of women's involvement in agriculture. Human Development in South Asia (2002) stated that South Asian woman keeps the rural life alive and she suffers a lot for it. Similarly in Sri Lanka too rural woman struggles with domestic, livelihood related and social drudgeries every-day.

This paper examined factors affecting the role performance in domestic, economic and social spheres of rural woman in dry zone agriculture. The study area was Anuradhpura district which has the highest female labor force participation (40.7%) (Census and Statistics, 2007). The study sample was 150 rural women involved in agriculture from six rural villages in Anuradhpura. Primary data sources were household survey, case studies, in-depth interviews, key informants' discussions, time use diaries and participatory observations. Secondary data were obtained from literature and reports. Descriptive statistics and narratives were used in the interpretation of results. Factors affecting multiple roles were studied under five categories, namely: socio-cultural, economic, personal, occupational and environmental. It was found that respondents' domestic, economic and social roles were affected by socio-cultural factors by 68%, 93% and 42% respectively whereas by personal factors by 57%, 73%, and 41% respectively. Further, her economic role was affected by economic and occupational factors by 62% and 71% respectively, while domestic role by environmental and occupational factors by 47% and 43% respectively. Socio-cultural factors affected her roles most, in which gender stereotyping was critical. Except for age maturity, work experience, kinship and education other factors affected her roles adversely.

Key words: Rural woman, Factors affecting, Dry zone, Agriculture