

Women's role in Household Food Security in the Rural-Urban Contexts of Sri Lanka

by

Chandanee Wasana Kalansooriya



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Abbreviations

DCS	-	Department of Census and Statistics
DS	-	Divisional Secretariat
FAO	-	Food and Agricultural Organization
GN	-	Grama Niladari
HDDS	-	Household Dietary Diversity Score
IDRC	-	International Development Research Centre
IFAD	-	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	-	International Food Policy Research Institute
OLS	-	Ordinary Least Square
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
2SLS	-	Two Stage Least Square

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Wasana Kalansooriya
Department of Economics
University of Sri Jayewardenepura
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Chandanee Wasana Kalansooriya

ABSTRACT

Food security is a major development concern in the current world and there is an increasing trend of directing food security policies towards the empowering women, because, many studies reveal that women play a major role in assuring the household food security. However, there is a dearth of studies that discusses the women's role in food security in the context of Sri Lanka, even though women are culturally assumed a huge responsibility in all most all the household tasks. Therefore, this study tries to analyse the impact of women's role on household food security in Sri Lanka in the urban rural contexts.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the primary data was obtained from 200 households which were selected from Maharagama urban council area to represent the urban sector and from the Thirappane AGA division to represent the rural sector. Both descriptive as well as econometric methods were used in the data analysis and a regression model was estimated using the OLS method.

According to the results, the study concluded that the women play an immense role in all three dimensions of food security; availability, access and utilization, within the Sri Lankan households. Women's income, education, their interests on preparing nutritious diet and the growing of food crop at household level were found as positive

contributors for the household food security, while the gender of the household head was not a significant factor for the food security of a household. Further, the study found some striking differences of the role women play in assuring household food security between the urban and rural households. Finally, the results suggest that the food security policies in the country should be aimed at empowering women's capacities to yield better outcomes.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Food security, being one of the major issues of the present development dialogue, has been prioritized in domestic economic policies of many developing countries and also in the agendas of many international organizations especially in Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). According to the definition put forward by FAO (1996), food security exists when all people at all times have the access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. Most of the developing countries are struggling to assure the food security in their countries with increasing food prices, decreasing arable agricultural lands, increasing population pressure, existence of poverty and with the adverse effects generated by climate changes, etc.

Generally, food security can be analyzed in two levels; macro level and micro level. The macro level or national level food security mostly aims at the food availability aspects, while the micro aspects focus on household or individual food acquirement and utilization aspects. Hence, the micro level food security or the household food security depends on many factors such as agricultural production, market availability of food either through national production or imports, income earning opportunities of household members, food aids received by the households, intra household decision making, resource allocation and responsibility sharing, care practices in households, and health care given to the household members, etc. Considering all the above factors, household food security can be considered as a multidimensional- multi facets issue which needs an