

**The Institutional constraints to the economic
empowerment of the tea plantation
communities in Sri Lanka:
Focusing on the Nuwara Eliya District**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on the Nobel Prize winning economics Professor Amartya Sen gains attention to fundamental human freedoms for development theory and practice. The current status and the condition of the tea estate plantation communities in the Nuwara Eliya district have been examined through his Capabilities Approach. The operation of the tea industry as an economic institution has been examined in order to ascertain the impact it makes on the functions of the tea estate plantation worker community and the resulting individual entitlements, capabilities, freedoms and rights. The objective of this research is to bring to light the institutional constraints that have deprived the functions and the capabilities of the tea plantation communities, which resulted in these communities lagging behind the rural sector development in social, economic and political spheres of Sri Lanka. The paper emphasizes the need for to reshape the institutional make up for the development of the tea plantation communities in Sri Lanka, which as a result deemed to have a positive impact on the tea industry.

The first chapter explains the background to this study sets the objectives and explains the methodology adopted. The second chapter studies the tea industry as an economic institution and the current status of the tea plantation community. Within it I have focused on the historical roots and growth of tea estate as an economic institution and the tea plantation community. The third chapter examines Sen's capability concept in relation to the current status of tea plantation communities in the Nuwara Eliya district. Based on the findings the fourth chapter is the conclusion and suggestions, where it is highlighted that the tea plantation community has not progressed in comparison with the tea industry that has seen an upward progress during the past century. The major reasons to it are the institutional constraints that have deprived the capabilities of the tea plantation communities. Suggestions are made to be effected at institutional level and at the state policy level for change that will remove the deprivation of capabilities of the plantation communities.