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**DOUBLE PERIL OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY: CLIMATE CHANGE INDUCED
CAPABILITY DEFICIT AND CHILDCARE RISK IN THE ESTATE SECTOR OF
SRI LANKA**

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ABSTRACT

Estate children are in dire need of alternative care and family strengthening. Despite the government's best efforts, some children in Sri Lanka continue to struggle with their development because of pervasive discrimination and poor family and community support. The estate sector in Sri Lanka, which relies heavily on plantation labor, has a childcare deficiency, as children lack access to quality early childhood care and education facilities. When climate change makes it more difficult to produce tea, it threatens the employment of those who work on tea plantations and has disastrous effects on early childhood development. The present study thus investigates how early childhood care in the most disadvantaged communities can be jeopardized due to climate change-induced vulnerabilities. Using information gathered from focus group discussions, interviews with children, parents, midwives, community members, and plantation management, the present case study demonstrates that climate change-induced vulnerability exacerbates the lack of childcare facilities in the Sri Lankan estate sector. Climate change has affected tea production on the studied estates, resulting in job losses and wage reductions for plantation workers and this compelled them to seek employment outside the community while leaving their children with older adults or adolescents. This study found that without parental support and care, children under the age of five are more likely to receive age-inappropriate experiences or not receive age-appropriate experiences, both of which are detrimental to their effective development. Teenage pregnancy and the caregiving responsibilities of adolescent girls can jeopardize their education. Overall, it appears that the problem of a capability deficit is exacerbated by the drastic changes in the market dynamics of underprivileged communities brought on by climate change, putting the effective development of children at risk. It is therefore suggested that parents' labor capacities be supplemented with certain skills that would ultimately help secure childcare in the country's most vulnerable communities. In addition, the safety and health of children depends on widespread public education and engagement.

Keywords: alternative care, capability deficit, childcare discrepancies, child development, climate emergency, vulnerable communities