

A Study on the Characteristics of Widows in the Batticaloa District.

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Abstract

In Batticaloa district, there are about 21,734 widows (Statistical Hand Book, 2005/06). They have been suffering from all the forms of burdens, which have based on the economic, social, cultural, and political factors. Individually, widows have been faced all forms of problems such as disruption of infrastructure, forced to displacement, direct involvement in hostilities, the climate of insecurity and fear; many of them continue to be exposed to grave forms of neglect, abuse and exploitation, lack of financial support, and increased poverty. Due to the above situation, widows have forced to live under the vicious circle of poverty, which would be bringing the impact on their physical, psychosocial wellbeing, children's future, and the future development of a community.

Accordingly, the research questions have based on what are, the economic conditions, social conditions, the cultural values and practices, and the political situations have been links with widows' characteristics. Hence, the objective of the study is going to identify the Economic, Social, Cultural, and the Political characteristics of Widows in the Batticaloa district. For this purpose the economic, social, cultural and the political factors have under taken as the research variables in conceptualization.

Two hundred samples have selected from the 14 Divisional Secretariats to the proportionate of the widows. The information has collected by the administrated questionnaire from the 200 selected samples. In addition to, 80 samples has selected from very remote and poor area to get the accuracy & the reliability of the data by interviews. This research conducted by the support of primary and secondary data sources. Especially the method of primary data collection was based on the questionnaire, un-structured interviews that included focus group interviews/discussion, narratives, and

oral histories, where the descriptive analysis has adopted to describe systematically a situation, and its' problems from the collected data.

There are several problems surfaced through the research. Hence, the major findings, economically, the widows have lack of access to increase their earnings, lack of saving/no savings, no investments, and no assets along property rights, which are pull them into the poverty vicious circle. In addition to, poor education standard, multiple displacements, unsafe housing patterns, dependency burden, and the poor communication & infrastructure facilities are marginalized the widows apart from the community development process.

The reason for increasing widows in this district as a result of the male mortality was and remains higher than female, age differences between spouses was often large, ongoing conflict/war situation of Sri Lanka, occurrences in disappearance of chief male occupant, occurrence of natural disasters, suicides and accidents due to that more women are widowed at younger ages. In addition to, old and young widows where provide evidence of not only physical damage but also brutalities, rapes, homelessness, terror, and severe psychological damage

Culturally they are changing their traditional taboos and symptoms; however, there are some restrictions on religious and the traditional occasions. Moreover, due to the rejection of their society, they are trying to withdraw from those things. Therefore, the societies should be aware, and change their attitudes regarding on the concept of widow

Politically, widows have marginalized, and they do not express their opinions. The institutional arrangements have organized; but the activities are trop down in the upper level participation. Thus, widows come forward to take the decision regarding their real needs, and they should be expressed their ideas and suggestion to the support systems. As a result the common characters of the four factors are, the social characters is determine **vulnerability** of

widows, the economic character is **poverty**, the political character is **passive participation** and the cultural character is **restriction** .

The trend of widows in Batticaloa district has been increasing in the last decades due to not only the war but also the frequency of the natural disasters. These are the major constrain to the widows development; there are lot of support systems as locally and internationally have been working for the livelihood developments of the district; although, standard of living of the widows have not improved jet. Therefore, all the support systems have to work with collaboration among them, where the government should take the responsibility for all. In addition, widows also have to participate with self-reliance to reach their living standard.

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