

The Backwardness of Development in the Rural peripheries of Rapidly Changing Areas in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Gampaha District

Nishan Sakalasooriya

Department of Geography, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
nishan@kln.ac.lk

Regional disparities in development have been the focus in many discussions on development issues in the third world during the past four decades. In common with other developing countries, the regional disparities of development have been an inherent and perpetuating development issues in Sri Lanka. The economic growth and modernization are skewed in to metropolitan core area in the Western Province of the island due to numerous historical and geographical factors. The broad objective of the study is to demarcate the backward areas in Gampaha District and to explore the prevailing backwardness in the rural peripheries. The widening spatial inequalities at micro levels caused disintegration of existing socio economic systems and deteriorating living condition at peripheral rural areas even in a relatively developed district like Gampaha. This study has found that the ongoing macro and micro level socio-economic forces that have created the backwardness in the villages. The study used several qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the analysis. The selected village areas in the Divisional Secretariat Divisions of *Mirigama, Attanagalla, Weke* and *Divulapitiya*, revealed that their backwardness has both endogenous and exogenous causes. The study areas, Akaragama East, Radawadunna Pahala, Ethaudakanda and Kirimatiyawatta in the rural periphery are relatively backward and stagnating amidst growing urban and industrial sector in the Gampaha district. The weakening the agricultural base and dependence on external sources of income for survival, lean industrial sector and poor quality of services are symphony the backwardness. Exploitation from outsiders, unfavourable macro development policies, intervention of politicians and globalisation effects in to the villages has been external forces that cause backwardness of the villages. The weak backward linkages and insufficient services and poor infrastructure facilities as well as validity of available theoretical and empirical knowledge in explaining and ongoing spatial changes in the study areas are also evaluated in the research.

Key words: *backwardness, development, economic growth, rural peripheries.*