

Article

Are Young Rural Women Abandoning Agriculture in Sri Lanka?

**W.G.R.L. Samaraweera^{1,*}, R.A.P.I.S. Dharmadasa², P.H.T. Kumara²,
A.S.G.S. Bandara²**

¹ Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, ruwan@ips.lk

² Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka, sampath@uwu.ac.lk (R.A.P.I.S.D.),
thusitha@uwu.ac.lk (P.H.T.K.), sampath13041@gmail.com (A.S.G.S.B.)

* Correspondance: ruwan@ips.lk

Received: 13 September 2021; Accepted: 11 March 2022; Published: 31 March 2022

Abstract

Sri Lankan youth are abandoning small-scale agriculture at an alarming rate. Rural youth are similarly at relatively elevated risk of underemployment and/or unemployment compared to urban and estate sectors. As a result, a considerable number of youth have diversified predominant agricultural livelihoods or migrated in search of better economic opportunities, particularly in the domestic urban sector or abroad. Due to the sheer uneven gender distribution of youth in the population, gender-based evaluation of influences on livelihood choice-making by young men and women was the purpose of this paper. A nationally representative sample of rural youth was extracted, and a multinomial logit model under a random utility framework was estimated to assess livelihood diversification. A probit model of migration outcome was estimated to assess the rural youth's choice of migration. Results revealed that female youth's preferred choice of livelihood being agriculture would be less probable and more likely to be anything other than agriculture. Education is an upward driver in the choice of urban paid work, whereas educated young rural females do not choose agriculture. Rural young women are less prone to migrate; nonetheless, married female youth have a strong proclivity to migrate. Moreover, increased access to agricultural land lessens the propensity of rural young women to migrate.

Keywords:

rural youth, gender inclusivity, women empowerment, youth livelihood decisions, agriculture, youth migration