

Improvement of social harmony through community based household waste management and urban agriculture

L.M. Abeywickrama

Department of Agric. Economics & Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Mapalana, Kamburupitiya

Abstract

Urbanization and consumerism has led the society to the breakdown of rural value systems. Literature revealed that the per-capita income has increased making the behavioral patterns more complex. Production of unmanageable solid wastes is a consequence of the rapidly changed consumption patterns particularly in urban areas. As a solution for the problem of increasing burden of solid waste to the municipalities and to the environment, a waste management model was introduced to the selected clusters of Matara municipality to recycle the decomposable kitchen and garden wastes while developing a sustainable home garden.

In addition to reducing the garbage in road sides and public places, social impacts of the implemented program was considered as one aspect of the project. Objective of the study was to measure the changes of indicators of social harmony through activities of the programme. Transformational Development Indicators (TDIs) were used to measure the social impacts of waste management and home gardening programme. Perception of stakeholders for each indicator was quantified with the scale of -2 (highly reduced), -1 (somewhat reduced), 0 (no change), +1 (improved), +2 (highly improved). Data collected from 112 stakeholders using a structured questionnaire from two locations (Walpola and Madiha of Matara municipality) were verified by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In addition to descriptive statistical methods to explain variables, the Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test was employed to find statistically significance of changes of selected aspects with the programme.

The analysis revealed that waste related conflicts within the society and conflicts among different categories of stakeholders have been significantly reduced. Among TDIs, caring for others, sharing the resources, sharing the knowledge and experience, community participation in shared voluntary activities, communication among neighbors and social recognition of neglected groups of the society have significantly improved with the functioning of the programme. The findings of the research suggest that the social harmony, which is needed to reduce trivial conflicts within the society, could be the seeds of catastrophic conflicts, can be improved through this kind of programmes.

Keywords: TDIs, Home gardening, Social harmony