

Livelihood Development in Tea Estate Sector through Women Empowerment: A Study in Kahagala Estate

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Abstract

Women play a major role in tea sector and they have been struggling for a better life for decades. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the relationship between women empowerment and livelihood status of women laborers in Kahagala estate Badulla. The objectives of this study were to evaluate levels of empowerment and level of livelihood status and to find factors influencing empowerment of women laborers in tea sector. Empowerment was evaluated under six dimensions; social, economic, psychological, physical, legal and interpersonal. Livelihood status was evaluated using levels of social capital, financial capital, human capital and physical capital. Seventy-two (72) women laborers were selected using cluster sampling technique and interviewed using pretested questionnaire for primary data in addition to informal discussions with different stakeholders and direct observations at the fields. Descriptive statistical tools were employed for primary analysis and ANOVA and regression analysis were used as inferential statistical tools. Study revealed that about 46% of the women laborers attended only up to grade eight. Majority of women (90%) belong to moderate empowerment level (50%-75%) while 8% of women empowering level was low. About 72% of women were under low livelihood status. Financial contribution to family ($r = +0.651$, $p = 0.000$), domestic decision making ($r = +0.756$, $p = 0.002$), psychological wellbeing ($r = +0.745$, $p = 0.000$) and active participation in social works ($r = +0.671$, $p = 0.011$) have significant impact on women empowerment. Positive moderate correlation ($r = +0.663$, $p = 0.000$) was found between women empowerment and livelihood status. Economic ($\beta = +0.671$, $p = 0.002$), social ($\beta = +0.590$, $p = 0.001$) and interpersonal ($\beta = +0.487$, $p = 0.021$) dimensions have significant relationship with livelihood status. It can be concluded that livelihood status can be developed by increasing economic, social and interpersonal dimensions through women empowerment in Kahagala estate tea communities.

Keywords: Livelihood status, Tea sector, Women empowerment

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