

Livelihood Diversification and Well-Being of Indigenous People in Sri Lanka: With Special Reference to Vadda Community

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Abstract

Sri Lankan indigenous peoples called Vaddas who own distinct socioeconomic and cultural traits, is one of the primitive communities of the world. This community with distinctive cultural values, prehistoric traditions and own survival strategies, at present, encounter to extinction due to the various influences. Even though Vaddas could be found around the island about three centuries ago, at present they can be seen only in specific scattered places associate with semi-evergreen dry monsoon forest habitat and newly established colonies.

The primary livelihood means of ancient Vaddas were hunting and gathering, harvesting non-timber forest products and sometimes shifting cultivation and fishing etc. However, at present these practises have diverted to agriculture and related activities mostly practised by non-Vaddas in rural villages due to the modern development activities, resettlements, and wildlife and cultural conservation policies and interacting with advanced communities. Meanwhile, the Vaddas who have been resettled in newly established colonies have to adopt agricultural and related practices involuntarily. These changes of livelihood practices have significantly affected their lifestyle as well as their well-being. The aim of the present study is to examine the livelihood diversification and the state of well-being of newly resettled Vaddas in Sri Lanka. The question that attempted to address is 'how livelihood diversification has affected on the well-being of resettled Vadda community?'

This study was mainly based on mixed method approach. Given the qualitative as well as quantitative nature of the study, both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed. In-depth interviews, group discussions, key informant interviews, focused group discussions and observation methods were supplemented by the questionnaire based survey. The study area was the *Henanigala* which is newly established colony under the Mahaweli Development Project in 1980s.