

ABSTRACT

The poverty reduction strategies in Sri Lanka since independence have to a great extent been a success story enabling the country to reach high levels in social indicators. The country's poverty levels have been on the decline and the country has reached the level of a middle income country.

However, this trend seems to have reversed for the estate community in Sri Lanka whose poverty levels have remained very much the same and has recently seen a sharp increase. In fact at the time of this study the poverty level of the estate sector was more than twice the national level of poverty.

The estate population who are mostly Indian Tamil origin comprise of around 6 percent of the country's population and 10 percent of the country's labour force. They work on the tea, rubber and coconut plantations of the country. The majority of the plantation workers are found on the teas estates in the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Kandy Kegalle and Ratnapura.

The plantation sector can be considered the backbone of the country's economy bringing in the much needed foreign exchange to a country very much dependent on trade. Tea export earnings have been the third highest foreign exchange earner to the island during the recent past.

Therefore it is of importance to look into the welfare of the plantation community from a social justice and economic point of view.

This study seeks to gain a deep insight to the causes of the high incidence of poverty in the estate sector while trying to understand why poverty reduction strategies have failed to address its people.

The research used the multidisciplinary approach; the social, political and economic point of views to understand the problem.

The research consisted of two components; the desk- based study and a case study of an estate in Nuwera Eliya district.