Fazeeha Azmi

FROM RICE BARN TO REMITTANCES

A Study of Poverty and Livelihood Changes in System H of The

Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP), Sri Lanka

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late father Mohamed Ibrahim, who believed in

women's education as the pillar of a woman's life. I will always remember his

encouragement

Abstract

This thesis consists of a comprehensive summary and five empirical articles, and explores how settlers from three different generations in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) of Sri Lanka perceive poverty and respond to it. The study was carried out in three different types of settlements. The main aim of this study is to recognize the important role played by the settlers who are in the process of making changes to alleviate poverty and attain their various objectives for a good quality of life.

The comprehensive summary of the thesis covers the introduction, the context, theory, methodology, and the settlers' perceptions of poverty. In terms of context, the comprehensive summary discusses the AMDP in detail, while the local, regional, national and global contexts are covered in the articles wherever relevant. In the theoretical section I introduce how shifts in understanding poverty have contributed to the understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty and different methodologies for studying it, which have become increasingly qualitative. The reason for engaging in a discussion on theoretical and methodological shifts is to draw attention to the basis on which the current livelihood approach to poverty is drawn. Livelihood approaches to poverty acknowledge the importance of identifying people's strengths as well as the different structures people have to negotiate in order to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. By adding people's perceptions of poverty to the livelihood approach to study poverty an analytical framework is developed. This is used to explore settlers' perceptions of poverty, changing livelihood contexts, changing importance of livelihood assets, determining factors of livelihood, changing livelihoods and livelihood outcome among three generations of settlers.

The research has adopted a qualitative methodology, where in-depth interviews, life stories, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions have enabled the researcher to capture the perceptions of the poor. To gain insights into how different generations of settlers perceive poverty, group discussions and in-depth interviews held with various categories of settlers as well as key informants in each settlement proved particularly significant.

The articles presented in the thesis aim to understand what shifting livelihoods are, why the settlers have changed their livelihood, what constraints and opportunities the settlers face in their attempts to make a livelihood, and the impacts of their chosen livelihoods. The research concludes that the livelihoods in the settlements are changing from agricultural to increasingly non-agricultural, especially to livelihoods based on remittances. The settlers are continuously negotiating changing contexts in order to fulfill their various objectives in terms of a good life (how they act in order to fulfill the various objectives are analysed in relation to changing contexts at local, regional, national and global levels). Their access to livelihoods is increasingly determined by age, gender, human capital, social capital, and political capital. The importance of land as an asset is being replaced by other assets, and women are playing an important role in sustaining livelihoods both at household and community levels. The analyses reveal that settlers are making improvements in their standard of living. However, the sustainability of such achievements is not certain. The main conclusion derived from the research is that different generations of settlers perceive poverty differently. Changing contexts highly influence the way people perceive poverty and respond to it through different livelihoods.

In terms of theory, the analytical framework adopted in the study contributes to an understanding of how a livelihoods approach to poverty can be analysed comprehensively, and by incorporating people's perceptions. It also documents how the interplay between actors and the changing contexts in the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project settlements has created a socio-economic space which is different from what the project was originally planned for. It concludes that although different generations of settlers are embedded in different contexts over time, their livelihood choices are not only influenced by the changing contexts but also influenced by how they perceive poverty and their various objectives related to a good life.

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGA	Assistant Government Agent Division
AMDP	Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project
CARE	Cooperative Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CEPA	Center for Poverty Analysis
DEC	Dedicated Economic Centers
DFID	Department for International Development
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
GN	Grama Niladari
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMCAP	Improving Capacities for Poverty Research
LDO	Land Development Ordinance
MASL	Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka
MDB	Mahaweli Development Board
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDP	Mahaweli Development Project
NEDCO	Netherlands Engineering Consultants
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SLAAS	Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science
SLBFE	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 20th century the alleviation of poverty and encouraging development has been at the top of the development agenda in many countries. Accordingly, developing countries have adopted various projects, programmes and policies to achieve these ends. At the turn of the new millennium, the UNDP's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reemphasized the eradication of poverty as a daunting challenge for the global community and laid the foundation for solidarity and commitment in the determination to eradicate poverty by 2015.[1] This resulted in the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and created a new focus and new priorities on poverty from the perspectives of different governments. Despite many attempts and concerns to reduce poverty, progress has been uneven among and within countries (UNDP 2003). The intensity of the problem is increasing worldwide, especially in developing countries. Dimensions of poverty are expanding along with the changes occurring at personal, local, national and global levels in social, political and economic spheres. New dimensions to poverty are added daily due to personal goals, conflicts, natural disasters, political power changes, national socio-economic and development policies, and globalization.

While this shows one side of the story, the other side of the story reveals that poor people continue to survive and live in the rapidly changing world. They are exploring their own room for manoeuvre to improve their position. Some are actively making use of the changes occurring in different spheres to improve their lives, while others simply manage to survive. How do they survive? What does it mean to be poor? Why do they choose or why are they forced to adapt to a particular livelihood? What constraints and opportunities do they face in their attempts to have a reasonable quality of life? How vulnerable are they to poverty in the future? These are some of the questions that have been focussed upon by researchers interested in poverty and development-related issues throughout the world and that have led to an increasing number of theoretical and empirical contributions. Following

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[1] Since the publication of the UNDP's first *Human Development Report* in 1990 (focusing on the concept and measurement of human development) the organization has continuously emphasized the need to put people at the centre of development and has identified the multiple dimensions of human development.

suit, this study seeks to answer some of these questions in relation to a resettlement project in Sri Lanka, the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP).

AMDP: strengths and weaknesses of Sri Lanka's development efforts[2]

The history of Sri Lanka's resettlement project reveals that it has long been practised as an attempt to bring development and raise the living conditions of the rural poor (Peiris 1996, Ratnayake 1992). This development strategy was previously implemented under the name of 'colonization' and focussed on the development of agriculture in the Dry Zone. Since the 1930s resettlement projects have been linked to the rural development strategies of the country as agriculture has been the cornerstone of the economy for a long time. Thus, the AMDP came to symbolize the magnificent attempt of the government to bring rural development and poverty alleviation through agricultural development.

The implementation of the AMDP during the 1970s was triggered by social, economic and political factors. The core objective of the strategy was the expectation that it would pave the way for improvement in the living standards of the settlers who were granted land for agriculture and homestead in the AMDP settlements. Today, the AMDP has contributed towards solving many of the country's socio-economic problems (Puttaswamaiah 1990, Ministry of Lands and Land Development and Ministry of Mahaweli Development, 1987, Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 1998): it has expanded the amount of land under cultivation, increased the local paddy cultivation through green revolution technologies, provided employment opportunities for unemployed and underemployed, and contributed to domestic hydropower production. However, while the project has provided national benefits, it has also had a profound impact on the daily life of individual settlers at local level.

In terms of poverty in the AMDP settlements, the prevailing situation challenges the underlying objectives of the project. Today, in spite of pursuing development and improving the settlers' standard of living through agricultural development, the strategy

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[2] In Chapter 2 I provide a detail discussion on the AMDP, which forms the main context of this study.

has simultaneously had a negative impact on the lives of the settlers. Studies conducted within different AMDP settlements have revealed that the socio-economic landscape of Mahaweli settlements has changed considerably compared to the original landscape which was characterized by family-based farming (Lund 1981, 2000 Siriwardana 1981, Scudder & Wanigaratne 1987, Gunawardane & Nelson 1988, Weerakoon 1989, Wimaladharma 1989, de Zoysa 1995, Muller & Hettige 1995, Peiris 1996, Sørensen 1996, Scudder 2005, Azmi 2007). These studies document both the gains and pains of the project, and after three decades it is evident that while some settlers have been able to realize their aims, many others have not been able to do so.

Since their incorporation into the project during the mid- and late 1970s the settlers have been bypassed by series of changes occurring outside the project area. The resettlement project of the AMDP took place parallel to some of the major political and socio-economic changes in the country. During this time, the economy was opened up, and the government was controlling wages, trade, prices, and distribution of productive assets in order to create a more market-oriented, outward looking economy (Sahn 1987).While the people outside the AMDP area started to experience the advantages and disadvantages of the changes initiated by the new political and economic regime, the settlers were beginning new lives within the settlements, and they did not have the time or the inclination to understand what was happening outside the project area. Neither the settlers themselves nor the government realized that the AMDP settlers would eventually be left alone in the middle of the development path. As a result of the restructuring exercises carried out since the second half of the post-independent period, today the agricultural sector has been bypassed by other sectors, especially the industrial and service sectors. In the process of liberalization of the economy and globalization, adequate attention was not given to the rural sector of the economy, while considerable attention was given to industrial development, services, tourism, and small-scale industries. The increased attention given to non-agricultural sectors has had adverse affects on the AMDP settlers. Even today, the AMDP's agricultural-based rural economy remains substantially intact from globalization. The settlers, who are classed as smallholder farmers, cannot face market competition and challenges even at regional or local level.

Today, agriculture-based livelihood activities are becoming less attractive among the settlers. What is striking is the different ways in which the settlers have actively and rapidly been responding to poverty within changing contexts and structures that were not present during the initial post-resettlement years of the AMDP. At the same time, how they respond to poverty is determined by several factors, varying from personal motivations for a better life to existing opportunities and constraints framed by local and global socio-economic and political environments. As a result, livelihoods which were previously based on land are no longer connected to land alone and are increasingly removed from it. The livelihoods of those living in AMDP settlements are gradually being replaced by remittances from women working in Middle Eastern countries and Free Trade Zones and soldiers working in the security forces. Theses livelihoods are also addressed by changing perceptions of poverty, different opportunities, constraints, capabilities, and vulnerabilities in uncertain local and global contexts.

This show that today's AMDP settlers have increasingly chosen their own ways of development as an alternative to that which was prescribed for them thirty years ago under this massive project.[3] Yet the different ways in which the settlers have chosen to alleviate poverty and fulfil their various objectives are neither simple nor painless. Some people have been able to climb out of poverty, while others are making a living based on low returns and have low levels of security in their livelihoods. Further, while such livelihoods are essential for them to meet their daily needs they are often associated with vulnerability and uncertainty. The risk is that the nature of their livelihood choices is unpredictable and easily affected by negative impacts on the global and national markets.[4] Thus, while creating short-term successes, the question remains as to how the adopted livelihoods will contribute to poverty alleviation in a sustainable way. It is also pertinent to note that the current livelihoods of the settlers have created not only a different economic landscape but

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[3] Scudder (2005) discusses how the settlers of Systems G and C of the AMDP started to switch from farming to non-farming sources of income during the 1990s. He observed that such changes also started in System H during the latter part of the 1990s.

[4] During fieldwork some of the families who had female members working as housemaids in Lebanon informed that the eruption of war in Lebanon had given them cause for concern. They were not only worried about the women's safety but also their return, as this would affect those families which are dependent on remittances.

also a different social landscape, where women who were once neglected and denied access to the main source of income (land) in the settlements have today become the catalyst for livelihood changes. All the changes occurring in the AMDP settlements are creating not only a 'field of tension', as Muller & Hettige (1995) describe it, but also a 'field of attention'.

It is not my aim to evaluate or deeply discuss the weaknesses or outputs of the AMDP in relations to its objectives in this research. However, the prevailing situation in the settlements show that inadequate attention paid by Mahaweli planners has resulted in wasting the enormous production potential of the project area. Failure to take account of the long-term needs (or at least the immediate short-term needs) and impacts of generations of settlers has created a great challenge, not only for the government but also for the settlers themselves. The issue of continuing poverty has been a major problem in many settlements (Scudder 2005).

This study investigates poverty and livelihood changes in three different settlements under System H of the AMDP.[5] The fieldwork was conducted during 2004–2007 in Solama, Maliyadevapura and Kongwewa, which are distinct in terms of the types of settlers who live in them. I document how different generations of settlers in the settlements perceive poverty and negotiate their livelihoods[6]. Qualitative methodologies were employed in order to understand the conceptualizations of poverty and how settlers respond to poverty through their livelihoods. An analytical framework based on people's (different generation of settlers) perceptions of poverty and incorporating some elements of the livelihood approach was used to capture the changes occurring in the settlements.

Justification for the study

The initial conception of this research started as a seed of thought when I was engaged to assist a Norwegian postgraduate student group along with my supervisor and a former

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[5] System H is one of thirteen administrative units under the AMDP.
[6] First generation (parents or original settlers); second generation (children of the originals settlers);third generation (children of the second generation or grandchildren of the original settlers)

colleague l in the study area in 2000. After that my interest in conducting research on Mahaweli settlements started to grow. I sought out literature on Mahaweli, and found that many interesting works have been published on different issues faced by settlers, and I became aware of how and from what perspectives such studies had been conducted. In particular, I became interested in understanding how settlers from three different generations conceptualize poverty and respond to it, which is an understudied topic.

The justification for the present study and the reasons why it is considered timely and needed are explained in three ways. First, studies dealing with the socio-economic aspects of earlier colonization schemes (i.e. before the AMDP) in Sri Lanka have reached the conclusion that these spaces are locations of poverty and its various manifestations. According to such studies the colonization strategy did not bring the expected changes to the lives of the settlers. The settlers have been identified and portrayed as poor victims of the strategy. Such studies have paid less attention to the ways in which the settlers have responded to challenging situations. It is also pertinent to note that many of the previous studies on poverty in earlier colonization schemes have understood poverty mainly from its income dimension rather than from people's perceptions, due to the paradigm gap in how poverty was understood at the time. In contrast, I attempt to show how AMDP settlers in the three study settlements have become active agents of change. This is captured through qualitative methods, and includes presentation of the people's own stories. Hence this study contributes to both the qualitative understanding of poverty and making the poor visible.

Second, for the past two decades there has been a sharp increase in resettlement and displacement due to various socio-economic, political and natural causes in Sri Lanka. Resettlements linked to war and natural disaster (the tsunami of 2004) has gained considerable attention among the state, NGOs, donors, and researchers (Hasbullah 2001, Brun 2003, Zackariya & Shanmugaratnam 2003, Stokke et al. 2008). The rationale behind the present research is guided also by the fact that Mahaweli settlements are gradually losing their importance among those people who showed greater affiliation during the AMDP's implementation and resettlement periods. I am not neglecting the fact that several researchers have contributed to understanding the changing socio-economic environment

of Mahaweli settlements, but I call for a 'revitalization of interest', as this large project can serve as a useful lesson in the era of resettlement in the Sri Lankan context, where conflict and the Asian tsunami of 2004 have displaced several thousands of families and increased the pressure for resettlement projects. Although it is not possible to apply the lessons learned in their entirety, I believe that lessons learned from past experience are essential in order to perform better in new situations, though the contexts may vary.

Third, it is understood that the real purpose of the Mahaweli settlements, especially System 'H', which is considered as the mother of all of the settlement systems, is increasingly moving in a direction that was not expected under the AMDP objectives. System H is an important location, not only in terms of Sri Lanka's past but also in terms of today and the future. Wickramasinghe (2006) points out that Anuradhapura, which is an important historical and religious city situated approximately *22 km* from the study settlements and *205 km* north of Colombo, is now growing into a garrison town and this is stimulating related activities such as trade and prostitution. This is a very dangerous situation as poverty may push many females to engage in prostitution, which would be an unexpected result of the strategies and intentions behind the development of the Dry Zone. Having justified the rationale behind the present research, in the following I will discuss the aims.

Aims of the thesis

The study aims to recognize the important role played by different generations of settlers who are in the process of making changes to alleviate poverty and attain their various objectives. The main aim of this research is to understand poverty from the settlers' perspective and the different ways they respond to it, which in turn are reflected in changing livelihoods. It is aimed to achieve this through the following research objectives:

1. To contribute to an understanding of changing perceptions of poverty and changing livelihoods among different generations in the settlements.
2. Assess the importance of assets.
3. To identify different opportunities and constraints in terms of making livelihoods

4. Identify which factors contribute to access to livelihoods.

5. Recognize the outcomes of livelihoods.

6. Provide and provoke further discussion among scholars, policy makers, planners, students, and researchers on the framework of reference for the qualitative understanding of poverty and how people respond to poverty through changing their livelihoods in a resettlement context.

7. Contribute to the theoretical and empirical discussion on poverty and livelihood studies in development geography.

Research questions

I aim to seek answers to the following questions, which are guided by the main objectives of the study:

1. How do different generations perceive poverty?

2. How have livelihoods shifted from the first generation to the second and third generations of settlers?

3. Why have people changed their livelihoods and what are the shifting livelihoods?

4. What are the constraints and opportunities that the different generations face in their attempts to alleviate poverty?

5. What are the outcomes?

The domain of the study is a focus on different perceptions of poverty, assets, changing livelihoods and livelihood contexts, determining factors of access and the outcome of livelihood choices. By both considering that poverty is what the poor see and through the qualitative methods employed to understand poverty, I imply my ontological assumption of the reality that I want to study. However, I do not undermine the role of changing contexts and strcutures that constrain or enable the livelihoods of the settlers who are struggling to overcome poverty and fulfil their various objectives. The analytical framework to study poverty and livelihood changes in the settlements is based on a hybrid model that mainly links actors (different generation of settlers) and changing contexts and structures (AMDP, local, regional, national and global). The framework examines

conceptualizations of poverty, assets, livelihood context, and the factors determining access and livelihood outcomes. Through analysing the settler's perceptions and responses to poverty with reference to three different generations, changing contexts, assets, and determining factors of access to livelihood I hope to capture the long-term impacts of resettlement too.

Thesis outline

The thesis is organized in seven chapters. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the research, including an overview of the situation in AMDP settlements. This is followed by the justification and aims of the study, after which I provide a list of research questions underlying the study.

Chapter 2 starts with an introduction to the Mahaweli Development Project and study settlements, which is largely based on secondary literature. This chapter contributes to the understanding of the broad contextual background against which this study is placed. I introduce the project in terms of historical, political and socio-economic backgrounds. I also introduce the study settlements in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds.

In Chapter 3, the theoretical chapter, I draw on the philosophical claims of knowledge on development and discuss different thoughts of development with reference to poverty. The purpose of this chapter is threefold. While it accounts for an alternative concept of poverty, it also provides theoretical insights into changing livelihoods in a resettlement context. I also examine the key concepts that are used in this study. Finally, I present the analytical framework used in the present study and make visible my contribution.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed discussion of the whole research process. I reflect on how the data were collected, analysed and presented. I draw particular attention to reflexivity with regard to the ways knowledge is produced. This chapter also discusses how the settlers classify the poor according to their own perceptions of poverty.

In Chapter 5 I discuss how first, second and third generation settlers' perceive poverty. By referring to the narratives of first-generation settlers and quotes taken from the group discussions, conducted with members of the second and third generations, I provide an in depth account of the perceptions of poverty in a resettlement context among three different generations.

Chapter 6 consists of five articles which address various aspects of the research questions from 2-5. The first article concerns the changing livelihoods of the second and third generations of the AMDP. The second article relates to women's empowerment and changing gender roles and relations created through married women's migration to the Middle East for work. The third article looks at the shifting geographies of house and home in an attempt to understand how female migrant workers in the AMDP settlement contribute to making homes and sustaining livelihoods at their home places and also to show how people pursue their livelihoods in order to fulfil their various aims. In the fourth article I explore different the forms of vulnerabilities experienced by women traders, who strive to make their living by trading in small markets. The fifth article highlights the stories of three women heads of households who struggled to make a living. The article discusses how each of the three women negotiated their family's well-being.

A summary of the findings and the main conclusions drawn from the research are presented in Chapter 7. I re-examine the main empirical findings of the research with reference to the analytical framework, which is employed to relate the main research questions and objectives. I also recommend few possible interventions and possible areas for future planning and research.

CHAPTER 2. THE MAHAWELI DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (AMDP) IN THE STUDY CONTEXT

Introduction

I start this chapter with an introduction to how Dry Zone development has been an important strategy in rural development in Sri Lanka. Then I will discuss the AMDP in terms of political, social, and economic perspectives. I also introduce System H and provide background information relating to the settlements. Some sections of this chapter also appear in some of the articles reproduced in this thesis. When writing articles for different journals it is necessary to introduce the context to readers in order to provide the background information. However, in this case, such information has been given only with relevance to the main discussions in the respective articles. In this section, I provide more detailed information on the AMDP and study settlements in order to give a more comprehensive picture. Accordingly, in some places repetitions are unavoidable.

Dry Zone development: A historical path to rural development

The Dry Zone of Sri Lanka is considered as the cradle of development. The country's early human settlements and irrigated agriculture commenced in the northern Dry Zone (Peiris 1996). In order to facilitate paddy cultivation and to counter drought, the Sinhalese kings started to establish irrigation works, which enabled a larger proportion of the population to live 'more productive' lives, as well as reflecting the kings' power (Peebles, 2006). However, for reasons varying from nature to politics the Dry Zone civilization started to collapse during the 13th century (Farmer 1957, Peebles 2006). After this the southern and central parts of the country became destinations for new settlements. During the Portuguese (1505–1658) and Dutch (1658–1796) colonial periods little attention was paid to the development of peasant agriculture as the focus was much more on trade and services in coastal areas. Following the British period of occupation in the country, the Wet Zone became the centre of social and political life. Although limited efforts were made to introduce land settlement in the Dry Zone during the British colonial period

(1796–1948) it was not until the 1930s that a stronger policy foundation was laid (Harris 1984). With the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931, the Dry Zone came under government focus once again and since then state-aided colonization schemes have formed an important development strategy of the various governments (Farmer 1957).

Sri Lanka's experience of planned development

The planned development efforts in Sri Lanka can be clearly traced from the resettlement schemes implemented under the policy of state-aided land colonization.[1] Governments started to implement colonization schemes in the Dry Zone as early as the 1930s (De Vroey & Shanmugaratnam 1984, Peiris 1996, Nelson 2002, Wickramasinghe 2006). Since then several small-scale and large-scale colonization schemes have been implemented in the Dry Zone and elsewhere in the country which have resulted in the resettlement of several thousands of families. Prior to the implementation of the state-aided land colonization strategy the Dry Zone remained largely unattractive to many people due to its climatic conditions, remoteness and the prevalence of malaria.

Under this policy of state-aided colonization, governments in power since the mid 1930s have taken over responsibility for providing irrigation facilities for agriculture and land settlement (Samarasinghe & Samarasinghe 1984). Successive governments allocated state land and acquired private land for the poor and landless under seven major projects: colonization schemes, land expansion schemes, middle-class alienation schemes, marginal land alienation schemes, youth colonization schemes, highland settlement schemes, and other schemes such as co-operative farms, agricultural projects and divisional development

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[1] Colonization was defined as the settlement of peasants outside their native villages in small family-sized farms (Samarasinghe & Samarasinghe 1984). People who were displaced under colonization projects were voluntary migrants and were mainly from the poor segment of the population. In academic literature such projects are termed 'land settlement schemes', 'colonization schemes' or 'land colonization schemes', all of which convey the same meaning. In this thesis I use the terms 'land settlement schemes' and 'colonization schemes' interchangeably.

councils (De Vroey & Shanmugaratnam 1984, Ratnayake 1992).[2] To encourage settlers in colonization schemes, the state provided necessary infrastructure, land and other basic survival assistance for them to start their lives in the new settlements. These implementations served as pull factors. However, there were push factors too. De Vroey & Shanmugaratnam (1984) identify one of the pull factors as the desire of landless farmers in a non-industrial context to own paddy land, by which they could acquire social status. However, according to the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) a new tenure system was created whereby land was leased to the settlers in the colonization schemes. In the absence of a dynamic or attractive non-farm agricultural economy, this policy – which has remained basically unchanged since the 1930s – has had far reaching implications for the livelihoods of settlers and subsequent generations as the land was allocated under certain conditions regarding its use, subdivision, sale, mortgaging, or any other forms of legal transfer.

The attempts made to develop the Dry Zone through colonization resulted in the productive utilization of a large proportion of state-owned land which previously remained under-utilized and uncultivated. Following independence, investment in irrigation works in the Dry Zone led to increases in the levels of paddy production many times over and also the amount of land under cultivation (Samarasinghe & Samarasinghe 1984, Peebles 1990). Until the 1970s all most all governments that had come to power had prioritized the development of the Dry Zone by restoring the old irrigation works and constructing new ones. 'Colonization' continued and, in the absence of well-organized industrial sector, had to be adopted as an important part of development policy and strategy in order to improve the agricultural economy (Harris 1984). The Dry Zone colonization strategy has played a significant role in the lives of many poor in the country in number of ways. Although the strategy has been acknowledged for its contribution to improvements in the settlers' standard of living and the overall agricultural production of the country it has also came under heavy criticism.[3] While acknowledging the attempts made by Sri Lankan

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[2] Under the large-scale multipurpose development projects undertaken by Sri Lankan government in order to solve the problems facing the country at different periods, the Gal Oya project has been the most prominent, followed by the Walawe scheme and the Mahaweli Development Project.

[3] This strategy was also criticized for its hidden agenda. Although the explicit aims of Dry Zone colonization were to raise the living standards of the poor in particular and in the country in general, in a country which is

governments to open up land for agriculture and human settlement in the Dry Zone, Peiris (1996) criticizes such attempts as being ad hoc. One of the criticisms Peebles (2006, 105) makes regarding this strategy is related to the nature of its implementation: 'In a colonization scheme the government created an irrigation system, selected the settlers, granted them land, and provided them with means of survival until their crops enabled them to become independent self-sufficient paddy farmers'. According to Peebles, the processes of the colonization strategy clearly reflect the 'top-down' approach of the planned development ideology existing in modernization development thoughts.

Poverty in old colonization schemes

Studies of large and small colonization projects implemented prior to the AMDP have identified various manifestations of poverty (Moore et al. 1978, Peiris 1996). Samarasinghe & Samarasinghe (1984) found that significant disparity existed in income and wealth among the settlers of Parakrama Samudra (a major colonization scheme). These disparities occurred largely due to differences in paddy production, which in turn was linked to landholding size. They also pointed out that families which had more sons had small landholdings, as the land given to the first generation settlers had to be divided among the sons in a family. Also, studies conducted by Wanigaratne (1979) and Moore et al. (1983) in other Dry Zone settlement schemes identify that the income disparities among the settlers have increased. Wanigaratne and Moore et al. have also concluded that the incomes of the majority of the settlers in large and small colonization schemes are hardly sufficient to meet their basic needs. A study conducted by Wimaladharma (1981) in the Minipe, Rajangane, Uda Walawe, and Minneriya colonization schemes also revealed that many settlers had very low levels of income. Harris (1984) points out that almost all researchers who have studied Dry Zone settlements have identified problems of debt due to the informal credit schemes in operation, a situation that has kept poor families in poverty

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experiencing war on land and freedom, historically the colonization schemes have had differing objectives. The need to 'colonize' the Dry Zone arose from complex objectives (Harris 1984), which were understood as strengthening peasants' well-being, preserving the peasantry, restoring the glorious ancient Sinhalese civilization, increasing domestic food production, restoring the country's past prosperity, decreasing the population pressure in the Wet Zone, increasing the GNP, and creating employment (Harris 1984, Samarasinghe and Samarasinghe 1984, De Vroey & Shanmugaratnam 1984, Ratnayake 1992, Peiris 1996, Kelegama, 2003, Vandsemb 2007). The objectives also included 'infusing Sinhalese nationalism' (Moore & Perera 1978, Moore et al. 1983, Moore 1985, Peebles 1990, 2006) and invasion of Tamil territory or traditional homelands (Balasingham 2004).

for a long time. Further, as De Vroey & Shanmugaratnam (1984, 40) point out, although there are questions about the reliability of the data sources, the 'general picture does not change drastically'.

The Mahaweli Development Project

Although the need to develop an extensive irrigation system in the Dry Zone was felt by governments at different times, it was only in 1958 that a feasibility study was undertaken, which eventually resulted in the formulation of the Mahaweli master plan. The project was based on the Mahaweli River, which is the largest river in Sri Lanka. It has the largest drainage basin (10,448 km^2) and it flows through vast stretches of land (16% of the total land area in Sri Lanka) that were once uninhabited (Peiris 1996).

The Mahaweli Development Project (MDP) is the largest and most ambitious multipurpose integrated project undertaken in the country to date. It has had, and continues to have, a lasting impact on the lives of many people in Sri Lanka.[4] The project was designed during the 1950s in consultation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and a master plan for the project was prepared during the late 1960s in consultation with selected local bodies (Mendis 1973, Ministry of Mahaweli Development 1980). During the pre-planning stages several socio-economic studies were conducted in order to understand the nature of the

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[4] Although not closely related to the present study context and far removed from the discussion in this research, it is important to point out how some research has viewed the AMDP's contribution to the heightening ethnic conflict, as one of my research objectives is related to consideration of the past lessons learned through the AMDP in relation to current and future resettlement projects. de Zoysa (1995) points out how, in the context of acceleration of the project, Tamil and Muslim areas have been excluded from the plan and have contributed to strengthening the demand of Tamil Eelam (nation). Kumar (1986) points out that in terms of sharing benefits most of the project's headwork stands outside the Tamil-dominated regions, while the larger part of land to be developed is located within the Tamil territory. He also points out the Mahaweli master plan includes systems in the northern region. Peebles (1990) acknowledges that colonization policies including Mahaweli were a reflection of the Sinhalese nationalism which contributed to the ethnic tension in the country. Scudder (2005) claims that the low percentage of Tamils selected for the project is one of the project's major weaknesses. Moore (1992) discusses how colonization was considered as a strategy to correct the historical injustice caused by the British rulers. de Zoysa (1995) notes that the United Nation Party (UNP) government in power during 1977–1994 made considerable reductions in the project area, resulting in the exclusion of Tamil and Muslim areas from the plan. Peiris (1996) makes a counter claim against Peebles (1990), pointing out the fact that under the resettlement strategy re-settlers (people from the project area) and evacuees were assigned high priority, implying that the Sinhalese were not unjustly settled in the project area.

village communities.[5] Following approval by the cabinet in 1968, the project was finalized in 1969 (Ministry of Mahaweli Development 1980, Scudder 2005). It was decided to implement the project under three different phases (Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 1998) starting in 1969. Unlike earlier colonization schemes, the MDP absorbed a large amount of foreign aid (Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 1998). The project also benefited from multilateral and bilateral assistance as well annual funding from the Government's budget (Central Bank of Sri Lanka 1993). Major financial and technical assistance for the project was given by the United Kingdom, Japan, Sweden, Canada, Germany, and the USA. The project covered 39% of the island and 55% of the Dry Zone, and had a 30-year implementation schedule.

Planned intervention of development

As in other old Dry Zone colonization schemes, the MDP also came to symbolize a more advanced form of development planning in Sri Lanka. The settlement planning, which was an important component of the project, was based on central place theory (Lund 1993, Peiris 1996, Nelson 2002). During settlement planning, the importance of the physical planning of the settlements was also emphasized. In previous colonization schemes, easy access to services had been a major problem (Peiris 1996, Nelson 2002). In contrast to previous schemes, it was planned to have a clustered pattern of settlements. The four-tier hierarchy, consisting of hamlet centres, village centres, area centres, and townships, reflected the order of the central places. It was expected that the townships would function as 'growth poles' and benefit the 'hinterlands' or the other centres in order.

The allocation of land in the MDP was an important component in the planning of the settlements. Unlike previous settlement schemes, the sizes of plots allocated to settlers in the MDP were reduced to 1 ha of land for agriculture and 0.2 ha of land for a homestead.[6] The allocation of similar allotments and series of small family farms to the settlers was considered to reflect an appropriate and effective settlement plan, as land given under previous Dry Zone colonization schemes had been regarded as unmanageable by the settler

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[5] NEDCO,(Netherlands Engineering consultants)reports submitted to the Sri Lankan government.
[6] Shanmugaratnam (1984) describes the trend in land allotment sizes in Dry Zone colonization schemes. In the 1930s the land allocated for paddy was 2.02 hectares, and 1.61 hectares were allocated for homestead.

families (Siriwardane 1981). It was expected that farmers would be able to operate their land without hired labour and the allocated plot size was considered sufficient to generate an income for a farming family (Raby 1995). The legal inheritance of land in the MDP was a controversial issue. The allottee was not the owner of the land. Under the AMDP, land cannot be sold due to the legal limitations of private ownership. In terms of the gendered nature of land inheritance, women have been regarded as a disadvantaged group. Women are recognized as legal owners in the settlements only if they are divorcees or widows (Gunawardane 1989, Lund 1993, Jayaweera 2002, de Zoysa 1995). During the planning of settlements in the AMDP, planners regarded males as the heads of the family units and women were expected to support the production activities in the context of their families without separating themselves from their husbands and children.[7]

Under the settlement planning human resource development was considered an important rationale, whereas previous settlements schemes had not paid attention to human and social development (Wickramaratne 1995). In order to fill this gap and maintain the equity objective among the settlers, the AMDP paid special attention to 'basic needs services' in most of its settlements (Nelson 2002). These services included schools, post offices, health services, a banking service, marketing services, food supply, and co-operatives. Peiris (1996) points out that the actual implementation of the new design in settlement planning also had lapses, which he relates to the project's expectation regarding urban services and the allocation of resources for infrastructure. Scudder (2005) notes that a UNDP study on the MDP pointed out the planning weaknesses of the project at very beginning, relating them to inadequate attention paid to marketing and the country's limited town and country planning capacity, which resulted in unfulfilled physical planning at various geographical levels.

Acceleration

Although the project was initially designed to be implemented over a period of 30 years, given all the planning exercises and errors a decision was taken in 1977 to accelerate the project, in order to transcend the overwhelming socio-economic problems encountered by

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[7] Today this trend has changed considerably (please refer to my articles in this thesis).

the country. Due to the nature and intensity of the problems, the government that came to power in 1977 initiated far-reaching changes, affecting the socio-economic contexts of Sri Lanka. The new government's development objectives aimed at bringing agricultural, economic and social development within a shorter time period. Among several other initiatives,[8] the acceleration of the Mahaweli Development Project was identified as an early strategy (Jogaratnam 1995, Scudder 2005). Accordingly, the project's operational time span was drastically rescheduled from 30 to 6 years. Thereafter, the project became known as the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme (AMDP). The project included 13 systems – designated alphabetically from A to M – in order to make the administrative functions easier (Figure. 2.1).

Following the decision to accelerate the project, the administrative structure of the project was changed. The Mahaweli Development Board (MDB), which had been responsible for the whole project, found it difficult to carry out the functions of the project alone. Therefore it was decided to set up the infrastructure giving more power to the Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka (MASL) than to the MDB. However, it was also decided that the MDB would continue to take responsibility for the construction of irrigation and social infrastructure and that the MASL would take responsibility for work relating to settlement and post-settlement in the area (Puttaswamaiah 1990, Merrey 1995).

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[8] The newly elected government took the decision to liberalize the economy, and reduce subsidies and unemployment. It was expected that the AMDP would contribute positively to finding solutions to the problem of unemployment.
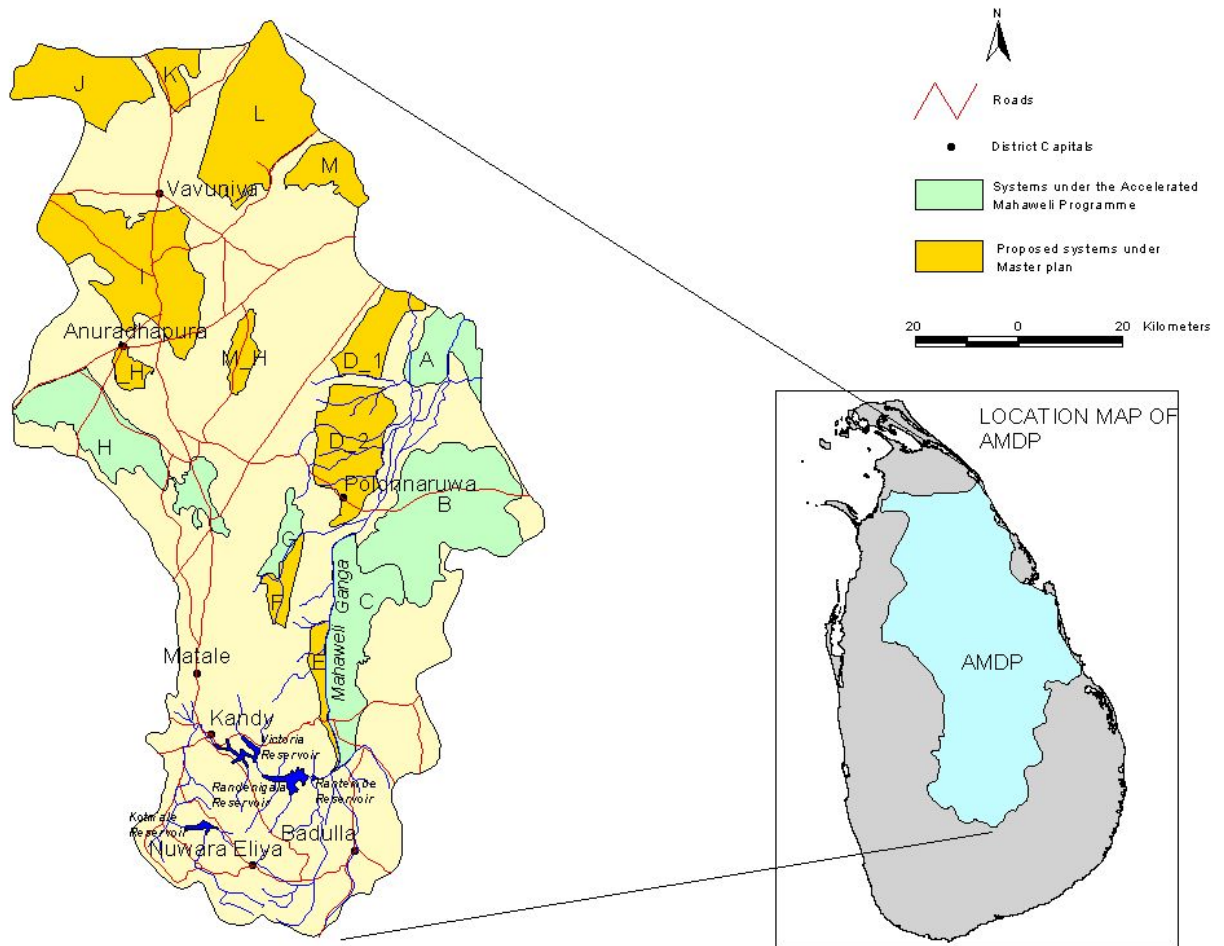
Figure 2.1: Location of the AMDP.

The MASL had different organizations with different specializations under its umbrella. Among them, the Mahaweli Economic Agency (MEA) is relevant in the context of this study. The MEA was assigned the task of settling people and managing post-settlement issues (Puttaswamaiah 1990, Merrey 1995), and since 1979 it has been responsible for all settlement-related economic and community activities. Puttaswamaiah (1990) notes that the post-settlement aspects which were neglected in the previous colonization schemes were given higher priority under the AMDP. By providing the necessary social and physical infrastructure for the settlements it was expected that the settler families would remain in the area and would be able to make their livelihoods there (Siriwardane 1981).

Under the acceleration programme higher priorities were given to the creation of employment, improving agriculture, and hydropower production. According to the master plan, the project was expected to provide irrigation for 364,225 ha of land and to accommodate 250,000 peasant families during the project's implementation period (Wickramasekera 1977, Ministry of Mahaweli Development 1980, Ministry of Mahaweli Development 1984, Ministry of Lands and Land Development & Ministry of Mahaweli Development, 1987). The wider objectives of the AMDP were many. It was expected to make contributions towards domestic food production, higher income for the settlers, alleviation of rural underdevelopment, agricultural diversification, water and land management, developing homestead gardens, expanding paddy production, and facilitating capital formation (Ministry of Mahaweli Development 1979). Further, the alleviation of poverty was either directly or indirectly reflected in many of the AMDP's objectives.

During recent decades, the AMDP has made a significant contribution to the agricultural development of the country, and particularly to the national economy (Abeysinghe 1986, Jogaratnam 1995). The project has significantly expanded the amount of land available for paddy cultivation. It has contributed to the national paddy production and other crops, such as onions, chilies, grams, and maize. It also has contributed substantially to the energy sector. However, recent statistics have shown that the contributions of both Mahaweli agriculture and power generation are declining on a national level (Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 2005, 2006). In terms of agriculture, this can be related to the contributions made in other parts of the country and the increasing costs of paddy production in Mahaweli settlements.[9] In the case of power generation, the decline may be due to the contribution made by mini hydropower generation projects and the increasing demand for electricity. This reflects the competitive environment in which the Mahaweli settlers' livelihoods are embedded.

It was expected that the AMDP would solve the problems of unemployment and widening disparities in income. However, the project had been criticized for its low employment-generating capacity (Karunatilake 1987), despite the fact that employment generation has

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[9] Settlers have found it difficult to pay for fertilizers, oil and water.

been one of the main thrusts since its implementation. With the completion of the major headworks, the operational concept of the project prioritized actions aimed at economic and social stabilization (Mahaweli Authority 1998). During the initial construction period of the project, several thousand jobs were created. Unemployed people from all over the country were employed in the AMDP under various categories (mainly as labourers involved in construction activities) for a period of five to six years. It was also expected that opening up of new land for agriculture in the Dry Zone would provide opportunities for either year-round employment or employment in a variety of agricultural-related activities, such as repair, maintenance, transport, marketing, and other support services (Ministry of Mahaweli Development 1979).

System H and study settlements

The settlements studied are located in System 'H' of the AMDP. For administrative purposes System H has been subdivided into 12 blocks covering pre-AMDP areas and newly developed units (H1–H12). I conducted my research in three settlements located in the Thambuttegama (H 4) AGA division. System H was the first system developed under the AMDP and has been operational since 1978, although its development started in 1974 (Ministry of Mahaweli Development, 1980). It has been labeled as a developed or a completed system, as the target land area (31,991 ha) considered for irrigation and development was completed at the end of 2005 (Mahaweli Authority 2006).

System H was developed as a settlement scheme involving the relocation of settlers from both within the AMDP area and other parts of the country. The settlers were classified into three main categories: original settlers (people who lived in the project area before the implementation of the project), evacuee settlers (people who lost their land and other property due to the construction of dams under the AMDP), and settlers from other parts of the country (mainly including landless poor people, people who supported the ruling party of that time, and encroachers). The majority of settlers in System H consisted mainly of resettlers who were from the project area. Although System H has made remarkable progress in terms of many aspects of human and economic development compared to the

past (Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 2004), many settlers, especially the second and third generations of the original settlers, have faced a variety of problems, predominantly concerning poverty and unemployment.

System 'H' had diversity in terms of its social components. The settlers' backgrounds also varied according to their political allegiances and caste affiliations. Villages incorporated to the AMDP usually consisted of members from a single caste. Sørensen (1996) identifies seven different castes in Thambuttegama, ranging from high to low. Although the settlers, especially low-caste settlers, do not like to talk about their caste background openly, and although researchers have mentioned that caste consciousness is fading, I was not able to observe this in the settlement areas. Further, settlers are discriminated against or live in fear of discrimination, though this is not openly voiced. Being 'outsiders' without a caste label, settlers, especially those from the low-caste settlements, talked about the disadvantaged position they face in joining the security forces due to their caste backgrounds. The Grama Niladari (GN) also confirmed this and told me that people come to him to change their names because one's caste background can be inferred from one's name or village background[10].

Researchers have noted that Mahaweli settlers are also developing into a class-based society. Siriwardane (1981) studied how social differences are created through the medium of production (land and other assets) in System 'H'. Krimmel (1986) has studied the social differentiation in System H. Nanayakkara (1987) notes how this process is also occurring in the settlements of System 'C' due to economic inequity. Thus, a class-based society in System 'H' has created a new form of power relations based on land, income, caste, and political affiliation. Although farmers are not mobilized as social groups in terms of politics in Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe 2006), in the Mahaweli settlements the settlers use their political affiliation as a kind of power to influence the community and to facilitate or constrain people's access to livelihoods. Although this has been done in the past and is widespread in the country as a whole, in the Mahaweli settlements it has created tension.

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[10] Grama Niladari is a local administrator at village level.

Today, the predominantly agricultural economy of System 'H' is rapidly changing to a non-agricultural economy. It is identified as having the one of the best paddy cultivation areas in the whole of the AMDP (Gunawardane & Nelson 1988, Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 2006). In addition, chillies, cowpeas, green grams, maize, soya beans, red onions, gherkins, big onions, groundnuts, and vegetables are also produced. Other crops are cultivated during the major cultivation season (*maha*) and minor cultivation season (*yala*). Depending on the availability of water, farmers cultivate paddy during the minor cultivation season too. In 1990 the area under paddy was 35,487 ha; by 2005 it had increased to 48,566 ha. However, the average yield has been decreasing continuously, except for the year 2002 when yields were significant (Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 2005). Farmers have to use more and more fertilizers to obtain higher yields, and water scarcity is becoming an increasing problem.

During the informal discussions, I learned that farmers were more interested in growing other crops than paddy. Some companies are also involved in the production of cash crops such as tobacco. However, these commercial farms are not preferred by the settlers and they only work on such farms if no other options are available or if their mobility outside the settlement is restricted. Non-farm agricultural activities are very limited. However, non-farming families are gradually increasing in numbers in System 'H' compared to the slow growth of farming families. The number of non-farming families has been rising rapidly in System H since the 1990s (Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka 2006). Non-farm activities within the area are not regarded as very attractive and there are not many opportunities for the growing settler population. Further, settlers are reluctant to engage in livestock-related income earning activities due to reasons varying from religion to theft, and also diseases, which they think will put them in a more vulnerable situation if they are unable to repay the loans obtained for self-employment purposes. However, some people are forced to take this option in the absence of any other opportunities.

Introducing the settlements

The research was conducted in three different types of settlements in the Thambuttegama Divisional Secretariat Division, located in System H (Figure.2.2).
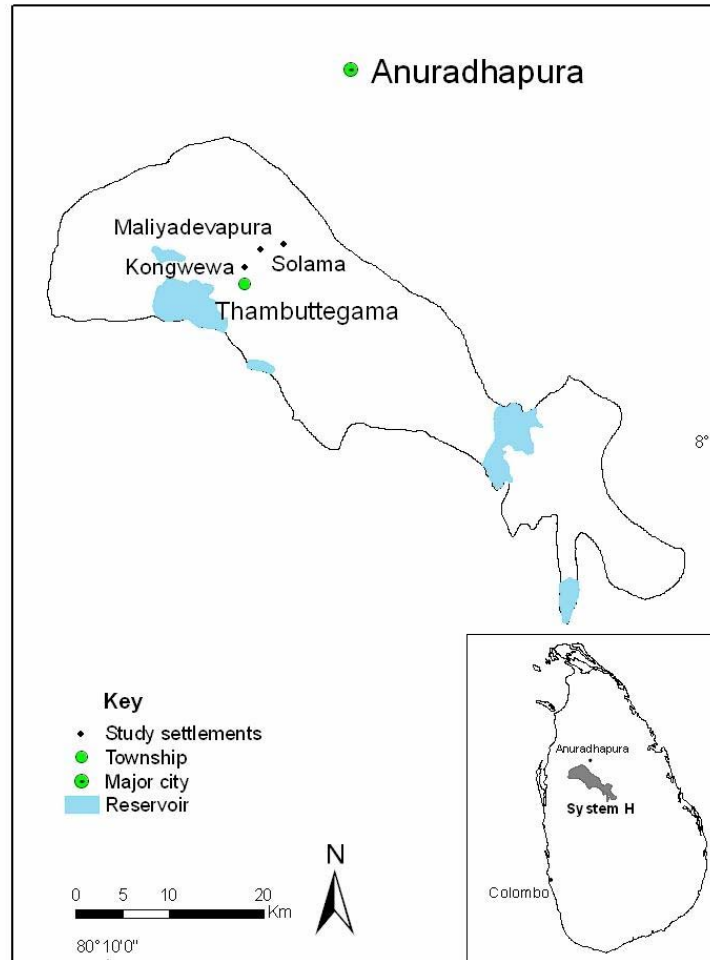
Figure 2.2: Study settlements in System H of the AMDP, and Location in Sri Lanka
(Reprinted from Changing livelihoods among the second and third generations of settlers in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) in Sri Lanka Fazeeha Azmi, Norwegian Journal of Geography, www.tandf.no/ngeog, 2007, 61:1, 1-12. by permission of Taylor & Francis As).

Thambuttegama is one of the pre-Mahaweli towns which existed in the project area and it has long history.[11] The study settlements located in Thambuttegama have diverse backgrounds and histories, and they reflect three different types of settlement in System H. The settlements under study represent diversity in terms of their settlement backgrounds, history and their social structures. Relocation of the villagers in the settlements has contributed considerably to changes in local socio-economic geographies. However, each settlement is largely ethnically homogeneous. Prior to migrating to or being incorporated into System 'H' most of the settlers had different social, economic and historical backgrounds (Appendix 3). During the informal discussions and key informants interviews it was revealed that settlers who had been selected for the project according to their political affiliation or electoral level were the most disadvantaged group of settlers when they first arrived in the settlements. They did not have any means (material or non-material) with which to start their lives in the new environment, in contrast to other types of settlers.

Kongwewa

Kongwew*a* has settlers from many parts of the country. Some were provided with land under the Mahaweli project, while many others are encroachers. Today, the settlement has lost much of its original characteristics due to changes occurring at various levels and to the increased interactions with the outside world. In the following section, I will introduce briefly the make-up of settlement with relevance to the study context. The settlement of Kongwewa comprises three GN divisions or villages, namely Rajapakse gama, Dambulupura and Kongwewa.[12] This research concentrates on Kongwewa only, as this specific GN division includes both settlers from other parts of the country and illegal settlers. Unlike the other two settlements, it was hard to find information about the pre-Mahaweli backgrounds of the Kongwewa settlers as they were from many parts of the country. They were mainly from the adjoining districts of Anuradhapura and from the

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[11] The AMDP changed the role of Thambuttegama to a much busier multifunctional town. Its economy is becoming a highly competitive market economy following the construction of the 'Thambuttegama Dedicated Economic Zone', which has impacted both positively and negatively on the livelihoods of the settlers which this township serves.

[12] GN (Grama Niladari) division is a local administrative unit in Sri Lanka.

southern part of Sri Lanka. From the information given, I understood that majority were very poor and were marginalized in the societies in which they lived. For them, migration to Mahaweli was the only option to find a better future. Their poverty and marginalized positions in their own societies created the precondition for migration. The first generation of the Kongwewa settlers in the area had worked as labourers in the AMDP. This was how many of them had come to know about the project area and had decided to settle. Those who were selected under the electoral category were either poor or had worked for the ruling party.

Maliyadevapura

Maliyadevapura is one of two villages that come under Galviharawewa GN division. The Maliyadevapura settlers were originally from the Kothmale Reservoir area, which contains a reservoir constructed under the AMDP. When construction work started the villagers had to be evacuated immediately. While some of the villagers chose to live in surrounding villages which were not affected by the project many villagers moved to the Dry Zone through lack of choice. Most of the migrants from Kothmale were from the *govigama* or cultivator caste, which ranks highest in the Sinhalese caste system. In general, the migrant settlers were eager to own a plot of land, as land had determined social hierarchy in their villagers. When they decided to migrate to the 'unknown' land most of them had the ambition of becoming the owner of a large extent of land.

Prior to the villagers' migration, the major sources of income were derived from different cultivation activities. The villagers grew tea and other cash crops, such as coffee, areca nuts, cloves, peppers, and cardamom seeds. They also grew Wet Zone vegetables and cultivated paddy on sloping land. In this way they were able to meet their daily food needs and they also sold the produce to earn an income. However, after arriving in Mahaweli the villagers had to buy almost everything. For Maliyadevapura settlers, it took a longer time to adjust to their new environment compared to migrants living in the other two types of

settlements.[13] Due to forced evacuation, many settlers were forced to abandon their livelihoods and the society familiar to them, and also certain cultural and religious practices were optional in the AMDP settlements. Construction of the Kothmale dam created the main precondition for livelihood change.[14] However, compared to other settlers, evacuee settlers generally had a sound material resource base with which to establish their new lives, as they arrived with compensation money for their loss of property.

Solama

Solama is a *purana* (ancient) settlement that existed in the area prior to the commencement of the Mahaweli project. It consisted of members of the drummer caste. According to one of the surviving founders of Solama, the village was formed in the 1930s as a result of a dispute with high-caste people who had refused the drummer caste access to water. After this incident, a group of nine young men from the drummer caste started to build the present Solama *wewa* (tank) and had moved to the site. Although the Solama settlers were not physically relocated to a distant or unknown environment, their incorporation into the AMDP changed their traditional lifestyles and landownership structure whereby some people had larger amounts of land than others. Following inclusion in the Mahaweli development project, Solama villagers were forced to abandon their traditional *chena* (slash-and-burn) cultivation in favour of intensive irrigated paddy cultivation, which they had very little knowledge of. In pre-Mahaweli times they had derived most of their material sources for daily survival from the forests. However, due to the Mahaweli development project, Solama settlers were forced to change their livelihoods.

Most settlers did not undertake wage labour or practice permanent agriculture prior to their inclusion in the project. They were not familiar with a more competitive commercialized economy as the pre-Mahaweli production system was on a subsistence level. After their

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[13] Krimmel (1986) observed a similar situation among the first 200 evacuees from Dorakadagam, in the Kothmale Reservoir area, who now live in System H.

[14] It is also important to point out here that also some settlers in Maliyadevapura decided to migrate due to poverty.

resettlement, many families carried out their traditional caste-based occupation, namely drumming, along with irrigated agriculture. According to some key informants, traditional caste-based occupations had almost disappeared from the village, with the exception of those performed by some elderly people. Due to their lower caste affiliation the drummer caste have a disadvantaged position in Sri Lankan society. However, in the study area their services as drummers are still in demand for religious and cultural activities in neighbouring villages. The second and third generations of Solama settlers are trying to make changes by adapting to new lifestyles reflected in new livelihoods and are not interested in their traditional caste-based occupation. Although many of the first generation settlers are not supportive of this trend, they do not deny that the continuation of their caste-based occupation will place the present generations in a vulnerable situation through lack of social recognition. Today, settlers are engaged in the cultivation of paddy and other Dry Zone crops. However, non-farming livelihoods are on the rise in the settlements. In terms of infrastructure, Solama has a poor road system, but recently (2006) it was provided with electricity and water supplies. However, not all households are able to afford these facilities.

Basic population structure

An understanding of population trends and characteristics is necessary in order to have a better understanding of the livelihood changes in the settlement. Table 2.1 shows some basic population data relating to the study settlements. The total number of people in each of the settlements doubled during the period 1981–2006. Solama has the highest number of people.

Table 2.1: Basic population data

Settlement	1981				2006			
	Females	Males	Total	Total no. of families	Females	Males	Total	Total no. of families
Kongwewa	125	235	450	120	482	450	932	223
Maliyadevapura	128	201	389	70	379	396	775	225
Solama	329	449	778	135	728	661	1389	320

Source: GN reports 1981, 2006

An interesting and important feature of the population change is that the number of females has exceeded that of males in two of the settlements. This pattern also reflects the national trend. During the initial years of resettlement, in Maliyadevapura and Kongwewa the female population was almost half the size of the male population. The responses from key informants and informal discussion groups confirmed the reason behind these statistics. Some older settlers, priests and GNs told me that this trend was due to the fact that as these two settlements were outside the project area it was mainly the men most who first decided to migrate.[15] In Kongwewa, men came first and found employment in the settlement area. Some of them were given land only for homestead, while others who were not given a piece of land gradually encroached upon the state land and erected temporary houses. It was only when they felt that the environment was satisfactory for the female members that they decided to invite the women to join them. In the case of Solama, the high rate of population growth is primarily linked with early marriages. Some of the Solama settlers informed that when land titles were given, married couples took priority. This also led to early marriages. Further, when they were incorporated to the project, unlike in the other two settlements, they had their families with them. Generally, during the early 1980s the education of girls did not receive much attention among the poor rural families, and this was also a factor that contributed to early marriages.

The increasing population in the settlements has had a significant impact on people's livelihoods as access to land is decreasing. Under the AMDP, subdivision of land is legally controlled along with mortgaging and sale. However, I understood that a large amount of land has been subdivided informally in the settlements, which has resulted in small unproductive holdings that are not economically viable. Further, people have mortgaged or sold their land informally. In the absence of direct access to land some of the second generation settlers operate *ande* (sharecropping). Separate statistical data on the current landholdings were not available with regards to the settlements, although clearly land division has been extensive. In addition, it was hard to learn about the different ways in which the original settlers divide their land among their children due to the informal nature of the practice. Furthermore, land encroachment is increasingly taking place both for

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[15] Prior to their arrival in the Mahaweli settlements, heads of households or prospective landowners were advised not to bring their families to the settlements until one year after their arrival (Wickramaratne 1995).

small-scale agriculture and housing. In Kongwewa, encroachment onto state land is comparatively higher than in the other two settlements.

Income distribution

The income distribution data (Table 2.2) indicate the income dimension of poverty in the settlements. However, this data should be interpreted with care because the beneficiaries of S*amurdhi*are not merely based on their income category. Some of the respondents informed that the selection criteria for this benefit are arbitrary and highly politicized. Although the issue of beneficiary selection has been at the core of the *Samurhdhi* programme's reform in the recent past there is no clear understanding of how this will be managed by the Sri Lankan government in the future (Sarvanantha 2003).

Table 2.2: Income distribution in 2006.

Settlement	Less than SLR 750	750-2499	2500-3499	3500-4999	Over 5000	Families receiving Samurdhi*
Kongwewa	87	59	33	23	21	81
Maliyadevapura	60	64	43	30	28	60
Solama	140	50	46	49	35	108

Source: GN report 2006

* Samurdhi, which means prosperity, is a government poverty alleviation scheme introduced in 1994 and covers the whole island. A monthly income of SLR 1500 is considered the basic criteria in the selection of settlers. The monthly assistance given varies from SLR 1000 to SLR 100.

Table 2.2 shows that the majority of the settlers earned less than SLR 5000 in 2006, which reveals a high disparity in terms of income compared to the national level data. Among those in the highest income group, most were working in formal sector employment with a fixed salary and a few are engaged in business. More than 87% of the families received an income of less than SLR 5000. The monthly average income for the whole country in 2006 was SLR 25,414 (Department of Census and Statistics 2006). The Department of Census and Statistics (2006) also recognizes there are differences between urban, rural and estate sectors in the average monthly income earned. The number of income receivers in households, i.e. contributing to the total income of a household, varied according to the

sectors: in the urban sector the average number of income earners was 1.9, in the rural sector it was 1.8, and in the estate sector it was 2.1 (Department of Census and Statistics 2006). However, it should be taken into consideration that obtaining information on incomes in a context where people are highly dependent on government assistance is extremely difficult and the reliability of the information may be in question as most people (as in this study) will either try to conceal the true amount or will not reveal their actual income.

In terms of income poverty, Solama ranks first. The reason for this can be related partly to its pre-resettlement conditions. As a *purana* village, Solama settlers had a different form of livelihood compared to after their inclusion in the AMDP. Their new form of livelihood based on paddy posed a great challenge to them as they were not familiar with irrigated paddy cultivation. Further, as these particular settlers were not given any compensation because they were re-settlers they did not have any stable means with which to start earning a livelihood in the new settlement context. The only asset they had was their labour and their community. Their foundation for development was rather unstable and unpredictable as they did not posses the capability to use the paddy land productively. Some first generation settlers told me that they had considerable freedom in terms of access to land and forest resources, which they depended on for their livelihood. Their caste-based occupation did not generate sufficient an income for them to be able to live a decent life. Their lack of mobility has also been an impediment to their progress. It is only recently that this settlement has developed increasing links with other parts of the country and beyond.

Education

Government schools are the main providers of education in the settlements. The nearest schools are located mainly in the town centres. Some settlements have primary schools, though among the three study settlements only Solama had a primary school. Students from all three settlements attend schools in Thambuttegama for their GCE (A/L) education. It was interesting note that the number of tuition classes in Thambuttegama was increasing.

Some students said they went to Anuradhapura town for tuition in mathematics, science and English. They were also attending classes in computing. This reveals the extent of the demand for education. It also shows how parents are willing to invest in their children's education. Table 2.3 shows the level of education among the settlers.

Table 2. 3: Settlers who had studied up to GCE (O/L) exam in 2006.

Settlement	Age 18-25		Age 26-30		Age 31-35		Age 36-40		Age 41-45	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Kongwewa	10	09	07	05	09	02	07	03	02	01
Maliyadevapura	08	05	01	02	--	--	--	--	--	--
Solama	02	14	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Source: GN report 2006

Regarding the level of education, the data in Table 2.3 are very disappointing. According to key informants many of the first generation settlers did not even have primary education. Statistical data were not available for those above the age of 45 years. Compared to Maliyadevapura and Solama, Kongwewa settlers had higher levels of education. This can be linked to the fact that the majority of the initial settlers from Kongwewa had better access to schools, especially compared to the Solama settlers, among which the first generation did not have any access to education. Further, among the re-settlers in Kongwewa there were many educated people (most of them were educated at least up to Grade Eight) compared to in the other two settlements. This may have been due to the fact that they had had better access to education in their places of origin.[16]

In Solama, the majority of the second generation did not have the basic educational qualifications considered necessary for government sector jobs. In terms of human capital, these settlements are far below national levels, yet the settlers revealed that during the previous decade interest in education had been increasing. However, investing in children's education has been a continuous challenge for many families.

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[16] In Maliyadevapura, I lived with a retired teacher during my fieldwork. She was one of my key informants, and her husband was a teacher. She said that when they were asked to move to the Mahaweli project area their children were attending school in their village. As she knew the education facilities in the settlement would not be better than in their village, they left their children with her in-laws and she migrated together with her husband. Their children moved to Maliyadevapura only after they had completed their education. Today, all three children are employed in well-recognized government jobs. The mother had served as teacher in the settlement area for more than 25 years.

Table 2.4: Labour force participation and employment structure in 1995.

| Settlement | Employed | | Unemployed | | Type of work among those employed | | | | |
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Agriculture	Garment Industry	Security forces	Middle East migration	Other
Kongwewa	40	55	112	85	50	12	18	10	NA
Maliyadevapura	50	109	114	80	115	07	20	NA	NA
Solama	60	80	130	111	119	05	05	01	NA

Source: GN reports 1995. NA: Data not available

Table 2.5: Labour force participation and employment structure in 2006.

| Settlement | Employed | | Unemployed | | Type of work among those employed | | | | |
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Agriculture	Garment Industry	Security forces	Middle East migration	Other
Kongwewa	72	90	158	130	34	20	41	37	30
Maliyadevapura	80	96	123	114	72	50	23	24	07
Solama	109	84	142	97	95	43	23	20	12

Source: GN reports 2006

From the data presented in Tables 2.4 and 2.5 the trend in the type of employment shows a clear change from agriculture to non-agriculture based employment. I will not discuss the changes occurring in the trend or the type of employment, nor the gendered nature of the employed population, as this forms core analytical points in the articles. However, the data in the Tables indicate the quantitative nature of the change and reflect the general trends.

In Kongwewa, the majority of the settlers are engaged in wage labour and a few people are self-employed. One of the most important structural changes to have affected Kongwewa is the availability of wage labour in the nearby town of Thambuttegama. The settlers in Kongwewa also work as agricultural labourers in other settlements. As many of the settlers do not have agricultural land they are engaged in non-agricultural activities. I observed that compared to the other two settlements Kongwewa had many temporary shops and boutiques. The shop owners purchased vegetables and other food and non-food items from Thambuttegama town for resale in the settlement. In Kongwewa, the number of women migrating to the Middle East for work is rising. According to key informants the majority of the Kongwewa settlers did not have a reliable or permanent source of income. The income they earned was hardly sufficient to cover their family's daily expenses. However, compared to the other two settlements the settlers in Kongwewa are engaged in more

informal sector employment activities (although such activities are seasonal, unreliable and poorly paid) in and around the settlement. Many of the young men work as labourers in Thambuttegama market. Further, during the informal discussions, it was revealed that compared to settlers in the other two settlements Kongwewa settlers have far more links with other places of the country, as they themselves originally came from various parts of Sri Lanka and they exploit these links to find employment elsewhere. The livelihood opportunities available during the 1990s for Solama and Maliyadevapura settlers were not very diverse. Most of the settlers worked in agriculture. The women in the families continued to assist on their family farms without remuneration, in addition to the other tasks related family life. Today, in both settlements, access to other forms livelihood is changing, with a clear gender dimension. This aspect is discussed further in the empirical part of this thesis.

Housing

Sri Lanka has accorded high priority to housing, as the provision of basic needs has been always been considered as a prerequisite for the success of a government. Planned settlements in Sri Lanka started as early as in the 1940s, with the commencement of Dry Zone colonization schemes. According to the original settlers and some key informants, most of the houses in the settlements were like huts during the initial resettlement period. They could not be described as houses because they were a very temporary type of construction made of materials found in the immediate environment. Upon arrival, the settlers were given financial assistance to buy construction materials such as coir, string, *cadjan* (coconut leaves locally used for thatching roof), wattle, and coconut reapers (coconut tree timbers). Elderly settlers in Maliyadevapura informed that they had to buy almost everything to build these temporary structures.

Figure.2.3: Increasing construction activities

Today, construction is booming in all three settlements (Figure 2.3). Compared to 30 years ago, houses have improved considerably in terms of construction materials, and structure. At the same time, what a house symbolizes also has changed greatly during the previous three decades. The houses in the settlements now have TVs, CD players and furniture, the walls are painted, and windows and doors are dressed with curtains. Some settlers even have electricity and water supplies. Unlike in the past, the need for better housing is receiving priority among the settlers. This was observed among the second and third generations in all three settlements. Their conceptualization of poverty has had a

considerable impact on the need for a good house. However, what constituted a good house in the settlements was relative to the settlement contexts too.

Social networks

In Sri Lanka rural communities are well known for collective activities, in contrast to the urban communities. Social networks in the settlements were found to be very different as the settlers' backgrounds varied. In Solama, as the settlers were from a single-caste village they had comparatively close relationships compared to settlers in the other two settlements, and this was largely due to same-kin marriages. Further, they had known each other well before their village was incorporated in to the AMDP. In Maliyadevapura, few of the settlers knew each other before their arrival at the settlements. Maliyadevapura settlers were from small villages from the present Kothmale dam area, where they shared similarities in terms of culture, knowledge about paddy farming, and lifestyles. In contrast, the settlers from Kongwewa had very weak social networks, and most of them did not know each other prior to resettlement. Further, they were either considered as outsiders (by Solama settlers) or not entitled to be settlers (by Maliyadevapura settlers) in the project area. Today these differences are changing. At the same time, within the settlements involvement in existing settlement-level associations (mainly in terms of membership) are on the rise. These associations are becoming more formal due to the nature of membership, functions and involvements. In the study settlements, funeral societies are particularly popular, followed by farmers associations, cooperative societies, temple societies, Samurdhi societies, saving societies, sports and recreation societies, and women's societies. However, participation in such associations is not much appreciated in the context of poverty, which forces people to look for income earning opportunities instead. Uphoff (1992) shows how farmers' organizations in the Gal Oya irrigation scheme have dramatically changed the socio-economic landscape of the area. He points out that farmers' organizations can improve people's lives through self-help and collective actions. In the settlements, the settlers and government officers do not seem to understand the potential for such associations to lead to improvements in people's lives. During the initial years of resettlement the social networks among the settlers were more informal. Lund (1993) notes

that how during the major and minor (*Maha* and *Yala*) harvest seasons farmers in Mahaweli settlements used various modes of collective labour such as exchange of labour (*attham*) and collective labour within the kin group (*Kaiyya*). These modes of labour exchange, which were once important sources of social capital, are now becoming increasingly depleted. This is an area which needs proper attention paid to the future development activities of the settlements.

Politics

Affiliation to a political party has also led to a kind of social network as well as division in the settlements, as elsewhere in the country. The settlement-level associations of Sri Lanka's two main political parties existed in all three settlements. These village-level associations become very active during election periods. Supporters of different parties almost become rivals during times of heated elections. Supporters of the winning party seek political benefits or use their membership and affiliation to access jobs (mostly lowest rank jobs) in the government sector which carry pensions. Some people use such associations to acquire land, loans and other benefits such as transferring a government servant who did not favour them (e.g. from the opposition party) to a remote location in the country. According to the settlers, some of the associations in the settlements, especially in Samurdhi, are highly politicized and many poor people are excluded from the beneficiary scheme due to their political affiliation to the opposition party.

Conclusions

The Dry Zone colonization strategy has been an important strategy in Sri Lanka's rural development efforts as most of the country's population lives in rural areas. It has changed the socio-economic landscape of the Dry Zone region as a whole. The AMDP has undoubtedly contributed to enhancing the lives of the settlers, and also the national and regional economies to a certain extent. The project has made a significant contribution to irrigation in the Dry Zone, providing settlement areas for poor people and attaining certain government objectives, though not fully. Nevertheless, inequalities and unidentified or unrecognized dimensions of poverty are on the rise and pose many challenges in the lives

of the settlers. Among other objectives, the AMDP clearly emphasizes the importance of alleviating various dimensions of poverty and creating a better, socially equitable life for the settlers in particular and benefits for the country in general. Despite the large investments made in the development activities under the Mahaweli project and in overall development programmes of the country, poverty, impoverishment and vulnerability remain a disturbing and pervasive phenomenon in the study settlements located in System H at the heart of the project.

CHAPTER 3: APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING POVERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT THINKING

Introduction

In this chapter I provide brief philosophical and theoretical backgrounds to poverty in the context of development thinking. I also very briefly note what the geographical stance is in terms of understanding a social phenomenon or the human world. The aim of this discussion is to show how the philosophical and theoretical discussions of understanding poverty led to the importance of incorporating people's perceptions. In order to research how different generations of settlers perceive poverty and how they respond to it. I draw upon some ideas that were developed by Sen (1999) (capability approach), Chambers (1983), Ellis (2000) and Bebbington (1999) (livelihood approach), Long (1997) (actor-oriented approaches), and Giddens (1984) (structuration). These ideas have been developed further by others. I also make use of such contributions.

Philosophical underpinnings

The vast amount of literature that has developed about poverty shows the divergent views of poverty and the difficulties in defining the term (Chambers 1983, 1993, 1997, Lipton 1988, Sen 1992). At the same time, this has also offered many criteria with which to understand poverty, which in turn has triggered challenges to understanding and studying poverty in academic circles, as such literature has also contributed to different empirical, epistemological and methodological improvements in poverty studies. The existing bodies of literature relating to poverty also show that it is hardly possible to study it in its entirety. Further, in reviewing the current literature on poverty, especially in the context of how different paradigms of development have understood it, there are numerous challenges in terms of approaches, frameworks, concepts, and perspectives, as shifting meanings of development over time have a profound impact on the definition of poverty in the development literature as well as in practice.

Generally, the major theories of development (modernization, dependency) adopted a positivist philosophy when explaining social phenomena (poverty is also a social phenomena). Such theories explained the social phenomena with reference to structures (Long 2001).[1] The positivist philosophy in early development theories painted the picture of development as society's evolution through different stages of growth (e.g. Lewis 1955, Rostow 1960). The contribution of the positivist approach to development is in the form of various growth-oriented theories. Such theories have also provided methodologies to use in understanding social phenomena. The basic assumption behind these methodologies is related to the fact that social phenomena are measurable (e.g. the income definition of poverty) (Johnston 1992, Long 2001). Thus the methodology proposed by the positivist tradition was based on quantitative approaches addressed by its fundamental epistemology. The methodology of positivism was highly benefited by the quantitative revolution in various disciplines, including geography (Kitchin 2006). The influence of positivism on geography grew during the 1950s (Kitchin 2006). Johnston (1983, 1986, 1992) discusses in detail the contribution of positivist philosophical stance in human geography which sought to answer the 'What?' and 'Where?' questions of social phenomena through universal laws.[2] During the period of positivist influence the methodology of human geography was related to hypothesis testing, and building theories, models and laws (Johnston 1983).[3] Johnston also explains how this methodology contributed to the formulation of, for example, central place theory, land use theory and industrial location theory. This resulted in the development of geography as a spatial science (Holt-Jensen 2006). Although positivism had a high level of influence on the social sciences during the post-war decades, faced with criticisms and dissatisfaction the positivist tradition was challenged by the constructivist tradition which was more humanistic.

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[1] Kitchin (2006, 20) offers the following definition: 'Positivism is a set of philosopical approaches to seek apply scientific principles and methods drawn from the natural and hard sciences to social phenomena in order to explain them'.

[2] Johnston (1992) points out that in human geography central place theory, which considers the spatial distribution of settlement and settlement planning, is a clear reflection of the positivist mode of theorizing of 'places' which was based on laws and expected behaviours.

[3] These theories and models were influential during the 1970s in development practices in many developing countries. For example, the AMDP's settlement planning is based on the central place theory (Nelson 2002).

In the social sciences, constructivism emerged as a counter argument to the 'ontological' reality of the positivist tradition which believed that the real world is simply out there to be discovered (Long 1984, 1992, 1997, 2001). The constructivist epistemology acknowledged the existence of multiple realities (Long 2004). In the understanding of development, the positivist explanation of development theories that were based on structural modes of explanations was challenged by constructivist studies on human conditions. Understanding of development started to acknowledge the 'multiple realities' (Long 1984). This epistemological standpoint brought 'actor-oriented' approaches to the forefront in explaining development outcomes in a way that put people at the centre of explanations.[4]

The influential work in terms of 'actor-oriented approaches' comes from Long (1984, 1989, 1997, 2001, Long & Long 1992). Long has continuously placed high priority on actors through recognizing the central role played by human actions and consciousness. He also assigns high priority to subjective experiences and everyday life. Long (200l) notes the importance of acknowledging the interplay between and mutual determination of 'internal' and 'external' factors and relationships. Although Long accepts the influence of structures, he emphasizes that different patterns of social organization result from the interplay between actors and structures. Chambers (1983) also reacted against the structuralist explanation of social phenomena. He reacted against the top-down approaches to development and called for a new perspective that builds on people's perceptions in the field of development. Generally, the actor-oriented approach challenges the intervention-type development and calls for development from below. Booth's (1994)) contribution falls along this line, which also takes an actor-oriented approach to research on development and social change. The methodological stance of this philosophy was qualitative and based on human experiences and values (Entrikin & Tepple 2006). The constructivist philosophy introduced more human-centred methods (e.g. ethnographies, PRA) in development studies in order to understand the social phenomena.

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[4] Gidden's (1984) ideas on structuration were extremely influential during the the period of meta-theories that explained social phenomena and processs from a structuralist view.

In geography the 'constructivist' claims concerning knowledge were reflected through humanistic perspectives. 'Humanistic' claims concerning knowledge emerged during the 1960s as a reaction to the positivist claims (Johnston 1983, 1986, 1992, Peet 1994). Johnston (1992) notes that in geography humanistic approaches were adopted by many geographers to explain the human world (Tuan 1974, Buttimer 1979). This perspective in geography also emphasized the importance of subjective knowledge and called for methodologies that can capture experiences, attitudes and beliefs in understanding the human world (Entrikin & Tepple 2006). Unwin (1994) notes that the overemphasis on subjective knowledge cannot explain the dominations or constraints. With the common criticisms rising against constructivist philosophy, humanistic approaches also came under fire (Johnston 1992).

It is evident that the fundamental claims of understanding social phenomena in terms of positivist explanations undermine or do not give a proper place to the role of humans (actors), and the same applies to constructivist explanations with regard to structures. In reality, actors negotiate various structures and contexts that may enhance or hinder their actions (Peet 1994, Unwin 1994). Giddens bridges this gap through his structuration theory (Peet 1994, Dyck & Kearns 2006). It is concerned with the interaction between knowledgeable and capable social agents and the wider social systems and structures in which they are implicated (Gregory 1994). Giddens (1976,1984,1986) developed this theory continuously throughout his work in the 1970s and 1980s. His work offers an account of how actors (agency) and social structure are related to each other in a way whereby the structure forms the basis of individual action and the acts of individual agents reproduce structures. In geography too, structuration theory had an impact (Peet 1994, Unwin 1994, Dyck & Kearns 2006). Unwin (1994) notes Massey's (1984) contribution in terms of operationalizing the theoretical work on human agency and spatial structure is related to an attempt to analyse the way in which economic and social change vary in different places.[5] Dyck & Kearns (2006) have used structuration theory to understand the

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[5] Giddens understand 'agency' as the capabilities people have of doing things and agency implies power. Giddens defines structures as a set of rules and resources and that exist virtually in the reproduced social practices (Peet 1994).

mutual influences of society and space in the production of everyday geography.[6] In explaining structuration theory, Holt-Jensen (2006, 127) notes that 'social systems are not only structured by rules and resources; they are also structured in time and space'. He continues by highlighting the role of geographer in making visible the production and reproduction of space.

In this research, I consider the 'actor' perspective is rewarding in understanding poverty and why different generations of settlers are engaged in their current livelihoods as it can explain the reasons for livelihood change from their own perspectives. This contributes to a subjective understanding of how settlers struggle to overcome poverty and fulfill their various aims. At the same time I emphasize changing context is an important factor that provides opportunities as well as constraints. In an actor-oriented approach too, attention is focused upon the potential strengths of people and how they make choices in different contexts. It is also pertinent to note that an actor-oriented approach does not totally reject structures. Long (1997) uses the terms 'domains' and 'arena' to analyse the constraints and opportunities that shape actors' choices to improve their positions. While shedding light on poverty and livelihoods, I believe the study will also contribute to an understanding of the production of social space that has been created by the interplay between actors and contexts over three decades. However, I do not engage in a serious discussion on a geographical theoretical perspective of how social spaces are produced. Finding of the study will document what has happened to planned space.

Poverty in the context of development thinking

The fact development is all about poverty (alleviation) is not new. Hettne (1995) asserts that development theories emerged in order to understand the problem of 'underdevelopment'. Poverty has long been the major problem of underdevelopment. It has been the focus of development in many developing countries since the World War II (Hettne 1995, Preston 1996, Martinussen 1997). It has also been on the agenda of donors, researchers, practitioners, politicians, and academics. To put it simply, the poor and their

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[6] Rigg (2007) provides a detailed discussion on 'everyday geography'

problems are viewed by different actors in relation to their own concerns and interests. The history of a given country's development activities (projects, plans, programmes) will reveal how poverty has been understood and tackled by the country's governments.

Development under modernization

During the 1960s the modernization perspective of development dominated the theory and practice of development. After World War II the main thrust addressed by development theories, which were reflected in the strategies and plans of many developing countries, was therefore centred on economic growth (Brohman 1996, Pieterse 2001). Under this theory it was believed that growth would eventually have a 'trickle-down' effect and benefit all sectors of population. In terms of how traditional agriculture in developing countries can contribute to an agriculture-led process of economic growth, during the early to mid-1960s the modernization theory proposed the 'small farms' model, which was considered as the engine of growth and development (Ellis & Biggs 2001). It was during this time that the master plan for the MDP was prepared, which also targeted small farm-based agriculture that could contribute to economic growth. This theory held that profits in agriculture could be used to improve industrialization and that raising investment in industrialization would bring development and alleviate poverty. Since then, several growth-oriented strategies have been proposed (growth poles, green revolution) to bring about development and alleviate poverty.

Under the modernization paradigm the meaning of development was equated with growth, and political and social modernization. As development was associated with growth and political and social modernization, accompanying strategies to bring development and alleviate poverty were also focused on growth and modernization (Preston 1996). During this time poverty was defined as lack of economic welfare, i.e. income (Ravallion 1998) and the main concentration was on economic well-being. In *absolute* terms, poverty is a lack of income necessary to fulfill the essential requirements of physiological survival. In *relative* terms poverty is a lack of income necessary to reach the average standard of living in a particular society. It deals with the identification and measurement of poverty in terms

of a shortfall in monetary income. The key elements of this approach include the definition of income and the determination of a poverty line. Although this approach has been criticized for neglecting other dimensions of poverty, it still dominates among academic and practitioners.[7] A good example is PRSPs and MDGs which acknowledge the multidimensional nature of poverty, yet in practice focus much on the monetary dimension of poverty. In order to introduce effective and sustainable strategies to combat poverty it is necessary to reach an understanding of what poverty means to the people who really experience and live it rather than focusing attention only on the income dimension. Successful reduction of poverty therefore depends on how poverty is defined (Laderchi et al. 2003). To this, I add that it is also a question of by whom it is defined.

Although growth-oriented theories under the modernization thought aimed to improve the lives of the people, they could not bring the expected development in developing countries. Instead, the situation of the poor became worse (Martinussen 1997). The failure of the modernization theories to bring development was attributed to several factors. The dissatisfaction with the development outcomes delivered by the growth-centred strategies adopted in post-war decades gained momentum in the early 1970s (Martinussen 1997, Blaikie 2000, Pieterse 2001). Further, conventional development theories did not pay much attention to the spread of benefits to the poor (Hettne 1995). As a result, poverty, inequality and unemployment became big issues in developing countries during the early 1970s. In Sri Lanka, high unemployment and the increasing cost of living were creating social unrest and youth insurgency (Hettige 1996, Gunatillake 2000). As in Sri Lanka, the growth-centred development strategies failed to bring the expected developments in many developing countries and the search for new alternatives to development and how it could be achieved emerged.

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[7] In Sri Lanka too, even though recent literature on poverty accepts the multidimensional nature of poverty (Korf & Silva 2001, Tudawa 2000, Mayer 2003) it is still defined as generally related to a poverty line which has been decided upon on an ad hoc basis. At the same time, there is increasing interest in understanding the non-monetary aspects of poverty using qualitative participatory methodologies. A study conducted by Shanmugaratnam in 1999 on rural poverty in Sri Lanka and also a study conducted by the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) on the perceptions of the of poor in four districts of Sri Lanka have contributed much to our understanding of the non-monetary dimensions of poverty from the point of view of those who experience it. These studies reveal the fact that the aspects of poverty identified by the poor are of greater significance than those identified in assessments made by international and national agencies.

The major weaknesses of growth oriented development thoughts led to new paradigms of development that emphasized on rural-based strategies and focused on development from below. This change in interest resulted in searching for new meanings of development which resulted in a paradigm called 'alternative development' which emerged during the late 1980s which was more human centred and top-down in nature (Hettne 1995, Brohman 1996, Pieterse 2001, Potter et al. 2004). Blaikie (2000) importantly notes the new development thought rejected the idea, modernization as the unavoidable direction of social change; accepted that truth is variable and negotiable; acknowledged an awareness of power relations; recognized the local differences and agendas; and recognized development as a continually negotiated and subjectively defined process.

Alternative development

Alternative development is concerned with introducing alternative practices of development and redefining the goals of development. The failure of growth-oriented development projects changed the focus in development from 'growth' to 'basic needs'. Basic needs included the minimum requirements for private consumption (food, shelter, clothing), essential services for collective consumption (water, electricity, transport, sanitation, health care, education), and participation of people in decision making and employment (Brohman 1996). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the focus of 'basic needs' took centre stage in the development debate. Since then a focus on human development has become a central aspect in the definition of development and hence in poverty alleviation.[8] Alternative development thinking reflects the idea of development as both quantitative and qualitative change and that development should result in enhancing human capabilities (Potter et al. 2004).

The shift in the conceptualization of development promoted development as a participatory process that empowers poor people to take control of their own priorities for change rather

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[8] The development programmes in developing countries were targeted at alleviating poverty, especially in rural areas, through distributional equity and the provision of basic needs, and much emphasis was given to projects that were directly targeted at the poor (Brohman 1996). In Sri Lanka, the acceleration of the Mahaweli Development Project occurred during this time due the pressing socio-economic problems prevailing in the rural sector.

than achieving certain targets (Potter et al. 2004). During the late 1970s 'popular participation' was seen as an important concept in rural development and basic need strategies. Under this approach meanings of development were interpreted in a broader sense. Development was defined as the capacitation, empowerment and enlargement of people's choices (Pieterse 2001). Put rather differently, alternative development worked through redefining the objectives of development and introduced alternative practices to achieve development and alleviate poverty (Pieterse 1998). This approach considered that the means to achieving the goal of development should be participatory and people-centred (Pieterse 1998). As a result, poverty alleviation during the 1980s was also centred on processes rather than the 'blue print approach' where 'top-down' approaches to development dominated (Ellis & Biggs 2001). In the following, I will briefly outline the main approaches and concepts that flourished after the emergence of the 'people-centred' vision of development and which are drawn upon in the present study.

Capability approach to development

The capability approach to development was initially articulated by Sen (1985) and later developed by Nussbaum and Sen (1993). The approach draws attention to the fundamental link between development and freedom, whereby Sen asserts that development is a function of people's ability to capitalize on their own capabilities as free human agents. In his award-winning book *Development as Freedom* (Sen 1999), Sen defines poverty as 'the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty' (p. 87). The capability perspective of poverty holds a multidimensional view as there are several *capabilities* and *functionings.* Capabilities and functionings mark differences between actual and potential, achievement and freedom to achieve, and outcomes and opportunities. The basic capabilities which Sen identifies are the expansion of basic needs. However, while Sen (1999) does not list any capabilities, he outlines five types of freedom: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency, and protective security. Nussbaum (2006), however, identifies an explicit list of capabilities that are required to secure a necessary level of dignity. By pointing out these dimensions of poverty she attempts to construct a framework for

multidimensional poverty reduction from a 'capability' perspective.[9] I find Sen's open-ended framework allows for more inputs and development as capabilities and functionings are complex and may vary considerably across the individuals and also, as Alkire (2007) notes, the dimensions of poverty that people value may vary.[10] This research contends that capability approach provides a better framework for thinking about poverty as well as 'well being' or what a 'good life is about' in a broader way.

Under the capability approach the methodology designed to define 'poor' is based on a minimum acceptable standard. If a person's 'capabilities' or 'functionings' fall below a minimum acceptable standard then he or she may be poor (Nussbaum & Sen 1993). I emphasize that what is a minimum acceptable standard cannot be a universal one. Empirical studies of how people view poverty in the context of their society can provide insights into what people define as a minimum acceptable level and expect within the context in which they live.[11] If an individual possesses a sufficiently large portfolio of capabilities he or she can choose a specific 'functioning' to escape poverty (Nussbaum 1997). At the same time, that individual may not choose to do so, as it may not be socially accepted or fixed within the context in which they live. Thus, minimum acceptable level may change over time and according to generation (their perceptions). It may vary geographically, and among social groups (attitudes) and castes. It is also important to acknowledge that capabilities can change during a life course (Sen 1999). For example, for elderly people, diminishing capabilities in both physical and mental terms result in poverty or increase in their vulnerability to falling into poverty (Lloyd-Sherlock 2000), and for those who are already poor, to remain in poverty.

The capability approach to development laid the foundation for the development of many other important concepts that could be used in understanding poverty. The capability approach also provides insights into what constitutes '*wellbeing*' (Sen 1985) or a 'good

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[9] A recent special issue of the journal *Oxford Development Studies* (Vol. 35:4, 2007) themed 'The Missing Dimension of Poverty Data' calls for internationally comparable indicators on some scant or non-available data on poverty dimensions that are of value to the poor and emphasizes the importance of empirical studies using individual or household level data on multiple dimensions of poverty (Alkire 2007). In terms of missing data, Alkire (2007) identifies certain dimensions that are valued by people: employment, empowerment, physical security, the ability to go without shame, and psychological and subjective well-being.

[10] The findings of my research show how dimensions of poverty vary across different generations.

[11] What is needed for a 'good life' depends on an individual's conceptualization, whereas how a good life can be achieved depends largely on the different contexts in which they are located

life' as used in this thesis. Sen (1985, 1992) notes that well-being should be interpreted with reference to peoples' capabilities to function. In the capability approach Sen (1992) regards well-being in a comprehensive manner and pays much attention to material, mental, spiritual, and social well-being. Sen's (1981) work on poverty and famine led to the development of the concept *of* '*entitlement*' to examine people's access to resources which is essential for the 'good life'. Sen's (1984, 311) theory of 'entitlement' defines it as a 'set of rights of ownership, transfer and rectification'. Nussbaum (2006) argues that capability is closely associated with rights, which link with access and hence with entitlement. 'Entitlement' to productive resources is important for livelihoods and hence for a better life. The implications of 'entitlement' in terms of livelihood are essential as it could be an important asset that could contribute to the alleviation of poverty. In the present study context, 'entitlement' to land has also been a major issue that has contributed to poverty as livelihood changes in the settlements. In the study I use the concept of access to imply entitlement.

Social exclusion

The social exclusion approach is also gaining currency in poverty studies in developing countries.[12] During the late 1990s considerable attention was given to incorporating social capital as it is becoming an important asset in pursuing livelihoods and alleviating poverty. Sen's (1999) definition of 'social opportunities' can be best used to explain social exclusion. Sen (1999, 39) defines social opportunities as 'the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so on, which influence the individual's substantive freedom to live better'. Sen continues to discuss how these opportunities are important in various realms of an individual's life. Social exclusion occurs when people are refused or deprived of opportunities that they value for a better life. Sen views social exclusion as 'capability deprivation as it manifests itself in the lack of an individual's access to funtionings as compared to others in a community. Social exclusion is gaining increased attention among scholars (Hulme 2000, Narayan et al. 2000, Stirrat 2003), and focuses on the limitations of effective or full participation in various spheres in society. According to

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[12] http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/papers/1994/dp77/abibl.htm (provides an annotated bibliographical list for social exclusion in South Asia)

this approach, poverty is socially constructed and has little to do with satisfying basic needs.

Empowerment and agency

Empowerment has become a popular development concept today. It is an important aspect in the acknowledgement of 'development as a participatory process'. The concept of empowerment is seen in this research as important process that can contribute to sustainable poverty reduction and well being. It has most of its theoretical roots in Chambers (1983). Chambers (1983) identifies powerlessness as an important aspect in his 'deprivation trap', where he asserts that powerlessness may contribute to poverty in many ways. Viewing empowerment from a bottom-up perspective, Chambers (1993) describes it as a process that gives the poor control over their lives as well as ownership of productive assets to secure a better livelihood.[13] Powerlessness leads the poor to a position where they are unable to negotiate better terms for themselves within markets, society and the state. Since Chambers' work has become widely known, empowerment of poor and especially the rural poor and women has been an important focus in international agendas (World Bank2001). In the literature on empowerment a number of scholars have contributed to understandings of women's empowerment (Rowlands 1997, Batliwala 1994, Kabeer 1994, Afshar 1998, Parpart et al. 2002, Alsop et al. 2006, Jakimow & Kilby 2006).

Empowerment as a concept is closely connected to agency. For Giddens (1986), agency is about people's capabilities to do things and it also implies power. Long (1997, 2001) asserts that agency is the capacity of an individual actor to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme situations. Long (1997, 2001) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the potential strength of people and how they make choices in different contexts. The importance of the actor-oriented approach is the prominent place given to the notion of the *agency* of the poor.

Rowlands (1997) also categorizes the experience of empowerment at three different levels, which she emphasizes are important dimensions of empowerment. According to Rowlands

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[13] Chambers (1993) cited in Ibrahim & Alkire (2007).

(1997,15) personal empowerment involves 'developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalized oppression', the relational dimension of empowerment relates to 'developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it', and the collective dimension of empowerment is defined as 'where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone'. I believe the 'personal' dimension of empowerment should be given proper attention as it may be a prerequisite for relational and collective dimensions of empowerment in certain contexts. Alsop et al. (2006) identify three important domains of empowerment: state (a person is a civic actor), market (a person is an economic actor) and society (where a person is a social actor). Again, this is also a classification of different contexts. Empowerment at market level is essential for securing livelihoods and essentially instrumental in the alleviation of poverty. I use the concept of empowerment in Articles 2 and 4 in order to show whether the livelihood activities women pursue contribute to their empowerment or not.

Kabeer (1999, 2003) defines 'empowerment' with reference to making choices. She uses a three-dimensional conceptual framework to analyse the choices people make, where she acknowledges the importance of resources (preconditions for empowerment), agency (an aspect of process) and achievements (the final outcome). Resources provide the conditions that enable a person to acquire the capability to make choices. Kabeer (2003) develops the concept of agency with reference to a gender perspective that I refer to in Article 2. For Kabeer (2003), agency is reflected through the ability to make choices. She emphasizes the importance of material conditions which define the agency of people. Kabeer (2003) differentiates between the 'effectiveness' of agency and the 'transformative nature' of agency. The 'effectiveness' of agency reflects women's ability to carry out given roles and responsibilities, while the 'transformative nature' of agency refers to women's ability to question or challenge various structures and constraints in their lives in a sustainable way (Kabeer 1994, 1999), and this is basically about power. This reflects how the transformative nature of the agency varies with different contexts as structures differ spatially.

Parpart et al. (2002) propose a new approach to women's empowerment, focussing on four issues. They first call for the need to analyse empowerment in global, national and local terms, as marginalized and impoverished communities are affected by global and national forces. Second, they emphasize that empowerment is related to the exercise rather than the possession of power. Third, they point out that 'groups become empowered through collective action, but that action is enabled or constrained by the structures of power that they encounter'. Finally, they believe that 'empowerment is a process rather than outcome'.[14] I find the aspects of empowerment that Parpart et al. identify to be important, as they place empowerment in various contexts. Parpart et al. also demand continuity and sustainability, which is extremely unpredictable due to changing contexts at different levels.

Gender

During the 1970s feminist and gender scholars pointed out multiple ways in which sex- and gender-blind development activities failed to have an impact on women (Boserup 1970, Agarwal, 1988, Ostergaard 1992, Moser, 1993, Kabeer 1994, 1997). Gender has been identified as a socially constructed concept (Moser 1993), and as such it has implications for understanding poverty (Chant 1999). In the past few decades, attempts to include women as a visible category of development have led to varying discourses. These discourses have shifted from Women in Development (WID), to Women and Development (WAD), to Gender and Development (GAD), to Women Culture and Development (WCD) (Bhavnani et al. 2003). Due to the shifts in the analytical framework or paradigms, women came to be explicitly targeted in development projects. Since then, a massive amount of empirical research and theoretical paradigms have stimulated academics and practitioners on this topic. Today in poverty research the concept of gender has been examined in relation to gender identities, roles and relations. Jackson & Jones (1999) caution that gender perspectives on poverty should try to understand poverty as a condition experienced by gendered actors rather than treating women as the poorest of the poor. It views women not as dependent, vulnerable and disadvantaged, but as a category of people who are capable of taking control of their own lives by defining their needs and the

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[14] This is also noted by Batliwala (1994)

strategies to fulfill them (Moser 1993, Nussbaum 2000, Momsen 2004). I find it is also important to acknowledge that if women are found to be poorest of the poor it is also important to understand that women are not a homogeneous group. Women differ according to their age, capabilities, marital status, culture and religion. These differences have different impacts on their levels of poverty and how they try to respond to it.[15] The World Bank's (2001) report *'Engendering development: Through gender equalities in rights, resources and voices'* is considered to be the most comprehensive work published by the World Bank on the issue of gender (Kabeer 2003). Millennium Development Goals also place gender perspective on their agendas. All the publicity and attempts show that gender is becoming an important element in development efforts which include tackling poverty. In this thesis, Articles 2–5 reveal the gender dimensions of poverty.

Methodology of alternative development

The approaches and concepts discussed so far in this chapter flourished under the alternative development thinking widened the understanding of participatory approaches to poverty (Chambers 1994). Pieterse (2001, 88) notes that 'the hallmark of alternative development methodology is participation', whereby he insists that the key to alternative development epistemology is people's knowledge. A participatory approach to understand poverty focusses on people by stressing their needs, realities and priorities. Such methods involve a wide range of tools and techniques to collect data which are flexible and mainly qualitative. Chambers (1994) defines Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as 'a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions to plan and act'. Mikkelsen (2005) has catalogued selected PRA methods that have been extensively practiced: review of secondary sources; direct observation; key indicators; semi-structured interviews; ranking and scoring; construction and analysis of maps, models and diagrams; diagramming; case stories; dramas, games and role play; workshops; triangulation; continuous analysis and reporting; participatory planning, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation, and self-surveys; and do-it-

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[15] Among the women, female-headed households have been identified as an important category that should be given due attention (Buvinic & Gupta 1997, IFAD 1999, Jackson & Jones 1999).

yourself. Poverty reduction activities undertaken by NGOs and donor agencies have increasingly applied PRA (Ellis 2000). This technique along with Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) has provided a rich set of data collections, analyses and communication techniques.

The latter part of the 20th century, which was dominated by participatory methods to understand poverty, paved the way for expanding the understanding of dimensions of poverty in the present century, incorporating qualitative aspects of poverty and resulting in an increasing amount of participatory literature, which in turn has resulted in increasing acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of poverty (Chambers 1983, Chambers et al. 1989, UNDP 1990, 1997, 2001, 2002, World Bank 1990, Sen 1992, 1999, Ruggeri Laderchi 1997, Narayan et al. 2000, IFAD 2001, Osmani 2003, Chambers 2004, Hulme 2004, Green & Hulme 2005, Gruskey & Kanbur 2006). The most influential work in terms of participatory methods use to understand poverty at the beginning of this century comes from 'Voices of the Poor', a project led by Deepa Narayan of the World Bank.

In terms of production of knowledge, the philosophical shifts have revealed that studying social phenomena has undergone considerable epistemological and methodological changes over time. The complex links and interplay between structures and actors are ongoing processes and continuously creating different social phenomena. In understanding the meaning of development and poverty these philosophical shifts have not only contributed to our understanding of the multidimensional nature, and causes of and responses to poverty but have also provided variety of methods to use in our attempts to understand the meaning of development and poverty. In the following, I introduce the most influential approach to understand poverty during the last decades which recognizes, actors, structures and contexts.

Livelihood approach to poverty

A substantial body of literature on livelihood has emerged in the understanding of poverty today, which originated during the late 1990s (Carney 1998, Ellis 1998, 2000, Scoones 1998, Bebbington 1999, de Haan 2000, Devereux 2001, de Haan & Zoomers 2003, Ellis &

Mdoe 2003, Ellis et al. 2003, de Satge 2004, de Haan & Zoomers 2005b). The concept of poverty has a long history. However, how livelihood is interpreted depends on the purpose of investigation. In the following section I discuss the livelihood approach in the context of its relevance to the current research. It is also an approach that informs the 'actor' 'structure' concepts but places actors at the centre of inquiry, which I find to be the strength of this approach (Chambers & Conway 1992, Hulme & Shepherd 2003, Rigg 2006). Drawing on different concepts, approaches and theories from the 1970s, livelihood approaches to poverty are receiving considerable attention in development geography today. The founding idea of a livelihoods framework was developed by Chambers as early as in the mid-1980s and further modified and developed by Chambers and Conway during the early 1990s (de Haan & Zoomers 2005b). According to Ellis & Biggs (2001) the foundation of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework was developed throughout the 1980s and 1990s by Robert Chambers (1983) and Chambers and Conway (1992) as well as from famine studies conducted by Sen (1981) and Swift (1989). Many of the common definitions of livelihood currently in use derive from the work of Chambers and Conway (1992). The following three definitions of livelihood are the most influential in my work. The first definition of livelihood is provided by Chambers and Conway (1992, 7):

> A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both social and material resources) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets and provide sustainable opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at local and global levels and in the long and short term.

What is important about this definition is that it proposes that thinking *in terms of strengths (assets)* is essential, as such a view acknowledges the fact that *people are active agents*. Another important point of reference that Chambers and Conway make is the link between the benefits of livelihoods at local and global levels. This also shows that the livelihoods people make are located in different contexts. Chambers and Conway also emphasize the importance of livelihood sustainability, which calls for an understanding of the positive

(achievements) and negative (vulnerabilities) sides of livelihoods. Long (1997, 11) provides another interesting definition:

> Livelihood best expresses the idea of individuals and groups striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions.

This definition captures the basic arguments of the actor-oriented approach. This definition is relevant to the present study as it indirectly calls for the incorporation of the perception of poverty in the livelihood analysis, because people's various needs and necessities can also be captured through what they mean by poverty. It also indicates that livelihoods are not only about material well being. This perception values the lived experiences and different ways in which actors deal with problematic situations within different contexts.

This research recognizes the contribution of Bebbington (1999) too. According to Bebbington (1999, 2022),

> A person's assets such as land are not merely means through which he or she makes a living: they also give meaning to the person's world … a person's assets are in large part determined by the structures and logics at work in economic and political spheres. They are, however, also – to some extent – both reflections and components of the meanings the person has tried to create through their livelihood strategies … Assets are not simply resources that people use in building livelihoods: they are assets that give them the capability to be and to act.

An important message that can be derived from Bebbington's definition is that the meaning people give to assets is related to their perception of and response to poverty. 'Asset' may mean many things. This is also a very important point, as Bebbington emphasizes that the importance of assets is as a means to empowerment. At the same time, what an asset is and the importance people attach to assets may vary according to time and context.

Livelihood frameworks

Today many frameworks have been proposed for analysing livelihoods, including: Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) (Carney 1998, Ashley & Carney 1999, Scoones 1998); the Institute of Development Studies' (IDS) framework developed by Scoones (1998); Framework for Rural Livelihoods (Ellis 2000); Capitals and Capabilities Framework (Bebbington 1999); and the Capital Asset Framework (Rakodi 1999). These frameworks all emphasize different aspects of livelihoods (Chimhowu & Hulme 2006). Within the last decade several efforts have been geared towards the application of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Bebbington 1999, Ellis et al. 2003, Ellis & Mdoe 2003). Livelihood approaches have been adopted by a range of donor agencies, such as the Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and also by OXFAM and CARE in their poverty alleviation programmes, with some modification. However, the basic principles of the approaches implemented by these agencies have many key common features.

Drawing mainly from the definition of Chambers and Conway, Ellis (2000) emphasizes that the livelihood framework suggests a way of thinking in terms of identifying assets and mediating processes and activities, and also motivates the thinking about the link between them. I found some elements of the framework suggested by Ellis (2000) were useful when preparing the present thesis though I do not fully follow the analytical framework as it was presented by Ellis. Ellis describes assets as a 'stock of capitals that can be utilized directly or indirectly, to generate the means of survival of households or to *sustain their material well-being* at different levels above survival' (Ellis 2000, 31). Ellis categorizes assets as natural capital (land, water, biological resources), physical capital (buildings, irrigation canals, roads, tools, machines, and so forth), human capital (labour, skills, education, and health), financial capital (stock of money, access to credits), and social capital (community and wider social claims), and calls them 'livelihood platforms'. Although he modifies the definition of livelihood provided by Chambers and Conway, the point he emphasizes is the visibility or the important place he gives to the assets. The importance of assets may vary according the time and context in which they are studied.[16] One of the important

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[16] Rakodi (1999) identifies capital in terms of rural–urban distinctions.

determinants of people's ability to alleviate poverty and fulfil their various needs depends on their access to assets. Ellis explains how the access can be modified by 'social relations' (gender, class, age, and ethnicity), 'institutions' (rules and customs, land tenure, markets in practice) and 'organizations and associations' (NGOs, local administration and state agencies). Ellis further elaborates that the asset status of households is modified by access in the context of trends (population, migration, technological change, relative prices, macro policy, national and world economic trends) and shocks (drought, floods, pests, diseases, civil war) which result in different livelihood strategies. These livelihood strategies may be natural resource based or non-natural resource based. Influenced by Chambers and Conway (1992); Long (1997); Bebbington (1999) and Ellis (2000), and extend it to include people's perception of poverty.

Analytical framework to understand poverty and livelihood changes

Winchester (2000, 2) acknowledges that the research questions which human geographers study today need a multiplicity of conceptual approaches and methods of enquiry. I find this statement to be very important when dealing with poverty from the perspective of the poor and with reference to different generations of settlers. Willis et al. (2007, 317–318) recently pointed out that '[t]he framework you decide to use in your own research may not reflect the belief of any single framework. Instead, it may be a reflection of your own thinking that draws from and is based on the scholarship in several different compatible frameworks'. In order to explain a social phenomenon which is more complex and constantly changing, it is better for the researcher to combine their own thinking with knowledge drawn from relevant works. This will be useful in researching and presenting the findings in a sound way.
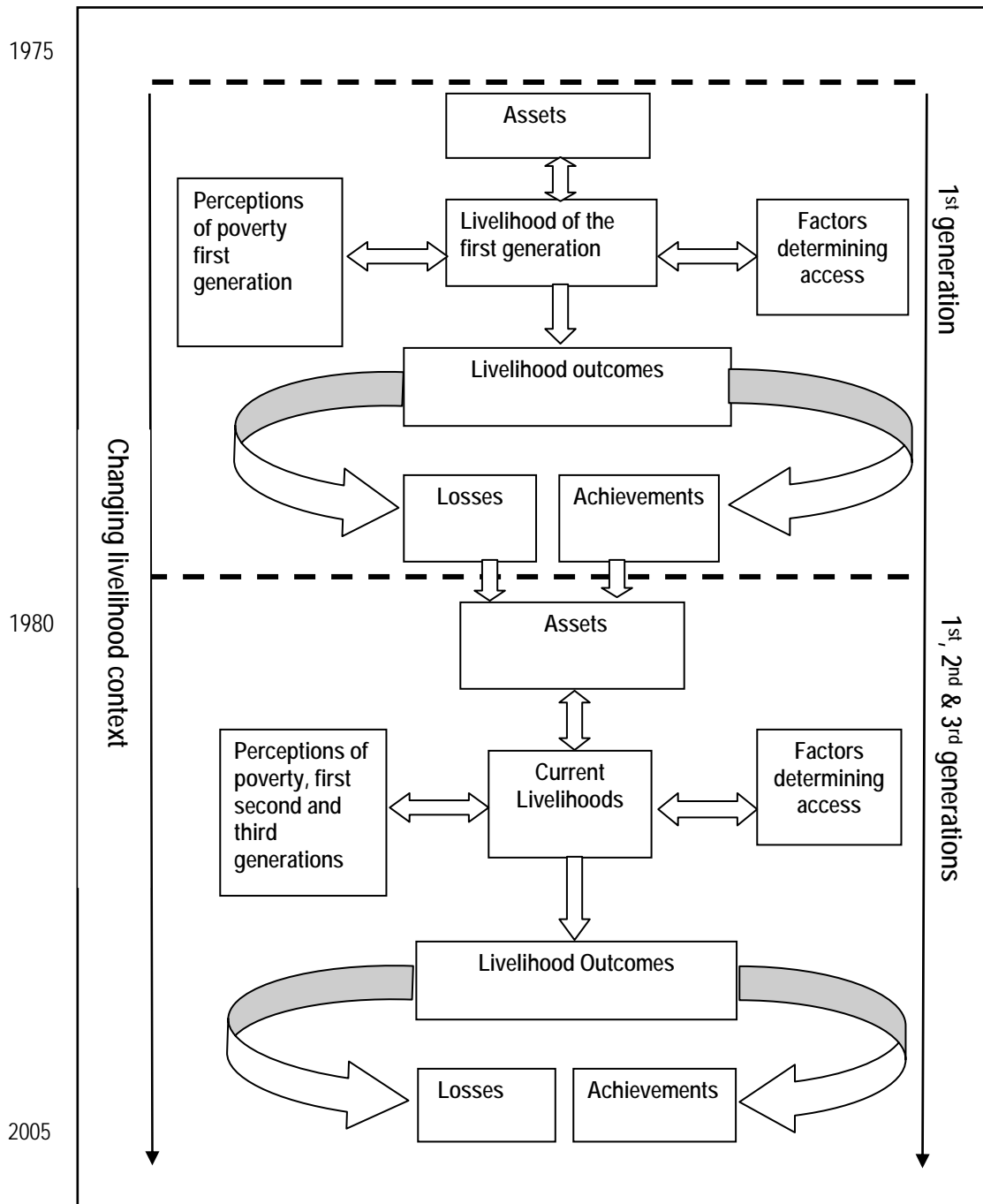
Figure 3.1: Analytical framework to understand poverty and livelihood changes.

The above analytical framework, which bridges actor and structure perspectives (Figure 3.1) and is based on some elements of the livelihood approach and perceptions of poverty in a resettlement context, will hopefully help in understanding how settlers in AMDP have been struggling to take advantage of different contexts to overcome poverty and attain their

various objectives. In trying to understand how perceptions of poverty change over time and among different generations of settlers, I take this approach a step further to show how the settlers' understanding of poverty and their narratives with reference to changing livelihoods can produce an interesting source of empirical knowledge on the social and spatial transformations taking place in the settlements over time. In the following section I discuss the key concepts and elements that are to be considered in the analytical framework and how I operationalize them.

Perceptions of poverty

The theoretical discussion in which I engaged in terms of understanding poverty in the context of development highlights how understanding poverty from the perspectives of people is dominating current poverty research. Perceptions of poverty form an important component in the proposed analytical framework. I have used discussions (formal and informal), life stories, in-depth interviews, and key informants to understand the *perceptions of poverty* among people in the settlements. I make reference to 'settlers of different generations' as an important reference point. In Chapter 5 I present accounts of how different generations of settlers conceptualized poverty.

Assets

In terms of assets, my framework recognizes the categories provided by Ellis (2000) but does not confine itself to them. The past asset situation was obtained from the perception of poverty among the first generation and through informal discussion (Chapter 5). This is one of the major limitations of this research. The current asset situation is explained both quantitatively and qualitatively (Chapters 2 and 5). Bebbington (1999) views on assets, in terms of what they mean and how they increase people's capability. The third article, titled 'Shifting geographies of house and home – Female migrants making home in rural Sri Lanka', which I co-authored with my supervisor, discusses how and why women in study settlements are contributing to sustain livelihoods at their home places. This article also reaffirms the meaning settlers give to assets.

Access

People's ability to engage in any type of livelihood is also determined by access. Access is a crucial aspect for many people in pursuit of a livelihood. Access to livelihoods is modified by different structural, cultural and political forces. Individual factors also modify the access. This shows that 'capitals' and access together make it possible to perform various livelihood activities. In Articles 1, 2 ('Middle East migration, women's empowerment and changing gender roles of married men and women in a peasant colonization scheme in Sri Lanka') and 5 ('Breaking a vicious cycle: Female-headed households and their struggles to escape poverty in System H of the accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) in Sri Lanka) I show the factors influencing the access to livelihoods in the context of settlements.

Context: local, regional, national and global

People have to seek their livelihoods within different contexts, which are not always fixed in time and place and most of the time are beyond their control. While this context provides opportunities, there can also be constraints. Ellis' (2000) elaboration on context implies livelihood studies should incorporate both the local and the global. Today globalization has created a need to study not only the global but also the local. It has added a new dimension to understanding poverty and livelihoods. As a result of globalization, while some people are included and benefit from globalization, others are excluded and made poor by globalization (McGrew 2000). I believe in terms of poverty, globalization has both created (and helped) to increase poverty as well as decrease it, as it has provided both opportunities and constraints. I consider the relationship between global and local to be very important in the understanding of perceptions of poverty and livelihood changes as globalization (among other factors) has a profound impact on these aspects at local, regional and national levels. This situation pleads for bringing to light the local conditions that fuel globalization, where concepts such as national, local and regional development and economic policies, choices, options, strategies, agency, and structures have to be understood. Hence, it should be acknowledged that the impacts of the increasing globalization on the poor in developing countries have generated a concept of social life as not merely the outcome of structural, and thus immutable, conditions, but also as

dependent on poor people's own responses at the local level to an ever changing world. Different articles of the thesis focus on changing contexts various levels to show how settlers negotiate their livelihoods.

Outcome

Outcome of the livelihood activities people engaged in can result in losses as well achievements. The chances of overcoming poverty and attaining various objectives of a 'good life' depend on the enabling environment. At the same time their may be many factors beyond the control of people and may exert a negative influence. Thus some livelihood activities may help the people to achieve their various objectives and *empower* them, while others will place them in a *vulnerable* position. Livelihood outcome in this study aims to understand losses (vulnerabilities) and achievement (positive changes). Vulnerability has been a key concept in livelihood studies (Chambers 1990, Moser 1998, Ellis 2000). Chambers (1990, 2) defines vulnerability as 'defencelessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk, shocks and stresses as well as difficulty in coping with such situations'. This definition suggests that vulnerability has two sides: one related to the external 'risk aspect', the other to the internal 'coping capacity' necessary to deal with loss. While emphasizing that poverty and vulnerability are different concepts, Chambers also points out that losses can result in economic impoverishment, social dependence, humiliation, and psychological harm. The ability of individuals to withstand or cope with stresses, shocks and risks depends on a range of factors including individual or household levels of human and physical assets, levels of production, income and consumption, and, importantly, the ability of individuals or households to diversify their sources of income and consumption to effectively reduce the effects of the risks that they face at any given time. Vulnerability contexts can also be created externally by economic policies and globalization, as well as war, as in the case of Sri Lanka. The concept of vulnerability is studied in terms of market women in the study settlements in Article 4, titled 'Forced to make a living: The vulnerability of women traders in the Thambuttegama periodic market, or *Pola*, in Sri Lanka

Although a number of contradictions prevail in terms of what empowerment is, and its purpose, the general understanding of empowerment associates it with achievements in various spheres of development, including poverty alleviation (Kabeer 1994, Rowlands 1997, Bebbington 1999, Alsop, et al. 2006).[17] One of the research questions addressed in this study focuses on how the livelihood activities people engage in serve to empower them. To understand this, in Article 2 I examine the changing gender roles of migrant women at household and community levels. In Article 4 I attempt to see whether trading at small markets empowers women at personal and collective levels. I also try to understand how female traders in small markets face different types of *vulnerabilities* through their chosen form of livelihood.

How do I contribute?

Today, within the sub discipline of development geography, poverty has taken the place that it has deserved for a long time. The livelihoods perspectives adopted by geographers to study poverty (Bebbington 2003, 2005, de Haan & Zoomers 2003, Rigg 2007) have made an important contribution to the most recent literature on poverty and livelihoods. The livelihoods approach in geography, which had almost vanished after World War II, received renewed interest when post-Marxist development geography assigned preference to focusing on local development (de Haan & Zoomers 2003, 2005a). Since then it has received considerable attention among geographers focussing on issues such as poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. de Haan and Zoomers (2003, 350) note that '[i]n an attempt to understand inequalities in the world development geographers have increasingly adopted a livelihood perspective in the analysis of poverty'. They elaborate that the livelihood perspective on poverty is opposed to traditional approaches to poverty which reflect on the poor as victims. Another important contribution that de Hann and Zoomers (2005a) make and one that is very relevant to my study is, placing livelihoods studies in a

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[17] Bebbington's (1999) analytical framework with reference to the analysis of rural livelihoods and poverty captures many interesting meanings of 'asset' or what he calls 'capital processes'. In explaining the meaning of assets, Bebbington calls for an understanding of capabilities, empowerment, agency, and the 'transformative nature of agency'.

globalization context and showing how globalization has increased livelihood opportunities for the rural poor more than ever before.

What I want to make visible through my research is that when understanding poverty and different responses to it (through livelihood changes), linking people's perceptions of poverty to the analysis of livelihoods will provide a more comprehensive view of actors, their priorities, aims, agency, and the subjective dimensions of the conditions in which settlers live and have been living. This may reveal why and how people are changing livelihoods. In this way the analytical framework provided in the study contributes to bring the people (different generation of settlers and changes in poverty perceptions) at centre of inquiry into the livelihood approach, and hence contribute theoretically and empirically to the discussions on poverty and livelihoods studies in geography.

Conclusions

The shifts in production of knowledge have had different impacts on the ways in which development and hence poverty are defined and studied. Changing understandings of poverty under different development thinking show that recent decades have witnessed a considerable step forward in terms of the perceptions of poverty and its various dimensions. These dimensions, in turn, have called for various concepts and approaches to address the issue of poverty. This has also created several controversies. Most of the controversies concerning poverty originate from differences in the perceptions, major determinants and causes of poverty, and also how to study poverty. In order to make any positive move in terms of poverty alleviation it is therefore important to identify how poverty is perceived and responded. Failure to do this may result in institutional and policy interventions that do not alleviate poverty but which will rather aggravate the cause, leading to increased poverty.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCHING POVERTY AND PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF IT

Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the methodology used in this research project, which relies largely on qualitative data collection tools. I discuss in detail the whole process of the research that I carried out for almost one year in the study settlements. Doing qualitative research involves preparation, dealing with unexpected challenges which were not apparent during the preparation stage, making decisions on methods, meeting people, arranging accommodation, and selecting informants, and these challenges continue throughout the whole process of analysis, writing and dissemination of the research, as qualitative researchers are faced with questions relating to the research process's ranging from sampling to the interpretation of the data.

Locating myself in the field

I carried out my fieldwork in three sessions, which together amounted to almost one year. The first fieldwork session was in the period November 2004 – January 2005, the second in March 2005 – June 2005, and the third in March – August 2007. Much of the first fieldwork session was spent on the initial preparatory work, such as familiarizing myself with the settlement environments and making contact with key informants, such as Mahaweli project officers, GNs, and an Assistant Government Agent (AGA). I also made initial contact with some of my prospective informants in order to avoid any misunderstandings about my fieldwork in their villages. I was aware of the risk that I could easily be misunderstood as someone preparing a list of people entitled to receive government assistance and I wanted to avoid such a situation.

Being a female researcher from a totally different social environment and staying in an unfamiliar environment in the settlements was a problem that I gave much thought to when I planned my fieldwork. Originally, the settlements were an unknown world to me. When I

first visited them, in the year 2000 (four years prior to undertaking my PhD studies) they reminded me of the villages I had seen in Sinhalese TV dramas, as I had not been exposed to the real experiences of rural life in the Dry Zone. When I started the proper fieldwork in November 2004 finding a place to stay in the settlements was the first problem I encountered. It was also a problem for my family, as they always wanted to be assured of my safety. Hence, as an academic and a woman from a minority ethnic group, I had many things to consider before embarking on my fieldwork, such as finding a safe rather than necessarily a more comfortable place in which to stay, approaching the settlers, and becoming adjusted to a totally different living environment socially, culturally and ethnically. Some of my male relatives who had had experiences (as businessmen) of villages in the Dry Zone had many interesting stories to relate about the villages. However, they did not forget to warn me of certain negative aspects (such as alcoholism) which they knew I had not been exposed to, and I always took heed of such warnings.

Because of the nature of my research, which required an understanding of the everyday social life of the research participants, I wanted to find accommodation in each settlement, though I was unable to find anyone who would rent a house or annex to me. Although I knew some of my prospective informants from my previous visits, they were not particularly enthusiastic about helping me to find a place either. When I approached them they responded 'we could have invited you to our house, but it would not be a suitable place for you'. I decided to contact the GNs of three settlements and they helped me to find accommodation with one family in each settlement, eventually. In Solama I was introduced to Sudanthi,(Dissanayake family) a widow. The GN told me 'there are no kids in this family. So you can work freely when you are back from the field. There are two girls and they will be your friends'. Sudanthi had two daughters and four sons. Only one of her sons (the eldest) was married and he had children and grandchildren. Her youngest son worked for the Ports Authority of Sri Lanka. The second son was working outside the settlement as coolie worker and came home once every month. The third son was suffering from a kidney problem and a problem with his spine. He had been working hard in the paddy field for a long time and he told me it was because of the hard work that he had developed the problem with his back. He owned a tractor which hired out to settlers for

ploughing.[1] Sudanthi's daughters were in their late twenties and late thirties, and not married. Both of them had worked in a garment factory in Colombo. As the eldest daughter had a problem in her vision she was no longer allowed to work. When she decided to return home, the younger one joined her too. During my first fieldwork session both of the daughters were staying at home but by the time of my second fieldwork session the younger one had gone to Lebanon to work as a housemaid. When I returned a third time to carry out fieldwork, I learned that the family had been moving in and out of poverty and at the time they were in a vulnerable situation. One of Sudanthi's sons had died, the eldest son had become a sick, the daughter who was working abroad was due to return home and marry, and then she was going to live with her husband's family, and Sudanthi's youngest son was also getting ready to marry. The second son and eldest daughter were going to have to depend on Sudanthi's youngest son's income to survive. Sudanthi was always worried about her eldest daughter, who was regarded as too old for marriage.

In Maliyadevapura I stayed with one of my key informants, a retired teacher and widow who was living with one of her daughters. I found this family (teacher, daughter and granddaughter) to be a more disciplined and organized family than the one in Solama. They rose early in the morning and listened to the national anthem on the radio. Then, they prayed and prepared food for breakfast and lunch. The daughter was working as a clerk and the granddaughter was studying in Anuradhapura, so after they had left in the morning there was only myself and the teacher at home. Their home provided me with a good working environment when I returned from the field.

In Kongwewa, I had come to know one family a previous visit and asked if they would help me to find accommodation in their settlement. The initial response from the lady of

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[1] Bandara had been a major source of information regarding the settlement. When I stayed at his home he always wanted to make sure that his family was treating me well. When I returned in March 2007, I planned to make a surprise visit to their home but was greeted with the news about Bandara's death. When I had said goodbye to the family on the previous occasion, Bandara's mother asked me to bring her a bottle of perfume or a T-shirt for her son. Bandara had not been happy about his mother's request and he said 'Nangee [younger sister] don't bring anything. Whenever you come here you must visit us and see how we are doing'. So, I had brought a T-shirt and perfume for him, as well as some gifts for other members of the family, who had treated me as one among them. I also met the eldest son who was taking care of the paddy land but was having problems with one of his legs and could not do any hard work. NB Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

the house was 'Where else could you stay? You should stay in our home, but, we don't have many facilities here for you'. She was so kind towards me and was genuinely happy to have me as a guest in her home. Hence, although I knew I would have to face some practical difficulties in staying with them, I accepted their invitation without hesitation (as long as the lack of facilities would not adversely affect my research).

During the first two months of my fieldwork I stayed a considerable amount of time in the study settlements in order to comprehend the everyday life of the settlers. On the first day of my stay as a guest in someone's house, I began to have regrets about selecting these research sites due to the unbearably high temperatures, dust, mosquitoes, and the frogs and insects that sometimes found their way inside the house. However, when I imagined the situation of my supervisor, who had carried out her master's degree research in the same study area thirty years previously and who was even less well acquainted with the culture than I was, I no longer felt self-pity. It took two to three days to adjust to the life in the first settlement environment, and after that I did not experience many problems when staying in the other two settlements. Nevertheless, during my first few days in the research settlement I felt the emptiness of being far away from my family. However, having a mobile phone made me feel safe and comfortable.

I was entirely unfamiliar with the cultural aspects of life in the settlements, but fortunately I could speak Sinhalese, which made the research process much easier. However, while I could more easily acquire the information I needed, gaining access to the informants during the day proved much more difficult. Most of the males were drunk during the evenings, which they justified by saying that they drank in order forget their hard work either in the paddy fields or outside the settlements in the daytime. In contrast, the women were busy with preparing dinner and attending to other household chores. Although I managed to hold some interviews with men (i.e. when they were not drunk) during the evenings and at night, I did not want to continue because conducting research during the night time was considered risky due to stories of theft, poisonous snakes in the Dry Zone, and the poor unlit roads (which are difficult to travel on even during the daytime).

'Leveling the field'

In all of the places I stayed, initially the household members either did not fully recognize or did not believe in the purpose of my stay in their homes. It took some people a day or two to satisfy their initial suspicions. They asked many questions about my workplace, family, where I came from, and where I was studying, among others, which I answered patiently as I believed they had a right to ask such questions. Consequently, I was warmly accepted into their homes and my status changed from that of a 'guest' (possibly uninvited) to a friend, a daughter and a sister. Despite this, it was not easy to approach the first few of my informants. They were not very open and most of them did not wish to be informants, although I considered that they could not be overlooked as informants because they were actively contributing to the well-being of their households. However, I wanted to adhere to research ethics and find ways to gain their confidence in me. This was a challenge for me as most of the settlers had not had much exposed to researchers conducting qualitative inquiries.. When the settlers questioned the use of my study to them, it was frustrating at the beginning to have to tell them that first it would lead to a PhD degree and that thereafter I could not promise them anything other than my power to make their voices heard. Eventually, many of them understood my purpose, although a handful of people in all settlements remained sceptical, accepting that at least I was not going to cause them any harm. However, it was not my responsibility nor was it possible to convince all of the families of my purpose. In the following section I will explain how I managed to access most of my informants.

As my research mainly depended on people's stories, it was important to build a good research relationship with the research subjects (Taylor & Bodgan 1998, Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005). Most of the initial encounters occurred during my first and second visits to the settlements, and although I ultimately managed to establish a good rapport with most of my informants this was not easy during the early part of my first fieldwork session. I realized that there was a need to level the 'field', and one of the ways I achieved this between my female informants was to meet them in the afternoons at the village *wewa* (lake), which most of them visited daily. I found that this was one of the places in the

village where women meet and talk about their family problems and also gossip with other women. Hence, after I had finished the interviews or focus group discussions that I had planned for the day I used to go to the *wewa*, usually three or more times a week. For me, the *wewa* was a 'field' in the shadow, and although I was away from my formal 'field' I found it was a place where I could gain much information from observations and also verify information given by informants during the interviews. It is also pertinent to note that for researchers, and especially for PhD students, de-linking themselves from the artificially created 'field' is not easy, or rather the boundary between the artificial field and daily life may become very blurred due to limitations of time, funding and other study-related requirements. This is particularly relevant in situations where a researcher's home is far away from the geographic location of the fieldwork site. He or she has to make use of the available time as fully as possible, and sometimes it is not possible to take a break.

Visiting the *wewa* enabled most of my informants to become more closely acquainted with me, and ensured there was a non-hierarchical relationship between them and me. This was a place where we shared our personal stories. It was surprising that so many women talked about very personal details on occasions when I met them alone at the *wewa*. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) term this 'self-disclosure' and they emphasize the importance of self-disclosure in building up rapport between the researcher and the researched. If the relationship in unequal or not taken seriously, the validity of the information provided will also be in question.

The importance of maintaining a level of self-disclosure was also confirmed by the fact that some of the information the women wanted to know 'about me' (e.g.intimate questions) may have risked putting me in an uncomfortable position) and hence the boundary between me as a 'researcher' and them as the 'researched' would have become very blurred, which would not have been desirable. The position of interviewer in relation to the respondent is an important aspect of fieldwork. During the fieldwork I was seen by some respondents as an 'insider' only because I was of the same nationality and could speak their language, otherwise I was regarded as an outsider to them in many ways. Eventually, I understood that being outsider made my informants feel much more

comfortable than they would have done if talking to an insider. One of the men said, 'As you are an outsider (*pita ekkenek hinda*), I can tell you this ….' Similar attitudes held by other informants led to a wealth of information being provided on matters that what I wanted to learn about. My position as an outsider enabled me to become more intimate with my female informants. When I listened to their stories, most of them had nothing to hide as they knew that my relationship with other settlers was limited.

Methods to identify the poor

According to Kelegama (2003) Sri Lanka has been one of the first developing countries to recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty. However, at a methodological level, poverty is still generally studied in relation to a poverty line. Many initial studies on poverty in Sri Lanka were based on monetary approaches which used income as a basic indicator to identify the poor (Bhalla & Glewwe 1986). Even though recent literature on poverty accepts its multidimensional nature (Korf & Silva 2001, Tudawa 2000, Mayer 2003), poverty in Sri Lanka is still referred to in relation to a poverty line which has been decided upon on ad hoc basis (Gunawardena 2005). Gunawardena (2005) discusses how each of these methodologies is used in poverty measurement in Sri Lanka, and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each method.

Choosing the informants: general framework

The methods used to collect information in this research are consistent with the objectives and the research questions addressed. In order to understand how people perceive poverty the first task was to identify the poor. This was done with the help of key informants (GNs, an AGA, field research officers, Samurdhi, officers, priests, local shopkeepers, and settlers (including the poor themselves). I obtained a list of the families and their addresses from the Grama Niladaries in each settlement. The lists provided basic information relating to the families and their location in the settlements. In each settlement I showed the list to the respective key informants and settlers and asked them to identify the poor based on their own perception of poverty. This part of the research was mainly done in groups, just prior to beginning formal fieldwork.

Identifying the poor in the settlements

For each settlement I used a group of settlers consisting of second and third generation settlers, along with a few first generation settlers (i.e. those willing to participate), to sort settlers into possible categories based on the group members' perception of poverty. Thus, when the settlers were asked to categorize the households in terms of poverty, first they differentiated the rich and the poor. They referred to rich people as *pohosath* and poor as *Duppath.* Then, they identified a group in between, called *Madhyama panthiye aya*, meaning those who belong to the middle class. They subdivided the poor into two further categories: *Duppath aya* and *ithamath duppath aya*, the poor and extremely poor. The settlers' found it difficult to agree on the dimensions they assigned to the fourth category and there were some overlaps.[2] However, there were not many differences in the manner in which the groups distinguished between the different social groups. Finally, based on their own view of poverty, the groups of settlers initially categorized the settlers' into visible social strata, such as rich, middle, poor, and extremely poor (4.1).

Table 4.1: Results of wealth ranking carried out by settlers

Groups	Characteristics
Rich	Those who have land or other assets, are running businesses, have a tractor or any other vehicles, a good house, a good link with the market, locally powerful people (in terms of politics), some government officers, liquor sellers, local moneylenders, mill owners
Middle	Government servants who have permanent incomes (army officers, teachers, Grama Niladari, nurses, police officers) those who work in Middle East countries, shop owners, those who lend money to earn interest
Poor	People who do not have land, those who have mortgaged their land, doing coolie work, do not have a good house, have more children, some Middle East returnees, those who do not have a good education, encroachers, alcoholics, disabled, women market traders
Extremely poor	People without a job, people in debt, people living in poor houses, those who do not have proper clothes, seasonal workers, elderly people without anyone to look after them, those who cannot find their day's meal, patients, women-headed households with many dependents, those who cannot afford a decent funeral, *natamies* (porters)

Source: Fieldwork December 2004

The groups explained their reasons for the three-tired ranking in terms of different indicators and also their reasons for assigning each of the households into three different

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[2] To make the analysis practical, I also use the category 'extremely poor'

categories. This method not only helped me to identify which households were perceived locally as poor but also made visible why and how the settlers consider their fellow settlers to be poor.

According to the settlers' classification rich people in the villages possess material goods that reflect consumption patterns above the average. The rich have control of social and political resources and hold prominent positions within the village. They have land and other property, good quality housing, and many electrical items in their houses and their children attend good schools in the nearest town. Rich people also employ other villagers to help them with their housework, and they provide employment opportunities for the villagers to work in their paddy fields. Liquor sellers (*Kasippu mudhlali*) and moneylenders (*Poli mudhalali*) were also identified as rich. Some government servants who owned paddy fields were also identified as rich. The middle category consisted mostly of government servants and a few farmers, owners of the shops in the settlements, some successful Middle East migrants, and some people who earned money from providing loans. Many of them had comparatively good houses, a good educational background and a good quality of life. The settlers' also stressed the importance of having a pension as this provides some sort of future security for this particular group.

According to the settlers, the poor and the poorest are proportionately high in all three settlements. The poor consist mainly of landless farmers, labourers paid on a daily basis), those do not have a good house to live in, have more dependents or large families, do not have a good educational background, and are not in good health. The poor and the poorest also include encroachers and alcohol addicts. The poorest have similar attributes to the poor, though in many respects they are worse off than the poor. They mainly consist of people who are sick, elderly and lonely, with nobody to look after them, women-headed households with no regular incomes, those who do not have proper clothes, and those who were unable to secure a daily meal. It was interesting to note that having a large family was previously considered to be a sign of wealth in agricultural settlements. However, with the changing production patterns and decreasing land resources, it is now mainly considered to

be a burden when it is no longer affordable for the head of the household to support a large family.

Thus, the key informants and settlers categorized other settlers into visible social strata, including rich, middle, poor, and extremely poor. The poor were found to be a highly heterogeneous group, and in all settlements the poor and extremely poor were found to constitute the majority (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Settlers' ranking of families

Settlement	Rich	Middle	Poor	Extremely poor	Total number of families
Kongwewa	20	38	95	85	223
Maliyadevapura	35	55	101	64	255
Solama	18	30	163	119	328

Source: Fieldwork 2004–2005

I observed that the some settlers share an understanding of poverty that is largely based on an individual's or household's economic situation. At the same time, beyond this rather economic understanding of poverty, some settlers also share a rather different understanding on poverty. I understood that the settlers differ among themselves as to what constitutes poverty, and that this comprises a broad range of economic, social, political, psychological, emotional, religious and cultural aspects. In the process there were many differences and arguments, as well as much agreement among the members of the groups, which gave me a wealth of information on different perceptions and the dimensions they use to identify the poor and poverty The purpose of investigating the perceptions of poverty is that I strongly believe that the different dimensions of poverty, which we can be understood through the people from themselves, capture something important about why people the settlers in the ADMP act as they do and provide better insight into understanding on the what they are working towards. This in turn indirectly reveals their goals, what they mean by a 'good life' and why they are changing their livelihoods.

In a study on improving poverty measurements in Sri Lanka, Gunawardena (2005) points out that the results of an ADB – PIMU (Asian Development Bank – Poverty Monitoring

Impact Unit) study conducted in 2000 confirm the view that qualitative approaches are not very useful methods for identifying the poor, but useful in identifying the concerns of the poor, dimensions of poverty and the dynamic process of poverty. Gunawardena (2005) points out the fact that the society needs to have a clear definition of poverty in order to be able to identify the poor. In this research, my purpose is not to calculate a representative count of the poor in the study settlements but to understand perceptions of poverty. However, the main focus of my research remains identifying the poor. I did not use the readily available official statistics about the number of poor in the settlements as they revealed only certain aspects (mainly income) of the whole situation, though I used them to confirm the reliability of certain information in the process of the research. Also, I did not rely only upon my own observation and understandings to identify the poor. Rather, to see the reality behind the statistics and my observations and understanding, I relied on the settlers and other key informants to identify who the poor were. I selected informants who were mainly in the poor, extremely poor and middle categories, in order to seek answers to the various research questions I had proposed. Most of those in the middle group leaned more towards the poor than to the rich category. The settlers' categorizations provided me with a framework for reference in terms of who were the poor and who should be my informants. Some times I also had to find respondents using other techniques too (such as snowballing) as the research proceeded. A list of research participants, including basic information relating to them and where they are mentioned in the chapters and/or articles is given in Appendix 1. The interview guides used when collecting information on various topics different articles are listed in Appendix 2.

A turning towards females

After becoming acquainted with the different ways in which the settlers identified the poor and extremely poor, I then approached my informants – I entered the 'field', as Katz (1994) describes it. Katz defines 'field' as marked off in space and time and as something which is not static: 'fields' are constructed, defined and dominated by various actors. When I started the first proper fieldwork session in the hope of collecting life stories for my first article I found that in many poor and extremely poor households women had

become 'economic heroes' despite having once been ignored by the project planners in term of access to land (the basis of Mahaweli's agricultural economy). This became even more apparent when I had finished my first article, 'Changing livelihoods among the second and third generations of settlers in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) in Sri Lanka'. Despite their differing gendered positions, poverty, responsibilities, and lifecycle changes, the women, especially second and third generation women, were found to be shouldering the burden of providing for their families. This is not to say that women from the first generation had become passive. Despite their age, they contributed to their own family's and their children's families' well-being in all ways possible. The women, especially those from the second and third generation, were making homes, buying productive resources, educating their children, supporting their extended families, contributing to the local community, and had become more 'powerful'. They had become active agents of change, exploiting the available opportunities despite the constraints.

The different ways in which women contribute in an attempt to save their families from poverty are not only stories of success but also of sacrifices, hard work, powerlessness, vulnerability, and isolation. Whether these women would be able to continue to save their families and themselves from poverty, or to enjoy the power and agency in a sustainable way, or achieve the various other aims in their lives, are central questions, as the settlers' sources of survival depend upon several unstable, unpredictable and threatening contexts. I became interested in not only listening to their perceptions and stories of poverty but also, based on the perceptions, discovering how they try to make or are making their lives better by exploiting the available opportunities resulting from expanding regional, national and global economies. When attempting to understand the active role of women in families' well-being, the supportive role played by men should not be underestimated. Certain types of livelihood activities which the women are engaged in required the support of men too. This particular situation raised the need for me to listen to men's voices too. Men who cannot find employment opportunities within the settlements or who are unable to migrate long distances engage in marginal income-earning activities outside the settlement, at daily commutable distances from their homes. Some of them support their families by

undertaking a different gender role to that which their parents or grandparents had had in the settlements 30 years previously.

Today, women in the settlements are sustaining the Mahaweli economy by engaging in various types of livelihood activities. At this point in my research I had to focus on methods to understand how the poor view the concept of 'livelihood'. During the informal discussions and interviews, and when people related their life stories it became apparent that poor people's perception of 'livelihood' is related simply to their day-to-day income earning activities. However, many of the settlers held the view that a livelihood is not only about making a living, but also about living a 'good life' (Azmi 2007). The 'good life' component is reflected in their perceptions of poverty and is the rationale behind what they are doing today.

Information collecting methods

Willis et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of using diverse methods in qualitative research. Hence, before I started my fieldwork I read much of the available literature on qualitative techniques. In practice, I found that as a qualitative researcher one cannot go into the field with a set agenda. It is also important to have an understanding of how different methods can be used in the field. By the end of the fieldwork, I appreciated that all fieldwork experiences are unique experiences, and in my case the situation in the field was much more different than what I had expected from reading the literature. However, the literature on qualitative research methods equipped me to handle some of the problems I encountered in the field (Denzin &Lincoln 2003). In this study I mainly used in-depth interviews and narratives extracted from life stories to understand the livelihoods of the poor. I also used focus groups, observations, key informant interviews, informal discussions, and secondary data sources in this research which I will discuss in more detail in the following

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews, whether structured or semi-structured, serve the objectives or the particular purposes of the researcher, and afford the researcher more control over the issues that are to be discussed during the in-depth interviews. In life stories, it is the researched that have more control over the information, although the researcher can bring them back on track if they deviate too much while telling their stories. Both in-depth interviews and life stories (narratives) contribute to the production of knowledge, and who contributes what percentage (whether the researcher or the researched) may vary according to several factors, including the objectives of the research. What is important here is the information that can be gathered through applying both of these methods.

In-depth interviews are designed to produce data which are useful in finding answers to research questions posed in a study. In this research the central data collection tool was semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews provided in-depth information concerning personal matters, lived experiences, values, decisions, actions, responses, and perspectives on the contexts and processes in which the settlers have to respond to poverty. I did not follow a strict interview schedule. Rather, the interviews were very loosely structured; giving participants time to attend to their household chores or deal with events such as an unexpected visitor. I prepared my interview guides in order to ensure their consistency and to save time.

Most of my male informants seemed to find it a big problem to speak frankly about their real life situations during the interviews. They were not willing to reflect deeply on their lives. Further, when I sat facing them to listen to their stories, with a small tape recorder, they were even more uncomfortable. Despite the fact that some of the informants from the second and third generations could understand the purpose, adjust to the situation, and found it easier to talk to me and have their conversations recorded, I found the process to be very hard work with the first generation settlers who were elderly. For them, 'speaking to a recorder' was similar to making a public speech. This was evident from their tone of speech and the way they spoke, and I soon understood that they were more focussed on making speeches rather than providing information. However, I did not try to conduct

interviews or listen to stories without a recorder with elderly people, as writing each and every word they spoke would not have been practical. A further problem was that as I am not a native Sinhalese speaker I sometimes found it difficult to understand the dialects spoken, especially in Solama. Recording the interviews and stories was the only way possible to solve this problem. Whenever necessary, I asked my friends and colleagues to help with clarification. Another (dis)advantage that I faced was that when I interviewed the elderly there was always a family member present. This was to keep an eye on the elderly who otherwise may have given some information that their families did not want to be revealed. Although their presence was helpful during the interviews, it also served as a screen between the informants and me.

Life stories and narratives

Riley & Hawe (2005) differentiate between the interchangeably used terms 'stories' and 'narratives'. They point out that the difference is at an analytical level, where they treat 'stories' as the end of the primary data and 'narratives' as the analysis of that data. They further note that the role of the researcher is to use narratives to give voice to the researched, where they may not be able to do otherwise. In this research I have used life stories and narratives to bring the unheard voices to a wider audience.

Literature on the life story method to collect data highlights several advantages of this approach (Miles & Crush 1993). This method enables the researcher to know the research participant from a variety of perspectives as the stories are told from different times in their life cycles, culture and contexts. Within feminist research researchers have used both life stories and narratives extrapolated from life stories extensively to document and interpret women's life experiences. Feminist researchers argue that qualitative methods generally expose the unheard voices, personal experiences and their knowledge (Reinharz 1992) through participatory methods such as life stories, focus groups, participant observations, and in-depth interviews. Most of my informants were aware that my job was not to solve all of their problems, yet my research provided an opportunity for their stories to be heard by a person who really wanted to listen to them.

Life stories narrow the power gap between the researcher and the researched (Kakuru & Paradza, 2007), which was of utmost importance to this research project. When the power gap between researcher and research becomes very blurred or hardly exists researcher can gain access to reliable information. During the process of collecting life stories, personal stories of tragedies, shame, guilt, and humiliation were revealed to me through tears. Some informants even asked me to switch off my recorder if the information became too personal, and I adhered to such requests. As the women's life stories continued, in some cases became apparent that my identity was constantly shifting between that of a researcher and that of a friend, sister and daughter.

I find the more inclusive, flexible and interactive nature of the life story method is essential for a study on poverty and everyday struggles. Further, I believe that through life stories this study may offer a better understanding of the changing economic, social and political processes, and also how settlers respond to such processes. Dunn (2000) asserts that life stories allow the researcher to collect information on the actions of individuals and how the individuals progress through transitional periods. As I incorporate different generations of settlers in this study, I use life stories to try to make visible the various changes occurring in the settlements from a time dimension too.

Focus groups
Jowett & O'Toole (2006) state that focus groups have been employed as a research tool for almost a quarter of a century and that they have been moving increasingly towards centre stage in social research. Cameron (2000) says that focus groups have been used by geographers to collect data. She acknowledges that focus groups are a useful research method to study the socially constructed nature of knowledge. Thus, focus groups allow the researcher to comprehend the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts of people's lives, especially those which would not be clearly revealed by other methods. In this research, I organized three focus group discussions in a situation where I needed to learn about people's attitudes and opinions concerning changing gender roles and relations occurring at the expense of women's migration to Middle Eastern countries.

Recruiting participants for focus groups was one of the problems that I encountered in the field. Bedford & Burgess (2001) note the difficulties in finding participants for focus groups. Although the first generation (mainly elderly) were readily accessible and agreed to participate, this was not the case with the other two generations due to their various engagements and especially due to the prospect of losing a day's coolie work for the sake of my research, where neither I nor they knew whether it would lead to a better future for them. I managed to find participants for the groups through purpose sampling and the snowball sampling method. The selection was influenced by the participant's knowledge related to the discussion topic as well as the research objectives. I wanted to recruit participants from each of the settlements, taking into consideration their age and gender too, as one of the objectives required such differentiation. The focus group sessions generally lasted for between two and two-and-a-half hours and consisted of between five and seven participants. I introduced the discussion topic and certain guidelines, which I believed would bring order when I late transcribed and analysed the data. At some points the participants became more encouraged and fully involved in the discussions, which in turn led to the conversations taking different directions towards topics other than those originally planned as discussion topics. Time after time I had to bring the participants back on track. I found the focus group discussions contributed far more insight to the research than I had expected, though it took many days to complete the transcriptions.

Triangulation

The issue of validity concerns in qualitative research has increased dramatically in recent years (Atkinson et al. 2003). Willis et al. (2007) note that the role of the interpretative researcher is not to accept validity and reliability as the main goals of research, as researchers do not look for universal laws and generalizations. He also suggests an alternative approach to validity and reliability in qualitative research, which he calls 'triangulation' and defines as 'multiple sources of confirmation when you want to draw a conclusion' (Willis et al. 2007, 218–219). Although searching for universal laws or generalizations is not the main goal of this particular research, the triangulation used in this research was a contextual decision, whereby my insider position guided me to take the my 'interpretative hat' off in certain instances when I realized that what I had been told

was untrue. Kakuru & Paradza (2007) state that 'triangulation' allows the researcher to become confident of their results and it enriches the explanation of the research problem. Accordingly, in this study I used the following methods to overcome problems relating to clarity and confirmation of some data..

Informal discussions

Informal discussions provided much interesting information regarding the history and culture of the settlements and settlers' backgrounds.[3] They always proved useful for accessing concealed information. I also held informal discussions with the few rich people in the settlements. All of the information gained contributed to an understanding of the basic characteristics of the settlements.

Key informants

My key informants mainly comprised government officers working in the settlements at various levels, though most of them were not from the settlements. The information provided by them was useful for understanding the impacts of government policies, projects and programmes on the settlers. I accessed seven key informants who provided valuable information regarding the socio-economic situation and history of the settlements.

Personal observations

Kearns (2000) states that participants' observations have been used by geographers seeking to understand the meaning of 'place' and the contexts of everyday life. In my research personal observations were made as a matter of routine throughout the whole process. However, they were motivated by two facts: first, observation is essential in order to understand the everyday lives and struggles of people; second, the 'field' explained by Katz (1994) cannot provide a detailed picture. As the study progressed, I found that personal observations were very helpful when revising the interview guides, verifying certain information and reviewing preconceived understandings.

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[3] Informal discussions were held throughout the whole process of research. Sometimes they involved only a couple of people or a small group of people. I also held such discussions with the families that I stayed with.

Secondary data sources

Although this research is based mainly on qualitative data collected through different methods, I also needed secondary data in order to provide a more complete picture. In terms of providing information on the AMDP, settlement backgrounds, and theoretical and policy backgrounds, I had to draw heavily on secondary data too. With regards to information on socio-economic aspects of the settlements, statistics obtained from GNs, the AGA office and the Mahaweli Authority all proved to be very useful. However, I had to rely on the GN and AGA office data to a larger extent for secondary data as much of the Mahaweli Authority data were based only on the boundaries of Mahaweli administration's sub-administrative blocks (H1–H14).

Data analysis and presentation

Analysis and presentation of data was organized in a way that enabled me to focus on addressing the research questions raised in this research. Willis et al. (2007) acknowledge that the way data is analysed relates to the purpose of the research to a certain extent. The data analysis and presentation of data relating to my research are based on an analytical approach that has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3. In the following section I discuss how the preliminary analytical work was carried out.

The analysis of data involved reading field notes, transcribing whole interviews and life stories, and making use of other data collection methods in order to make sense of what I had been doing in the field. This is the most painstaking task for a qualitative researcher. All of the interviews, life stories and focus groups that I had recorded on audio tape were transcribed as soon as possible at the end of the day. Accurate transcription, which is time-consuming, is the most important step in data analysis (Crang 1997, Dickson-Swift et al. 2007). I did all the transcriptions myself, and if there were any terms that I did not understand I sought the help of my colleagues. Doing the transcriptions proved very useful and interesting as I 'returned' to the field again in the process. When the transcriptions were completed I read through them several times to search for meanings and general ideas from the data. During the initial process of analysis, I initially focused on narratives taken from life stories and interviews and then I identified themes from life stories and

interviews, in a process that Dunn (2000) calls 'latent content analysis'. When analysing focus group discussions, first, I transcribed a discussion, but not the whole discussion. I maintained a running order of speakers in my field notebook. I identified the core contents of the discussion, after going through the transcriptions a number of times and noting down each theme. Then I took notes of relevant and useful quotes from the transcriptions and organized them under each theme. When analysing data collected through in-depth interviews, the interview guides based on my objectives and research questions were helpful for identifying themes. In-depth interviews were also analysed through the identified themes and quotes.

The analysed data were presented in five articles. It is not uncommon for a qualitative researcher to find it hard to (re)present or (re)construct reality. As a doctoral student, I had to write in a particular style, and in choosing to write an article-based thesis I had to consider multiple audiences when I submitted the articles to different journals. While my work is a significant part of my PhD studies I do not know how much it will impact at policy level (one of my research objectives), even if my work is consulted. Although I cannot know for certain whether my research will materially benefit the settlers in the study area, by making their voices heard I can at least contribute to making them accessible. In this regard, the presentation of the analysed data takes multiple audiences into consideration.

In this research, rather than trying to confine myself to a single paradigm or multiple paradigms, what I found to be most important was how I could contribute to the production of knowledge that would simultaneously contribute to the well-being of poor people. Long (2004) notes that in actor-oriented approach the researcher enters the field with his or her own knowledge as well as the theoretical knowledge available. For Long (2004), what is important is to turn such subjective knowledge to analytical advantage. At the same time, Butler (2001, 266) notes that 'all knowledge is produced within certain economic, political and social circumstances, which inevitably shape it in some way'. In the presentation, I have made maximum effort to bring the people's voices to the forefront, and have analysed and presented them according to my analytical framework.

Writing process

The writing process of this research started parallel with the data collection due to the nature of the study programme and the method by which I chose to write my thesis. With the collected information, I first wrote the articles which form the core empirical part of this thesis.[4] Due to the nature of this research I have attached much significance to the voices of the people I researched. However, to present the research to multiple audiences I have had to write the articles in such a manner that I could not reproduce all of the transcribed stories, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and informal discussions. When presenting the arguments and discussions in the articles, I was unable to provide in-depth discussions on theory or methods due to the requirements of the respective journals. However, I provide a wider discussion of the study's theoretical underpinning in Chapter 3. I also had to use the knowledge I had gained through observation and secondary data sources in the process of writing the articles, where necessary.

Limitations

In the preceding discussion, where appropriate, I have included accounts of the field encounters at various stages of the research. I will discuss some additional relevant aspects in this section. This study may be criticized for including more married women as informants and for not including unmarried women. The rationale behind this choice is that most of the young unmarried women who are making economic contribution to their families are not easily accessible. Most of them work in the Free Trade Zones (FTZs) of Sri Lanka. They do not return home very often. In my case, when these women were in the study settlements, unfortunately my fieldwork period had finished. They could not make any promises about the timing of their next home visit. Further, the few young women who were available did not want to be my informants. Although a few young women worked in the garment factory closer to their settlements, they were only accessible after seven o'clock in the evening, which was not a practical time for conducting interviews. However, I was fortunate to meet a few women who had migrated to the Middle East for work and

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[4] I co-authored Article 3 with my supervisor.

who happened to be in the settlement on holiday, especially because their holidays generally last much longer than local garment factory worker's holidays.

This research has taught me many lessons, which I may take into consideration in my future work. It was a real challenge for me to see things from an insider's point of view in the research settlements, even though I am Sri Lankan myself and can speak Sinhalese. While I discovered many facts during the course of the research, I am certain that many more remained hidden. I realize that this may be due to my first encounter in a 'field' in which I had not had any direct exposure to previously. Having been brought up in a totally different environment (Muslim tradition), the alcohol culture of one of the settlements created a further limitation in my research. In one of the settlements, almost 90% of the men were addicted to alcohol and they drank daily. Meeting these men posed a great challenge for me. However, on one particular occasion involving a few men whom I wanted to interview I received the following response: 'If you can come and talk to me when I haven't taken a drink, I can tell everything clearly. Can you come and meet me tomorrow?' I was not sure whether they would keep their promise or not, but I agreed to meet them and to my surprise, I found that they had not been drinking beforehand.

Conclusions

The main purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the whole process of this research. I have attempted to give an account of the approach adopted in order to produce knowledge in this research. I have also outlined how I accessed the field, selected the informants, and developed a rapport with the informants and approached them. The data collection techniques have also been discussed in detail, with reference to some existing literature on qualitative research. Finally, I have shown how the data were analysed and presented, how writing was done, and also some of the main limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 5. DIFFERENT GENERATIONS, CHANGING

PERCEPTIONS

Introduction

My first research question is 'How do different generations perceive poverty?'. In order to seek answers to this question I identified a group of men and women from the study settlements who were representative in terms of age, gender, employment, marital status, as I understand that poverty varies according to these dimensions. The selection was done with the help of the GN and some settlers I knew from my previous visits. As my intention was to learn about the perception of poverty from a generational perspective, I further divided the respondents according to different generations. The first generation settlers (original settlers) formed one set of respondents, while the second and third generations (children and grandchildren of the first generation) formed another set of respondents. I decided to approach these two categories of informants in two different ways. In each settlement I approached the first generation settlers individually at their homes, due to some practical problems such as health problems and the inability to gather the settlers as a group. With the remaining settlers (second and third generations), 15–18 people were approached in each settlement and I held discussions with them focussing on their perception of poverty[1] (Appendix. 4).

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[1] An important point to mention here was the inability to include the extremely poor in this group; they were approached, but were reluctant to participate in the group discussions. I later understood that the reason why I could not hear their voices was because poverty had eroded their dignity within their own society. I decided to meet them individually, and surprisingly they reacted well in such contexts compared to when they were approached in groups. Some participants in the group, who later became my informants, told me a different story of their own experience of poverty to the one they told when they were in a group of people. This led me to expand the components of the dimension section in Table 1 many times. While I acknowledge that approaching informants individually could have provided richer stories and revealed hidden stories of poverty (as with the first generation), I had to focus on a number of matters pertinent to the research as I wanted to do a wealth-ranking exercise using the group. It was mainly through the ranking of the groups according to wealth that I was able to identify the poor.

Perceiving poverty

The narratives I have listed here provide the context, different dimensions and experience of poverty from the settlers' own views, or voices. Bebbington (1999, 2033) claims: 'Actors at different scales opt to address certain dimensions of poverty and not others … How they make this choice depends on what development, poverty and livelihood mean to them as well as the constraints under which they make these decisions and the power relations at play'. My informants were not an exception in this respect. From personal observations and also through informal discussions which I conducted in the study settlements it was evident that they experienced various dimensions of poverty. However, they talked about certain dimensions and different experiences of poverty according to their priorities and needs. Although the following narratives were discussed under different themes (dimensions of poverty), these themes were maintained among the interviewed and participants in the group through the different stories relating to the experience of poverty. It was only during the analysis that I grouped the narratives according to theme in order to make the discussion easier, though still there are overlaps.

What did the first generation tell?

Reduced capabilities

I met Kiri Banda, who was from Maliyadevapura, at his son's home. He was 64 years old. Since he had become partly paralysed he was confined to his home as he could not walk without support. Kiri Banda also had breathing problems and was unable to talk continuously, yet he seemed to be very interested in sharing his life story with me. When asked about his perceptions of poverty, Kiri Banda described his dilemma as follows:

> I was suffering from a backache and breathing problems for a long time. I think many of the old people in the village have this problem. … Most of us worked hard to turn this land into a fertile one. We worked under the burning sun. Our feet were in the mud almost 365 days [each year]. I did not have paddy land on my own [because] I sold my paddy land. I had been working as a labourer. Although, it was much hard work, I felt happy as we had

something to eat at the end of the day. My wife passed away. I have five children. They did not study because of my poverty. They also did coolie work. My youngest son studied up to Grade 10. Now he is in the army. I cannot do any work now. I am paralysed. Now I have poor eyesight and I often get sick. Until last year, I did coolie work. Earlier, when I was healthy, I even went outside the village to find coolie work. Now, I cannot go to the temple, at least on poya *(full moon) days. If I could work, I could have helped my son to increase his income. I am living with my son now. I am depending on him. He is also poor.*

Kiri Banda's story indicates how reduced capabilities through declining health contribute to the creation and perpetuation of poverty in old age He still believed he could have supported his son's family if he had been able to work. He had been working hard since he arrived in the settlement. However, he could not escape poverty or raise his level of living. He was very worried because he had become a burden to his son. Good health is a very important asset to elderly people as it enables them to continue working and functioning independently.

In the settlement context, heath problems related to hard work had been experienced by many farmers at a very early age. Kalache & Sen (1999, 64) note that 'Health in old age is greatly determined by the patterns of living, exposure and opportunities for health protection over the life course'. Health is also an important indicator of human capabilities (Sen 1985). Further, it is considered as an important asset under the livelihood framework (Ellis 2000). With time the endowments of health assets may change and age itself will serve as a constraint to people wanting to pursue their different livelihood objectives. In general in the settlements, old people are suffering from various health problems. After years of hard physical labour, most of the settlers have entered old age with chronic ill health. They started their lives in the settlements with harsh social and physical environmental conditions, which most of them have been able to become accustomed to, and they have been exposed to burning sun and pouring rain.

An important finding of the health dimension is also related to gender. While many of the first generation male settlers engaged in paddy cultivation in their fields when they started their lives in the Mahaweli settlements, the women had many other responsibilities. They

worked on the family farm (unremunerated), looked after their children, and performed household duties from dawn to dusk. Their mobility outside the settlements was mainly constrained by their different gender roles and gendered responsibilities. Compared to men, they have spent their youth working hard work. Unlike men in Sri Lankan rural society, women depend greatly upon social and familial networks for various purposes. In the case of the Mahaweli settlement, the women (who were not from the settlement areas itself) had to experience and still experience a feeling of loss in terms of a proper social network. Their mental health (which is an understudied area in the context of Mahaweli) is not sound; the women are worried. Their age, which has reduced their capability to undertake work, has also put an extra pressure on their remaining years of life. Some of the elderly people still continue to work despite poor health, partly due to their own needs and partly to meet the needs of their family. With aging, along with reduced capabilities mainly resulting from deteriorating health due to physical labour, this group of people was gradually excluded from working in agricultural activities too. This also can be related to how opportunities and vulnerabilities can shift throughout the process of aging. Lloyd-Sherlock (2000) also identifies that in general reduced capability to work will eventually push the elderly poor into a vulnerable position. The opportunity to employ labour, which is their main human asset, is reduced in old age. The main aspect that keeps many elderly men in the settlement is their entitlement to land.

Deterioration of culture, tradition, religion, unity, and moral values
Ukkuwa was from Solama, and was living close to his son. He was 59 years old. The only difficulty he mentioned was his hearing problem. When I asked about how he perceives poverty, he indicated there were multiple dimensions:

> *When I came to this village it was a big jungle. Life then was not difficult. People were happy. They had enough to eat and drink. They did not need televisions or motorbikes. People were never jealous of each other. Everybody was same, nobody was rich and nobody was poor. People helped each other. Today ... I feel we are losing our culture, traditions, unity, and religion. Before Mahaweli, many of us worked on our* chena*. I think this kept the people closer. People worked in each other's* chena*. It is not like now. During that time the society was equal. Now there are differences among people in terms of money*

and other property. Look at this village now. Young people do not come to the temple. They do not respect the elders. People are jealous about each other's progress. There is not chena *now. The young people do not even want to do paddy cultivation. They do not want to dirty their feet and do not want to stand in the mud under the burning sun. They want easy jobs or they send their wives abroad. Among the younger generation nobody wants to be a drummer, which has been our traditional occupation. I am really worried about this. Older people do not have a place in this society. We are poor. We have not gone to school. Earlier, we could not resist the Mahaweli officers as we were poor, not educated and from a low caste. Now, in my own community, I cannot speak. You know why? It is due to the new money coming to the village. Young people think they can do anything with money. We feel like we are not fulfilling a social obligation to guide our young people on the right path. I am worried about the future of the young people in this village. I have told this to our priests many times. Now we have lost everything. We are poor and old.*

In general, elderly people are always worried when they are not in a position to fulfil their family or social roles and obligations. In his study on old age poverty in developing countries, Barrientos (2003) has identified similar attitudes among the elderly in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia Pacific regions. The elderly expect that society should listen to their voices too. In traditional Sri Lankan societies, mostly at village level, elderly people generally gain power to influence society through their participation in certain kinds of social and religious institutions. Traditionally, older people have served as village headmen and senior priests in the villages where they had a recognition and acceptance. However, this trend is changing. External social and economic changes have gradually filtered into the settlements in the form of 'new money' fuelled by new job opportunities and now the village traditions and culture are being replaced by modernity. Brow (1992, 53–55) has also noted how Sri Lankan villages are deviating from the 'ideal type of village community towards more heterogeneous types of villages due to the changes introduced by market expansion, modes of production and changing rural life patterns.[2] Wickramasinghe (2006) also notes that 'new wealth' brought into Sri Lankan villages by those who were

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[2] Brow (1992) discusses different themes in agrarian change in detail. He notes that when the ideal model of 'village community' was observable in the Dry Zone villages they mainly involved members of a single caste, who were closer to self-sufficiency and autonomy, and were more isolated from market and centres of power. Now they too have changed.

traditionally low in social status has led to some changes, and crime and violence has increasingly occupied the rural space as a result of the competition for power and land which is fuelled by this new wealth. While young people consider that new avenues for development are necessary for village development, the elderly do not see them in the same way. They are worried about certain negative impacts of such new avenues. These changes have also undermined the power which elderly people have traditionally enjoyed in society. Elderly settlers are worried about their inability to make changes in their own society. They think their inability is linked to poverty and old age, along with changing societal attitudes.

Older women are particularly vulnerable to poverty in the absence of their husbands or other family members. The situation is worsened in the settlements as access to land (the main productive resource) is constrained by inheritance laws in the Mahaweli settlements, which are different from those in other parts of the country. Further, unlike when they were young, the elderly no longer have the same mental or psychological strengths to cope with the challenges facing them in their later life in their struggle to survive. Many of them feel insecure, fearful, stressed, and desperate. Along with these dimensions, alienation has also been identified as a dimension of poverty in the settlements. Many old people in the settlements faced problems of alienation when they arrived in the settlements. For evacuee settlers, harsh climatic conditions, malaria, wild elephants, and water quality were the biggest problems initially. Unlike the re-settlers, the evacuee settlers and new settlers found it difficult to adjust to the physical and socio-economic environments.

The aforementioned aspects (culture, tradition, religion, unity, and moral values) cannot be captured by the livelihood framework. I find this is one of the main weaknesses of the framework, where assets are limited to a pentagon. Culture and historical factors are important in building people's livelihoods and hence contribute to alleviate poverty. The settlements that I studied are examples of Dry Zone Sinhalese culture, where historically people have used their own knowledge, beliefs, skills, and value systems to practise *chena* and paddy cultivations successfully. All aspects of paddy cultivation were treated with the

great respect. First generation settlers were worried about the decline in paddy cultivation in the settlements, as this will also threaten the survival of their culture.

Supernatural and spiritual acts

> *Once I was hit [attacked] by Tigers (LTTE) when I was working in a sawmill in a border village, now I am hit by a* yaka *[devil]. I cannot do anything now, look at my hands, I depend on my wife. But until a year ago I helped my wife to collect firewood. I don't have anyone now except my wife to look after me. I do not know where my children are. This is what I think poverty means for a man like me.* (David Appuhamy, aged 97 years, from Maliyadevapura)

In many societies, especially in the rural areas of developing countries, supernatural beings or acts are considered as the deciding factor in a good life or poverty. David Appuhamy believed he was affected by a supernatural power besides the incident which resulted in losing the use of his hands. Regardless of the various religious beliefs, I believe that Sri Lankans in general tend to believe in supernatural and spiritual acts. When they are caught up in a problem (e.g. poverty, illness, childlessness, marriage arrangements) for a long time, they will eventually link it to a supernatural power or spirit and then start to work it out of their life through making supplications in order to safeguard against such calamities.

Extra burdens: struggle, fear and desperation

Gunawathie lived next to the house in Solama where I stayed when carrying out my fieldwork. When I asked her to suggest a convenient time for me to meet her, she asked me to come in the morning on a day when she did not have to work. However, when I went to see her on the appointed morning, I saw that she was in a hurry and she informed me that she would meet me in the evening instead. Later, she apologized and explained the reason for the hasty change of plans:

> *These days I could find some work in another village. It is not very far, but I have to go early. If I don't go on time, I will not have work for the day and will have to come home empty handed. We will not have anything to eat. You know, my son cannot work. He earned well when he could. Now he can't. Someone who is jealous of his progress has*

done a hooniyama *[a supernatural act] to him. So, I have to do everything. I have seven children, but nobody takes care of me and they don't know whether I am alive or not. My only worry is my sick son. Who will look after him if I die? Having seven children, an old woman like me should rest at home, but, it is my* karume *[fate] I am poor; I have to work until I die.* (Gunawathie, aged 68, from Solama)

Gunawathie lived in a small hut, together with her son who was 36 years old and physically disabled. He was also suffering from a long-term illness. Gunawathie was in despair, with no other children to support her, no husband, and with a sickly son to care for. Gunawathie's story was a story of struggle, fear, desperation, and frustration. However, it was also a story of how she could redefine her later life to adapt to unexpected circumstances and renegotiate her agency to make a living for her and to look after her son, even under extreme conditions. She did not have a regular income as she did not have regular work, but just took on work whenever it was available. Her only aim was to earn sufficient for the day to feed two mouths. She did not have any personal wishes or interests. She believed the life she was living was because of her *karume* (fate), thereby emphasizing a religious aspect of poverty.

Elderly people generally value a peaceful social environment in their later life. However, many elderly people in the study area could not fulfil their expectations in this respect due both to personal circumstances as well as external circumstances imposed on them. In many developing countries elderly people are compelled to work often into extreme old age. This pattern has been observed in other rural areas too (Ratnayake 1992). As many of the old people in the study settlements worked in the informal sector, they did not have the capacity to save money when they were young. They just survived and are still doing so. For some of the elderly the absence of any other type of support has compelled them to engage in paid work regardless of their age. Gorman & Heslop (2002) note that also in agricultural environments older people need to continue their economic participation even though their productivity levels decline. However, with declining physical ability, old people's income earning opportunities will also decline.

Feeling lonely: alienation then and now

Bandara, who was 75 years old and living alone in his home, was from Maliyadevapura. His children visited him once day each month and these were his happiest days. He was receiving money from his children to fulfil his basic needs. A neighbour cooked food for him. Bandara was worried about being alone:

> *When we came here in 1976, it was as if we had arrived in a different world. Everything was new for us. We felt lonely and the family was the only resort we had to discuss our problems. Everything was new for us: the climate, quality of drinking water, forests, dusts, and people. During the first few years after our arrival we did not have a good time as we were new to this area, but with time we managed to work on our paddy land. The whole family worked hard in the paddy field. Our neighbours also helped us in our work. They did various work according to the needs of the season. The different work we performed on the paddy land led to close ties among the family members and even among neighbours. Today, generally people have become more selfish. My children visit me when they have holidays. They asked me to live with them, but I don't like the busy life in the city. If they go to work, I would have to be alone in that new place. I am living alone in this house which was once filled with my family members. Now I have to talk to the walls. This is also a kind of poverty. Isn't it? At least now I am living in a place where I have known more people than in a new place. In old age people need love and care, not money.*

Bandara was very worried about the new form of alienation he was undergoing. Today many first generation settlers face different a type of alienation due to the changing socio-economic context of their settlements. The psychological aspects of experiencing poverty, such as feeling outside, inferior and insecure, were also captured in other old people who were experiencing similar dimensions of poverty in a different context to in the past.

As a consequence of various pressures and problems, the second and third generations are gradually moving away from agricultural activities and making their livelihoods mainly from non-farm activities outside the settlement areas, which have created a vacuum in the old age security. The AMDP aimed at creating employment opportunities for second

generation settlers within the settlements.[3] However, Gunawardane & Nelson (1988) have identified that new opportunities for off-farm employment were not created within the settlements or in any close town. Hence, young people, particularly women, are continuously migrating to other places within and outside the country in search of employment.

Access to land

Gamini was 70 years old and from Maliyadevapura. I met him at his home. Fifteen years previously Gamini had enjoyed financial prosperity due to his access to land and family labour. He was able to hire labour whenever necessary. Today, Gamini no longer has access to land as he is old and his elder son has taken over from him. When I asked about what poverty means to him, he replied:

> *I have four sons. None of them have worked continuously on my paddy land. I handed over the paddy land to my sons as I could not continue to work. During* yala *they cultivate whatever they want. They think I am too old to advise them on what to plant. My children do not understand my worries. Now I don't have access to land as I am old and I cannot work on my land. Now I am poor and have to depend on my children for everything.*

Access to land is an important aspect in a resettlement context. Many first generation settlers are gradually losing their access as they hand over the responsibility to their sons. Although they are forced to hand over their responsibilities due to age-related incapacity, they expect their children to listen to their advice. Although the first generation has contributed to the development of the settlements and to the AMDP as a whole in the past, their contributions are not much recognized by their own families or by society. In terms of assets, most of them are losing access and control mainly due to their age and related declining capabilities. Due to physical inability, today's elderly settlers have had to hand over land to their children, at which point they immediately lose power over it. Although they are compelled to hand over the responsibility due to their inability, lack of or losing

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[3] Scudder (2005) identifies this situation as a failure of regional development efforts.

power over their own land puts them in a marginal position, especially in an agricultural settlement.

Decreasing old age care

Due to the increasing participation of women in economic activities, in certain families in the settlements the elderly have become primary caregivers. In all three settlements the young female labour force is moving to urban areas or to Middle Eastern countries to find jobs. This trend has serious implications for older people in the rural context, where young people traditionally took care of the elderly in their families. In much of rural Sri Lanka, the traditional extended family has been the immediate accessible safety net for old people. The situation is no longer the same as it was 30 years previously. For instance, Podimenike had taken responsibility for her grandson's family as the grandson's wife worked in a Middle Eastern country. When I asked about her perception of poverty Podimenike informed:

> *It was very difficult then. We had to tolerate all the hardships. I had to work in the paddy field during the daytime. After finishing the work in the paddy field I had to go home a little earlier than my husband to prepare the dinner. In the morning too, I had to wake up very early to prepare the breakfast and lunch. My husband never helped me with household work. I have seven children. We never had a good life, because many times our harvest was not very successful. We had the problem of debt. My husband could not repay it and eventually he committed suicide. After that I started to do coolie work. With many hardships, I brought up my children. They are also having lot of problems as they do not have regular incomes. Now I am living with my youngest son and looking after my grandchildren. My daughter-in-law is in the Middle East. She wanted to improve our house, so she went to earn some money. I am still doing household work. Many old people like me in the village worked hard when they were young. They still continue to do so.* (Podimenike, aged 69 years, from Maliyadevapura)

Since domestic work and child care are highly gendered in Sri Lanka's rural societies, for those who seek employment outside the settlements elderly women (mothers, mothers-in-law) such as Podimenike are considered as assets. While their family members, especially

women, work outside the settlements or in a different country as maids for a regular salary, many elderly women have to do the similar work for kind and not for cash. While some of the elderly have become passive victims of the AMDP and remain dependents, others still contribute to the development of their children and grandchildren, and are helping them to escape poverty. However, these contributions are either unnoticed or, in many cases, not acknowledged. At the same time, due to poverty which forces even the elderly to work and due to disputes regarding land among siblings there has been a decline of this kind of informal support. Some of the elderly women told me that their daughters or daughters-in-law made maximum use of their support to look after the children while they are in the Middle East and as soon as they return all the help is forgotten and the elderly are considered as burden. This also has serious implications for the mental health of the elderly. How migration (especially married women's migration) creates psychological and social problems has been studied extensively in Sri Lanka. However, less attention has been given to the impacts of migration on the well-being of the elderly (especially mothers and mothers-in-law) when migrant women leave them with extra responsibilities. This is also a dimension of poverty as it is directly link to mental health, especially in the old age when older people seek a quieter and calmer life.

Generally in the Sri Lankan context, it is not socially accepted for elderly parents to be sent to live in special homes for the elderly. However, in urban areas of the country, this option has become especially important to middle- and high-income families in cases when there is no one else to take responsibility, as most of the family members are either working or engaged in other activities that keep them away from home. Such practices are becoming unavoidable in the war-torn northern and eastern parts of the country due to the diaspora remittances, as young family members are leaving their parents behind when they migrate to a foreign country. At the same time, facilities in homes for the elderly in the north and east are maintained to levels found in developed countries. In the case of the settlements under study, there are no such facilities for the elderly, nor are such facilities socially acceptable. Consequently, any negligence on the part of the children will place their elderly parents in a miserable situation, and the parents' risk of falling into poverty or extreme poverty will be very high.

Another important fact to be acknowledged is that due to the changes occurring in the settlement the extended family is gradually giving way to nuclear family systems, where the informal care arrangements for the elderly as well as children and disabled or sick family members have become a big issue. With the increasing participation of the female labour force, elderly people will become systematically isolated and will not be cared for by family members in the future, despite the fact that most of them today are contributing to the well-being of their children and grandchildren. What needs more consideration here is the fact that in these settlements, elderly persons traditionally have drawn on a variety of extended family connections and different social connections in order to support themselves materially and non-materially. Family and social connections provided and to a certain extend continue to provide the elderly with a safety net. However, the sustainability of this support is questionable. Article 2 focuses on how migrant families are negotiating household responsibilities when female migrants' husbands do not receive any support or only minimal support from their extended families. In this article I have pointed out how the support drawn from the extended family network has become problematic.

Chronic poverty

Leelawathie was 67 years old and from Kongwewa. Before she came to the AMDP she worked as a domestic aid in her village. As her husband was addicted to alcohol she had to take economic responsibility for their family. When I asked how she perceived poverty she responded:

> *What to tell? I am born to be a poor. My parents were very poor. We did not have a place to live nor did we eat a proper meal at least once a week. Our family lived in a mud hut. I got married when I was 15. My husband is addicted to alcohol. When my husband told me that we should move to Mahaweli, I decided to come. I came here in 1978 with full of hopes, but the land we were given was not productive and there was no water. My children suffered from malaria and I lost my third son due to a snake bite. My husband did not change his habits. He started to beat me and my children when we did not have anything to eat. It was so miserable then. I have one son and two daughters. My son left home when he was 15 years and never returned. It is due to my husband. My husband always forced him to find a job. He is a small boy, what can he do? One of my daughters is living with me. I*

cannot send her outside the village as she is sometimes has fits. Both of us do coolie work in the village. I do not know what sin I have committed? My only wish is all these hardships should come to an end, at least after my death; I did not want my children and grandchildren to suffer any more.

Leelawathie's concern was that her story should be the last episode of poverty in her family. The transmission of poverty from parents to children has serious implications for children as well as for the parents in their old age. In common with Leelawathie, there are number of elderly people suffering from this type of poverty in the settlements, and some have lived their whole life in the settlements in poverty. Their livelihood outcomes have never been positive. While they acknowledged the structural factors of the failure they also accepted personal misfortune or their fate (*karume*). These are some of the qualitative aspects of poverty that are not explicit in the livelihood framework. Leelawathie's story shows the different dimensions of chronic poverty and her attempts to break the vicious circle. Old people do not want to transmit poverty to the next generation. In the settlement context, this attitude was revealed by other informants too. Causes of chronic poverty are linked to personal factors (for instance, Leelawathie's husband's alcohol addiction) as well as structural factors (e.g. competitive markets, political power and policy changes).

Gender

Rani was 63 years old and from a Maliyadevapura settlement. When Rani's husband died Rani lost the economic security she had previously enjoyed. When asked about the experience of poverty, Rani responded:

What should I tell? I spend the whole of my life in misery. My family is a big family. My sons are quarrelling among themselves for land. When my husband was alive, it was not a problem. Now my sons are looking after their own families and not me. If I had a piece of land of my own, I could have made use of it. It is because of this I am poor.

In the AMDP, the gender dimension of old age poverty has become a critical issue due to the land inheritance pattern in System H which has created unequal property relations between men and women (Schrijvers 1988). The legal inheritance of land in Mahaweli has

always favoured men, as they have been identified as heads of households from the beginning of the project. This has left many women in a vulnerable position as their access to and ownership of land depends on their relationship with male landowners. In the case of Sri Lanka, due its high level of human development compared to other countries in the region, women tend to live longer than their male counterparts. Consequently, they experience poverty well into old age. Along with old age, if such women become separated or widowed they become vulnerable to poverty, as the possibility of losing material advantages are high (Ewing 1999). This has happened to many first generation women in the settlements as their indirect access to land comes to end after they become widows, and especially if they have sons.

Unable to face the new challenges

Rathne was a 62 year old man from Solama, and was living alone with his wife. He had four daughters, all of whom were married. Despite his age, Rathne was a hard working man. I met him in a paddy field, where he and his wife were taking a break. When I asked him about the experience of poverty he told me:

> *I think when people are getting old they become poorer. I have four daughters and I am happy that I could marry them off. I have been doing agriculture for a long time. As I did not have the capital to cultivate the whole land, I sold a part of it. Now I am cultivating a small plot, but that is not enough. Young farmers use different technologies, which we are not much familiar with. Also, we cannot afford them. Further, the markets are very competitive now. As we are old we cannot face the challenges. We cannot take our products to a market which is very far away. Many old farmers face these types of challenges. We don't have the strength like the young people to accept these challenges, so we remain in the same place [status] or go further down.*

Rathne's concern was his age-related inability to meet the new challenges. He believed that this was the reason for falling behind in economic terms. He also did not have access to reliable market information. Therefore, he sold his produce to a middle man, from which he earned a profit that was hardly enough to meet his daily expenses. Today, a competitive market environment has been created around the region where the study settlements are

located. In this environment smallholder farmers face a challenge as they feel they are excluded from these markets. However, since the establishment of the Thambuttegama Economic Centre, vegetables, fruits and different varieties of Dry Zone grains have been sent there from various surrounding settlements. As a consequence, the price of such items has declined considerably and people are able to earn a marginal profit. Like Rathne, other farmers who are unable to bear the costs of transport have to sell their products to middle men.

Perceiving poverty: what do the second and third generations tell?

The following quotes represent the views of poverty held by the second and third generation settlers in the study settlements.

Employment

> *We can do hard work but there are no jobs available in our village. We do coolie work here and there, but we don't get this work often. Having a job is important, at least to eat three times a day. If we were born in Colombo we could have worked in a hotel or a factory, at least. Sometimes my friends have told me that if we had been born as girls we could have got a job at a garment factory at least, or have gone to Lebanon. I think poverty is basically about not having a job.* (Mahinda, aged 19, from Kongwewa)

> *I, too, think it is about not having a job. As I could not find any employment, I decided to join the army. I was 18 years old then. I had to look after my parents and four younger brothers. It is not because of the love for the country that I joined the army, but to feed my family. Many soldiers in the army tell 'Thanks to Prabakaran [Leader of the separatist movement in Sri Lanka] we have a war'. We should not think like that, but this is the reality. Now I am an army deserter. I am married, I have a daughter, and my wife is expecting our second baby. I have to do whatever work I can get.* (Priyantha, aged 24, Maliyadevapura)

> *I think women like me are poor [widow with two children]. We can't go outside the village to find employment. We have kids, but there is nobody to look after them if we go out to*

work. We have to survive with whatever jobs are available here. Such jobs are not regular and people do not pay enough. (Heenmenike, aged 45, from Maliyadevapura)

Unlike in the past unemployment and underemployment have become serious issues in many of the AMDP settlements. Lack of employment or unemployment were identified as the main causes of poverty and evidently an important dimension in the perceptions of poverty held by youths in all three settlements. For them, poverty is basically about not having an employment. Most settlers believed that they had been deprived of their fair chance of employment opportunities in the government sector as they do not have access to higher education, technical and vocational education compared to those living in the urban areas of the country. They also said that though there some vocational education centres in the neighbouring town they could not afford the cost of transport or that public transport was not available. Agricultural activities in the settlements can no longer provide employment opportunities for the increasing population. The employment opportunities in neighbouring areas are also rapidly decreasing due to lack of employment in agriculture, lack of off-farm employment and the increasing population. As a result, some of the settlers are underemployed, unemployed, seasonally employed, or engaged in casual work. Some of them have to do whatever employment they find. For those who are unable to leave their families it is either difficult to find a job in their settlement or they are engaged in low paid unreliable work. They are trapped in their settlement by lack of employment opportunities and they are not sufficiently enough to find jobs elsewhere, especially outside agriculture. Mahinda's narrative also shows how employment opportunities are becoming gendered. Further, many youths in the village held the view that they either did not have or were deprived of opportunities compared to youths living in Colombo, and this has been a long-terms issue and will continue to be. After the liberalization of economy, due to increased mobility and the media, AMDP settlers' perceptions of poverty have also changed. For instance, due to increased mobility the settlers are able to appreciate that lifestyles in other parts of the country are different from their own. Furthermore, they feel (especially the second and third generation) they are socially excluded from opportunities in terms of access to better education and employment.

Lack of opportunity

> *I think most of our people became poor after the Dambulla market. Some vegetable buyers from Thambuttegama go to Dambulla to buy vegetables from there. So how can an ordinary man survive in this competition? We don't have large lands.* (Wasantha, aged 32, from Kongwewa)

> *Like me, many poor young men in our settlement depend on jobs (porters) in Thambuttegama economic centre. But they are not reliable. On the days we have work, we are happy as our children will have something to eat.* (Saman, aged 24, from Kongwewa)

The perceptions of poverty are clearly related to the ability to participate in the local markets. The settlers cannot access national labour markets due to their low capabilities, or low human capital as they are termed under the livelihood framework. Many of them are not educated to a sufficiently high level to be able to secure a highly paid job in the government or private sector. Alternatively, they are not in a position to negotiate for jobs in the labour market in their respective region. At the same time, it is pertinent to point out that many who are active in the labour market, such as the porters in Thambuttegama economic centre (mainly from the study settlements and other surrounding settlements), work for very low wages. The capability to negotiate their position in the current labour market of Sri Lanka is highly gendered, age-specific, skills-based, competitive, and in some cases dependent upon political patronage too. Some of the participants in the group mentioned that the available livelihood opportunities were either exploitative in nature or provided low incomes.

Education

> *The school in our village is not a good one. It doesn't have many resources. It is because of our parents neglected our education, we are in this position today. We are poor. Lack of education is the basic reason for poverty in our village. (Wasana, aged 25, from Solama)*

Poverty in the settlements was also linked to education. The first generation of settlers did not achieve much in terms of education, and some did not even attend school. Although at the time they did not appreciate the importance of education, they now regret it due to their inability to read and write. The importance of education was particularly recognized in Maliyadevapura, where it was felt that good educational opportunities had been lost through migration to the settlement. The participants in the focus group raised many issues in terms of the poor quality of education being responsible for their present situation. Lack of teachers for main subjects (mathematics, science and English), and the poor quality of teaching, teacher absenteeism, and distance to schools were identified as important issues. Many of the villagers could not afford to send their children to the town schools. As rural areas lack necessary educational infrastructure, many children do not study after taking GCE (O/L) examinations. The settlers were worried that their children would also lack employment opportunities in the future due to the lower level of education which they receive now. While there are many children in the settlements with different talents there are no facilities in schools to improve these talents. The prevailing low quality of education identified by the participants in the focus group questions the usefulness of this investment. Thus, the sustainable impact of investment in education on poverty reduction will not only depend merely upon the availability of education but also on its quality too. If the free education provided does not enhance human capital formation and improve labour productivity in the settlements this investment will be wasted.

Despite education being provided free of charge in Sri Lanka, the accompanying costs are not affordable for the poor and many poorest. In addition, in some poor families, children who attend school are also burdened with domestic work, especially due to the absence of their mothers. In such families, girls look after their younger siblings and do household work. Some of them have stopped attending school completely while others do not go to school regularly. This trend may lead to poverty being transferred to future generations too. According to the participants, girls whose mothers migrate to Middle Eastern countries and girls from women-headed households are forced to sacrifice their education. If this trend continues, future generations will not be able to take advantage of any

opportunities to improve their lives in the absence of a favourable regional economy and declining access to land.

Housing

Housing was put forward as a dimension of poverty. This dimension was identified and discussed in terms of quality and access to land for housing. Many of the settlers have built their house on encroached land. This is a critical issue in Kongwewa. In contrast, lack of land for housing was not highlighted as much of a problem in Solama and Maliyadevapura, but instead the residents were worried about their inability to afford to build a house:

> *I think it is also about a proper place to live, it is not only about money. My income is hardly enough to feed the family. How can I build a proper house? Look at the roof of this house. Before the next rainy season I have to change the* cadjan *leaves. Earlier, I didn't buy coconut leaves; now I have to pay for them.* (Gunawathie, aged 24, from Kongwewa)

> *I think for me poverty is not only about having enough food to eat; it is also about having a good house to live in. Unlike earlier, our people are connected with the outer world. Our friends from schools or from our work place visit us. They will judge us by our home.* (Kumari, aged 25, from Solama)

> *Today people give priority to having a good house too. Poverty is not only about having enough money to eat well.* (Sanjeewani, aged 22, from Solama)

In the group it was revealed that compared to the past, improvements in the quality of housing is measured in terms of the construction materials used. Most of the settlers felt the need to have a proper house. Women who migrate to Middle Eastern countries or who work in garment factories and men who work in the army have comparatively better houses in the settlements. According to them mobility and the influence of the media are some of the factors that have influenced people's desire to have proper houses. Sometimes it was difficult to assess a person's poverty level in terms of housing in these settlements.

For instance, in the case of women who migrate to Middle Eastern countries for work and who have built permanent houses or semi-permanent houses, they or their families do not have any permanent source of income upon the women's return. One young man in the focus group stated that if such women do not find a means by which to live they remove a window or door and sell it in order to survive. This also shows how investment in housing is also a kind of security against poverty. Compared to men, women in all three settlements stressed the importance of having a decent house. It is also pertinent to note that first generation settlers did not consider housing (or poor quality of housing) as a dimension of poverty.

Health

Health was also identified as a dimension of poverty. The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to providing free primary health care for all. Nevertheless, some of the poorest families in the settlements had become destitute through family members having serious health problems. This situation has resulted in the deterioration of human capital (labour) of such families. Many of them could not perform manual labour due to poor health:

> *People become poor if they do not have good health. In our settlement, especially our parents and grandparents have worked in the paddy field for a long time. Now they have become sick. They complain of various problems. This is especially bad when they become old.* (Suamane, aged 21, from Maliyadevapura)

> *Most people in the area suffered and died from kidney problems. It is due to the bad quality of water. People do not have money to treat such illnesses. If a working man in the family gets this problem then the whole family will suffer.* (Bandara, aged 33, from Solama)

While the distance to the nearest hospital was mentioned as a problem in Solama, in Maliyadevapura and Kongwewa settlers were not very satisfied with the locally available health care facilities. They complained about the high costs involved if they attend private medical centres. In all of the settlements, traditional medicines are also in use, and many of the poor rely on this source as the cost is comparatively low. Sometimes their environment provided them with necessary medicines, and most of them are still used to the traditional medical system prevailing in Sri Lanka. Although government hospitals provide free

health care services, some costs have to be borne by the recipients. The poor and the poorest find it difficult to bear these costs.

Land

Lack of land or access to land was highlighted as a dimension of poverty by many settlers across different settlements.. Scarcity of land for agriculture has become a significant problem in Solama and Maliyadevapura, while land for housing has become a big issue in Kongwewa. In the group discussions, it was frequently linked to increasing population which has resulted in the fragmentation of land in an unproductive way. Landlessness and lack of fertile, well-irrigated land was also identified as an important dimension of poverty in all three settlements. Furthermore, even in cases when people owned land it was located in unproductive sites.

> *Our land is located in a hilly place compared to my neighbour's land. Those who got land in low areas could do better compared to those who got land in slightly hilly places. It is mainly because of difficulty in getting water that we could not progress.* (Seneviratne, aged 54, from Maliyadevapura)

> *We are already living on encroached land. We are not sure whether we will be given the proper title. I don't know what will happen to our children. They will not have a place to encroach, at least.* (Jayanthi, aged 43, from Kongwewa)

> *We were eight in the family: six boys and two girls. My brothers always quarrelled over the landownership, what to plant, and where to sell. I do not like to quarrel with my brothers. I am doing a coolie work now. This problem is everywhere in the settlement. It is because of lack of land for our generation that many people cannot raise their heads.* (Thilak, aged 25, from Kongwewa)

However, compared to the emphasis on land and the importance attached to it among the first generation settlers, the second and third generation did not place as much emphasis on land as a dimension in their perception of poverty. As income from agriculture has increasingly being replaced by income derived from non-agricultural activities, land was not seen as an important factor. This does not mean that settlers do not value land as an

important asset, but they revealed that the type of land title is the main reason for poverty in the settlements. Even if the first generation were to be provided with clear land titles, it would create new kinds of problems in the context of population growth, which in the course of thirty years has produced two more generations. Although the first generation perceived poverty in terms of shifting land control, which has resulted in loss of power too, the two subsequent generations were not too worried about shifting land control as the land title is not clear. However, some of them still live in the hope that they will be provided with the freehold title in the future as their land has been occupied by their parents or grandparents.

Debts

In the settlements the issue of debts was also raised as a dimension of poverty. Some smallholder farmers find it necessary to sell off their harvest to repay their debts, which sometimes trap them in a cycle of poverty and hunger:

> *When you don't have enough money to have a good life you are poor. I am not saying that we want a palace. Even in a mud hut, if one can live without debt then one can have a good life.* (Wasantha, aged 40, from Maliyadevapura)

> *You know, many people in the settlement have become poor due to the high interest rates they pay for their locally obtained loans. There is nobody to control these moneylenders.* (Jayamini, aged 39, from Maliyadevapura)

In general, debts and pawning have long been adopted as a survival strategy for the poor in the settlements. It has been part of their normal life. People in the settlements paid for most of items they consumed daily on a debt basis. When they are refused items on credit in one shop, they choose the next nearest shop in the settlement. Some people even hide from the shop owners because they are unable to repay their debts. This shows that how poverty erodes self-respect. It is also a reason why poverty is inherited by members of different generations in some families. Although this aspect has been made visible by qualitative research on poverty it is not captured in the livelihood framework.

Infrastructure

Availability of infrastructures, such as roads, transport, communication, and markets were also identified as dimensions of poverty which, according to the participants in the group, are impediments to expanding their economic horizons. Public utilities such as electricity and water are unavailable for significant portion of the population in all three settlements. This is a big barrier for youths wanting to start work as self-employed. Kelegama (2001) also notes that in many rural areas of Sri Lanka the major impediment to creating off-farm employment has also been linked to lack of proper infrastructure. Kongwewa is located in close proximity to Thambuttegama town and physical access to markets and roads were not major problems. In contrast, these problems were serious for those living in Solama and Maliyadevapura:

> *People are trying to come out of poverty, but it is because of the things happening in other rich countries that we can't get rid of poverty. Some things are beyond our control. This is the main reason for poverty in many parts of the country. Look at the politics and cost of living these days. Can the poor live?* (Sisira, aged 30, from Maliyadevapura)

Powerlessness

The powerlessness dimension of poverty was discussed at both community and household level. Solama settlers were worried about powerlessness at community level because they felt it was preventing them from interacting with formal and informal institutions. According to the participants, although many programme existed from which they could have benefited, because of their poverty and powerlessness they were not in a position to approach the officers. They blamed some officers for being rude, uncaring, exploitative, and corrupt:

> *As we are not rich we can't talk to politicians. If we are rich we could have talked to them and got a job. I have studied up to GCE (O/L). I don't like to join the army. If I can get at least a small job in a government office, it is good.* (Janaka, aged 18, from Solama)

> *I am sick, people do not offer me any work in the paddy field. My family has to depend on my husbands' income to eat a meal. You can ask about him in the village. He is an alcoholic. If I talk against him, he beats me and my children and threats that he will leave*

me. I have three small children. I am waiting till the youngest one becomes five. Then I can leave them with my mother and go to Lebanon. (Lisa, aged 56, from Solama)

Lisa was worried about her inability to exercise control over her life as she is unemployed. She was losing her self-confidence as she was isolated from opportunities due to her present condition which was both the cause and consequence of poverty. At the same time, while revealing the household level of powerlessness Lisa's quote reveals the gender, health and economic dimensions of poverty. Her narrative reveals many dimensions of poverty, but also her will to change and her positive thinking about her future.

Psychological

The psychological aspects of experiencing poverty, such as feeling inferior, humiliated, shame, and insecure, were captured in the second and third generations perceptions of poverty. They experienced such dimensions of poverty in a different context compared to in the past:

> *I had to go to six lakes to collect* olu kottu *[stems of water lilies prepared as a curry in the Dry Zone] to prepare breakfast for my daughter who is in year one [at school]. The teacher has asked the children to bring different types of homemade breakfast for one week. If I don't prepare this for my daughter, she will be bullied by other children. I sold the* olu kottu *in the* Pola *[periodic market] and earned enough to prepare breakfast for my daughter. I am poor and I have to live my life like this.* (Mangalika, aged 25, from Kongwewa)

> *It is so bad when you are bullied among your friends in school. I went to a town school. All my friends went to tuition classes. My father could not afford it, so I stopped schooling.* (Nimali, aged 17, from Maliyadevapura)

> *When I was in the army, I had good respect in the settlement. Now people call me 'nondiaya' [a person with a crippled leg]. I know that I have become a burden for my family. I cannot marry. I am receiving a salary, but do you think money can buy everything. You don't feel how it is to lose one of your limbs ... it is terrible.* (Chandrapala, aged 29, from Maliyadevapura)

In Sri Lanka, the psychological dimension of poverty came into a wider discussion especially after war and the tsunami of 2004 as these events have impacted on the lives of many, both rich and poor. Before these events the psychological dimension, despite being accepted as an important dimension, was not incorporated into the poverty alleviation programmes. However, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for Sri Lanka recognizes the importance of understanding how the psychological dimensions of conflict affect people when discussing poverty in the north and east of the country. This should also include the psychological trauma of losses and disability created by war among the soldiers and their families.

Social

In Solama, youths feel that their caste identity is also a barrier to overcoming poverty. Consequently, many of them do not want to follow their parent's and grandparent's occupation. Some youths feel that their lower caste prevents them from accessing employment and securing better positions and promotion in jobs. Due to their caste identity, which is reflected in their names, many youths who move outside their village in search of employment feel inferior and shame:

> *Some young men from this village change their names before joining the army. They think that if they get promotion they won't be able to control the others due to their lower caste. It is because people do not have money that they are forced to hide their caste.* (Samadara, aged 65, from Solama)

> *We are poor, because we were born into a low caste. People outside do not like to give jobs to our people. It is our fate. Although people say caste is not a problem these days, I think it is everywhere in the country and it decides many things, including who should be rich and who should be poor.* (Anulawathie, aged 19, from Solama)

Caste identity has directly and indirectly restricted the settlers' mobility. The mobility of those living in Solama is very limited compared to those in the other two settlements. Some of them have not even visited the nearest town of Thambuttegama for years. I found some men who were identified as among the poorest in the village, who fish from the

Solama lake and collect stems of a kind of water lily which is then prepared as a local dish. Although they work hard, they make a very low profit as they sell only in the village. When I asked them why they could not go elsewhere to sell these items, they did not give me a direct answer. However, I later understood from some informal discussions that lack of recognition due to their caste identity is one of the factors that prevent them from selling outside their village. In many respects, although the importance of caste is said to have lessened in Sinhalese society (Tudawa 2000; Uyangoda 2000) this was not found to be the case according to the views expressed by the focus groups conducted in Solama, which is predominantly a lower caste (drummer) village. However the importance of incorporating the caste dimension into poverty analysis has been recently stressed (Jabbar 2005).

Alcohol

> *There would be no poor in this village if people stopped drinking too much alcohol. Whatever they earn is mostly spent on alcohol. It is because of this that they don't have enough savings, have come into debt, quarrel with their neighbours, and do not know how to deal with the outer world.* (GN, aged 47, from Solama)

Addiction to *Kasippu* (a locally produced type of liquor that is comparatively cheap and readily available in villages) has become common among the settlers. During the informal discussions; I found that those who were seriously addicted to *Kasippu* looked much older than their true age. Many of them had *Kasippu*-related health problems as the liquor contains a lot of harmful substances. According to the group participants, those who are alcoholics spend a large part of their small earnings on *Kasippu*.

Young unmarried women felt reluctant to speak about the alcohol habits of their male family members. However, married women were less reserved:

> *My husband works in his brother's paddy field. He owned the field earlier, but due to his* Kasippu *practice he has pawned that piece of land. I have told him several times to stop this at least for the sake of our children. He drinks in the evenings. He sings loudly, smashes the pots and quarrels with me. Sometimes he beats me too. Sometimes I feel like committing suicide, but who will look after my children? My elder daughter refuses to go*

to school as my husband scolded her once in front of her classmates. (Karunawathie, aged 37, from Solama)

The women in the settlements were worried about the economic consequences of the alcohol practices of some of the men. Loss of income, its impact in terns of not being able to spend on children's education and health were more of a concern. Compared to Maliyadevapura and Kongwewa, the problem is acute in Solama, where many of the men are addicted to alcohol. For them, alcohol is very much an integral part of their lives. However, in all of the villages the consumption of *Kasippu* has created lot of social and economic problems. Many men drink on credit in the local *Kasippu* shops. The reasons given for why they had got used to alcohol always related to their hard work and mental worries. They believed that taking a glass of *Kasippu* would help them to get rid of body aches and to forget their worries. The families of drunkards suffer from domestic violence, and this has resulted in increasing numbers of disputes, family break-ups, school dropouts, and suicides. In turn, these cause and impact on poverty.

Social and ceremonial aspects

The women in the group discussions revealed interesting insights into how poverty hinders their social and ceremonial lives. In the villages of Sri Lanka, the lifecycle rituals such as puberty, weddings and funerals are still important social events. Also in Sinhalese villages, almsgivious ceremonies and some religious ceremonies have brought people together. Poor families have traditionally offered their hospitality to their neighbours, relative and friends on these occasions. Today such ceremonies, especially the celebration of puberty and weddings, take place only in small circles, unlike in the past where the whole village gathered. The women in the focus group told that they purposely ignore such invitations now as they do not have the proper clothes, jewellery or money to buy gifts:

I don't attend ceremonies now as I cannot bear the cost. I came to know my sister's daughter has attained age last week in our village. How can I avoid this? I have to give at least 100 Rs to that girl. Can I go without anything in my hand? I have to prepare some kevum *[oil cakes], at least. I have asked for a loan from my neighbour and she told she*

would give it to me tomorrow, but I don't how I am going to repay it. (Jayamini, aged 39, from Maliyadevapura)

The manifestations of poverty in social and community relations are apparent in all three study settlements. Because of their poverty many poor are forced to abandon their social and community obligations. What is interesting here is that it was the women in the groups who pointed out this particular dimension of poverty.

Supernatural, spiritual and religious

Even for the second and third generations, supernatural and spiritual aspects were linked to poverty:

> *People become poor when they are not close to the temple. They are running after money and do not spend time on good things. It is mostly the old people who come to the temple in poya [full moon] days.* (priest, aged 50, from Solama)

> *In our village there are people who cannot tolerate other's progress. Such people do bad things [using supernatural powers] to the people who are having a good life.* (Somalatha, aged 28, from Maliyadevapura)

The supernatural, spiritual and religious dimensions of poverty were mentioned among the first generation settlers too. I have already discussed how these aspects are related to poverty among the first generation. The narratives presented here show how such perceptions are still continuing.

Laziness

> *I think people become poor if they are lazy. There are ways to improvement. I did not get through the GCE (O/L) exam, but I did not stay at home. I went to town, brought diesel, pesticides and fertilizers and sold them in the village for a little profit. Now I have shop in Thambuttegama and I am doing well. Poor people in our village stay until fortune knocks their door. They should go out and look for fortune. Most poor in our village have become*

dependent and they always blame the government for everything. If they do not want to make a change, they will remain poor forever. (Raja, aged 27, from Solama)

If people are willing to do hard work they cannot be poor. Look at me. I came to this village empty handed. I think it was in early 1970s. I worked as a labourer at the RDA [Road Development Authority]. I did not have work after the road construction works were over, but I did not stay lazy. I worked in a hotel in Colombo for some time. I had enough money to start a boutique in my home place. I started the business. I improved gradually. Now I have a mill in Thambuttegama. (Piyaratne, aged 43, from Kongwewa)

The above views on poverty came from two of the rich people in the settlements (according to the settler's classification of rich). They believed poverty is related to laziness and lack of motivation to find work. While this may reflect part of the story, during my stay in the field in all settlements I have observed how men and women attempted to survive, despite age and other problems. However, I do not totally reject the views of the rich people, though I am sceptical towards about Piyaratne's narrative. Most of these settlers are willing to work hard, but the opportunities are constrained.

AMDP

I think we were not supposed to become poor, but we were made poor by Mahaweli [AMDP]. If our parents had decided to stay in their own villages, we would have in a better position. Now we can't go to our parent's villages. We don't know many villagers, especially the young people there. (Padmasiri, aged 25, from Maliyadevapura)

If the project had other types of investment than agriculture people would have lived a better life. It is because of the land allocation system in many families that there are quarrels between children. Sometimes these quarrels have ended up in killings and suicides too. When people become poor they are not worried about even killing their own siblings for land and money. (Wasantha, aged 32, from Maliyadevapura)

Many of the second and third generation settlers who came from other areas to the project area held this view. This was because they held the belief that it was the AMDP that was responsible for them becoming poor and for their present position. The AMDP was not

planned for subsequent generations. Surprisingly, the issues of subsequent generations have not been taken up in the planning of the long-term impacts of the AMDP. The second generation problems concerning employment and land started earlier than expected.

Discussion and conclusions

The definitions articulated by the participants of the groups and individual narratives obtained from the first generation's perceptions revealed many different aspects of poverty. The multidimensional and complex nature of poverty is confirmed from these perceptions. The perceptions of what constitutes poverty were wide ranging in the settlements. They were basically rooted in factors such as basic needs, livelihoods, and social, economic, political, psychological, environmental, gender, and resettlement backgrounds. In all three settlements poverty was often defined using the terms 'not having', 'lack of', 'feeling' 'being', 'in ability to', and 'powerlessness' (Appendix, 5). The group participants also highlighted a variety of dimensions, revealing their own perceptions of basic needs, capabilities, vulnerabilities, livelihoods, marginalization, and social exclusion. Although there were many similarities in the dimensions that the theoretical discussions on poverty highlighted, the settlers' perceptions add new dimensions, different experiences and different contexts to such dimensions.

The settlers' perceptions of poverty varied according to generations, especially in the way they prioritized the dimensions. An important finding of this research is that the settlers' perceptions of poverty are undoubtedly linked to the changing social perceptions of poverty which in turn are influenced by increasing links with the outside world at local, national and global levels. The participants also mixed the causes of poverty with the dimensions of it. While this shows the inextricable link between the definition, dimensions and causes of poverty, it also reflects that these aspects are interrelated and most of the time indistinguishable. Current thinking on poverty accepts that certain groups of people are particularly important, both in terms of understanding the nature of poverty and for defining policies to alleviate poverty. The perceptions of poverty in a resettlement context presented here provide strong evidence for taking 'different generations' into account

when framing policies and planning programmes related to poverty alleviation. This aspect cannot be simply captured by poverty lines or frameworks that provide a particular view at a given point in time. Another important finding is the differences in the perceptions of poverty in terms of different generations, showing the changing importance of assets. Today, in this land-based resettlement scheme, there has not been much emphasis placed on land as a dimension of poverty among the second and third generations. To conclude, it could be argued that perceptions of poverty are changing among different generations of settlers and this has implications for the way settlers respond to it.

CHAPTER 6. INTRODUCTION TO ARTICLES

During the initial discussions with my supervisor on how the work should proceed I chose to write my thesis as a set of articles and comprehensive summary. At the beginning I did not fully realize the challenges of my decision. In the process of writing articles I came to realize that the difficulties created by this approach are complex. The difficulties I experienced with writing a thesis as a set of articles are mainly related to putting them under a single umbrella, especially in the context of an adopted theoretical position and analytical framework. Some components of the analytical framework could not be explained in detail due to the journal editors' constraints on space. Repetition of certain background information was also inevitable. As Acharya (2004) notes, publishing articles has its own challenges, starting from finding a suitable journal to sending the final proofs back to the editor of the journal. To this, I add that writing a set of articles for the thesis parallel to carrying out the fieldwork also presents a different set of challenges. In the first article, I made use of all the data I collected during the first round of field work. During second and third rounds of fieldwork I was able to correct this mistake. Again, the challenge was addressing the referees' comments and the request for more input of data from the field. As fieldwork and article writing were done simultaneously another challenge was maintaining consistency, upgrading certain information and clarifying certain concepts. In the following I provide the summary of the five articles and their publication stage.

Article 1

Azmi, F. 2007. Changing livelihoods among the second and third generations of settlers in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) in Sri Lanka. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift–Norwegian Journal of Geography* Vol. 61:1, 1–12.

The article concerns the livelihood changes of the second and third generations of the original settlers in System H. Due to changes in local, national and global situations in many spheres and in personal circumstances, along with the changing perceptions of what

constitutes a 'good life', many settlers are forced to seek livelihood options which are different from those of previous generations. During the last two decades, several factors have affected the settlers, narrowing or constraining their choices, presenting challenges to and opportunities for their survival, and forcing them to struggle to secure or change their livelihoods. Today, the different livelihood activities in the settlement are linked upwards to the macro-level factors within the global economy and downwards to the local economy. Through narratives, the study reveals how the second and third generations negotiate different structures in order to survive and fulfil their aspirations, and also how they are capable of tremendous resilience and can adjust to and act upon a wide range of changes. It is concluded that the settlers' livelihoods are changing and that these changes are no longer specific to the local context but similar to those in other rural areas of Sri Lanka.

Article 2

Azmi, F. (Forthcoming). Middle East migration, women's empowerment and changing gender roles of married men and women in the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project of Sri Lanka. *Modern Sri Lanka Studies* Vol. 11:2.

The article explores how, triggered by various socio-economic factors, married women in Mahaweli settlements in Sri Lanka are seeking employment outside the household. Today, employment opportunities in the Middle East are changing traditional gender roles and relations at household and community levels. It is aimed to understand the changing gender roles and relations and women's empowerment through information gained from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The paper concludes that despite migrating for work, and although women have been able to use their agency in many areas at the household level, they are not able to make significant transformations at community level, nor are any such transformations sustainable.

Article 3

Azmi, F. & Lund, R. 'Shifting Geographies of House and Home – Female Migrants Making Home in Rural Sri Lanka'

Paper jointly presented with Lund, R. at the *Symposium of the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography: Transnational Lives: Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship, Home and Belonging*, Department of Geography, National Taiwan University, 23–26 November 2007. Currently under review for a special issue of the *Journal of Geographical Science* titled 'Transnational migration', focusing on feministic perspectives.

Inspired by recent discourses in geography on house and home, the paper focuses on how women migrants contribute to making houses and sustaining livelihoods in Solama. In the study settlement, the viability of people's livelihoods today is dependent upon an influx of foreign capital. The authors follow the transnational experiences of some women in the study settlements who have been migrants, by listening to their stories on belonging and the role of home, how they perceive home in relation to their new roles, how they articulate their sacrifices, and how they assess their contributions to the local community in their home country. It is found that conceptions of house and home are embedded in their socio-spatial experiences at home and abroad, the traditional image of women as homemakers has changed, and female migrants have gained authority in household decision making. The politics of home are also changing spatially as female migrant workers work in both local and transnational spaces. Home can no longer be represented by a simple location or physical space but transcends the local and the global, thereby revealing the dynamics of transnational lives. This also reveals how making home is related to livelihood objectives.

Article 4

Azmi, F. (Forthcoming). Forced To Make A Living: The vulnerability of women traders in the Thambuttegama periodic market, or *Pola*, in Sri Lanka. *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* Vol. 17.

This article seeks to explore different forms of vulnerabilities in women traders involved in one of the periodic or small markets (*pola*) in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project of Sri Lanka (AMDP). To comprehend how women make use of new opportunities provided by the expansion of the regional economy and the different types of challenges the women face, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted and informal discussions held with key informants. Direct observations were also recorded. Close examination of *pola* women's status reveals that they face wide gender inequalities, discrimination and unequal opportunities, making them especially vulnerable to exploitative situations. This study concludes that women are compelled to work at *pola* (predominantly a male domain) mainly due to socio-economic conditions and personal misfortune. It further indicates that trading at *pola* does not empower women at the societal level. The study recommends that *pola* women should be given due attention and not overlooked in future development planning.

Keywords: *pola*, Sri Lanka, vulnerability, empowerment, women traders

Article: 5

Azmi, F. (article under review) Breaking a vicious cycle: Female-headed households and their struggles to escape poverty in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) in Sri Lanka

The article investigates how women who head households and are also sole breadwinners in the settlements attempt to alleviate poverty. The rational behind focusing on female heads of households without male income earners is primarily to highlight their disadvantaged position. The study focuses on three such women from three different types of settlements located in System H of the AMDP. From narratives extrapolated from life stories, it is aimed to highlight how these women negotiate for their family's well-being in various contexts. The article reveals how, in the absence of any other income earners and no one to take care of the household chores, female headship exacerbates poverty. While escaping this situation depends on their individual capabilities and also their productive and reproductive roles, it is also embedded in the specific settlement context in which they

live and in the broader social, economic, cultural, and political processes that operate at local and global levels. Influenced by such factors, the means by which the women have sought to escape poverty are not empowering. The research concludes that these women are in a disadvantaged position in terms of escaping poverty and their risk of falling deeper into poverty remains high.

Article 1
CHANGING LIVELIHOODS AMONG THE SECOND AND THIRD GENERATIONS OF SETTLERS IN SYSTEM H OF THE ACCELERATED MAHAWELI DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (AMDP) IN SRI LANKA

Article 2

MIDDLE EAST MIGRATION, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND CHANGING GENDER ROLES OF MARRIED MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ACCELERATED MAHAWELI DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OF SRI LANKA

Abstract

Triggered by various socio-economic factors, married women in Mahaweli settlements in Sri Lanka are gradually moving out of their households in search of employment. Employment opportunities are changing traditional gender roles and relations at both household and community levels. The study uses information obtained through focus groups and in-depth interviews to understand women's empowerment due to their economic participation through changing gender roles and relations. The findings reveal that, as a consequence of migration to the Middle East for work, and although women have been able to use their agency in many areas at the household level, Mahaweli women could not make much transformation at the community level. It also reveals the transformation they can make at household level too is not sustainable.

Keywords: agency, empowerment, gender relations, gender roles, Mahaweli, Middle East, migration

Introduction

Sri Lankan women have participated in various economic activities for centuries (Jayaweera 2002; Asian Development Bank 2004). However, until a couple of decades ago this participation was mostly confined to within the country. Today, accelerated by the process of globalization, open economic policies, structural adjustment policies, poverty, unemployment, and a high demand for female labour, women's destinations in search of employment have extended beyond Sri Lanka. Middle Eastern and West

Asian countries have provided opportunities for income-generating employment for many impoverished women. Remittances from migrant workers in Middle Eastern countries have become a major source of foreign exchange (SLBFE 2005) and have provided significant support to help redress Sri Lanka's balance of payment problem. Sri Lanka has become one of the main countries exporting female unskilled labour to the Middle East (Weerakoon 2000).

Although women's migration has provided a number of economic benefits to the country as a whole as well as to individual families, the social costs of this process are far reaching. In the case of Sri Lanka, most of the migrant workers are 25–44 years old (SLBFE 2005) and the large majority are married women with children. The social impact of married women who migrate to Middle East or West Asian countries has been extensively researched in Sri Lanka (Gunatilleke 1986; Bandarage 1998; Hettige 1989; 1991; Gamburd 2000; 2003; Jayaweera 2002; Kottegoda 2006), as it has created a more complex picture with regard to traditional gender roles and relations in societies and households. The period of migration generally lasts between two and five years (Kottegoda 2006), which puts pressure on the migrants' partners to take on completely different roles. However, in the majority of families where married women are absent for such a long time child care arrangements and responsibilities for other household chores are undertaken by other female family members rather than men (Gunatilleke 1992, Gamburd, 2000).

Although the social impact of married women's migration to the Middle East or West Asian countries have been well researched in Sri Lanka, the impacts of the migration have not been researched much in peasant colonization schemes. Hence, the objective of the study was to understand a decisive component of women's empowerment, namely the 'transformative nature' of gendered agency of migrant women at both household and community levels. In order to understand this, I chose to focus on families where migrant women's husbands either did not have access or only had very little access to traditional support networks provided by female members of the extended families. In many families, when married women migrate it is usually the extended family that provides assistance by attending to the needs of the children remaining behind and carrying out other domestic activities. When no immediate family member is available, the assistance of a distant relative is sought. However, in

the study settlements, as well in other parts of the country, such support systems are gradually decreasing. In the future reciprocal services may no longer be accessible for many families, when women have opted to work outside their place of origin for various reasons, irrespective of their age. This study was conducted in three settlements located in Thambuttegama local administrative division in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) (Figure 1) of Sri Lanka.
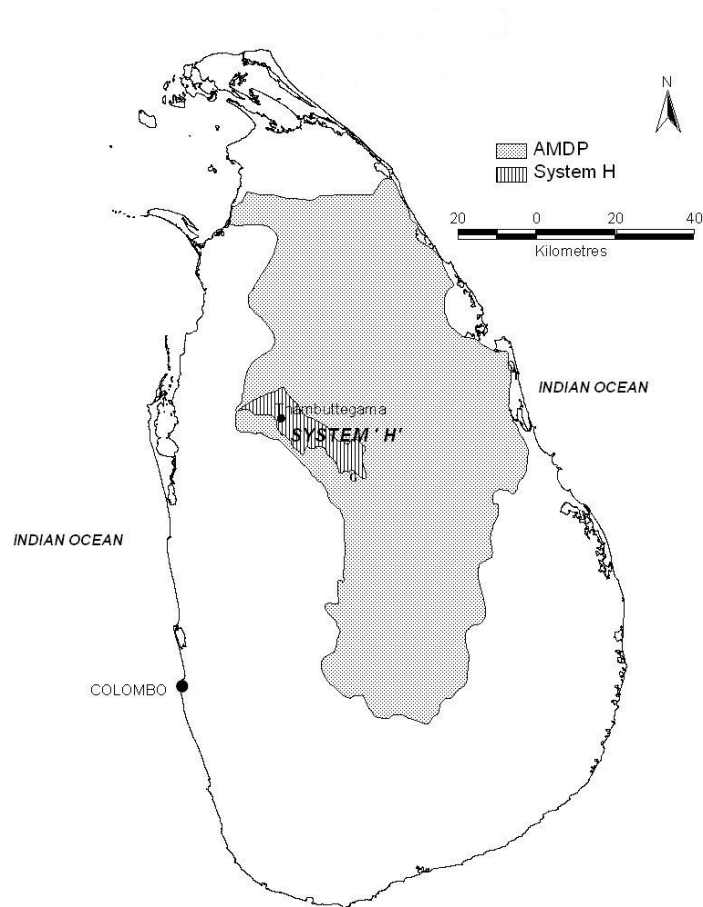
Fig. 1. Location of AMDP

Empowerment and agency

Inspired by the work of Sen (1999), the term 'empowerment' has entered into the vocabulary of several disciplines. Kabeer (1999a; 2003) defines 'empowerment' with reference to making choices. She uses a three-dimensional conceptual framework to analyse the choices people make, where she acknowledges the importance of resources (preconditions for empowerment), agency (an aspect of process) and achievements (the

final outcome). Resources provide the conditions that enable a person to acquire the 'capability' to make choices. At the same time, employment is one of the means to create an enabling environment to acquire resources. By acquiring resources people gain material conditions. Thus, the material conditions achieved through employment should allow individuals the freedom to make choices, and this is termed 'agency' (Kabeer 1999a). Accordingly, agency is considered as the central process of empowerment because it is exercised through the medium of resources. At the same time, Kabeer emphasizes that empowerment is not only about controlling resources (physical, human, natural, and financial) but also about control over ideologies (beliefs, desires, behaviour, patterns, values, attitudes, and traditions) which have created asymmetrical gender relations.

Kabeer (2003) differentiates between the 'effectiveness' of agency and the 'transformative nature' of agency. The 'effectiveness' of agency reflects women's ability to carry out given roles and responsibilities, while the 'transformative nature' of agency refers to women's ability to question or challenge various structures and constraints in their lives in a sustainable way (Kabeer 1994; 1999a) and this is basically about power. This reflects that transformative nature of the agency varies with different contexts as structures differ spatially. Batliwala (1994) claims that in empowerment 'power' is an important aspect as it provides the ability to control material assets, intellectual assets and ideologies. She further states that empowerment should be seen as a process where oppressed men and women gain the ability to challenge the existing power relations and the sources of power. Batliwala also notes that empowerment is not a temporary phenomenon. It is both a process and a goal. These definitions are based on the understanding that 'power' is inherent in the social structure rather than belonging to an individual. Thus, 'power' can be dynamic. Generally, 'agency' does not exist independently of social structures which enable or constrain action (Giddens 1986). Parpart et.al (2002, 12) acknowledge that 'the tension between agency and structures and their interrelationships lies at the heart of the empowerment debate'. Structures may vary from being political to cultural. Thus, power exists in multiple domains (Malhotra & Mather 1997), such as household, social and political domains. Within these domains men and women have to maintain their gender relations and negotiate or renegotiate their gender roles.

Gender and migration

In the literature, focus on the gendered impacts of migration has provoked extensive discussions on women's empowerment, relative autonomy and status (Kabeer 2001). Further, across a range of different cultural contexts, how women's employment affects gendered power relations within households has been debated for a long time (Chant 1991; Redclift & Sinclear 1991; Laurie 1999). There are two theoretical approaches in terms of women's empowerment due to economic participation. While some studies have found that economic participation helps women to increase their status within their family and local community (Buvinic 1989; Kandiyoti 1988; World Bank 1995), other have suggested that women's economic participation does not necessarily empower them (Malhotra & Mather 1997). However, although the theoretical position on women's economic participation and empowerment comprises contradicting views, the fact remains that gender relations and roles are frequently transformed in the context women's economic participation. In this way, gender, understood as a social construct that organizes relations between males and females, can greatly affect the impact of migration on both men and women in different contexts. Gender roles and relations[1] are an area that intersects with empowerment. Empowerment provides a means for women to negotiate and renegotiate their gender roles and relations.

Methodology

The research was conducted in three settlements in the Thambuttegama local administration division in System H of the AMDP in Sri Lanka during March–June 2005. The three settlements are Solama (an ancient village incorporated into the project), Maliyadevapura (a settlement for evacuees who had lost their lands due to the project), and Kongwewa (a settlement which mainly consisted of settlers from other parts of the country as well as illegal settlers).

The data were collected through three focus group discussions with the settlers and 16 individual in-depth interviews both with the husbands of the migrant women and with returnee migrant women. The three focus groups were selected based on the settlement backgrounds, generational differences (first generation or the original settlers, second generation or the children of the first generation, third generation or the grandchildren

of the first generation) and sex differences of the settlers. Each of the focus group discussions, which were held with 5–7 participants, lasted for approximately 2–2.5 hours. Recruitment of the participants was done using the snowball method. Cameron (2000) notes that focus group discussions are very useful for researchers conducting studies on the socially constructed nature of knowledge. With gender being a socially defined and culturally differing concept, I found that focus group discussions provided very different and insightful facts about the topics introduced for discussion.

The in-depth interviews held with the husbands of women who had migrated to the Middle East to work and with women who had returned were tape recorded and later transcribed. Although unmarried women and men migrate to the Middle East, the study focused on men who were married to women who migrated for work and also returnee women migrants in order to understand the impacts of Middle East migration on their gender roles and relations. This was because in Sri Lankan society, as in many other Asian countries, marriage is an important institution where gender roles and relations for the most part are becoming increasingly complicated, complex and challenged.

The reason for choosing to conduct in-depth interviews with married men individually was to enable them to feel at ease in the environment in which they were to provide information on their changing gender roles. It was believed that speaking about a topic of this nature in a focus group would have placed them in an uncomfortable situation, and hence focus groups were not the place to hold interviews if I wanted their voices to be heard. Dunn (2000) claims that when interviewer and informants are at ease with each other the informants may become more communicative. He identifies interviews as an important method for collecting data on experiences and opinions. He also claims that interviews are useful for seeking out the opinions of rarely heard voices. In this study, interviews provided interesting information on the way men perceive their changing gender roles.

When I approached the men they were initially reluctant to talk about their experiences, saying they did not have time or offering other excuses. Although I knew that they could afford to spare a couple of hours to talk with me, it was clear that they did not wish to discuss their experiences. However, my constant presence in the settlements and the small size of the settlements (where the men could not avoid seeing me in one

or other of the houses, the village shop or on the road) made it impossible for them to avoid me for long. Nevertheless, I did not wish to breach research ethics by pressuring them to be my informants. Fortunately, a middle-aged man whose wife had recently arrived back from the Middle East helped me to make contacts.

Responding to changes: What triggers women's migration to the Middle East?

The Mahaweli Development Project, a multipurpose development project initiated by the Sri Lankan Government was an attempt to provide a solution to a number of socio-economic problems faced by the country (Puttaswamaiah 1990; Muller & Hettige 1995) by resettling several thousands of families from the late 1970s onwards. The settlers included original settlers from the project area, impoverished people from various other parts of the country, and a further group who had lost their land due to the construction of dams under the AMDP. Among the different groups of settlers in the Mahaweli project, women had gained increasing attention. Some researchers have argued that since incorporation into the Mahaweli settlements women have been subordinated and exploited due to their workload, lack of access or no access to land under land distribution policies and inheritance practices, restricted mobility, and unremunerated work on the family farms (Lund 1978; 1993; Schrijvers 1985; 1988). By contrast, others have claimed that women are not economically marginalized (Jayaweera 1987) and that they enjoy a greater share of power within the household (de Zoysa 1995). Although there are conflicting views about the position of women in Mahaweli settlements it cannot be denied that Mahaweli women have been making extensive contributions to ensure their family's survival.

During the initial years of resettlement the women in Mahaweli contributed to their family's well-being through unremunerated work at home and on their family's land. Since their arrival in the settlements the women have experienced extensive workloads. They are responsible for household maintenance as well as agricultural production, and in some cases they are also responsible for the sale of agricultural products.[2] During the peak seasons, they work as both waged labourers and unpaid family workers, or they participate in reciprocal labour exchange. In terms of household tasks, their workload involves cooking, child care, drawing water, and collecting firewood. Many of them also engage in home gardening. Although few in number, some women are also

engaged in non-farm income-earning activities in order to supplement their income from farming. Traditionally, men have not been expected to engage in housework as part of their culture-influenced gender roles. However, in some of the settler families who were not from the project area the men assisted women in certain household activities. This situation was observed by in the Mahaweli settlements during the late 1970s and early 1980s Lund (1993).

During the initial years of resettlement women's employment opportunities were limited to the settlement environment. However, during the last two decades women have been compelled to seek employment opportunities elsewhere for a number of reasons, primarily due to poverty (Wanigaratne 1987; Scudder 2005). When settlers' livelihood opportunities were affected by debt, droughts, market failures, and crop failures, along with declining profit margins for paddy,[3] the economic gains from paddy cultivation started to slip out of the hands of the settlers and they became helpless and desperate (Scudder 2005). Income from agricultural activities fell far below expectations and many farmers started to rent out their paddy land on a share (*ande*)[4] or lease basis. By the late 1980s, with increasing poverty, many settlers either leased their land[5] and/or worked for the elite members of the settlements (Schrijvers 1988). By the early 1990s, under the second round of structural adjustment reforms, the withdrawal of fertilizer subsidies and the subsequent rise in the cost of production (Jayaweera 2002), the situation had worsened for the Mahaweli cultivators. Many of the settlers, who were by that time small landholders and the weaker segment of the population in terms of capital, could not reap the benefits of expanding regional economies or wider markets. As the market-oriented growth strategy failed to trickle down, many Mahaweli settlers gradually started to change their livelihood strategies, looking beyond their settlements. Table 1 shows the settlers' major employment activities performed outside the settlements for two different time periods

Table 1. Number of people employed in security services, garment industries and work abroad.

Settlement	2000			2006		
	Security forces	Garment industry	Foreign employment	Security forces	Garment industry	Foreign employment
Kongwewa	30	12	23	41	20	37
Maliyadevapura	15	38	11	23	50	24
Solama	11	21	06	23	43	20
Total	56	71	40	87	113	81

Source: Annual Grama Niladari Division[6] data reports obtained from the Grama Niladaries in the respective settlements

Finding livelihood opportunities outside the settlements was not without constraints. Among many factors, livelihood choices were determined by sex and age dimensions. While many young women were able to find employment opportunities in the garment industry, young men found employment opportunities in the security forces and the construction industry and there were also a few informal sector employment opportunities which did not demand high skills or educational qualifications. However, for middle-aged married women and men the employment opportunities were very much limited as the garment sector and security forces required mainly a young labour force.

Faced with poverty and few opportunities for paid work both within and outside the settlements, some married women have resorted to Middle Eastern migration as a conscious choice to break the vicious cycle of poverty.[7] Compared to other sources of locally earned income, this avenue provides an attractive source of income for women who are able to migrate. However, the perceived centrality of this specific economic activity in women's empowerment can be questioned.

Discussion: Views of the local society

In this section I attempt to shed light on the 'transformative nature' of the agency of migrant women. Through the collected information, I will attempt to show how gender

roles (housework and taking care of children) and relations (decision-making in some basic aspects such as raising children, investing in the future, building houses, making decisions on how to invest in the future) are located, negotiated and practised in households and also in wider societal contexts. The discussion is divided into three sections. First, I discuss the views of local society on the changing gender roles and relations between men and women. Second, I present the views of the husbands of migrant women on the causes and effects of migration on gender roles and relations at the household level. In the third section I discuss the views of returnee migrant women on their changing gender roles and relations.

Settlers' perspectives on 'change'

During the previous decade, a gradual positive change has been observed by the settlers in terms of their economic well-being. During the reconnaissance study, especially the elderly settlers informed me that the incomes they earned from cultivating paddy or other crops and vegetables were gradually being replaced by remittances. Although they were happy that their settlements had TVs, radios, motorbikes, cement-floored houses, and houses with roof tiles, they were very worried about how some men in the settlements were becoming 'women', which is how they referred to the changing gender roles in the settlements due to women's migration to the Middle East for work. The following section reflects the views of the participants of focus group discussions on women's Middle East migration, and how the participants viewed the changing gender roles and relations created by this particular livelihood strategy.

'Their place is the kitchen'

In many societies, traditionally assigned gender roles are being challenged due to local and global forces. Although the changes are visible and inevitable in Sri Lanka, how local society views such changes is worth considerable attention as such views are mixed. Although the roles of married women as wives and mothers are held in high respect (Bandarage 1998), women cannot fulfil their obligations in this respect due to socio-economic pressures. For similar reasons, married men cannot fulfil their role as providers. Across the settlements studied, women were therefore abandoning their traditional gendered responsibilities in order to earn sufficient to meet their various needs.

One of the focus group members reflected:

> I used to see a carving knife on Sumane's wife's shoulder. Now it has been replaced
> with a handbag – all because of Arab money. I feel sorry for Sumane. He had to do
> women's work at home. (Man aged 59, from Solama)

This statement reveals that although women's roles are changing and they are
contributing to the well-being of their families, society's expectations of them in terms
of assigned gender roles have not changed. Similar attitudes were revealed by another
participant in the group:

> Even if they go to moon, women are women. They should know how to cook and take
> care of the family. Men should earn the money. In our time women never even went to
> the town to work. I know a few women sold vegetables at the *pola*,[8] but before they
> left they did all their housework and they returned on the same day to take care of the
> housework. (Woman aged 63, from Maliyadevapura)

Generally, older participants emphasized the importance of maintaining traditional
gender roles. In the settlements the constraints imposed by the ideology of gender roles
with regard to home making and childcare means these are primarily the responsibility
of women. Even if the migrant women workers contribute to the betterment of their
households, the village social structure does not easily recognize this contribution in a
positive way.

'Why not men in the kitchen?'

The views of participants on 'changing gender roles' were conflicting. One young
woman justified the reason for women's migration to the Middle East as a matter of
rational choice. She reflected a more positive view of women's economic participation
and supported the changing gender roles:

> Many young women in the village are working in the garment factories or in the
> Middle East as there are no jobs in the village. Unlike during our parents' time, today
> there are lots of opportunities for women to work. So what if their men take care of the

work done by their wives, at least when they are absent? (Woman aged 24, from Kongwewa)

One young man and a young woman, from different settlements, also held the same view:

> In our village many married women have gone to the Arab countries recently. Many of them have managed to build a good house. With the jobs available for men in this area, one cannot even imagine building a wall. So, unlike in the past, husbands and wives have to share their household responsibilities in a different way. So why can't men do housework in the absence of their wives? (Man aged 30, from Maliyadevapura)

> Our men go to the kitchen only when their wives or other family members are sick, but they cannot continue like this any more. If they can send their wives to Arab countries, why can't they take care of the housework and the children? (Woman aged 22, from Solama)

The following view was expressed by a man. He often pointed out the problem of finding employment both within and outside the settlements. He himself had been unemployed or underemployed on several occasions. He also had a large family to feed, and none of the family members had permanent employment:

> It doesn't matter where the money comes from if it is legal. This is not a time to debate about whether women should be in the kitchen and men should be in the *bajaar*.[9] When you feel hunger yourself you won't argue about whether men doing women's work is right or wrong. (Man aged 43, from Kongwewa)

Unlike older participants' views, young participants' attitudes towards women's Middle East migration and the changing gender roles of men and women were mostly supportive of women's choices. Many middle-aged women and men had a more positive view of women's economic participation outside the home, if not on their changing gender roles. Participants more frequently mentioned poverty and men's unemployment as the principle factors responsible for women's Middle East migration and the consequent changes in the gender roles. However, other factors are also

responsible, such as denied property inheritance for women, increased opportunities, and increased access to information.

'It is alright'

Compared to the situation a couple of decades ago, women now participate more in household decision-making in the Mahaweli settlements. de Zoysa (1995) points out that previously even in wealthy families women did not have the power to make important decisions regarding agriculture even though they were knowledgeable on the subject. This situation has changed considerably now. In the context of Middle East migration utilization and control of remittances are evidently critical for understanding changes in gender relations. When I asked about the control and decision-making concerning the use of remittances one woman pointed out the following:

> After migrating to a foreign country our women have become more experienced and more knowledgeable than men on what is right and what is wrong, because they have survived in a tough world and they know how to overcome such situations. I think it is alright for women to have the power to make important decision about the future of the family. (Woman aged 56, from Solama)

Another young woman voiced a similar attitude:

> In our village, most of the [women] Middle East migrants are middle aged. Some of their husbands have not even gone to Colombo. They were very much limited to the village. Most of them can't make useful decisions, especially on what to invest their foreign money in. So it is alright if their wives can make such decisions, as they are exposed to the world. (Woman aged 25 years, from Maliyadevapura).

It can be inferred from these views that mobility outside the home and interaction with people outside the settlements, especially with other migrant women in the Middle East, has improved women's knowledge of investing in profitable economic activities. The views of the aforementioned participants thus acknowledge that women are capable of making important decisions as a consequence of their migration experiences.

'It is not alright'

One young man expressed a more negative view of women's economic participation as well as of men who are dependent upon their wives' remittances:

> Isn't it disrespectful for men to eat on their wives' earnings? I am not against working women. I know women who work in this village. Many of them have a good family life. They cannot be equated with women who go to work in the Middle East. In families where women are working abroad men have lost their male powers. If women earn a higher income than men they try to control men. This cannot be accepted in a village. (Soldier aged 23, from Solama)

This young man's view was also supported by middle-aged and elderly men and women in the focus group. One elderly man added:

> Women going to Dubai earn more money and they use more power at home. Even the children take the mother's side in many matters when it comes to whether something is right or wrong. Some women neglect their husbands and their children to follow the same path. I think power gained by money is not good for a peaceful family life. (Man aged 60, from Maliyadevapura)

Although it is not new for women to be involved in economic activities, the aforementioned participants indicated that women should not interfere with their husband's powers. They also pointed out that women who are working locally were maintaining a good family life (i.e. in the context of settlements, which literally means where the husband holds a superior position in the family) and they were respected in the local society compared to the migrant women. Indirectly, this shows that women who are gainfully employed (such as those who migrate for work) have more control over several matters relating to their family life at household level and that the increase in women's relative economic power in terms of employment has started to affect the social image of men in the settlements in a negative way. From the local society's perspective men's roles as husbands and fathers have been dramatically affected or they are in an inferior position due to the specific employment opportunities in the Middle East.

'It is alright, but …'

One young man justified the changes that women's livelihood choices have wrought in men's traditional gender roles in the settlement by highlighting the broken promises of the Mahaweli project. He also emphasized the importance of making livelihood choices according to the situation one finds oneself in. However, he did not approve of women taking the upper hand in important decision-making pertaining to the family's well-being:

> Women who could not find employment have migrated to the Middle East. If the migrants' families are doing well, what is wrong with men helping in maintaining a family? But I don't think it is proper that such women decide everything in their family life. Some migrant women decide what their husbands should wear and not wear, and some take decisions on what they should invest their foreign money in. This goes beyond the [traditional] limits of women's control. (Man aged 24, from Kongwewa)

A middle-aged man from Solama added further support to this view:

> Some of our men are depending on their wives for everything. In such cases it is alright for women to use more power at home as they earn money. However, they cannot influence the local society with such powers. This cannot be tolerated. Most of the migrant women try to force their attitudes and behaviour on our innocent women. (Man aged 47, from Solama)

Although migrant women were able to ensure a better economic status for their families, much of the time the Middle East money could not ensure a better social status for them in the community in which they lived.

Rarely heard discourse

In this section, I present the stories of men who have been forced to change their traditional gender roles and in some cases also their gender relations due to their wives' migration for work. I asked the men about how they managed and accepted the new gender roles, how they shared power in important decision-making events at household level, and how they viewed the local society's reaction. The circumstances that

prompted women's entry into the foreign labour market were diverse. However, their husbands frequently mentioned poverty, unemployment and the future of their children as the principle factors responsible.

Men's new household responsibilities

Unlike other economic activities that women are engaged in, Middle East migration requires long absences from home. This has caused husbands to take full responsibility for the tasks previously performed by their wives:

> Until she left, I did not know how to cook, though I knew some simple cooking. I have three children. All of them are attending school. I cannot ask my children to do the housework. They are too young and they have lot of schoolwork. I know that I am not doing my work as well as my wife did, but I cannot do more than this. (Man aged 45, from Maliyadevapura)

> It is difficult to manage housework along with taking care of three boys. Sometimes I get angry, but then I forget everything, thinking of the difficulties my wife is undergoing. She says that when she starts to work in the kitchen in morning the next thing she knows is that it is midnight. She tolerates everything for us, so why can't I? (Man aged 42, from Kongwewa)

> My children are studying. They also help me with cooking, washing and cleaning the house. After my wife left, I have not been doing any job. I am taking care of the children. It is a hard job … a man can't do it alone. (Man aged 37, from Solama)

Among the men interviewed, most could not cope with housework as they had young children to care for, some of whom were attending school. For some, the new gender role was a real challenge. However, they did not have any option other than accepting the situation and adjusting to it. Consequently, men who were engaged in paid work and taking care of housework revealed that they felt they were living a life full of pressure.

'They look down on us'

Middle East migration in the study settlements undoubtedly has drawn the attention of many settlers. Stories about migrant women, including their behaviour and that of their husbands, have become important items of gossip. The following views were expressed by the husbands of migrant women:

> Society generally has a bad impression of Middle Eastern migrant women. This is strong, especially when such migrants are continuously migrating. The husbands of such women are also looked down upon, especially if the husbands do not have a job. In some families, if the wife is abroad, the husband does not do any work. I think that is not good. In our village such men come under heavy criticism. (Man aged 29 from Maliyadevapura)

> I cannot do any work as I am not well. My wife has been in Lebanon for seven years. In the village shop people gossip about Middle East migrants and their husbands. They do not know how many problems we face. I avoid going out much in public. (Man aged 36 from Solama)

> When men cook in hotels and their wives cook at home, people do not think men are doing women's work, but when men cook at home and their wives cook in Arab people's kitchens, then people say men are doing women's work. I don't know what the logic behind this is. (Man aged 39 years, from Kongwewa)

Among the husbands interviewed, most of the young men had at least seasonal employment or did coolie work. In this way, they tried to support their families by contributing an income, albeit an irregular one. These men were generally regarded positively by society as most of them used the income their wives earned abroad carefully. At the same time, some men had withdrawn from making any economic contribution to the family after their wives had become the major providers. Local society did not hold such men in high regard; sometimes the men were humiliated by the villagers. This also shows how poverty leads to men's social position in village societies deteriorating when they become dependent on their wives' incomes. In such situations, gender roles and relations in the various contexts of the settlements have therefore become complex.

It is also pertinent to note that some men did not feel that women's economic participation had a negative impact on them as husbands. However, they felt socially marginalized due to the existing gender ideologies in the contexts in which they lived. For many, their lives had become double-edged swords, since they felt they could not oppose their wives' decision to migrate yet they also had to accept the new roles created by this strategy.

A particularly relevant story on men's new gender roles was told by an army deserter:

> People do not like to give coolie work or any other work to an army deserter in our society. My family is very poor. That is why my wife took the decision to go to Kuwait. Our son is three years old. So I am spending the whole day with him. Regarding society's views, it is really difficult for a man like me to face society as my wife is a housemaid. When I was in the army I was well respected in the village. Now I have to face two challenges: one as an army deserter, the other as a husband depending on my wife's income, even to pay for my haircut. Sometimes, I really hate my life and our society, but what to else can I do? I have a son. He should have a good future. (Man aged 29, from Maliyadevapura)

In Sri Lankan society army deserters are not well regarded because many of them have been found to have been involved in criminal activity after leaving the army. Hence, they cannot access employment opportunities easily if their backgrounds become known. The army deserter interviewed found it difficult to find employment either in his village or outside due to the position he found himself in. As he did not have any other options, his wife went abroad to work as a maid, but still he was very worried about his dependence on her.

'She decides' versus 'we decide'

In the following case, although the informant's wife was working abroad, the husband was also in employment, in a rice mill. In addition, he was taking care of their children and performing other household duties. His wife went abroad so that the family could save in order to build a house:

> My wife wishes to send our sons to a town school. We have to build a house. We have a lot of future plans. We discussed them. All depends on my wife's salary. We make decisions together on many matters. (Man aged 42, from Kongwewa)

In the aforementioned case, the husband used his income for the survival of the family, while he was careful to save the remittances his wife sent towards building their house. This shows that among the families with wives and mothers who migrate to the Middle East for work and where husbands are also employed it is possible for the husbands to enjoy a certain amount of economic power, unlike their counterparts who do not have a job. In contrast, the following narrative reflects how men's gender relations are changing:

> Now we have almost completed the house. I asked my wife to stop going again and to buy a three-wheeler for me so I can earn something. However, she is not listening to me. If I write a letter asking her to come home, she will stop sending the money. She did that once. Now I am not asking her to come or buy a three-wheeler for me. My responsibility is to bring up the children. I don't earn money. So my word isn't worth anything. So I have to tolerate everything my wife does. (Man aged 37, from Maliyadevapura)

When I first met the man at home with his children my initial impression was that he represented a success story of Middle East remittances. In terms of material well-being he was a successful husband who did not squander his wife's remittances. Yet in terms of non-material well-being he could not be labelled as a successful man because he felt passive, helpless and inferior in his society. This feeling was also shared by another informant who was unemployed:

> I have started to build this house with my wife's money. When she came home last year after working a two-year contract, it was she who decided on the planning of the house. (Man aged 44, from Solama)

Collectively, the narratives reveal that women are exercising more economic decision-making power at household level in cases where their husbands are not working. In the

families where both the husband and wife work important decision-making is shared jointly.

When they are not housemaids any more

As it was not possible to access migrant women who were currently abroad working as housemaids in the Middle East in order to understand what the women themselves thought of their impact on gender roles and relations within family and community level, I approached a few women in the settlements who had returned from the Middle East. Some of them had returned temporarily while others had decided not to migrate again.

On gender roles and relations

I asked the women who had returned from the Middle East how they had perceived the conventional gender roles, both at household and community levels, upon their return. Some responded as follows:

> I think my husband listens to my opinions better now. Before I went to Lebanon he hardly helped me with household tasks. But these last two years have given him a good training. Now he knows the difficulties in doing household tasks alone and he helps me in many ways. We make decisions together. (Women aged, 27 from Kongwewa)

> Upon my return from Dubai my husband supported me in the household activities and taking care of the children, but it was just for a short time. Now I am not earning. I have spent most of my earnings to build this house. My husband is working as a mason; He is not listening to me now like he did when I was abroad. Sometimes he is suspicious of me if I tell him that I want to go abroad again. I am tolerating everything for my children. I have to depend on him for everything. (Women, 29 from Maliyadevapura)

> My husband was happy only when I earned money. I have a kidney problem and I can't go abroad now. He expects me to do all the housework now. (Woman aged 36, Soalama)

> It is because of the Middle East money that some unemployed people are employed now in the village. People build houses and it provides jobs for the villagers. For our villagers, Middle East money is good but not the migrant women. Many of the older people humiliate us. (Woman aged 22, Solama)

The narratives raise the question of whether women's economic participation results in sustainable changes in gender roles and relations or whether these changes are only temporary. According to the respondent from Solama, migration had provided her with previously denied benefits, though in some cases the benefits were temporary, as described by the woman from Maliyadevapura. The latter case shows that when migrant women stop migrating for work they also lose their agency and return to their previous positions. Generally, the material conditions attained through women's migration are targeted at the whole family and most of the time women do not gain any individual benefits. The migration period of married women in the settlements lasted from two to five years and in few cases it was for longer periods. The money earned by the migrant women in the settlements was invested mainly in one or a few of the following activities: improving their existing house, building a new house, repaying loans, saving for the future, or household consumption. Some of the women stop migrating once they had achieved their goals. When they ceased working most of them had hardly any savings left.

The situation is very complicated as some women 'choose' this option while others are forced to adapt. In the following case, the woman chose to remain passive:

> I think we have to respect the village values. I worked as a housemaid to have our own house. My husband and I understood that we would not be able to build a house if we earned here. It is difficult and expensive for men to go abroad. So I went abroad and I am back now. He is making bricks. That is his job. I don't have a job. I think it is my duty to take of

the children and housework. If a woman is at home it is not good for men to attend to the housework. (Women, 41 from Solama)

Thus, the women had adopted the appropriate gender roles in their families and they considered that household duties and child care should be attended to by women. This shows that although the migrant women recognize the reality of their situation they did not consider it to be unfair, either because they did not have any other alternatives or because they valued the village traditions. During the focus group discussions some young women revealed that in families where women had stopped their employment contracts and where alternative options for earning an income in the future were worse, they were continuing with the traditionally assigned gender roles and maintaining the traditional gendered power relations at household and community levels. According to Kabeer (1999b), such 'choices' made by women may reinforce their subordinate status in society.

Conclusions

Although women in the Mahaweli settlements were left out in the initial top-down planning when it came to accessing land – which is an important asset in an agricultural settlement context – many of them have actively responded to the changing situation today. They have exploited the opportunities available to them for ensuring a better future for their families by actively seeking alternative employment opportunities. The findings in this study reveal that many women in the Mahaweli settlements have brought economic advantages (building houses, buying tractors and three-wheelers, investing in their children's future education) to their families through their migration for work.. This shows how migration for work can provide the resource base for empowerment and can open up opportunities for challenging the conventional gender roles.

However, the stories of the returnee women differed among them selves. According to some women, their particular livelihood strategy may also lead to dependency, vulnerability and reinforce existing traditional gender ideologies, especially when women cannot invest their earnings in a sustainable way, while few of returnee migrants enjoyed a positive change. The former shows that access to income earning

opportunities alone cannot provide the agency for women to make conscious choices. In this study women who had access to income earning opportunities primarily ensured the welfare of their families as a whole rather than their personal well-being. It did not provide them with the capacity to budget for the future. Thus, increasing women's access to employment is not an effective means for achieving their empowerment unless it is sustainable and transformative.

Women's migration for work has also changed their partners' traditional gender roles at household level, as their absences from home are comparatively longer than when undertaking other locally performed economic activities. In families where women continue with migration as a livelihood choice, the men are gradually withdrawing from their financial obligations towards the family. In such families, men have become dependent, powerless and voiceless, while women are gradually taking control of many of what were traditionally 'men's responsibilities' and are becoming empowered in this domain. Now many of them are caught in a paradoxical, frustrating situation which they can neither avoid nor accept due to the gender ideologies about women's work in the settlements. According to some informants in the focus groups, migrant women's husbands' conventional gendered social values are gradually being eroded, their self-esteem is declining, their masculinity is under attack, and they are gradually becoming passive, disempowered and helpless.

In this respect, some villagers see women's empowerment in the household domain as occurring at the expense of men's disempowerment. In all focus groups, women's increasing economic power and men's declining economic power were given much attention. Even among the participants who did not view men's changing gender roles as a negative effect, women's long-term absences or continuous migration were not viewed as a positive trend. According to some of the participants, in the long run this trend may lead to men losing their traditionally held power and force them to become dependent upon their wives for everything. However, 'gender equity' is important in a society and it should not be achieved at the expense of one gender's devaluation, disempowerment or subordination.

At the community level, social expectations based on gender roles and relations act as a powerful force in determining women's empowerment, especially in terms of the

'transformative' nature of their gained agency. In many societies, such as those of the settlements under study, the traditionally assigned gender roles and relations are being challenged due to local and global forces. Although these changes are apparent and inevitable, how the local societies view such changes needs a lot of attention in order to empower women further, as changes in societal attitudes are difficult to achieve. Some deeply entrenched attitudes regarding gender roles and relations can only be changed by the people concerned.

When selecting participants for the focus groups, I focused on settlement background, generation and gender in order to determine whether these variables had any influence on the participants' views on changing gender roles and relations due to women's role as providers following Middle East migration. In terms of settlement backgrounds, changes in the gender roles of men and women created by Middle East migration have received considerable attention and mixed reactions. Some focus group participants expressed a doubled standard. While the participants acknowledged that women should work in order to help their families they also emphasized that household duties should be attended to by women. Settlement background did not have any significant influence on the way settlers viewed the impacts of the livelihood choice in question on gender roles and relations.

A central finding of this study is that in terms of age and sex the views expressed regarding the changing gender roles and relations created by married women's Middle East migration clearly differed. Women, especially young women, in all settlements held a more liberal view because they emphasized the importance of family well-being rather than changing gender roles. Young men also supported this view. On the other hand, despite the changes occurring at local and global levels in terms of social and economic aspects, many of the elderly villagers' expectations of the gender roles of married men and women remained unchanged. Although many of the focus group participants in all settlements agreed that both they and their offspring should have a good life and should find alternative ways to achieve this objective, some of them did not accept that this should happen at the expense of men changing their gender roles. Many elderly people would not accept any changes that would lead to deterioration in men's status in society. Elderly and middle-aged participants were more concerned about men's role as caregivers than women's roles as breadwinners. However, gender

equity and empowerment cannot be achieved if either men or women loose their dignity and become subordinate, powerless, humiliated, or discriminated against.

Notes

[1] Gender roles explain differences between men's and women's lives in terms of socially constituted notions of what men should do and what women should do. Feminist geographers explain this concept as the contribution of men and women to society. Gender relations are about 'power relations' between men and women.

[2] In rural Sri Lanka many women are involved in trading at small markets called *pola*.

[3] Providing land for paddy cultivation and becoming self-sufficient in paddy was one of the objectives of the AMDP. The heads of each legal settler family were given 2.5 acres (1hactare) of irrigated land.

[4] Under the *ande* system of cultivation the total production of the harvest is shared between the two partners.

[5] Despite this being illegal.

[6] Grama Niladari Division is a local administrative unit in Sri Lanka and the officer in charge is called Grama Sevaka or Grama Niladari.

[7] This also exemplifies how the women use their main capability – labour – to ensure their family's well-being in bleak situations.

[8] A type of rural market normally held on one or two days a week.

[9] Although the direct meaning of this term is 'street', literally it means the public domain.

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Article 3

SHIFTING GEOGRAPHIES OF HOUSE AND HOME – FEMALE MIGRANTS MAKING HOME IN RURAL SRI LANKA

Fazeeha Azmi and Ragnhild Lund[1] (Article under review)

Abstract:

Gendered mobilities have become an intrinsic part of the era of globalisation/economic restructuring. The sustainability of rural lives in Sri Lanka has become increasingly dependent on the contributions as workers in foreign countries, particularly in the Middle East. Men and women have differential mobility, and various studies have documented how Sri Lankan women constitute the major migrant work force to the Middle East. Inspired by recent discourses in Geography on house and home, the paper focuses on how women migrants contribute to making houses and sustaining livelihoods at the home place. Based on empirical findings from a rural community in the north-central region, the viability of people's livelihoods now depends on influx of foreign capital. We follow the transnational experiences of some women who have been migrants, by listening to their stories on belonging and the role of home; how they perceive home in relation to their new roles; how they articulate their sacrifices and how they assess their contributions to the local community in the home country. It is found that conceptions of house and home are embedded in their socio-spatial experiences at home and abroad; the traditional image of

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[1] Equal authorship

women as homemakers has changed and female migrants have gained authority in household decision-making. The politics of home is also changing spatially as female migrant workers work in both local and transnational spaces. Home cannot any longer be represented by a simple location or physical space, but it transcends the local and the global, thereby revealing the dynamics of transnational lives.

Keywords: female migration, transnational lives, house and home

Introduction

Gendered mobilities have become an intrinsic part of the era of globalization and economic restructuring. The sustainability of rural lives in Sri Lanka has become increasingly dependent on contributions from workers in foreign countries, particularly in the Middle East. Men and women have differential mobility, and various studies have documented how Sri Lankan women constitute the major migrant workforce to the Middle East. However, less has been documented on these women's subjective understanding and experiences of migration and working abroad.

This paper focuses on how women migrants contribute to making homes and sustaining livelihoods at the home place. Based on empirical findings from the rural community of Solama in the north-central region of Sri Lanka, at the heart of the most prestigious resettlement programme of the country, the viability of people's livelihoods now depends on influxes of foreign capital rather than agricultural production as this area was planned for. The transnational experiences of some women are presented through their stories on belonging and the role of home, how they perceive home in relation to their new roles, how they articulate the sacrifices they have made, and how they assess their contributions to making a home.

Set against such a micro-cosmos, we aim to gain knowledge of female migrants' contributions to shifting geographies of house and homemaking. We study house and home as multifaceted dimensions in the society (political, cultural, social, and economic), which intersect and impact on different places and scales differently over time. The overall

objective of our study is to find out how house and home are sites of change and contestation that impact on gender roles. We ask how new houses in the settlement scheme represent home for the migrant women and what their perceptions of house and homemaking are. In our interviews with migrant women in Solama, by using migration and work as the site for investigation, we aimed to understand how the women contribute to making a home and sustaining livelihoods at their home places. The discussion is divided into two sections. First, we start with a theoretical discussion on house and homemaking. Second, we discuss subjective knowledge of the migration, work and homes of the migrant women. Essential to both sections is the role of constructing a house in homemaking, and how the house has become a symbol of achievement, transnational identity and a good life in the future.

A Geography of house and homemaking

The Mahaweli project (1977 to date) was a major effort to reconstruct the rural economy of Sri Lanka more than thirty years ago, whereby every settler was given an equal share of land (1. ha) and a home (one-room mud hut on 0.2 ha plot). The project may be regarded as the first structural adjustment programme in the country. Since then, the Mahaweli area has developed into a highly differentiated society, as many settlers have succeeded in earning a good income and creating a good home, while others have failed in this respect (Lund, 1993; Azmi, 2007; Azmi, (forthcoming). Today, many settlers work as industrial workers or soldiers, or they work abroad, primarily as workers in the Middle East. This impact on how people perceive and identify themselves with settlements or invest in their pioneer houses in the settlements, and how they deal with the vulnerable and often impoverished life situation prevailing today.

According to Mallett (2004) there has been a proliferation of writing on the meaning of home within the various social sciences recently. She has reviewed the literature on house and home and finds that home is variously conflated with or related to house, family, self, gender, and journeying (migration). Citing various scholars who have focussed on the experiences of migrants and refugees, she argues that ideas about staying, leaving and

journeying are integrally associated with notions of home. She shows how home, be it defined as a dwelling, a homeland or even a constellation of relationships, is 'represented as a spatial and relational realm and to which they generally hope to return' (Mallett, 2004: 77). We (the authors) find that most of the literature on house and home is mainly based on experiences from Western countries. There has been little research on the relationship between the construction of houses in settlement schemes and conceptions of home in Asian contexts. Furthermore, there is limited knowledge of how conceptions of house and home shift in time and within the new globalized rural economy due to structural adjustments, the new market economy and other conditions, such as the present-day war-like situation in Sri Lanka.

Since our first visit to the area in 1978, we have observed a shift from the time when the pioneer settlers in the Mahaweli worked the land and created a home with very simple means, to the present-day situation where their children and grandchildren (primarily the women) contribute towards their parents' well-being to enable them avoid the poverty trap by building good new houses for them and sending money home for the betterment of their daily lives. The way the second and third generation settlers strategize is thus linked with globalization and making a life in both the local village and abroad. However, most women work abroad without their dependants, and hence grandparents and young children have to manage without the work input and social contributions of the most active generation, and consequently often the grandparents have had to give up farming. Furthermore, households and families are split because of labour migration (Lund, 2007). These factors raise questions relating to the significance of house and home in a wider territorial sense, namely the global, the local and the transnational context.

The reality as described from the village of Solama in Mahaweli has led us to conceptualize globalization as time-space distanciation (Inda and Rosaldo, 2001; Lie and Lund, 2005; Lund, 2007). It tells us that the world is shrinking but the same time stretching out. We may experience the world as smaller than before, because it is within reach, directly by fast transport and indirectly via new media. Still, the personal world is simultaneously stretching out because social systems are lifted out of the local context, in

this case through family members migrating for work. People develop multi-local livelihoods and transnational networks (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005)

People in the Mahaweli area have become dependent on both their home country and foreign countries for their survival. In the process, all family members, especially the women, have become important actors in the global economy. Houses in the settlement stand as symbols of globalization. They have become a transnational element in society, but as will become apparent in this paper, the value and esteem attached to them are grounded in local cultural values.

Such an approach sees house and home in economic, political and cultural contexts. This fits well with more recent quests that the study of the experience and use of home requires a more dynamic and context-sensitive focus. In citing the works by geographers Relph, Buttimer, Tuan, and Seamon, Jeanne Moore (2000: 207) calls for a 'greater focus on the context of home, and development of a contextual understanding of the concept of home which transcends the material characteristics of domestic space'. This facilitates a more holistic interpretation of house and home and how they are entities that comprise inter-related qualities of people, environment, place, and time.

Two geographical concepts are relevant for this analysis of house and home: place and space. We regard place as a geographical and symbolic entity, an important locality of belonging for the people who live there. Space is a much more diffuse entity or dimension, but we insert the issue of scale to encompass local global interfaces, to capture the transnational spatial dimension. Mallett (2004: 63) defines home as a place, but also as a space that is inhabited by family, people, things, and belongings: 'a familiar, if not comfortable space where activities and relationships are lived. In my account home is a virtual place, a repository for memories of the lived spaces. It locates lived time and space, particularly intimate familial time and space.'

Furthermore, for us place is an intrinsic dimension of the settlements that we study and is a better tool with which to analyse identity. To cite Rose (2001: 88), 'Identity is how we

make sense of ourselves, and geographers, anthropologists and sociologists, among others, have argued that the meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people experiencing them'. Crucial to the argument in this paper are the meanings given to various places, namely 'here', which is the ancestral place, and 'there', the foreign place. When migrants live partly here and partly there, their identities change, so that they not only represent here and there but also hybrid forms of belonging to more than one place. Hence, identity may relate to different scales, in this case locally and transnationally.

At the individual level, and with respect to domicile and work abroad, we explore the significance of Alison Blunt's (2005a) concept of *spatial politics of home*. What constitutes home and belonging in the settlements today, as well as among settlers who are temporarily away? Are the Mahaweli settlements considered as 'home' to people who work abroad? When living outside, do they identify themselves as Mahaweli settlers and what do they perceive as their 'home'? Are there gendered differences supporting definitions of home in identifying what constitutes home and where one thinks one belongs? Inspired by the work of geographers such as Blunt (2005a), Blunt and Varley (2004), Yeoh and Huang (2000), Little (2002), Massey (1995), and also other scholars such as Kottegoda (2006), Vimaladharma (1997) and Bowlby et al. (1997), we wish to contribute to the understanding of what constitutes the power geometries of making home, as these intersect all levels in time and space.

We also find that the vulnerabilities and livelihoods of settlers at community level determine peoples' mobility patterns. According to Carney (1998: 4), 'a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for means of living a livelihood: A livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future'. Livelihoods exist within the context of culture and tradition. Livelihoods impact on culture, and culture changes with new ways of living (Bourdieu cited in Lund, 1993; Carney, 1998; Ellis and Freeman, 2005). Rigg (2007: 77), however, argues that livelihood studies have not been particularly successful in

understanding change. He asks: '[W]hy do they [livelihoods] change and what implications changes have for different groups whether delineated geographically, socially, culturally or economically?' Furthermore, Rigg (2007: 78) states that 'livelihoods transitions operate at several levels of scales. Individuals age; households pass through a sequence of changes that have livelihoods implications; economies evolve; and countries' prospects improve, falter or decline'. Thus, with respect to house and home, people's strategies depend on their status, gender and age, as well as external 'conditionalities' such as structural adjustment and global influences.

In the Mahaweli settlement project housing was one of the most debated but also biggest material investments for most families when the project started in 1977. Today, many settlers still live in the mud hut that they were given by the Government, as they have not been able to afford a better house. Migration is seen as a way to re-create home, to minimize people's vulnerability and to diversify their livelihoods. Homemaking thus depends on the agency of migrant women, and we argue that women authorize their power in the homemaking process: their power over their husbands and families in decision making, their shared power with husbands and family members in planning and constructing a house, and power within in relation to making a home 'here', which is good, sustainable and a dream fulfilled. Like Gamurd (2000), in her study of women who migrate from Sri Lanka to the Middle East, we consider women migrants as capable individuals who take an active role in their families' economic well-being and in making a home. Our analysis shows how social and cultural practices of creating house and home are embedded in Sri Lankan community, despite being facilitated in a transnational context.

Our previous work in Sri Lanka has provided some insights into homemaking (Azmi, 2007; Brun and Lund, forthcoming). Azmi (2007) has sought to understand the change in meaning of what constitutes a good life and how women consider home as an important dimension of a good life. Azmi (forthcoming) also draws attention to how women consider having a home is an important contribution to the household's well-being as well as well as that of the community. Brun and Lund (forthcoming) have studied homemaking in post-

tsunami villages in Sri Lanka and have argued that in exploring the relationship between house and home in recovery processes, the house is seen as something which is both material and imaginative (symbolic); house is an expression for, and homemaking involves, both identity and power (after Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Thus, house and home may facilitate a sense of belonging and togetherness, as well as the opposite, namely alienation and tension.

Making house and home thus has different meanings in different contexts. 'House' signifies both material and symbolic aspects and is located between memory, identity, survival, and everyday life (Blunt and Varley, 2004). How houses are constructed in a particular context is of crucial importance and implies a need for specific local knowledge when building or rebuilding houses. Migrant women work in both local and transnational spaces, and we argue that transnational identities are embedded in women's capabilities and achievements at the local place.

Finally, we argue that the concept of 'home' gains meaning through the absence of a home. Bowlby et al. (1997) note that during a person's life course he or she will change his or her own orientation and idea of home. For migrant women, home carries contradictory and ambiguous meanings as they negotiate life 'here' and 'there'. This also shows that a home changes its signification when articulated from different locations. Although the migrants have been living in someone else's 'home' during their contract period overseas, their real 'home' may be in their place of origin and where they return to.

Solama

Solama is a small village situated within system H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP),[2] which is the largest multipurpose development project in

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[2] The AMDP is a multipurpose development project, targeted at solving many of the socio-economic problems which the country faced during the late 1970s. Under this project, several thousand families were settled and resettled in the project area. The main aim of the project was providing a higher standard of living for the settlers. However, today the settlers face a number of socio-economic problems.

the country.[3] Solama was once considered one of the *purana* (ancient) villages in system H. The village was formed in the 1930s by a group of drummer caste people, who were discriminated against by other castes in the area due to their less privileged position. Initially starting with nine families, today the village consists of 320 families,[4] spanning three generations. The total population of Solama now is 1389, of which 728 were females and 661 were males[5]. All villagers were Buddhists. Until the village was incorporated into the AMDP, it hardly maintained any relationships with other villages in the surrounding area. Today, it is gradually losing its original characteristics, such as slash and burn agriculture, extended families within a tightly knitted community, internal exchange of labour, food and other goods, subsistence production, narrow roads, and mud houses.

Upon their resettlement in the AMDP, the settlers were given homesteads and fields close to each other to enable them to maintain their family and community ties, and to continue the traditional clustered pattern of living. They were also introduced to permanent agriculture, something which most settlers had no knowledge of. After they were incorporated into the project the villagers faced multiple problems as they were forced to abandon their traditional lifestyles and adopt a new one which imposed restrictions on their perceived freedom. Today, with population growth, and declining access to land, lack of water resources, lack of employment opportunities within the village, many families are no longer able to derive adequate or acceptable living conditions. This situation has been aggravated further by external processes, such as changes in political power, market liberalization and globalization, all of which are beyond the control of the villagers. In 2006, 67% of the villagers were beneficiaries of government welfare and poverty alleviation programmes.[6]

Of the 330 families only 121 families owned paddy land, and a large number of people did not have land to cultivate paddy. Also, most of the settlers who owned paddy land had

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[3] Fazeeha has conducted her PhD research work on Solama and two other villagers since 2004, and Ragnhild has been engaged in research in this area for almost thirty years.

[4] Statistical handbook of the Thambuttegama AGA office in 2006.

[5] According to GN report 2006.

[6] In 1994 the Sri Lankan Government introduced a poverty alleviation programme called 'Samurdhi', using a higher poverty line.

given it to others for cultivation on a share basis as they could not cultivate profitably due to escalating production costs. The number of settlers who have given out their land for lease or sharecropping has increased during recent decades. The majority of landowners and landless people in Solama can hardly survive with the limited income earning opportunities and therefore have had to seek employment opportunities outside the village.

Methodology

This article is based on data collected as part of a PhD project that aims to understand the changing livelihoods of settlers in a peasant colonization context. Clare et al. (1997: 92) thinks that qualitative techniques 'can provide detailed understanding of socio spatial experiences'. In our study we used in-depth interviews to explore the 'subjective understanding' and 'experience' of migration, work and home. Subjective understandings and experiences of migration, work and home are shaped by broader socio-economic contexts along with individual needs and preferences. At the same time, individual understandings and experiences can also differ considerably, as each individual has his or her own expectations, capabilities and motivations. Further, despite the changes, the selected study participants had created in their families' well-being as a consequence of their migration, but the participants have remained almost invisible as they have received less attention among researchers, policy makers and planners. Our research is creating a voice for these women. When we approached the women, initially they were reluctant to share their experiences of their journey abroad which had led to considerable changes in their lives and those of their families. However, when we explained the purpose of our research, they gradually allowed us to hear their stories.

We conducted five in-depth interviews with female returnee migrants in Solama village to gain an understanding of the migration, work and homes of migrant women. While two of the women had decided not to migrate again, the other three were uncertain as whether they would migrate again. The migrants interviewed were aged between 22 and 35 years, and had low educational qualifications (none had studied up to GCE 'O' Level) and skills. Three interviewees had worked in the Free Trade Zone of Sri Lanka before they had

migrated to the Middle East (prior to marriage), and two had worked as agricultural labourers in the village. All of them had young children and/or children attending school. Their husbands were either unemployed or engaged in coolie work. Child care arrangements were negotiated between other family members and their husbands during the women's absence.

Migration context

In Sri Lanka, as elsewhere in several developing countries, global restructuring has created a new socio-economic landscape. The subsequent restructuring of regional economic landscapes creates different local, national and international contexts, stimulating the movement of people and capital. The introduction of industrial capitalism, post-colonial development policies and land settlement programmes has created similar scenarios at the local level, involving the community, family and individuals. As restructuring pressures intensify, generally poor families appear to be increasing their dependence on international migration as a survival strategy. Middle Eastern and West Asian countries have provided an avenue for many impoverished families, especially for women, to pursue a livelihood.

During the last two decades remittances from migrant workers in the Middle Eastern countries have become a major source of foreign exchange in Sri Lanka (SLBFE, 2005). With more international migration and temporary circulation expected, remittances are likely to become a critical resource for the government and individual families in many parts of the country.

Although poor families in many parts of the country have benefited from remittances since the late 1970s, migration for work has been accessed by Solama women only since the early 1990s. More recently, policy changes accelerated by market liberalization, along with increasing population growth and the changes in the conceptualizations of poverty and what constitutes a decent living, have forced many poor men and women in the village to seek new and more remunerative sources of income outside agriculture. Solama villagers have gradually moved out of the village in search of employment. Men have sought

employment as agricultural labourers and construction workers, and in the armed forces, while women have pursued different paths. Among the employed total female population, 15% of women in Solama have migrated to Middle Eastern countries, while 28% work in garment factories in other parts of Sri Lanka (fieldwork 2007, percentages were calculated from GN report, 2006) The majority of the working age women, however, are still engaged in agricultural-related work in Solama and neighbouring villages, and some are engaged in trade too.

Initially, the women's decision to migrate was triggered by several factors related to different dimensions of poverty. Today, especially the second and third generations in Solama face problems of scarcity of land for agriculture and housing. Being a closely knit community in terms of religion, language and caste, the growing population tends to concentrate in the same locality. Consequently, the size of landholdings has also become very small as they are fragmented informally. This uneconomical land fragmentation has become a serious issue in the village. With the average landholding size falling below cultivable levels, the shortage and lack of commercially viable land have had an adverse impact in terms of poverty. Consequently, many households in Solama have become increasingly more dependent on transfers and remittances from family members working in urban areas, the security forces and abroad.

In response to poverty and deteriorating living conditions, several poor households in the village have opted to migrate as a livelihood strategy. Contemporary livelihood studies also emphasize that instead of being victims, people play active roles in securing their livelihood (de Haan, 2005). At the same time, finding livelihood opportunities through migration has not been without constraints. Such opportunities have largely been dependent upon the age, sex and marital status of the migrants. In Solama, married women who have decided to migrate to the Middle East have based their decision on the lack of other suitable options at home. As a result they also have changed the traditional gender division of labour existing in the village context and the traditional household models which were dominated by male breadwinners. Little (2002) explains that the choice of jobs women undertake results from complicated and dynamic interrelationships between

different elements of their lives and different constraining factors that operate at various individual, family and community levels.

Investment decisions relating to remittances depend on several factors, such as the economic situation of the recipient family, the migrant's marital status and their position in the family. Also the priority given to investing remittances changes with life course changes. In the case of married women from Solama, for example, migration is associated primarily with building a house. Throughout our interviews, we learned that among this particular cohort of migrants, having their own home was their first priority or the main push factor that led to their migration. The women also stated additional priorities: most of them wanted to have a regular source of income and to escape poverty. It was apparent that escaping poverty was not only about earning money but also about having their own home, buying land, saving money, educating their children, and securing a better future.

Generally, their initial contract lasted for two or three years. After the first contract period, the interviewees had managed to lay the foundations and build the basic structure of their houses. Some then continued to migrate in order to complete their houses, while others regarded that building the basic structure was the most expensive part and that they would be able to complete their house with money they earned in the village. However, from observations and informal discussions, we understood that many families were unable to realize these goals, and hence the women had to resort to migration again. In some families, migrant women extend their migration contracts for up to five years in order to complete their houses, as well as to save a little or to buy or invest in productive resources, such as buying a piece of land or renting land, buying a three wheeler or tractor that could provide income through hiring or invest in children's education and health.

In the following section we follow the transnational experiences of five married migrant women in Solama through their stories of their contributions to making a home, what they regard as the significance of home, how they sustain livelihoods, and the sacrifices they make in the course of achieving their goals.

Making home

Migration is basically about having my own home

In order to understand the main factor(s) influencing women's decision to migrate for work, we asked 'What are your priorities in taking a migration decision?' One woman responded:

> *If living is only about eating, what we earn is enough for us. But it is not so. We should have a house to live in. Then one has everything. I know the pains of living in a poor house, that you have your walls built up with mud, roof thatched with palm leaves, and a mud floor.* (Sanjeewani, aged 22)

Like Sanjeewani, other migrant women also found that they could not provide adequately for their families from incomes earned locally; rather, they were only able to earn sufficient for daily subsistence. They were unable to save any money or spend anything on housing, weddings, funerals, health care, or education. The desire for good housing was stated overwhelmingly by all of the women.

All those who had migrated from Solama expected to be able to improve their living conditions. Either they were living with their parents or they no longer wanted to continue living in a poor quality house constructed of locally available building materials. The primary goal for most migrant women in the study was either to build a new house or to improve their present house. Similar findings have been made by other researchers who have conducted research on Middle East migration and its various impacts (Vimaladharma, 1997; Gamburd, 2000, Kottegoda, 2006).

Sustaining livelihood at home

Despite low salaries, in general the migrant women of Solama send a large share of their earnings as remittances, which their families use for food, health care, housing, repaying loans, etc. The women interviewed said that they sent their money to a person in the family whom they trusted, as they were very concerned about alcohol abuse in the village. More than 90% of the local men were in the habit of consuming alcohol and many of them were

alcoholics. We also heard stories regarding family break-ups among migrant women, especially due to their husband's alcohol addiction which resulted in the waste of hard-earned money. In cases where the husbands do not work, the women have to send money for their family's subsistence and have to work abroad for far longer than they had originally planned. In families where the husband had a job, remittances were only used for daily consumption needs in critical situations:

> *I send the money to my husband. He is also working in a rice mill. He carefully uses that money only to build the house. Unless I ask him to spend the money to buy good food and clothes for the children, he will not use my money for any other purposes.* (Kumari, aged 25)

Somalatha (aged 28 years) had a different experience:

> *My husband does not have a regular income source. So I send money to maintain the household expenditure. There is hardly anything left. As my husband does not have a job, I have been working in the Middle East for about six years. I don't know when this journey will end.*

Thus, among the interviewed women, sending money for purposes other than building a house was highly correlated with their husband's employment. Two of the women interviewed had managed to save some money in the form of gold jewellery, even after paying for the construction of their semi-finished houses, as their husbands earned incomes that could cover daily expenditures. Others had hardly managed to save anything other than some second-hand electrical equipment, given by their employers, which could be useful in times of crisis. In these families, the husbands had neglected their possible earning opportunities through depending on their wives. Hettige (1991) noted a similar situation in his study of female workers who migrated to the Middle East from a Muslim village located in one of the irrigation schemes in North Central Sri Lanka.

In general, remittances thus play a critical role in the economy of Solama. We observed an expansion in commercial activities (especially in small shops) in the village compared to a decade previously, which had resulted from the increasing money circulation. Also, compared to males who migrate, female migrants who work as housemaids generally

receive low salaries 'there'. According to the interviewees, this was one reason why they had not invested their remittances in productive resources. By contrast, male migrants (comparatively few in numbers in Solama) invested their money in trading activities or buying agricultural machinery or a three-wheeler.

Kottegoda (2006) notes that migrant women use remittances also to help their extended families, especially when the latter are in a critical situation. Although nuclear family models are increasing in Solama, caring for extended families is still customary. Given that Solama is a single-caste village, extended families are a common feature. All of the village women have continuously sought assistance from their extended families in decision making with regard to migrating for work, covering the cost of migration and child care arrangements. Accordingly, they have an obligation to look after the well-being of their extended families. In a discussion with a family member of one of the migrants it was revealed that as many of the husbands in the village are addicted to alcohol, proper management of remittances are taken care of by other members of the extended family.

The meaning of home

Home had differing meanings for the interviewees, which were not solely based on their identities as migrant women but also apparently influenced by their roles as mothers and wives.

It is a mirror of who you are

> *Having your own home provides a new identity. In our society people who do not own a home are looked down upon. You might have heard some people saying, 'look at her, she doesn't have a house of her own, but she is wearing a nice dress'.* (Vineetha, aged 35)

> *Being in the Middle East as a housemaid for about four years, if I could not build a house, my journey will not become meaningful … Villagers will humiliate our family for not being able to build a house. Now I don't have that fear.* (Somalatha, aged 28)

For migrant women home plays a crucial role in maintaining personal identities in society, and their houses look more attractive or at least are in a better state compared to other houses. Thus, the success of migration is reflected through the ability to construct a house. Furthermore, beyond escaping poverty, what others think of the migrant women is a major factor in motivating them to do what they do for a living and how much they want to earn.

Home as a place for immediate family and privacy

High fertility rates and socio-cultural factors have favoured the extended family system in rural Sri Lanka. Although families with larger numbers of members are the trend in the South Asian context, Sri Lanka has experienced a strong decline in the number of persons in a family. An emerging feature of the modern family system is the changing attitudes towards the number of children. Previously, more children were preferred as they contributed to the strength of the family in many aspects, particularly labour. However, the birth rate has declined during the last two decades. Hence, the structure of Sri Lankan society is gradually moving from extended families to nuclear families where the family model comprises a husband, a wife and their children (most often two). Married couples no longer tend to remain living in their family homes:

> *I was living in my husband's home with his parents and other in-laws. I was always busy with cooking, cleaning, washing, and home gardening. At the end of the day, I felt tired and I always thought, if I can have my own home, I have to cook for only a few and I will have less work and more time to rest. I did not have a time or could not enjoy my family life. I decided to migrate to build a house of my own.* (Janaki, aged 30)

Home is also a space for family life (Blunt and Varley, 2004). Family relationships are located within the home, and are where the spatial politics of home are articulated. The migrant women interviewed in Solama would like to have a nuclear family. Janaki's quote reveals that she did not have the life she preferred when she lived with her husband's family. She thought having her own 'home' would provide this freedom and redefine her emotions, experiences and relationships. In extended families in Sri Lanka, tolerance and mutual understanding among family members are considered important to the unity of the family. However, recently media and tele- dramas are questioning this 'unity', and has

focused on women's subordinate roles in families and society, negligence of female education, and employment. In our view, this may have contributed to a more balanced view about the way people conceptualize home and family. Poor rural women from Solama are no exception as they too usually gather in houses with televisions to watch such programmes.

I can conduct my own business at home

> *Now I prepare sweets and sell them at the weekly market. My husband does the business. It is giving a reasonable profit. Earlier, we could not start a business, although I had the idea. It is because of the poor condition of our house. When you prepare food for sale, it should be prepared in a hygienic environment. The most important thing is I have water connection.* (Janaki, aged 30)

Valentine (2001) discusses the importance of 'home' as an object of consumption. Janaki's quote reveals that homes can also be placed in terms of a business context. She had actively strategized her home as place for production in order to become an income earner, even after she had stopped migrating.

Reflects a sense of belonging

For migrant women home is no longer represented by just a simple location or physical space; it is much more than a physical dimension. Long absences have led the women to appreciate the comforts of their homes in a way they had not done before. Further, the attachment to place gives meaning to 'home' because relationships between people in a society have grown with time. Migrant women who work as domestic workers do not have any positive attachments to other people's homes as they do not belong there permanently. Their relationship with the 'new' society is also different from that with their place of origin, as it is limited to the family they are working for. As most of them are expected to work from dawn to dusk, seven days per week, their social interaction is limited or sometimes even prohibited. Even if they are allowed to interact, it is mostly with other maids. Thus the spatial politics and social understanding of 'home' in their workplace relate to a temporary place of paid work. The following view of one migrant reveals her attachment to her own home at her place of origin and how free she was there:

When I returned Sri Lanka after three years and when I saw my 'home', I just felt like, oh this is mine. In my home, I can eat when I want, I can sleep when I want, I can arrange the household chores according to my interest, and I can have a happy life with my family. (Kumari, aged 25)

As mentioned, Bowlby et al. (1997) note that during a person's life course he/she will change his/her own orientation and idea of home. For migrant women, home carries contradictory and ambiguous meanings as they negotiate life 'here' and 'there'. This also shows that home changes its signification when articulated from different locations. Although they have been in someone else's 'home' during their contract period overseas, their real 'home' is in their places of origin, where they have an attachment to, and where they return to. They feel 'invisible and marginalized' in 'homes there', whereas they are visible and empowered at 'homes here'. Further, many migrant women do not consider their workplace as a home because their socio-economic status is marginal there, they feel subordinate and they do not have any emotional bonds to the place abroad. At 'homes there' the migrant women have a lower position which is constantly emphasized and articulated daily:

How can I feel at home there? I am just a servant. I do domestic work for my madam. Nobody helps me. If I am doing household duties at home, somebody will help, at least when I am not well. I do all the childcare work there, but just for money, because those children do not show any affection or at least sympathy with me. In my home I feel like I am the boss. I feel satisfied when I finish my household work as there is no one to order me to work or to make complaints about my work. Caring for my children gives me real satisfaction. My children care for me when I am sick. (Vineetha, aged 35)

Blunt and Varley (2004: 3) define home as a space of belonging, 'invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life'. For Vineetha, 'home there' does not fit with this definition. Her view reveals that the real meaning of home is also attached to connectedness and care, which cannot be expected when one works as a housemaid.

Home as an asset to women's agency

Home can be considered as an important dimension of livelihood which comes under the category of assets. Bebbington (1999) points out that a person's assets give meaning to that person's world. He further elaborates: 'Assets are not simply resources people use in building livelihoods: they are assets that give them the capability to be and to act. Assets should not be understood only as "things" that allow survival, adaptation and poverty alleviation. They are also a basis of an agent's power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources' (Bebbington, 1999: 2022). The following narratives reveal how migrant women's contributions to 'making home' has given them a degree of power and control which they otherwise would not have been able to enjoy.

Making home

The image of women as homemakers in the traditional sense has gradually changed in Solama, as elsewhere in Sri Lankan society. Our interviewees had made considerable contributions to homemaking after assuming their new role as economic providers. They were trying to bring order to daily family life, which they had been less able to do prior to migrating. The children are expected to follow rules (which are not so rigid) to keep the 'home' a beautiful place (physically) and to create a 'homely environment'. They are also expected to assist in maintaining the neatness of their home, and they are expected to eat, study and worship at regular times. Women have more say than previously in introducing order into their everyday lives:

> *When I was abroad, my husband could not maintain this order in the family. It is not his fault. The children do not listen to him. Now I have a home. Children have their own place in it. They are eating on time, doing their homework, and helping me with household chores. I tell them, and of course they know the hardships that I underwent to build this house. I make them understand they have a duty to make it a home, they should pray, study, and respect elders. Everything should start from home*. (Vineetha, aged 35)

The quote reveals that the concept of homemaking in Sri Lanka is gradually changing and becoming a *family* responsibility. This finding fits with that of Gamburd (2007), who shows how labour migration has changed conventional gender roles in Sri Lanka, giving women more control over money and in decision making. It also shows that 'making

home' is not only about cooking, washing and cleaning. It is also about maintaining a peaceful family, culture, religion, family values, and bringing up good children.

Home as a site of power

> *I sent money to my father. My husband did not like this arrangement. It is not that I did not trust my husband. He spends a lot when he has money and he has many friends who expect him to spend money on their entertainment. So, I sent the money to my father. I also sent the plan of the house. I was particular about what it should look like. I wanted to build the toilet closer to the house, otherwise it is difficult if you want to use it in the night. There is a lot of other work to be done. My husband says now I have to stop going abroad again, and he will earn money to complete the house. But I don't think it will be possible. I will wait for a year.* (Sanjeewani, aged 22)

Migrant women's success as family providers gives them greater control over the use of the money they earn and decision making at household level. Although Sanjeewani's husband did not like the idea of her sending money to her father, she resisted and was eventually able to build a house with her father's help. She also became more powerful in the process: when she said she would wait for a year to see how her husband was going to help her to complete the house she was in a position to assess his performance.

Exploring women's agency within the home

Migration has precipitated qualitative shifts in economic and social roles, changing the traditional roles that women had as caregivers. Although migration erodes family ties for a short time, it strengthens women's gendered identifications (Yeoh and Huang, 2000). After returning from the Middle East, most migrant women have had to renegotiate the assigned meanings of gender roles and relations:

> *After I married, I moved into my husband's home. It was like hell for me because, the whole family lived there. My husband is an alcoholic. Many times he used to beat me and scold me in front of my in-laws. Then I cried a lot and did not speak against him. Now, I have my own home, he cannot do the same things, as I think it is my home and I have control over what is happening at my home.* (Kumari, aged 25)

In Kumari's case, it was the determination to migrate that ultimately led to her having her own home. Migrating for work increased her agency and also her status and power in her home. However, it is important to consider whether these changes are sustainable or not. Though limited in numbers, studies conducted in Sri Lanka reveal that migration as a livelihood option has not changed the position of women in society substantially. Many women are unable to continue to be income earners upon their return or they are unable to invest in productive resources.

The price paid for making a home

Women also make large sacrifices to improve their families' living conditions, as the following stories reveal.

Mothering from distance

> *I left my son when he was just one year and two months. My mother took care of him during my absence. Now he is four years and I missed many things that a mother should have enjoyed of her son: how he started to walk, how he started to speak …* (Somalatha, aged 28)

> *I went to Lebanon when my son was three. Now he is seven and he still wants me to carry him …* (Janaki, aged 30)

Like Somalatha and Janaki many other migrant mothers who have left their children when they were very young seemed to have feelings of guilt. The interviewed women had negotiated child care arrangements with their family members, especially when their husbands worked too. The tasks related to child care were automatically reallocated to the closest family member with confidence, generally a grandmother or sister.[7]

Being alone

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[7] Although many migrant women in the village want their own houses and a nuclear family, they are compelled to maintain the extended family at least temporarily.

I was not allowed to go out, except to throw out the refuse. I sent one letter a month. I was not allowed to use the phone … (Janaki, aged 30)

The family left behind was a constant worry for housemaids who felt isolated abroad. Some wrote letters to learn about their family's well-being. However, as many were unable to write, or did not have access to a telephone, they used cassette recorders and sent tapes to their families via friends returning home from the Middle East.

Practising Buddhist rituals

I was not allowed to keep the statue of Lord Buddha. My madam asked me not to have anything like that at home. I had a postcard of Lord Buddha in my suitcase and I kept it secretly and I worshiped my god every morning before I started my work. It is really a pity that I did not have the freedom to worship my god. Yes, it is not my home. (Vineetha, aged 35)

They think we are bulls

Our interviews revealed that many of the migrant women had bad working experiences. They had to work for large families without any help. They had long working hours and very short periods of rest:

I woke up daily at four. I had to work until midnight. I didn't have a break or free time. If they saw me taking a rest they would ask me to do extra work. If I complained, they said I could go home and they would take another maid. But I had lot of expectations in my life. I couldn't go home empty handed. So I worked all day. They think we are bulls. (Vineetha, aged 35)

As most of the domestic aids in the Middle East are in a subordinate position they do not have any choice other than to obey their employer. Many of them are treated as slaves and some do not receive their salaries regularly, while others do not receive the proper amount:

I asked for my salary only when I wanted to send money home. But they wouldn't give me my salary at once. I had to wait for about three to four months to get my salary. They said that they would give me the salary before I went home. But they did not give me the last six months' salary. (Kumari, aged 25)

Despite such stories, many women decide to work in the Middle East because of the higher incomes. Compared to the available coolie work in their own village, they believe that if they tolerate the hardships for a short time they can have a good future and fulfil their various aspirations. Their sacrifices also mean they develop stronger attachments to their homes. The attachment is not the same as it would be to a house provided freely by the government or given as a dowry by their parents.

Contribution to the local community

In Solama village it is very easy to identify a house in which a Middle East migrant lives, and such migrants have become a source of inspiration for many people, especially the poor. The better housing standards, the affluent lifestyles and the consumption habits of migrant women have created a competitive environment among the villagers in the quest for a better standard of living. However, the situation has also created social discontent as some people are not tolerant of the new wealth acquired by poor people.

> *People in this village are very jealous of us. They do not know what a hard time we went through abroad to save some money to put up this house. You know, as many women go abroad, men have benefited much in this village. Now many of them have started to work as carpenters and masons.* (Somalatha, aged 28)

> *Our villagers are like 'frogs in the well'. Most of them have not even gone to Colombo or Kandy. For them, it is hard to accept a women's journey to a faraway land. But, what is surprising to me is still some people do not understand the changes we are making and how we are contributing to uplift the village.* (Sanjeewani, aged 22)

Through previous research that we have conducted in Solama we have been able to observe that the villagers are not very receptive to new opportunities. Until the late 1980s or early 1990s many villagers perceived migration to the Middle East the worst thing a woman could do and migrants were highly criticized for breaking with village traditions. This attitude is gradually changing as the villagers are increasingly depending on external sources of income rather than income from agriculture. Remittances have contributed to upward social mobility. Today many migrant families are able to afford the construction of

a house, buy land or a vehicle and repay their loans, and some are even able to maintain saving accounts.

Concluding remarks

We find that the conceptions of house and home among female migrants are embedded in their socio-spatial experiences at home and abroad. In homemaking they are constructing a house as a symbol of achievement, transnational identity and a good life in the future.

The traditional image of women as homemakers (limited to child bearing, rearing, cooking, cleaning) has gradually changed in our study area. The migrant women interviewed had made considerable contributions to homemaking after assuming their new provider role. They had contributed to changing livelihoods and they had tried to bring order to everyday family life, which they had been less able to do prior to their migration. Hence, the politics of home are also changing, socially, economically and culturally. The present success of migrant women as family providers has given them greater control over the use of money and decision making at household level. This signifies a certain shift in authority structure and the emergence of various new powers among women: power over their own destinies and contributions, power in relation to other family members, and increasing power within themselves (self-worth, belief in their own contributions and identity as important providers and agents of change). However, unless they can find a sustainable means to survive economically in the home place, they will return to the positions they held prior to migration (Azmi, forthcoming).

The politics of home is also changing spatially. The female migrant workers work in both local and transnational spaces. Their contributions enhance the ability of women as actors in the local place as well as in the international arena, and are significant both at their 'homes there' and their 'homes here'. For most of the women we talked to, the meaning of home was multiple, but when they located home, it was always related to their place of origin.

Compared to men's contributions, those of women (remittances and savings) are channelled to cater for family welfare and needs. To construct a house is a key investment and to make a home – which provides a meaning to house and signifies a sense of belonging to a place and house – is a wider concern. The agency of women to provide a house and make a home is essential, as is their willingness to sacrifice a lot to obtain their target of creating a safe home for their dependants and families. We draw the conclusion that transnational identities are embedded in women's capabilities and achievements at the local place as well as in foreign countries. We have also learned how livelihoods are gendered and shift over time, just as female migrants' contributions to homemaking. Finally, to these migrant women, home is no longer represented by a simple location or physical space but it transcends the global and the local, thereby revealing the dynamics of transnational lives and work.

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Article 4

FORCED TO MAKE A LIVING: THE VULNERABILITY OF WOMEN TRADERS IN THE THAMBUTTEGAMA PERIODIC MARKET, OR *POLA*, IN SRI LANKA

Abstract

This article seeks to explore different forms of vulnerabilities in women traders involved in one of the periodic or small markets (*pola*) in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project of Sri Lanka (AMDP). To comprehend how women make use of new opportunities provided by the expansion of the regional economy and the different types of challenges the women face, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted and informal discussions held with key informants. Direct observations were also recorded. Close examination of *pola* women's status reveals that they face wide gender inequalities, discrimination and unequal opportunities, making them especially vulnerable to exploitative situations. This study concludes that women are compelled to work at *pola* (predominantly a male domain) mainly due to socio-economic conditions and personal misfortune. It further indicates that trading at *pola* does not empower women at the societal level. The study recommends that *pola* women should be given due attention and not overlooked in future development planning.

Keywords: *pola*, Sri Lanka, vulnerability, empowerment, women traders

Introduction

> When a child is hungry, it says 'mother I am hungry', it doesn't say "father I am hungry". Men do not understand these things. That is why I became a *pola* trader; I have to feed my

children. Still *pola* women are looked down upon by the society. There is no other way here for us to survive

<div align="right">Respondent 2</div>

Sri Lanka has made strides towards bridging the gender gap, but still has a long way to go before women can take control of their own lives. Development policies adopted by the Sri Lankan Government in the recent past have had a heavy focus on increasing women's economic participation. As a result, more women have gradually entered the labour force during the past two decades. However, a closer look at the situation reveals that Sri Lankan women continue to face gender inequalities, discrimination, exploitative situations, and unequal opportunities.[1] This is especially the case in the economic sphere. Jayaweera Swarna notes that although women have increased access to paid employment, they are employed in low-paid, casual and marginal income-earning activities[2]. Their presence is high in labour-intensive industries such as the garment and plantation industries, and also among the migrant labourers to Middle Eastern countries. Sri Lankan women's participation in the informal sector has also increased during the last couple of decades. In the informal sector, market trading is one area that provides employment opportunities for impoverished women. However, little research has been conducted into women's involvement in periodic markets in rural areas in Sri Lanka or the problems faced by women working in these markets. The present study highlights and discusses the different forms of vulnerability experienced by women *pola* traders at the Thambuttegama *pola*, which is located in System H (one of the thirteen administrative systems) of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project of Sri Lanka (hereafter referred to as AMDP. (See Figure.1.) The study also confirms that *pola* women's economic participation is merely a survival strategy rather than an empowering one.

The Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project of Sri Lanka (AMDP)

The AMDP is one of the largest multi-purpose development project schemes in Sri Lanka aimed at solving the country's socio-economic problems. Under this strategy implemented

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[1] Kamalini Wijethilake , *Unraveling Histories: A Three Generational Study*, Colombo: Centre For Women's Research (CENWOR), 2001, p. 59.
[2] Swarna Jayaweera, 'Women in education and employment,' in *Women in Post Independence Sri Lanka*, ed. Swarna Jayaweera , Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2002, p. 119.

in the late 1970s, it was envisaged that 250,000 families, mainly headed by impoverished farmers, would be resettled in the project area. The plan was based on the assumption that resettling farmers in different administrative units of the project area would improve the agricultural economy by providing irrigation facilities to previously uncultivated and under-cultivated land. The settlers in the AMDP can be grouped into three main categories. These are 1) the original settlers (who lived in the area before the commencement of the project), 2) re-settlers or evacuee settlers (who were resettled in Mahaweli settlements after losing their properties when dams were constructed under the AMDP), and 3) settlers from different parts of the country who were given land in the AMDP due to landlessness, poverty and political affiliation.
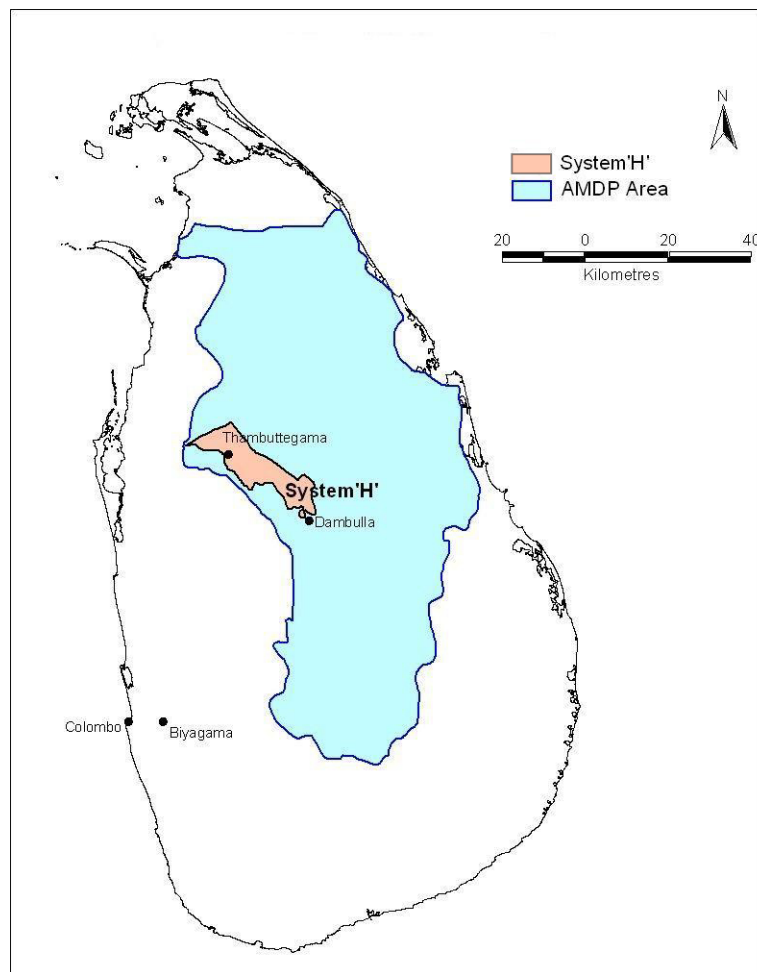
Figure.1. Location of AMDP and research area

The settlement planning of the AMDP was based on the model of central place hierarchy[3]. Thus, in terms of facilitating trade, the planners attempted to develop a more accessible system for the settlers concerned. However, trading activities have also developed spontaneously outside the formal infrastructural process of the AMDP administrative blocks,[4] including in System H where I conducted my research. Nelson notes that under the trading activities spontaneously developed in the settlements, periodic markets or *pola* are important features[5]. These periodic markets dominate not only the economic landscape of the settlements, but also the social landscape where many settlers have carved out a niche. In the following section I discuss the nature of *pola* in both the national and the AMDP contexts.

Periodic (*pola*) markets in Sri Lanka

Periodic or *pola* markets are held on specific days once or twice a week at an allocated place. They are the main marketing channel for farmers to sell surplus production and to buy necessities. Goods sold at the periodic markets reach the consumers in different ways. In some cases, farmers sell their produce directly to consumers. Some sellers buy or collect the primary products from the hinterland and sell the products back to the p*ola* traders. Such sellers also resell purchased produce to other sellers and thereby act as middle men. These types of trading activities have created a spirit of competition at *pola*. Periodic markets also serve as sites of social interaction where information, ideas and innovations are disseminated. *Pola* have long been an important economic and social unit in Sri Lanka's rural areas, although they are also found in urban areas. Generally, *pola* traders are predominately men, unlike the African context where small markets are dominated by

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[3] Central Place Theory which origins from the work of Wlater Christaller, is an important theory of spatial structure. In a settlement planning context Central place is a location that offers a service or product to its surrounding market regions.

[4] M.D. Nelson, *Mahaweli Programme and Peasant Settlement Development in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka* Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 2002, p. 116.

[5] Nelson, *Mahaweli Programme and Peasant Settlement Development in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka*, p. 140.

women.[6] While *pola* are dominated by men as sellers, buyers at these markets are frequently women and children.

Earlier, *pola* sales were mostly confined to agricultural products. Now a wide variety of items are sold, ranging from cellular phone covers to audio CDs. Goods on sale at the *pola* are usually separated by type, with different sections being set aside, for example, for vegetables, fruits, dried fish, fresh fish, ready-made clothes, locally made pottery, betel leaves, areca nuts, and ornaments. Typically, there are also musicians, singers, beggars, fortune tellers, and lottery ticket sellers at a *pola* in Sri Lanka.

The administration and maintenance of *pola* is the responsibility of local government authorities in a specific area. While some *pola* are administered directly by the local authority, others are tendered out to middle men who subsequently lease out the stalls. There are also *pola* traders operating outside the area designated for the leased stalls. These traders, who for various reasons are unable to obtain a stall within the designated market area, are forced to pay a tax to a collector appointed by the local government.

Although there are no time series data on the growth of periodic markets, several studies indicate that the numbers of periodic markets are on rise in rural Sri Lanka.[7] Certainly, there was a dramatic increase after the implementation of the AMDP.[8] This can be related to the spontaneous process of development and social change created by the AMDP scheme. Today, *polas* have become important in the economy of Mahaweli, where many small farmers sell their limited surplus to people in the hinterland, whose purchasing power is generally low, as well as to buyers from outside the area. Thambuttegama is a pre-Mahaweli township located in System H (Figure 1). With the township's incorporation into the AMDP, Thambuttegama flourished and is now a busy business town where wholesale traders and retail traders of agricultural products meet. After the establishment

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[6] George Owusu and Ragnhild Lund, 'Markets and women's trade: Exploring their role in district development in Ghana,' in *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift–Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 58 (2004): 113-124, p. 117.

[7] L.P. Rupasena, 'Preliminary analysis of rural periodic markers (polas) in the Central and North Central provinces of Sri Lanka,' in *Rural Urban Interface in Sri Lanka*, ed. M.M. Karunanayake, Nugegoda: Department of Geography, University of Sri Jayawardanepura, 2003, pp. 44-61.

[8] Rupasena, 'Preliminary analysis,' p. 44.

of the Thambuttegama Dedicated Economic Centre (DEC), *pola* in the area performed an important role in collecting and distributing the agricultural products of the region.

My study was confined to the Thambuttegama local administrative unit in System H of the AMDP. I researched women traders from the Thambuttegama *pola* which is held each Wednesdays. As was the case in many places, the *pola* in Thambuttegama did not have permanent building structures until March 2007. Prior to the construction of permanent stalls, the traders used temporary shelters or huts erected on open ground spaces where they sold their goods each *pola* day. Some traders who are unable to secure a stall still continue to operate on *pola* days but must pay tax to the local government authority for the space they occupy.[9] Many traders visit different *polas* which are conducted on different days of the week in the area. This pattern is called *pola rawume* or '*pola* circuit'

There has been a significant change in the economic activities undertaken by women in today's AMDP *pola* markets compared to the activities of women in the Mahaweli settlements of the past. As a survival strategy, many women no longer confine themselves to unpaid or underpaid labour at home or on family farms but now also undertake remunerated work outside the home. In the absence of gainful employment opportunities within the settlements, many migrate to urban areas and to Middle Eastern countries in search of wage labour. However, middle-aged and elderly women especially are often not fortunate enough to find employment through such avenues. In response to increasing economic hardship, poverty, and lack of access to productive land or support from the government and their husbands, some of the women forced to remain in Mahaweli settlements have ended up as traders at periodic markets.

Women *pola* traders participate in an economic activity which is dominated by men and face specific forms of vulnerability and powerlessness in their domestic, economic and social spheres of life. While compelled to participate in income-earning activities in a male domain to ensure the survival of their family they also have the additional burden of meeting the prevailing norms of social obligations towards their families and societies. To

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[9] For a permanent stall the tender's levy was 250–300 Sri Lankan Rs (1 USD = 110 Rs) per day. For open ground the rent varied from 150 Rs to 200 Rs, depending on the size of the ground each *pola* trader occupied.

the outside world, *pola* women appear to be independent and courageous women, with masculine qualities[10]. However, a closer look reveals that they face considerable gender inequalities, discrimination, and unequal opportunities, and that they are more vulnerable than men to exploitative situations.

Theoretical perspective: gender, vulnerability and empowerment

Generally, women who trade at markets are poor.[11] Poverty makes market women vulnerable to a range of disadvantages embedded in the conditions of the local and global, social, historical, and political environments. They are therefore unable to withstand the adverse impacts of the shocks and stresses to which they are exposed. Chambers defines vulnerability as defencelessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk, shocks and stresses, as well as difficulty in coping with such situations[12]. This definition suggests that vulnerability has two sides: one related to the external 'risk aspect', the other to the internal 'coping capacity' necessary to deal with loss. While emphasising that poverty and vulnerability are different concepts,[13] Chambers also points out that losses can result in economic impoverishment, social dependence, humiliation and psychological harms. Although stresses, shocks and risks can arise either from man-made situations or natural calamities, the problems faced by women traders are largely pre-existing in the women's communities. Their ability to withstand or cope with stresses, shocks and risks depends on a range of factors. These include individual or household levels of human and physical assets, levels of production, income and consumption, and, importantly, the ability of individuals or households to diversify their sources of income and consumption to effectively reduce the effects of the risks that they face at any given time. Since they have low skills levels and very limited capital, few of the women traders have access to formal

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[10] These views are derived from the informal discussions conducted with government officers, senior citizens and other women in System H.

[11] Solomon Christiana, 'The role of women in economic transformation: Market women in Sierra Leone,' in *Conflict, Security and Development* 6 (2006): 411-423, p. 416.

[12] Robert Chambers, 'Editorial introduction: Vulnerability, coping, and policy,' *IDS Bulletin* 20 (1990): 1-7, p. 2.

[13] Robert Chambers, 'Poverty and livelihoods: Whose reality counts?' in *Environment and Urbanization* 7 (1995): 173-204, p. 189.

sector employment opportunities.[14] Many who lack access to land or other property in the settlements try to solve their problems through hard work, the only meagre resource they possess.

Coping capacity varies according to individuals, households and communities. From this perspective, gender is an important attribute influencing the coping capacity of women in vulnerable situations. As a socially constructed concept, gender varies across different social contexts with different social norms and customs determining the roles of women and men in the family and community.[15] Since different societies have their own expectations in terms of gender roles even an individual with a high coping capacity in vulnerable situations may be prevented by gender norms from exercising this capacity. Moser[16] defines this as 'social control'. Given that social norms are expressed through institutions,[17] such as the family, religion, culture and tradition, media, state policy, law and regulations, education, and the economy, it is not surprising that in the economic sphere certain jobs are assigned as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. When men take on feminine tasks they are ridiculed.[18] Similarly, if a woman takes on a masculine job she is not only considered as unfeminine, but also becomes vulnerable in multiple ways as discussed in greater detail below. It is pertinent to note here that continuous exposure to vulnerabilities generated in this way may eventually dis-empower women.

Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been approached and described variously focussing on aspects such as agency, participation, power, control over material and non-material assets, self-confidence, and dignity.[19] The central concept in these approaches and definitions is

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[14] Anju Malhothra and Mark Mather, 'Do schooling and work empower women in developing countries? Gender and domestic decision in Sri Lanka,' in *Sociological Forum* 4 (1997): 599-630, p. 602.

[15] World Bank, *Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voices*, New York: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 109.

[16] Caroline Moser, *Gender Planning and Development Theory Practice and Training*, London: Routledge, 1993.

[17] Kamalini Wijethilake, *Unraveling Histories*, p. 27.

[18] World Bank, *Engendering Development: Through gender equality in rights resources and voice* , New York: World Bank and Oxford University Press. p. 109.

[19] Robert Chambers, *Challenging the Professions: Frontiers for Rural Development*, London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1993; Caroline Moser,'Gender planning in the Third World: Meeting practical and

'power'. Although there are number of feminist perspectives on power, the present study makes particular reference to the work of Rowlands who classifies four dimensions of power. These dimensions are 1) 'power from within' (the psychological power in the minds of people focussing on aspects such as self-confidence, self-esteem, self-respect), 2) 'the power to' (the capacity to take action), 3) 'power with' (the collective forces whereby people cooperate with each other to solve a problem), and 4) 'power over' (the ability to resist force)[20]. Rowlands also categorises the experience of empowerment at three different levels, namely the personal level, the collective level and the level of close relationships. She emphasises that each level is important in order to achieve full empowerment. Personal empowerment involves 'developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalised oppression.' The relational dimension of empowerment relates to 'developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it'. The collective dimension of empowerment is defined as 'where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone'[21]. I would argue that the 'personal' dimension of empowerment should be given particular attention as, in certain contexts, it is a pre-requisite for developing relational and collective dimensions of empowerment[22]. At the same time, it is also important to consider what personal, collective and close relationship dimensions of empowerment mean in different socio-economic and cultural contexts and how people, women especially, operating in these specific contexts might be adequately empowered to equitably access the resources of a society.

strategic gender needs', in *World Development* 17(1989): 1799-1825, p. 1815; Naila Kabeer, 'Women wages and intra-household power relations in urban Bangladesh,' in *Development and Change* 28 (1997): 261-302, p. 265; Naila Kabeer, 'Resources, agency and achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment,' in Development and Change, 30(1999): 435-464, p. 437; Jo Rowlands, Questioning Empowermen*t: Working with Women in Honduras*, Oxfam: UK and Ireland, pp. 13-14, 110-141; Srilatha Batliwala , 'The meanings of women's empowerment: New concepts from action in Population Policies Reconsidered Health Empowerment and rights,' in Gita Sen, Adrienne Germain and Lincoln Chen (eds.), Population Policies Reconsidered. Health, Empowerment and Rights. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994, 127-138. 127-135; Jane L Parpart., Shirin M Rai, M. and Kaathleen Staudt, 'Rethinking em(power)ment, gender and development: An introduction,' in *Rethinking Empowerment. Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*, eds. Jane L Parpart, Shirin M Rai,. and Kathleen Staudt, , London, New York: Routledge, 2002 pp. 3-16.

[20] Kwok-Fu Wong, 'Empowerment as a panacea for poverty- old vine in new bottles? Reflections on the World Bank's conception of power', in *Progress in Development Studies* 3,4 (2003): 307-322, p.310. Jo Rowlands , 'Power and empowerment' p. 13.

[21] Jo Rowlands, *Questioning empowerment, working with women in Honduras* Oxfam: UK and Ireland*., p. 14-15, 110-141*

[22] Jo Rowlands, 'Using the model: empowerment, gender and development' p. 129

Methodology

The field survey, which forms part of my PhD research, was carried out from March 2007 to mid-May 2007. In-depth interviews were conducted with fourteen Thambuttegama *pola* women traders who were from three different types of settlement in System H. Although there are several *pola* in System H of the AMDP, administrative limitations restricted my research to the Thambuttegama *pola*. However, this was not a significant problem since this *pola* had comparatively large numbers of women traders.[23]My research period lasted ten weeks and included both pre-and post-festival periods.[24] During the field visits I observed that the *pola* attracted a large number of customers during the festival season while the numbers of customers were less during the off season.

I interviewed the women *pola* traders at the *pola* itself. During my first visits I met the women in the morning either before they unpacked or while they were unpacking their goods. However, since the morning hours were their best trading times, the majority of women said they did not want to be interviewed before noon. Therefore, I used the mornings to make personal observations and conducted interviews in the afternoons. These interviews focused on exploring the potential for economic empowerment of women at *pola* and means by which their vulnerabilities might be reduced. In addition to interviewing the *pola* women, I also held informal discussions with government officers and other key informants. These discussions assisted me to understand the functions and administration of *pola* and the constraints and opportunities faced by *pola* traders generally and by women traders in particular.

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[23] M.M. Karunanayake, Y.A.D.S Wanasinghe and R.M.K. Ratnayake, 'Dynamics of rural periodic market circuit in the Anuradhapura District of North Central Sri Lanka,' in *Rural Urban Interface in Sri Lanka*, ed. M.M. Karunanayake, Nugegoda: Department of Geography, University of Sri Jayawardanepura, 2003, pp. 62-103.

[23] Rupasena, Preliminary analysis, p. 44.

[24] Sinhala, Hindu Festival, which falls on 14th April each year, is a very hectic period in terms of business in many towns as well rural areas. Most people spend a larger part of their savings on buying clothes for their families, preparing sweets and renovating their homes.

Personal characteristics of the respondents

The socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents are shown in Table 1. In general, the informants had started to trade at *pola* after the death of a husband or a divorce/separation. Since the burden of supporting family members, especially children and other dependents, then fell on these women, they were forced to find a way to supplement the family income. Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents were middle-aged or elderly, a trend that is apparent also at *pola* in other parts of the country. In one sense, however, this was an advantage since social and cultural restrictions become less rigid in rural society as people age.[25] Generally, therefore, a *pola* woman's status increases with her age.

Table 1: Socio-economic background of the informants.

Respondent no.	Age	Marital status	Number of children	Employment prior to *pola* trade	Education
R 1	45	Divorced	3	Did not work	Year 9
R 2	54	Divorced	3	Middle East migrant	Year 5
R 3	66	Married	7	Agricultural labourer	No schooling
R 4	57	Separated	2	Middle East migrant	GCE (O/L)*
R 5	50	Separated and remarried	4	Agricultural labourer	Year 9
R 6	58	Widow	6	Did not work	Year 4
R 7	80	Widow	10	Agricultural labourer	No schooling
R 8	63	Separated	6	Domestic aid	Year 3
R 9	67	Separated	7	Food seller	No schooling
R 10	51	Married	5	Middle East migrant	Year 10
R 11	48	Married	4	Garment factory worker	GCE (O/L)
R 12	50	Divorced	5	Did not work	Year 10
R 13	63	Widow	7	Agricultural labourer	No schooling
R 14	74	Widow	9	Agricultural labourer	No Schooling

Source: Field survey 2007.   *General Certificate of Education: O Level

Education has important implications for the socio-economic status and potential of women. However, although the overall literacy rate of Sri Lankan women is the highest in

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[25] Karunanayake et al., 'Dynamics of rural periodic market circuit'.

the South Asia region, the truth behind this average is relative. Women *pola* traders, like their other counterparts in the rural economy, are generally less well educated than urban women. Table 1 shows that the education level of the respondents was relatively low. Most of the women who had attended school had only been educated up to primary level, although 14% had completed secondary education. Approximately 35% of the women had never been to school. Furthermore, the majority of the women interviewed did not possess any employment skills. This combination of lack of education and lack of employment skills meant that few of the women were able to improve their position by making use of the new employment opportunities created by the national economy or the expanding regional economy. Even for educated women, however, the limited number of jobs in the formal sector was also a problem.

In terms of marital status, only 28 per cent of the respondents were currently married with the majority being separated, divorced or widowed. This situation is typical at other *pola* in the country. The fact that the number of children among older women traders was high compared to numbers among the middle-aged traders is likely to be related to declining fertility rates in Sri Lanka, especially since the late 1970s.

Most of the women interviewed had previously been employed in marginal sectors of the economy. Some had worked as unpaid family labourers on their paddy land, while others had sought employment only after the death of their husbands. Prior to becoming traders at the *pola*, 35 per cent of the women had been agricultural labourers. Of the women who had received secondary education, 35 per cent had worked either as housemaids in Middle Eastern countries or in garment factories. The remainder had been engaged in menial jobs with severely limited wage rates. In the following, I will discuss how these women who, with their relative lack of skills and education were among the most vulnerable workers in Sri Lanka, responded to an economy in transition.

Women in the changing Mahaweli economy

Women and men are positioned in different ways in the local economy of Mahaweli. Since their arrival and incorporation into the AMDP, many Mahaweli women have performed various agricultural tasks in addition to their daily household duties. Their main responsibilities are articulated by gender-specific roles, where women are mainly responsible for reproduction and the maintenance of household welfare, while men are responsible for their family's financial needs and activities outside the home.

Since the introduction of open economic policies in the 1970s, considerable changes have occurred in Sri Lanka's economy in terms of employment opportunities in general, and especially for women. The integration of Mahaweli's economy into the regional, national and international economies, had considerable negative impact on the socio-economic roles of Mahaweli women.[26] This was because access to the main productive resource (land) was denied to women, against the customary inheritance pattern of the country[27]. The establishment of garment factories in the Free Trade Zones (FTZs) closer to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, and employment opportunities in the Middle Eastern countries attracted a female labour force from many parts of the country. Such employment opportunities were accessible to Mahaweli women only relatively recently. However, while some women were able to benefit from these opportunities in terms of securing employment, many could not. This latter group was left either without jobs or compelled to work in low paid, casual and marginal economic activities. For women unable to find employment elsewhere, the expansion or increase in the number of periodic markets in the Mahaweli settlements has provided a much needed opportunity for earning an income. One respondent commented on these changes as follows:

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[26] Jayaweera Swarna, 'Women in education,' p. 120.
[27] In Sri Lanka's land settlement schemes an allotment can be inherited only by one heir, in order to prevent unproductive use of the land. Usually in the past, the heir has been male. Women in Mahaweli settlements have been excluded from landownership, as in previous land settlement schemes in the country. Women's claim to landownership depends only on their marital status, and in the case of divorce, separation or abandonment even this right is lost. This has been a serious impediment to achieving a better standard of living .

Unlike the past in the Mahaweli area you can see a lot of *polas*. Now you don't have to go to villages to collect vegetables. You can come to the Thambuttegama wholesale market and sell at the *pola*. On Wednesdays, I trade at Thambuttegama *pola* and I also trade at Puttalam junction, Thalawa, Nochiyagama, and Anuradhapura *pola* [Fig. 2]. Transport is now easy. If my husband does not have coolie work he also joints me on other *pola* circuits. There is lorry which comes in the morning close to Thambuttegama wholesale market.

Respondent 10

Figure 2. Women traders at Thambuttegama *pola*. Source: By author

Since its incorporation in to AMDP, Thambuttegama has developed into a multiple function township. The sudden population influx in the area following resettlement changed the long established pattern of trade in the area which formerly was based mainly on surplus agricultural products. Following resettlement, however, Thambuttegama Township flourished with new trade outlets. AMDP sponsored construction of a network of minor and major roads connecting many previously remote centres further facilitated the development of *polas* in the area.
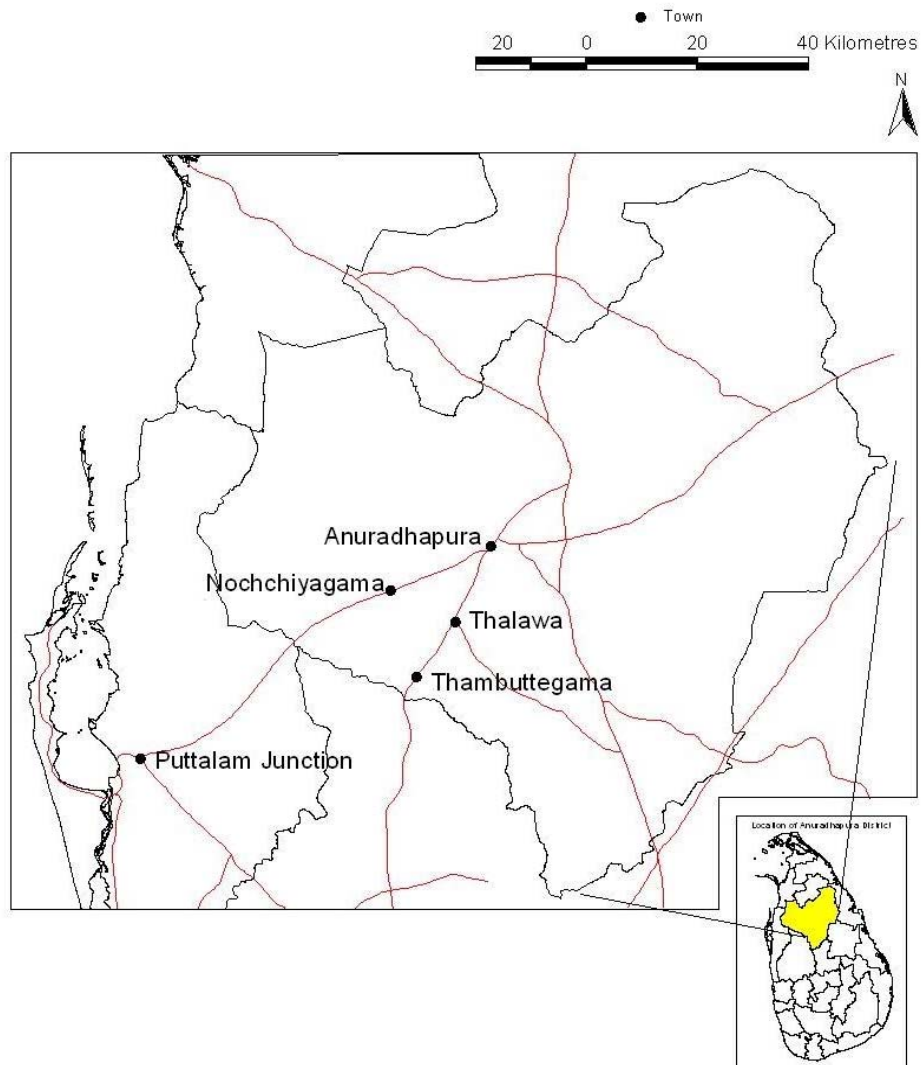
Fig.3. *Pola* visited by women traders

Figure 3 shows the *pola* attended by respondents. The recent set-up of the Thambuttegama Economic Centre and Dambulla Dedicated Economic Centre (DDEC) has made *pola* trading even more attractive,[28] with many women using these centres to make wholesale purchases of vegetable or fruits also for subsequent resale. Although traditionally traders

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[28] Female traders buy vegetables from whole sale vegetable markets for resale at *polas*.

went to villages to collect vegetables and fruit to sell at a *pola*, added family and community responsibilities mean that this is not always possible for women traders.

In the past, previously unpredictable transport arrangements, long distances and few consumers made *pola* trade very hectic and unattractive to many traders, especially women. However, the creation of the Thambuttegama and Dambulla economic centres has improved these adverse conditions which have led in turn to a gradual increase in the number of traders. *Pola* trading has become particularly appealing to many financially weaker women lacking the capital necessary to be self-employed in other ways. Today, it is a common sight to even see women who live close to a main road but who are unable to go to a *pola* to trade constructing small stalls at the front of their houses to sell vegetables or fruit they have either purchased from the wholesale centres or produced in their home gardens.

Women have also made use of the expansion of the national and global economies to perform their trading activities at *pola*. Free Trade Zones (FTZs) are important economic landscapes created by the process of globalisation and have provided direct and indirect employment for many Sri Lankans especially through the garment industries. One woman discussed how she retailed clothing goods she was able to buy cheaply from a Free Trade Zone:

> I worked in Colombo as a domestic aid. I am very familiar with that area. My employer migrated to a foreign country, so I came back to the village. On my last day in their house, my employer's wife gave me 10,000 Rs to buy some ready-made clothes from a shop close to Biyagama Free Trade Zone to sell in our village. This business gave me lot of confidence. When all my children were married, I started to sell clothes that I buy from Biyagama at *pola*. Sometimes I used to buy clothes from our own village, but they are not made to a standard or they are not in the latest fashion.
>
> Respondent 8

Many women and men who lived in the towns located in close proximity to the Free Trade Zones made use of the clothes, or in the local term 'cut pieces', disposed of by garment

factories, to sew frocks, curtains and bedspreads. Like Respondent 8, some of my informants bought finished clothes from such places and resold the clothes at Thambuttegama *pola*.

Pola women and multiple vulnerabilities

During my visits to Thambuttegama in 2004, the *pola*, which is located in the city centre, had only temporary structures. Today, it looks modern and very large, with permanent buildings and other facilities. During a recent follow up visit to find out how the new *pola* structures at Thambuttegama were operating, I noted an increase in the number of women since 2004. These women were selling a range of goods such as vegetables, fruits, food and readymade clothes. Some of them did not have a permanent place in the pola compound and were selling their products outside the market grounds. In order to understand why this was happening, I approached Respondent 14 as she was getting ready to go home after business:

> I have been trading at this *pola* for the last twenty-four years. I started to sell tea at this *pola* along with my husband. My husband passed away. Now I am doing this business alone. Earlier, very few women traded at the *pola*. Even if they traded, most of them did the trading along with their husbands, but during the last fifteen years, the number of female traders has considerably increased. You know, men cannot find employment these days. There are conflicts in families due to this and many families are torn apart. Whoever fights, the family responsibility falls into the hands of women, eventually. That is why we can see many female *pola* traders these days.
>
> Respondent 14

Pressured by sub-standard living conditions, personal fate, poverty, landlessness, and unemployment, women in the Mahaweli settlements are forced to seek work outside the home. In addition to the local factors discussed above, the social, economic and political environments of the country during the last three decades have also placed increased burdens on women who are poor. The following section will discuss some of the specific

vulnerabilities to which women traders at *pola* markets are subject with reference to the data gathered during interviews.

Fear of eviction

> I do not know how long can I survive in this *pola*. I do not have a permanent stall. Who can pay the rent? It is too high. When they [officers or leasers] chase us, we run. What else could we do?
>
> > Respondent 6

> I am eighty years old. I have been trading at *pola* since 1962. When my husband was alive, both of us were engaged in *pola* trade and we had permanent stalls. My husband passed away eighteen years ago. Since then I have not had a permanent stall. I come only to the Wednesday circuit now. Many women at this *pola* help me. They give me a small space to sell my vegetables. Yet tax collectors force me to pay the rent and they threaten me to vacate the space. I earn a small profit. How can I pay the rent?
>
> > Respondent 7

Like Respondents 6 and 7, many women occupy illegal trading spaces and are therefore subjected to harassment by the local government authority or the leaser appointed by the authority. This was a major problem since their tiny profit margins meant that paying tax deprived them of any income at all. Further, women were sometimes deprived of the opportunity to trade. According to some respondents, space allocated to women was often occupied by men. When this happened, rather than resist, women would cede their places to the men in order to ensure their future survival at the *pola*.

Renegotiating domestic tasks

In order to free women to engage in *pola* trade domestic tasks have to be renegotiated between men and women. However, not all women were fortunate enough to have supportive males in their families, and some were therefore compelled to work both inside and outside the home. Many women who did not have grown-up daughters or other female

members in their households confided that they had to attend to their domestic work before they could go to a *pola*:

> I was the youngest female trader at the Thambuttegama *pola*. I started my business at the age of twenty-three and am still continuing. I divorced my husband when I was pregnant with my youngest daughter. Then I was twenty-one years. As my marriage was due to a love affair which my parents or sibling did not like, I did not have support from my family. I worked as an agricultural labourer for two years. Since the day I divorced my husband I have been doing the household duties alone. I do not ask my children to do household work. I give priority to their education. So I get up early in the morning and do all the household work and go to the *pola*. I return from the *pola* and prepare the dinner.
>
> Respondent 1

Another respondent was more fortunate, explaining how she negotiated the household duties while she was away at work:

> I worked in a garment factory before I became a *pola* trader. My husband lost one of his legs due to a quarrel in a land dispute. After that I quit the job in the garment factory to take care of him and the children. I ran a small business at home. During that time it was easy for me to manage household duties and the business. I did this business for three years and I could not get the capital back. People buy goods on loan and they never settle. So, I decided to trade at *pola*. My husband takes care of the children and prepares the meals when I am not at home. During the festival season in April lots of people come to the *pola* then, so I have to stay at the *pola* longer than during the other seasons. During those times, my daughters also help my husband with the household duties.
>
> Respondent 11

In many rural families, children also perform household work. Girls in the family often help their mothers to take care of younger siblings, carry water and collect fire wood. A similar situation has been noted in the peak agricultural seasons in rural areas.[29] However, some women have no one to help. When I asked one woman trader selling fruit while she

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[29] Anoja Wickramasinghe, 'Women's role in rural Sri Lanka,' in *Different Places Different Voices: Gender and Development in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, ed. Janet Henshall Momsen and Vivian Kinnaired, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 159-175.

was breast feeding her five month old son why she had to take her son for the whole day to such a noisy, smelly and unhealthy environment, she replied:

> 'My children are going to school and I chased away my husband as he depends only on my income. I cannot feed him too. I don't have anyone to take care of my son. I have to take him to the *pola*' Respondent 12.

This respondent is representative of many *pola* women who have to integrate household responsibilities with *pola* trading. Even if they are living with their husbands, prevailing gender ideologies and patriarchal values[30] concerning household work place extra burdens on women. Some of the women who do not have permanent stalls mentioned the difficulty of securing a good place at the *pola* because, since they must complete household duties prior to leaving home, they always arrive at the market later than men traders. The extracts given here from the women trader's stories thus reveal their double burden.

Sexual harassment

> Being a middle-aged or young female trader at a *pola* is extremely difficult. I sell breakfast and tea here. Some of them (male traders) are treating me like their own sisters, some are not. So they are approaching me for different purposes, but it depends on how you handle such people. If we are flexible, men make use of the opportunity. Many men at the *polas* whom I have been trading with have approached me for unwanted things, but I always tell them I am not the type of woman they expect. At Anuradhapura *pola*, you can see the *pola* activities going on until night, but I never stay after six in the evening. I don't understand why these men behave like this. I must say, not all men at *pola* are so. Due to some men, it is women who are affected.
>
> Respondent 4

Sexual harassment by male traders was not openly mentioned in my initial interviews. This is due to the fact Sri Lankan society regards women as totally or partially responsible for

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[30] Kamalini, Wijethilake *Unraveling Histories*, p. 30.; Vinitha Jayasinghe, *A New Vision: A Feminist Perspective in Sri Lanka*, Rajagiriya: Pace Printers, pp. 74-75.

being victimised in such situations.[31] However, the presence of sexual harassment was confirmed by the young woman quoted above during my third visit to the *pola*. Given the largely informal environment, some of the young *pola* women, especially, appear helpless in the face of what could be described as sexual harassment or exploitation. In contrast, middle-aged and elderly women traders are less vulnerable. Another respondent pointed out that some women had responded positively to men's approaches. Such women have financial problems in buying goods from the wholesale market, problems in finding a place at the *pola* to sell their products, or problems in transporting their goods to other *polas*. The disadvantaged conditions of the women traders compound their vulnerability thus rendering them victim to other forms of exploitation, as discussed below.

Less bargaining power

> I buy vegetables from the Thambuttegama wholesale market in the morning. I buy them using a loan and repay the money to the traders in the evening when the *pola* is over. I do not earn much profit. Some days I have gone home with 20 Rs, after shouting the whole day. I also have to pay the rent to the tax collector. We cannot bargain like men. I am not educated. I think you have to have university degree to trade at this *pola*. Consumers are cheating us. They look for cheaply priced vegetables and they come to women traders as they can be cheated easily. Consumers who come in the early hours of the *pola* select the good vegetables and those who come in the evening are left with damaged vegetables. Then we have to sell them at lower prices, yet we still have to pay back the wholesale trader the full price for the good vegetables. When we buy vegetables at the wholesale market we cannot choose the good ones, but when consumers buy, they choose the good ones and they ask us to reduce the price of the damaged ones. Men at the *pola* do not allow the consumers to select vegetables, but we cannot do this.
>
> Respondent 9

Due to lack of bargaining (and, possibly, physical) power, many women at *pola* earn less profit than men. They also constantly come under threat by male traders at the *pola* for selling goods at lower prices. Sometimes the women go home without any profit after

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[31] Vinitha Jayasinghe, *A New Vision*, p. 111.

paying the tax for occupying the market space for the day. Although men are often able to negotiate with the tax collectors, many women do not have the necessary physical or psychological strength to negotiate in this way.

Lack of mobility

> I have seven children and five of them are married. Two of my daughters are working in the Middle East as housemaids. I am taking care of their children along with my youngest daughter who is at home now. Therefore I cannot go to other *pola rawum* in the area. I come only to the Wednesday circuit here. Earlier I used to go to Nochiyagama *pola*. Now, I cannot do so as I have to take care of my grandchildren.
>
> Respondent 13

Women may disproportionately face mobility constraints that limit their ability to travel or sell at markets located some distance from their households and communities. Trading at markets requires mobility and social interaction. The majority of the male traders attend several different *pola* throughout the week. Jackson,[32] in her study on '*Polas* in central Sri Lanka', notes that traders reap many advantages by attending several *pola*. They can establish good links with different customers and become familiar with places to stay overnight or to store goods. In addition, many male traders operate in groups, which maximises their profits and ensures full employment as they move around the many *pola* in the area.[33] However, women traders cannot work in this way due to home and community commitments. Women's mobility is also constrained by societal attitudes, age and physical capability:

> 'Earlier I used to visit three *pola*, now I come to this *pola* only. I am old and I am sick. I do not even come regularly to the Thambuttegama *pola*'
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> Respondent 3

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[32] Debora Winslow Jackson, 'Polas in Central Sri Lanka: Some preliminary remarks on the development and functioning of periodic markets,' in *Agriculture in the Peasant Sector of Sri Lanka*, ed. S.W.R.De.A. Samarasinghe, Colombo: Wesley Press, 1977, pp. 56-84.

[33] Nelson, '*Mahaweli Programme and Peasant Settlement Development in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka*,' p. 147.

Mahaweli women's restricted mobility due to unpaid work on family farms and for household duties has been highlighted generally by a number of other researchers[34]. Lack of mobility makes women dependent upon just one or a few *pola* to sell their products. In common with Respondent 13 and unlike their male counterparts, many women at Thambuttegama *pola* have limited mobility. The majority of women traders preferred to operate at a particular *pola*. Proximity to their own village was a key factor in their choices.

Socio-cultural and traditional values

> Already women traders are neglected by the society. If we travel to more *polas* and if we stay overnight in a place for trading purposes, people will speak badly of us in the villages.
>
> Respondent 12

> In schools our children are looked down upon, even by teachers, if they come to know their mother is a *pola* trader
>
> Respondent 5

The foregoing statements outline the difficult conditions under which the women *pola* traders work. They are caught between societal expectations and survival. As in most traditional communities, the lives of *pola* women are governed by a set of socio-cultural values and norms. Hence, factors such as religious beliefs and rationalisation, cultural norms, behavioural norms, myths, perceptions, and moral values exert a strong influence on the *pola* women's socio-economic and cultural lives. Nevertheless, *pola* provide a viable means of livelihood for many impoverished women. *Pola* trade has given many women strength and confidence, even after becoming single parents with extra family responsibilities. Trading in *pola* does not require a large amount of capital and entry is easy compared to other formal sector employment.

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[34] Ragnhild Lund , Gender and place. Examples from two case studies. Thesis submitted for the doctor rerum politicarum exam, Department of Geography, University of Trondheim. 1993, p.9; Nedra Weerakoon Goonewardene, 'Policies and Programmes of the Mahaweli Settlement Scheme and its Impacts of the Role and Status of Women,' in *Women in Development in South Asia,* ed. Kanesalingam,V, New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 1989, pp.237-258, p. 248.

Conclusions

Today, growing insecurity and poverty has created conditions whereby women are breaking barriers and entering the public sphere to ensure their survival. Due to their exclusion from the economic benefits of the AMDP and their subordination within domestic and community contexts, women are forced to seek employment outside the home often in marginal sectors of the economy. The reasons which make it imperative for women in Mahaweli to have their own source of income are related to poverty, unemployment, and their present marital status. The need to find paid work almost always adds an extra burden to these already marginalised women.

The foregoing discussion has provided some insight into the magnitude and nature of the vulnerabilities experienced by women *pola* traders. Using data gathered from in-depth interviews and informal discussion, I have highlighted the different forms of vulnerability experienced by the women traders at Thambuttegama *pola*. These include fear of eviction, the double burden of paid combining paid work with domestic roles and responsibilities, negative socio-cultural attitudes towards *pola* women, limited mobility, less bargaining power and the risk of sexual harassment. It was interesting to note that *pola* women were concerned about their vulnerabilities both in the immediate context of the *pola* environment and at the wider community level.

The sacrifices undertaken by *pola* women to improve their families' living conditions cannot be measured in monetary terms. The pathway out of poverty chosen by these women is not an easy one: it involves a struggle, shame, fear, and hard work. *Pola* women are recognised as being economically important, yet they have been socially marginalised in the Mahaweli economy. For most of the women interviewed, trading at *polas* is simply a survival strategy.

The above narratives show that participating in *pola* trading has increased the women *pola* traders' vulnerability with many losing self-esteem and a sense of dignity as a result of the nature of the work in which they are engaged. However, in terms of personal empowerment, they at least have the ability to respond to poverty and to challenge the

norms of a male-dominated arena. They know how to interact with the outside world, and they have self-confidence. At the same time, economic participation by *pola* women does not necessarily lead to any changes in their power status in terms of the relational dimension of empowerment, as they do not have the ability to control the prevailing patriarchal ideologies in society. While the women often develop loose networks of cooperation between themselves, this kind of cooperation is very weak as they cannot compete with the male traders, nor can they negotiate as a group with government officers or local politicians who play important roles in the administration and allocation of stalls at *polas*.

I have demonstrated in this paper that economic participation has not helped to empower the *pola* women at collective and close relationship levels, as defined by Rowlands. However, economic participation has empowered the women to a certain extent at the individual level. I am sceptical as to whether individual level empowerment will strengthen them or lead to collective and close relationship empowerment, as the women face multiple forms of vulnerability at home, at the market place and in society.

In the future, women's economic improvement and empowerment programmes will need to give special attention to *pola* women. Their right to life with dignity should be ensured and attempts made to alleviate the various vulnerabilities they face. Attention should especially be paid to their safety at the *pola*. The important contribution the *pola* women make to the betterment of their own families and the overall economy must be recognised. Patriarchal attitudes should acknowledge the fact that the women are involved in both productive and reproductive roles. Future initiatives to empower women must take into consideration not only women's participation in economic activities but also the need to reduce their vulnerabilities. It is only through reducing vulnerabilities that women can be empowered in the long run.

Article: 5

BREAKING A VICIOUS CYCLE: FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR STRUGGLES TO ESCAPE POVERTY IN SYSTEM H OF THE ACCELERATED MAHAWELI DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (AMDP) IN SRI LANKA

Fazeeha Azmi (Under review)

Abstract

This article investigates how women who head households and are also sole breadwinners in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) of Sri Lanka attempt to alleviate poverty. The rational for making female heads who are without male income earners the focal point of this analysis is primarily to highlight their disadvantaged position. The study focuses on such women from three different types of settlements located in System H of the AMDP. From narratives extrapolated from three life stories, this article aims to highlight how these women negotiate for their family's well being in various contexts. It reveals how, in the absence of any other income earners and no one to take care of the household chores, female headship exacerbates poverty. While escaping this situation depends on their individual capabilities, and productive and reproductive roles, it is also embedded in the specific settlement context in which they live and in the broader social, economic, cultural, and political processes that operate in local and global levels. Influenced by such factors, the avenues the women have sought to escape poverty are not empowering. The research concludes that these women are in a disadvantaged position in terms of escaping poverty and their risk of falling deeper into poverty remains high.

Introduction

Reference to women in terms of female headed households (FHHs) and their links with poverty is not new though it is a controversial issue. In the literature, while one line of argument holds that focus on female headed households is worthy of special consideration (Dwyer & Bruce 1988), the contrary view emphasizes that female headed household should not be the main target as such households are not always poor (Fuwa 2000). Some argue that targeting female headed households in poverty and social disadvantage is worthwhile, but the strategies should focus on the heterogeneity of female headed households as they are not always poor (Buvinic & Gupta 1997). Because FHHs are diversely represented and positioned in different societies and they cannot be treated as a homogeneous group. They may differ according to their age, children, length of the time that they have been heading the households, and access to resources and capabilities. Therefore, how FHHs become poor and how they try to escape poverty vary widely. At the same time, FHHs' attempts to overcome poverty are linked with a number of factors, such as their individual capabilities, access to resources, gender roles, family support, number of dependents, composition of the family, other income earners in the family, and the different contexts within which they live. In addition to these factors, globalization and changing local phenomena also have implications for FHHs and their link with poverty.

According to estimates of poverty in Sri Lanka during the period 1985–1991, the difference between male and female headed households was insignificant (Datt & Gunawardane 1997) and an association of greater poverty with FHHs was only prevalent in urban areas. In terms of income – which is still the dominant poverty indicator – female heads' disadvantaged position cannot be made clear. A World Bank (1995) poverty assessment on Sri Lanka has also concluded that the incidence of poverty among FHHs is no worse than that of male headed households. These conclusions are based on income-based poverty measurements alone. A broader understanding of poverty focusing on qualitative measures will indicate female heads of households are often poorer among poor.

Although the various Sri Lankan governments that have come to power since 1972 have incorporated women in many of their development attempts, and in *Sri Lanka's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (Government of Sri Lanka, 2002), diversity among women has not been much acknowledged[1]. Kottegoda (2003, 202), while acknowledging the fact that the most recent government documents on poverty and poor are gender neutral, criticizes the policy makers for overlooking different forms of families (such as FHHs) and for continuously considering males as the heads of the households in poverty reduction programmes. Ruwanpura (2003, 5), in her study on the survival strategies of female heads of households in the conflict areas of Eastern Sri Lanka, notes that 'historical and legislative reforms along with ethno nationalist discourses curtail the possibility of women's economic independence as well as their social space'. In the case of FHHs, the implications of such limiting factors are stronger compared to other women in Sri Lankan society.

In Sri Lanka research focusing on FHHs' link with poverty has mostly been confined to urban areas. However, with the significant increase in FHHs due to the ongoing war in the country, FHHs' link between poverty in the conflict areas has received increased attention during the last two decades (Alisan 2004; Ruwanpura 2003). However, research concerning FHHs' link with poverty in Sri Lanka's largest colonization project, the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP), which was implemented during the late 1970s, as being relatively been low, needs proper attention. Within the literature on the AMDP, considerable research has focused on issues related to women (de Zoysa 1995; Lund 1978; Raby 1995; Schrijvers 1985). Key themes in these studies included property rights, access to resources, women's living conditions and changing positions, marginalization, social adaptation, and changing gender roles. Within this body of literature, however, a relatively under-explored theme is FHHs' association with poverty and the different ways in which they try to escape poverty. This article attempts to fill this knowledge gap.

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[1] Before 1972 women were not visible in any of the government's national development plans. (Jayaweera 2002)

Main objectives of this article are first, to explore how FHHs, who are now without male income earners, in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project became poor or experience worse living conditions than previously, and second, to explore different ways they strive to make a living for themselves and their dependents in the context of challenging and changing local and global phenomena. The fieldwork for this research was carried out between November 2004 and June 2005. The study took place in three different types of settlements in System H. I employed the snowball method to find the informants. I listened to the life stories of three different categories of FHHs to learn how they became heads of their households and poor, and also how they make use of the available opportunities and what constraints they face in their attempts to break the vicious cycles of poverty. In trying to understand their struggles from the life stories collected, the study makes reference to important themes (which shape the directions of the women's attempts) that emerged in the stories and discusses such themes.

The article is organized as follows: first, I provide a brief account of the AMDP. Next, I describe the methodology adopted in this research. Here, I argue how life stories can provide deeper insight to unheard voices in poverty-related research, such as those of the FHHs. I then present stories of three different FHHs recounting how they became head of their households and slid into poverty. I analyze their stories and narratives about their attempts to escape poverty, and conclude that although attempts are made to escape poverty, FHHs in the AMDP area are more vulnerable to falling into poverty rather than escaping from it.

The AMDP: The context

The Mahaweli Development Programme (MDP) was the largest multipurpose project undertaken in the country between the late 1970s and was accelerated in 1977 in order to transcend the overwhelming socio-economic problems encountered by the government. Since then, the project has changed its name to the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme (AMDP) (Figure 1). The project involved land irrigation, resettlement of poor families (both within and outside the project area), generation of hydropower, and

provision of physical and social infrastructure. In the AMDP, each settler family received 1 hectare of new irrigated land and 0.2 hectares of land for a homestead with which to start their new life in the project settlements. For administrative purposes, the project area was divided into different systems or zones. I conducted my research in three different settlements in a System called 'H' (Fig. 1) which was the first project area to be developed under the AMDP.
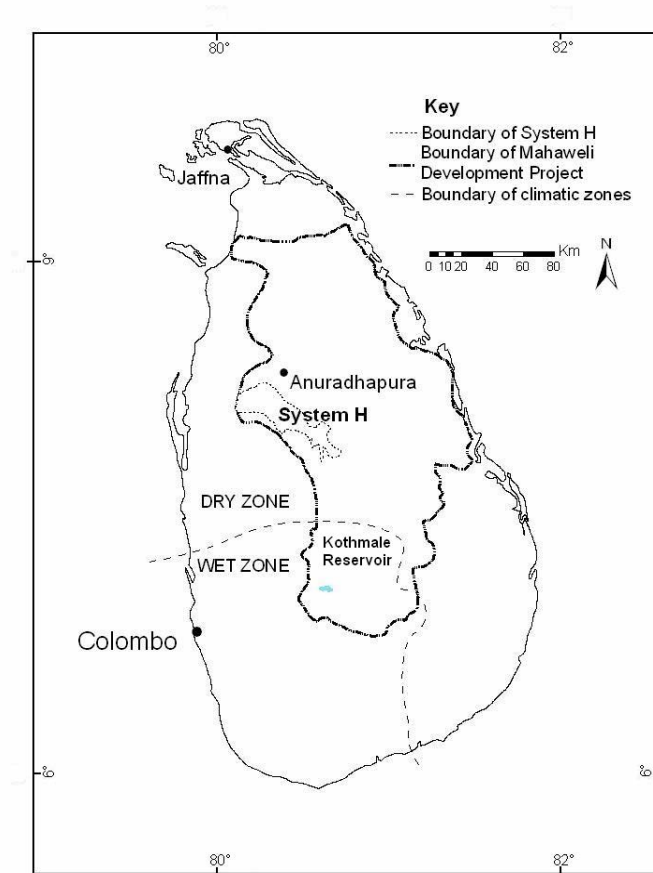
Fig.1. Location of AMDP

(Reprinted from Changing livelihoods among the second and third generations of settlers in System H of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project (AMDP) in Sri Lanka Fazeeha Azmi, Norwegian Journal of Geography, www.tandf.no/ngeog, 2007, 61:1, 1-12. by permission of Talyor & Francis As).

The social composition of settlers in System H varied tremendously in terms of settler backgrounds, knowledge, employment, gender, and what they brought to the settlements.

The settlers in system 'H' are classified into three main categories: original settlers, evacuee settlers and new settlers. Original settlers are from traditional (*purana*) villages which existed even before the implementation of the AMDP, and they form the majority in System H. Evacuee settlers are those who lost their properties due to dam constructions under the AMDP. Finally, new settlers came from other parts of the country and either did not own land or had been given land due to their political affiliation with the ruling party at the time. With their different backgrounds, the settlers started their lives in System H on different footings. After almost 30 years, with the changing socio-economic, political and cultural phenomena, some of the settlers have made their way out of poverty or have been able to improve their situation, while many have not achieved the same successes. The latter group has included women and of these especially FHHs face multiple challenges in escaping poverty.

Who constitute FHHs in the AMDP?

In Sri Lanka, the head of the household is generally the oldest man in the house, as in many Asian countries where male-dominant ideologies exist. Only in the absent of a man does a woman become the head of the household. In the AMDP this ideology has been in existence since planning and implementation (Schrijvers 1985). Women living in System H are not homogeneous. They differ in terms of age, caste, what type of settler background they have, marital status, attitudes, educational level, etc. Among the women in the AMDP, FHHs are strikingly diverse. They constitute different types of female heads with different reasons for becoming heads of their households. According to the settlers, women heading households in the AMDP fall into three main categories, namely widows, divorced or separated, and unmarried and abandoned.[2] My research focused on three different types of women who headed their households: a widow, a divorcee and an abandoned woman. However, unmarried women (very few in numbers) in the settlements who head their

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[2] Female headed households are generally classified as de jure; the woman is accepted as alone, legally or under customary practice (usually widowed or divorced) or de facto (the man absent temporarily, and in some cases women have been abandoned but are still perceived as having a male partner, or households headed by women who have never married). However, these stereotype categories cannot be uniformly applied in the global contexts. In Sri Lanka, generally the head of the household is the oldest man in the house, as in many Asian countries where male-dominant ideologies exist. Only in the absence of a man does a woman become the head of the household.

households could not be approached as they did not show their willingness to be studied when I approached them.

Stories and narratives in understanding the link between FHHs and poverty

During the last three decades there have been considerable changes in the approaches to studying and understanding poverty. This reflects the multidimensional nature of poverty and also the different ways it is experienced by different individuals, and understood and represented. It is now widely accepted that how poverty is defined, conceptualized and experienced varies according to individuals and according to different contexts. A study focussing on the understanding the link between FHHs and poverty needs to consider individual experiences of poverty and the different approaches they adopt to escape it. To capture such experiences, participatory approaches to the study of poverty provide a wide range of tools and techniques for collecting data, which are flexible and mainly qualitative. Among the different qualitative methods, stories analysed in terms of narratives have enabled researchers to study the world through the eyes of the researched.

Vandsemb (1995, 413) claims that 'Narrative is both phenomenon and method'. Riley & Hawe (2005, 227) point out that although stories and narratives are used interchangeably, in analysis they should be treated differently. This defines the position of researcher and researched. Stories are central to narrative inquiries. In poverty studies, stories provide detailed information on how people become poor and how they relate to the opportunities and constraints they face. Therefore, in a study attempting to understand how FHHs become poor and their attempts to escape poverty in a resettlement context, making use of individual stories is very important as they can shed light on both individual and structural causes that lead to people become poorer and which hinder or support the different ways in which people try to escape poverty. Vandsemb (1995) points out that people's stories can capture complete pictures that are not visible to researchers. This is particularly useful for this study because even among women or female heads, the reasons behind becoming poor and attempts to escape poverty vary. Their stories may reveal different dimensions, understanding or representations of poverty beyond the presumptions of the researcher.

Therefore, stories play a valuable role in understanding the diverse experience of poverty that cannot be understood by stereotype quantitative methods.

Narrative inquiry may give new and deeper insight into a complicated issue such as poverty because narratives allow the storyteller's voice to be heard. In narrative analysis the researcher's role is to make use of stories to highlight the underlying narrative that the storytellers may not give voice to themselves (Riley and Hawe 2005). Lawler (2002) claims that narratives are 'social products produced by people within the contexts of specific social, historical and cultural locations'. In this way, narratives are not only about individuals but also about their surrounding world. In understanding poverty, narratives offer a means of exploring how different social actors become poor and slide into poverty by stressing their needs, realities and priorities.

This article presents FHHs' stories of poverty. In order to understand the FHHs' struggle to escape poverty in the settlements, I have used the stories of three different FHHs in the research settlements. I found that narratives derived from stories are very useful for exploring the ways in which the FHHs became poor and how they face constraints and make use of available opportunities to escaping poverty. I also found that FHHs and their links to poverty is a relatively unexplored issue in System H, and using stories to unravel the women's experience of poverty will give voice to them.

From wives to widows and abandonees

The following stories and narratives deal with how FHHs in the settlements I studied reflected on the women's situation: how they became heads of the households and poor. Women assume headship of households for number of reasons. However, the loss of their husband was considered as a rupture point in their life.

Stories of loss

Not all women are able to cope with a sudden life course change. For the women in this study, the absence of a husband immediately resulted in psychological traumas of desertion and loss and it forced the women to take on the responsibility of economic and social

maintenance of the family. Overcoming this challenge partly depended on their individual capabilities and partly on other processes at work.

The story of Swarnamalika

    I don't know whether my husband is alive or not. He left me and my son in 2003, and since then he has not contacted me. I worked in a garment factory in Colombo (Figure.1). He also worked in the same factory. We fell in love and we married against the wishes of our families. I know my parents will not be able to spend money on my marriage as they are poor and totally depended on me to meet the daily needs. My father sold the paddy land he owned. He ruined our childhood because of his alcohol addiction. I always had a dream to live a life without worries, unlike my childhood. My husband came from a relatively good family compared to mine. His family threatened me to stop our love affair when they came to know about it, but we could not do that and with the help of some friends, we married without informing our families. When they came to know about our marriage, we were expelled from our families. We had a hard time when we started our new life at the beginning. I worked hard in the factory and was able to save more money. Our life gradually improved and became stable. After some time I became pregnant. It was during this time that my husband lost his job as he was suspected of being involved in a theft in the factory. He believed our unborn baby would not bring any fortune to us and he asked me to abort it. I did not agree. After that, he did not allow me to continue my work in the factory. I know that it is difficult to find another job. I told him that until he found another job, I would continue to work in the factory. He did not like that idea and he started to fight with me even over small incidents. One day, when I came from the factory I discovered that he had left home, taking all my jewellery and some money that I had. It was really a shock to me. I became helpless (*asarana*). I did not have anybody to help me except for some of my friends in the factory, but as I was pregnant how long could I expect them to help me? So I decided to contact my elder sister. I asked her for help. She told me she had to discuss this with her husband first. One day I got a letter from her to say that I could stay with them in the village. So I left my job and went to live with my sister. At the age of 21, I gave birth to my son, who is three now. This is what happened to me. I really wanted to have a good future. I did not want my son to live the miserable life that I had lived, but I don't know why my husband did not understand this fact. I still have contacts with my fellow workers in the factory. One of them wrote and told me that my husband was

working as a security guard in a tourist hotel in the South. I don't know whether he is alive or not after the [2004] tsunami. (Swarnamalika 23 years old)

Swarnamalika is a young abandoned woman from a *purana* village which was absorbed into the AMDP. She now lives in a small hut closer to her sister's house. She was abandoned by her husband since 2003. Now she is dependent upon her sister's family for every need. Despite having lived a miserable life as a child, when her parents were poor and had many children, she had been a future-oriented woman and had been optimistic. She always hoped for a life without suffering, hence she started to engage in income earning activities even before she married. She considers her state of being poor and helpless as only temporarily. At the same time she also realizes the challenges she has to face as an abandoned young woman, searching for a job in order to support her family. She worries about her husband taking all her jewellery, as she believes it could have helped in her current situation.

The story of Jayamini

Jayamini, aged 39, is a young widow from a new settlement (settlers from other parts of the country) in System H. She has not yet recovered from the shock from her husband's death. Now, along with her five children whose ages range from 5 to 16 years and who all attend school, she is living a hard life. She does not have a permanent source of income. Her husband worked as a casual labourer at the Road Development Authority when she married him. They had three daughters and two sons. Her husband had encroached upon a piece of land in 1985, where she lives now. Her house is a small one, constructed with permanent building materials but not yet completed. When they started their family life, their life was difficult. Her husband owned a couple of cows, and they sold the milk to wholesale milk collectors in the town. Later, her husband started to produce curd at home, and Jayamini helped him with this work. The business ran smoothly for approximately one year, until her husband managed to buy a motorbike, and then the shock came. She explained how she became a widow:

One day, a curd buyer told us that our curd was spoiling too soon and they could not buy our curd any more. We did not understand what went wrong. It was a loss for us. However,

my husband started a papaw business. He collected papaws from surrounding villages and sold them in Colombo. I helped him with sorting out and cleaning the papaws. When he returned home from Colombo he brought bed sheets and sold them in the government offices close to our settlement. Both of these businesses gave reasonable profits to the family. He had lot of money and lots of friends too. He became addicted to alcohol as he had more money than previously. One day when he was travelling from town to our home in his motorbike, he collided with a lorry. He was seriously injured and taken to hospital. The doctors said they would have to amputate both of his legs. I cried a lot, but to save his life there was no choice other than to amputate his legs. With the help of my neighbours I took him to Colombo for further treatment. Since I came to live in this village, I have not much been out. So everything came as a shock to me. My husband did all of the outside work. I went out only if I wanted to go the temple or to the hospital if either I or my children became sick. When he was at hospital, I could not sleep at nights if I started to think of the future of my children. I sold the cows we had and also the television to cover the medical expenses and to feed the family. I could not think of any other ways. After spending six months in hospital, my husband passed away. I had to borrow money from a money lender for my husband's funeral expenses. My husband's family could not provide any help after he had passed away. They are also poor. Now I have only my children to help me. They are still attending school. I cannot ruin their education. They ate three meals a day when their father was present. Now I don't have money to give them three meals. My elder son has told several times that he will give up his studies and find a job, yet if my husband were alive he would never have allowed my son to do this. How can I let him leave give up his education? (Jayamini, 39 years old)

Jayamini became a widow in 2003. Her story reveals that she is already in a vulnerable position. Although previously she had helped her husband in his business, she has not since engaged in any income earning activities of her own. She was dependent upon her husband, economically. She may slide into deeper poverty soon unless she finds employment that could at least fulfil the basic needs of her family.

Story of Heenmenike

Heenmenike is from an evacuee village. She is a widow who married again. Now she has been abandoned by her second husband too. Her parents had a good income from the plot

of tea land they had before they lost the land to Kothmale Reservoir (Figure.1) construction under the AMDP. However Heenmenike's parents did not opt to move into new AMDP settlements unlike many people who decided to migrate. Instead, her father bought a land in a nearby village close to their original village. Heenmenike came to her present place after marrying Sarath, her first husband. She was given a good dowry when she married in 1985, when she was 25 years. Her husband, along with his family moved to System H in the 1980s, as they had lost their land due to dam construction under the AMDP. Sarath and Heenmenike lived in a small house close to Sarath's parents' house. Heenmenike's parents helped to finance the building of a house for her on a piece of land belonging to Sarath's father. Heenmenike and Sarath had a son, and they enjoyed a relatively good life. They also had a good reputation in the settlement as Sarath's family was actively engaged in several village level organizations and temple-related activities. Sarath worked on his family's land and Heenmenike assisted him. She also grew vegetables in her home garden for domestic consumption. Until he passed away they had a peaceful life on what they earned.

Now at 45 years old, once widowed and now abandoned, Heenmenike, looks much older than her actual age. She lives with her two sons; the oldest is 17 years and the youngest is 12 years. At the time I interviewed her, she had been abandoned by her second husband for the past six years. When I asked her about how she became the head of the household she told her story of loss with much emotion:

> When my husband passed away I tried to commit suicide, but I did not do that because of my little son. After my husband's death, I moved into the house of my husband's parents. I had a very difficult time and I had many problems there. I had to do all the housework when I came in from the field. When I went to bed I was tired and exhausted. However, I understood that I could not eat in their house without doing such work. I understood that if I remained, my future life would be a burden for my parents-in-law and my son would not have a good future. I also suffered a lot of economic hardship. Do you think a women like me alone can provide the basis for a good future for my son? So, I decided to marry again. It was not only because of my own interest. My sister also insisted I should marry again. When my sister told my parents-in-law about my decision to marry again, they became

very angry with me. They started to hurt me psychologically. I immediately moved into the house that my former husband built and my sister helped me financially to do some repair work. I married again in 1992 and I have another son from my second marriage. My second husband was a lorry driver and he used to transport vegetables from our village to Colombo. He was very good at the beginning and he did not treat my elder son differently. That made me very happy. One day he told he wanted to buy a van so that he could earn more rather than working for others. He asked me for money. I did not have much savings, so I gave him what and borrowed the rest from a money lender. However, he never bought a van. Whenever I asked him about this he used to say it is not easy to find a van for a cheap price and had to wait until he had more money. Then I asked him return the money and told him I could give the money back to the money lender until he found a van. After that he did not stay much at home. He came home every fortnight and then gradually he stopped coming home. With the passing of time I understood that his behaviour was changing. Whenever I asked about why he was behaving like that, he was angry with me and he shouted at me. He gradually stopped giving me money for daily expenses. I started to borrow money from my neighbours. Later I came to know from a friend of his that he was already married in Colombo and had grown up children. I was really worried about that news. All my dreams faded away. What was I to do? Now I feel I should not have married again. If I had not, I would have at least some money left. My first husband was like a god. I am not lucky to continue my life with him. I must have committed a big sin in my previous life. Now I am paying for that. I have two sons. Since my second husband left me, I started to do coolie work in the village again, but you know how difficult it is nowadays to cope with the rising prices. I have been doing this for the past six year; look at me. Once I went to my own village for the funeral of an uncle of mine and my friends did not recognize me. When they heard my story they too felt sad. (Heenmenike 45 years old)

Heenmenike's story shows how she experienced double tragedies in her married life. Death of her first husband according to her is the greatest tragedy. She took the decision to remarry as she had experienced economic hardship in raising her son and providing a good future for him. However, she could not attain what she expected from her second marriage. Rather, her situation became worse than it was prior to her second marriage. She has been working hard to bring up her sons and she has great expectations that her sons will take care of her in the future.

Summary

The stories reveal how these women became widows or abandoned. Prior to these events, their lives were characterized by economic prosperity, family happiness, social recognition, and satisfaction. After they became FHHs they lost all of these immaterial qualities. The stories further reveal that after the absence of their husbands the women were forced to adapt to the role of the head of the household while maintaining the family well being, which they identified as a big challenge for them considering their present martial status. They linked the loss of their husbands immediately with themselves and their families becoming poor. They also are suffering from the psychological traumas of desertion and loss. When their husbands were present, the women supported them to improve their family well being, either by involving in unremunerated work in the support of their husbands' economic activities (Heenmenike and Jayamini) or in remunerated work (Swarnamalika). They also said that they had a good social position in society as married women with children. Being poverty a dynamic process (Chambers 1983) these women are now fallen into it. How quickly they can come out of poverty or alleviate it depends on how vulnerable are they to the existing structures and different other processes at work, and also their individual capabilities which shape their attempts. Relative to other women in the settlements, they face drawbacks in socio-economic and political realms due to their new position. Further, the women are also constrained by existing patriarchal, cultural and social norms in the society in which they live. At the same time, all these aspects should be seen in relation to the women's heterogeneity.

Narratives: different responses break the vicious circle

Having considered the stories of how the women became poor or worse off than previously, after the loss or absence of their husbands, I will examine their responses to the question of what they have been doing or were planning to do in order to alleviate poverty. The stories and narratives below reveal what FHHs do to rescue their families from poverty and to understand the various factors that enable or restrict their abilities to overcome poverty. In this article, FHHs' attempts to alleviate poverty are conceptualized as the different productive activities they are engaged in and their plans for the future, as

prioritized by them. This section therefore seeks to reveal the many ways in which FHHs in System H mediate their multiple roles and negotiate the various opportunities and constraints they face in their attempts to alleviate poverty.

Negotiating to make a living

In all three stories, the first priority mentioned by the women was to maintain their family well being in both economic and social terms. They identified economic well being as the most important and urgent matter that needed attention; their first priority was to maintain the economic well being of their families. According to their stories, the constraints they faced and opportunities they made use of in terms of maintaining their family well being are typified by employment opportunities in the settlements, individual capabilities, networks and kinships, social norms, access to resources, and gender roles.

Employment opportunities in the settlements

Being in employment was the foremost concern of the women I studied in the settlements. Their stories revealed that effective way to secure their families against the risk of sliding into poverty or deeper poverty is to be employed or to engage in self-employment:

> I have been doing coolie work for the last six years. The income I earn is barely enough to cover even the basic expenses. Coolie work in paddy fields is decreasing and men who cannot find any other employment outside the settlement do coolie work in the paddy fields. Further, today's generation is not interested in paddy cultivation. So the number of people engaged in paddy cultivation is decreasing. Unemployed men in our village go for the available work in agriculture. So how can women like me survive? Now I have started to prepare handmade paper bags at home and sell them to the shops. (Heenmenike)

> Now I am doing some coolie work in the village. It is not easy to get such work daily. Many men do not have jobs in the village. Did you notice that they are sitting outside the village shops, gossiping and gambling? If there are no jobs for men in the village, how can women get jobs? I will not be able to find a job here. I have to go out of this village to find a good job. In the future I hope I will be able to find a good job outside this village. (Swarnamalika)

Due to the economic policies adopted in the late 1970s and along with the wider context of change in the world economy fuelled by globalization, agricultural activities of Sri Lanka generally have had to undergo dramatic changes. The AMDP, which is predominantly an agricultural project, suffered severely from such changes. Due to the changes which occurred in the agricultural sector, the nation's productive structure created a labour surplus of unqualified workers in many rural areas, including settlements in the AMDP. These unqualified workers remain unemployed or underemployed in the villages.

Along with the changes which have occurred both at national and global levels, changes which have occurred in the settlements have also created agriculture as a problematic issue. At present, agricultural activities, especially paddy cultivation, are declining in the settlement areas due to lack of productive land, population increase, lack of water during the cultivation season, high input costs, sudden drought, and decreasing prices for agricultural products. This situation has made the people who depended on agricultural labour as an income earning source in these settlements worse off than previously. This is especially the case for women like Heenmenike and Jayamini, whose mobility outside the village for the sake of employment is impossible due to their household responsibilities.

During the informal discussions, the settlers revealed that the cultivation of subsidiary cash crops has increased in the settlements. They grow subsidiary crops such as chillies, onions, cowpeas and *mung* beans. Women in the settlements are involved in such agricultural activities too. However, their involvement means they lose the advantage of the proximity of home and workplace. Mothers who do not have anyone to take care of younger children for them have to take their young children with them, setting out early in the morning and returning home late in the evening during peak harvest seasons. Heenmenike was engaged in such an income earning activity, while Jayamini was not, as she has young children. Swarnamalika had taken her son to work, but as her employers did not like this arrangement she could not continue and now she goes to work only if her sister stays at home and takes care of her children. The income earning activities of the women under study are not empowering due to the associated risks and the limited amount of time they can spend working. Not only do they do not work regularly, they are also paid less than

their male counterparts. They can be satisfied only for one reason, namely that their choice has helped them to balance the family and work.

Under new economic reforms influence by globalization, the setting up of garment industries and employment opportunities in Middle Eastern countries, has provided employment opportunities for women with few or no skills, who are mainly from rural areas in the country. This change has resulted in the roles women formerly played as unpaid family workers changing to those of independent income earners. These employment opportunities have forced many rural women to move from their original villages to find waged employment. While these changes occurred earlier in other villages, settlements in the AMDP underwent such changes relatively recently. Further, although economic policy changes and globalization have opened the previously closed employment opportunities for women, such changes have not benefited all. Thus, FHHs such as Heenmenike, Jaymini and Swarnamallika as differently positioned actors in the social phenomena have differing access to such opportunities. Employers, whether at export processing zones (EPZs) or from Middle Eastern countries, often choose women workers based on criteria such as age, marital status, number of children, appearance, and where they come from. Due to their marital position in the society, FHHs who are widows, separated or abandoned and with dependent children are far from being able to access such opportunities. Although Swarnamalika was able to work in a factory before her marriage and before she had her son, her access to factory work is now uncertain, yet she is willing to work and has a plan to find a gainful employment.

Individual capabilities

Education and job skills are important for women to escape or minimize the risk of vulnerability to poverty. In Sri Lanka, due to the welfare policies adopted by the Government, women have equal access to education compared to other countries in the region. Education is also considered a success story in terms of the gender perspective in Sri Lanka (Jayaweera 2002). Free and compulsory primary education is the reason behind

the country's high literacy rate. However, not all women are fortune enough to gain access to education.[3]

> I went to school only up to the 5th grade. I am from a remote village. Our school was very far from our home. I went to school with my elder brother, but he stopped schooling when he was in Grade 8 so my parents did not allow me to go to school alone. I had a dream of becoming a dance teacher. I had the talent and had participated in school competitions. I asked my parents not to stop me from attending school. They did not listen to me. In those days, in our village many girls do not go to school after they reached puberty. It has changed a lot now. You cannot find a child not going to school these days. I think we should educate our children. It is very important for a good future. If we can educate our children, they will not suffer like me. (Jayamini)

> I have studied up to Grade 8. My parents could not spend much on our education but I do not regret that. When I was in Colombo, I knew of many people who had studied at universities who were without jobs. I have already worked in a garment factory. I have the experience. Now I cannot go outside the village to find employment as I do not have anyone to take care of my son regularly. If I cannot find any job outside, I will open a tailor shop in the village. (Swaranmalika)

> It is not like now. During that time we did not realize the importance of education. I did not go to school after I reached puberty, nor did my sister. In our village many girls do not go to school after they reach the age of puberty. (Heenmenike)

From the stories it is evident how individual, social and cultural factors have influenced choices regarding women's education. Jayamini's and Heenmenike's access to education was curtailed by the social norms that existed in their villages, though they had aspirations to study. Compared to the past, the situation today has much improved and social and cultural hindrances to women's education are disappearing, even in rural areas. In Swarnamalika's case, her education was disrupted by poverty. However, she is not worried as she has already had work experience in a garment factory which she thinks will help her

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[3] Jayaweera (2002) explains women's experience in education and employment in Sri Lanka when she points out that in term of employment women are not able achieve what they expected from their education.

to find a job in a garment factory again. If she cannot find a job, she thinks she can use her experience to run a tailor shop in the village.

Education is an important capability that contributes to quality of life (Sen 1999). Capabilities reflect the real opportunities people have to lead or achieve a certain type of life (Sen 1999). An individual's capabilities are essential to their attempts to alleviate poverty. Individual *capabilities* are important to convert *resources* or *commodities* into *functioning*. At the same time, it is important to consider the fact that people differ in their abilities to convert resources or commodities into functioning (Sen 1999). It depends on one's personal characteristics as well as on external circumstances. Therefore, the capabilities of individuals may vary considerably according to who they are in the wider society, the different aspects of the contexts in which they live, what they possess, and what they prefer (Nussbaum 2000). As a result, individual achievements also can vary. In the stories presented, Swarnamalika's possibility of finding comparatively good employment is better than that of Heenmenike and Jayamini. Further, Heenmenike and Jayamini do not possess any skills, even to engage in self-employment. Their limited capabilities (education, training) tend to lock them into a vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation. However, since they are living during a period of wider socio-economic and cultural transformation at local and global levels they will have to react to the pressures of such changes if they are to escape poverty. They realize that they cannot achieve their past expectations in terms of education, and they believe that providing education for their children could be a remedy against poverty in the future. Therefore they are working hard to secure their children's education.

Kinship ties and networks
Kinship and social networks play an important role in escaping poverty.

> I will be able to go to work only if there is someone to look after my son and my sister's children. I can work only if my sister does not have any employment. Sometimes I used to take my son with me when I find casual jobs in the village, but people do not like it when I go with my son. I am sure that if I can send him to school, my sister will look after him and then I can find a job in a garment factory or in a foreign country. (Swarnamalika)

> I cannot leave my children alone at home and go to work. I have two grown-up daughters. If there was someone at home I could have left the children with them and found a work. All my relatives are living in faraway places. I have to start a business that I can do from my home. Now, I have started to grind dried chillies at home. I pack them and sell them to local shops. In the future I have an idea to expand this small-scale business. (Jayamini)

Unlike the women in *purana* villages, women who originally came from outside the settlement area kinships and networks are not readily approachable.[4] Within the *purana* villages marriages have taken place between relatives and within the same caste. By contrast, the immigrant male settlers have married women from their former villages or from outside the settlement area. Under the *deega* (patrilocal marriage) system of marriage, upon marriage women in Sri Lanka typically move from their parent's home to their husband's house. Married women are isolated from their own families most of the time and hence they lose an important source of social support if they have to undertake income earning activities. After the settlers in System H left their original villages their bondage with their villages and former families were no longer strong. For those who migrated to the AMDP from other parts of the country, the association with non-kin also provided social support and security. However, this support is not always reliable or secure. In the case of Heenmenike, Jayamini and Swarnamallika, they are very careful and selective in creating more networks as they believe they may easily become the subject of village gossip if they choose the wrong network. Therefore, they limit their social network, which otherwise could have been the source of information for finding employment opportunities. However, kinship ties are getting weaker, even in the traditional villages.[5] The settlers interviewed were worried that due to the commercialization of agriculture and

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[4] Although the families who came to the settlement from outside managed to establish some sort of networks and relationship with fellow villagers, they always do not trust them fully.
[5] Today in Mahaweli settlements the traditional form of labour exchange (*attam*) in agricultural activities is being replaced by casual labour (*Kuli weda*).

competitiveness created by socio-economic changes in the country the social spirit is eroding and people have become more selfish. They also pointed out that due to these attitudes people are forgetting their familial and social obligations. This has far reaching implications for the disadvantaged groups like FHHs.

Unlike previously, women no longer like to work on their family farms as unpaid workers, so they are compelled to seek gainful employment in order to avoid economic hardship. Therefore, in the settlements, traditional mutual assistance involving relatives and friends has come to a stage where it is largely decided by labour markets. Further, men's abilities to earn money for a decent living are decreasing in the settlements. The impact of weakening kinship ties has important implications for FHHs, who do not have any one to take care of their children when they working away from home. In Swarnamalika's case, although she is living with her sister she can do coolie work only if her sister does not have any work and can stay at home. Previously, in traditional villages extended families served as practical and emotional resources for women who performed remunerated or unremunerated work. Today many women are engaged in remunerated work, even outside their villages. Therefore, the traditional practice of mutual help is declining. Heenmenike's children are going to school, so she is not so dependent on her neighbours to take care of them. Further, when she leaves for work, leaving her grown-up sons at home is not a problem, unlike it is for Jayamini, who finds it difficult to leave her daughters if she has to go out to work.

Social norms
The stories reveal the social norms regarding widows or abandoned women.

> Being a separated young mother, it is not easy for me to find a job. I am young I have the strength to work. However, I have to be careful, as I may become the talking point in the village boutiques. This is a village where if a young widow like me goes out to work or even talks to a man the villagers will talk badly about us. (Swarnamalika)

> My first husband's family still thinks that after I joined their family, they had to face a lot of losses. In their gossip, I have been called a *moosala geni* (unlucky or miserable woman).

I hardly participate in social events. I don't want to be the talking point of others. (Heenmenike)

A friend of my husband asked me to work in his furniture shop after my husband's death. As it is very close to my home, I thought that it was a good opportunity for me. One day he tried to me abuse me sexually, so I quit the job on the same day. A woman in my position can easily become the subject of gossip. For us, it is important to have our respect (*nambuwa*), so I stopped going there. (Jayamini)

All three women value their dignity and do not want to be the topic of village gossip. They and other women like them have to renegotiate their identities in their settlement. In rural societies such as the settlements in System H, where the societal pressures exerted on widows, divorced and abandoned women, who are the heads of the households and who do not have a male income earner, together with the hard economic environments, make them more vulnerable to poverty than women whose positions are defined by their husbands' status. Influenced by strong social norms and gender stereotypes, such women may choose typically female occupations which give fewer benefits in terms of profit.

Social stigma is a burning problem that affects many of the female headed households in their attempts to escape poverty. Although Sri Lanka is in a comparatively good position in terms of women, the plight of widows and separated or abandoned women in the country's rural societies is a tough one, especially when they are poor and also the family breadwinner. Social attitudes towards widows or abandoned women have not kept pace with the changing socio-economic environment in the country. Perera (1997) points out how divorce or separation is viewed in Sinhala societies, when he states that they have negative cultural value. Although this attitude is undergoing change in urban areas, it still holds true in rural areas. In Sri Lankan society women who head households (especially widows) are still being considered as inauspicious and are always overlooked in important ceremonies (Perera 1997). This attitude has socially marginalized FHHs, and the economic opportunities for FHHs are also denied in this way.

Access to land

At present, due to the changes occurring on a broad front, income earning opportunities are becoming de-linked from land in the rural areas of many developing countries. This is particularly true in the settlements too. However, land remains an important source of income earning for many rural poor and especially for FHHs, whose mobility outside the settlements in search of employment depends on many factors.

> My in-laws say they will give this land to my elder son, but I am not sure. If he can get a plot of paddy land from his grandparents, it will be good. If they had given it earlier, I could have at least leased the land. I don't think those people will give an inch of land for my son. (Heenmenike)

> I am not sure whether I will be able to get the legal title for this land as it is encroached. People say as I have lived here for a long time I can get the title, but I am not sure. (Jayamini)

Heenmenike had built her house in a piece of land owned by her father-in-law. She was told by her former in-laws that the small plot of land where she has her house will be given to the first son, but Heenmenike is not hopeful. She thinks if she had the land, she could have leased it. Jayamini has a plot of land where she has built her house but she is not sure whether she will get the legal title or not. Neither of the women has agricultural land. In Swarnamalika's case, she is in an even more vulnerable position as she does not have her own house or land. As FHHs in the AMDP are deprived of access to land they lose many benefits which could otherwise have formed the foundation of their empowerment and their attempts to escape poverty.

In agrarian economies arable land is the most valuable, productive and livelihood sustaining resource for men and women. Agarwal (1994) discusses the importance of land rights for women by introducing three arguments. First, there is the welfare argument, in which she emphasizes the importance of land for women as a security against poverty. Under the second argument, the efficiency argument, she argues how land rights can make

women more productive. In the third argument, which she calls as the equity and empowerment argument, she points out how secure access to land can improve women's economic position and form the base for equitable negotiations with men. As the women who told their stories have no or limited access to land they have become dependent and vulnerable.

Land in Sri Lankan society, especially in rural societies where agriculture is still the heart of the economy, has traditionally also been the basis of political power and social status. Lack of land, especially of paddy land was and still is considered a social and economic disability in Sri Lanka. The legal inheritance of land in the settlement areas of the AMDP is alien to Sri Lanka's traditional legal system. In terms of tenure, women's access to land has been highlighted as one of the major issues in the AMDP (Bandarage 1998; Jayaweera 2002; Lund 1978; Schrijvers 1988; Scudder 2005). Although the project aimed at providing land to landless families, the main beneficiaries have been men. Because of this, in the AMDP unequal property relations have been created between men and women (Schrijvers 1988), contrary to the Sinhalese traditional property inheritance law. Women's access (not legal title) to land is only possible through their legal relationship with a male. Therefore, compared to other women, women in the AMDP were considered as being in a better position as they had access to land through their male partners. However, in case of divorce, separation or abandonment they stand to lose this right, which has made the AMDP women worse off than other women in the country. Since ownership of land is traditionally expected to come mainly through inheritance, female heads of the households are obviously at a disadvantage and vulnerable to poverty due to the law of inheritance in the AMDP. Lund (1993 b) also explains how the loss of inheritance rights has put women in inferior positions in the AMDP.

Gender roles and relations

Several studies of development-induced displacement and resettlement projects, have documented how the planners have undermined the existing gender relations, roles and their impacts in terms of disproportionate shares of costs and benefits among men and women (Agarwal 1994; de Zoysa 1995; Schrijvers 1985; World Commission on Dams

2000). When such development projects ignore the importance of gender at the initial planning stage the outcome of such projects may leave some people worse off than before.

While it is documented that gender roles and relations have varied and the positions of women have improved in Sri Lanka, the acceptance of this trend among many rural people is not positive. In the AMDP people still tend to place men in the breadwinner role and women in the caregiver role. Although this attitude is changing among the young generations, it is highly prevalent among men and women of older generations and especially in traditional villages. One of the male settlers in the settlement said:

> My neighbour's wife has gone abroad. Since then he has had to do all the household work and look after his children. That man has to do women's work also. Can you see what the foreign money does? (Man from System H)

> If I work at home, I can take care of my children and do my work at the same time. However, I do not have much time left to do my work after I finish all the household works, and after my children have left home to go to school. My elder sons like to help me in preparing the meals in the morning, but I did not like this. Can I allow my sons to do kitchen work? Besides, they are very young. (Jayamini)

The accounts demonstrate the conventional rural gender ideology of women's work being limited to household work and bringing up children. An interesting observation can be made about the attitude of Jaymini, who does not like her sons to undertake the tasks in the kitchen. She also considers that the kitchen is an area confined to women alone. Jayamini is undertaking both household chores and her work at home. However, as she is spending more time on household chores, it limits her ability to undertake large-scale income earning activities at home.

From the beginning, most women in the AMDP were drawn into the agricultural sector to help their husbands or families as unpaid agricultural workers. In addition to their household duties, many women carried out unpaid agricultural work. Compared to their male counter parts, they did not have any knowledge about the green revolution or about

the changes taking place in agriculture in terms of technological improvement. During the initial years of resettlement both men and women had to work hard in order to gain economic self-reliance in a totally new environment, despite their assigned gender roles. According to Lund (1993 a), while this was the case for many new settlers, in the traditional villages which were incorporated into the AMDP the traditional gender divisions of labour did not change much. The women faced several hardships; they had to work at home and also in the paddy fields. Even there, women's tasks became more of a burden than those of men. The situation of women who came from outside the settlement was worse compared to the women in *purana* villages. In *purana* villages women had the support of their extended families whereas the women who came to the settlements from the outside did not have this type of support. At the beginning, women in the AMDP areas were mostly confined to nuclear households where their household duties restricted their mobility.

In a resettlement context, as gendered actors, being a widow or separated and being the head of the household, a woman faces multiple challenges to overcome or alleviate poverty as her gender roles do not come to an end when she becomes a widow or separated. Due to their gender roles the women are expected not only to attend their household duties but they are also forced to engage in income earning activities to support their families. Because of their burdens, such women are less able to participate in social networks, which many other women have the possibility benefit from.

Conclusion

The stories of female household heads presented in this study show how they are negotiating to saving themselves and their families from poverty. The stories of FHHs consistently portrayed that their current social identities due to the loss of their husbands have not only given them a marginalized position in the society, but have also made their survival difficult in the settlements. The study also revealed the different constraints these women face in order to break the cycle of poverty, yet it also revealed how the women are making use of the few available opportunities to make their ends meet. Their choices are

not of the empowering kind. According to their stories, the women are just getting by, which may perpetuate poverty further. Therefore, the possibility of survival and avoiding poverty remains sceptical for the women and their families. The present outcomes of their attempts will be unfavourable for them and their children in the future. In summary, if the results of the women's attempts become negative, they are going to transmit the poverty to the next generation too. It must be understood why women and especially FHHs are in a disadvantaged position in terms of achieving their goals in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. There is an urgent need to consider FHHs as a special category that needs attention in future development projects.

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CHAPTER 7. WHEN THEY HAVE THE ANSWERS THE QUESTIONS HAVE CHANGED

Introduction

In the present study I have proposed an analytical framework to understand poverty that incorporates people's perceptions, which will be useful when trying to understand poverty through a livelihood approach. In the following, I relate the main findings of the research to the adopted analytical framework in order to answer the research questions and hence contribute towards meeting the objectives (as formulated in Chapter 1).
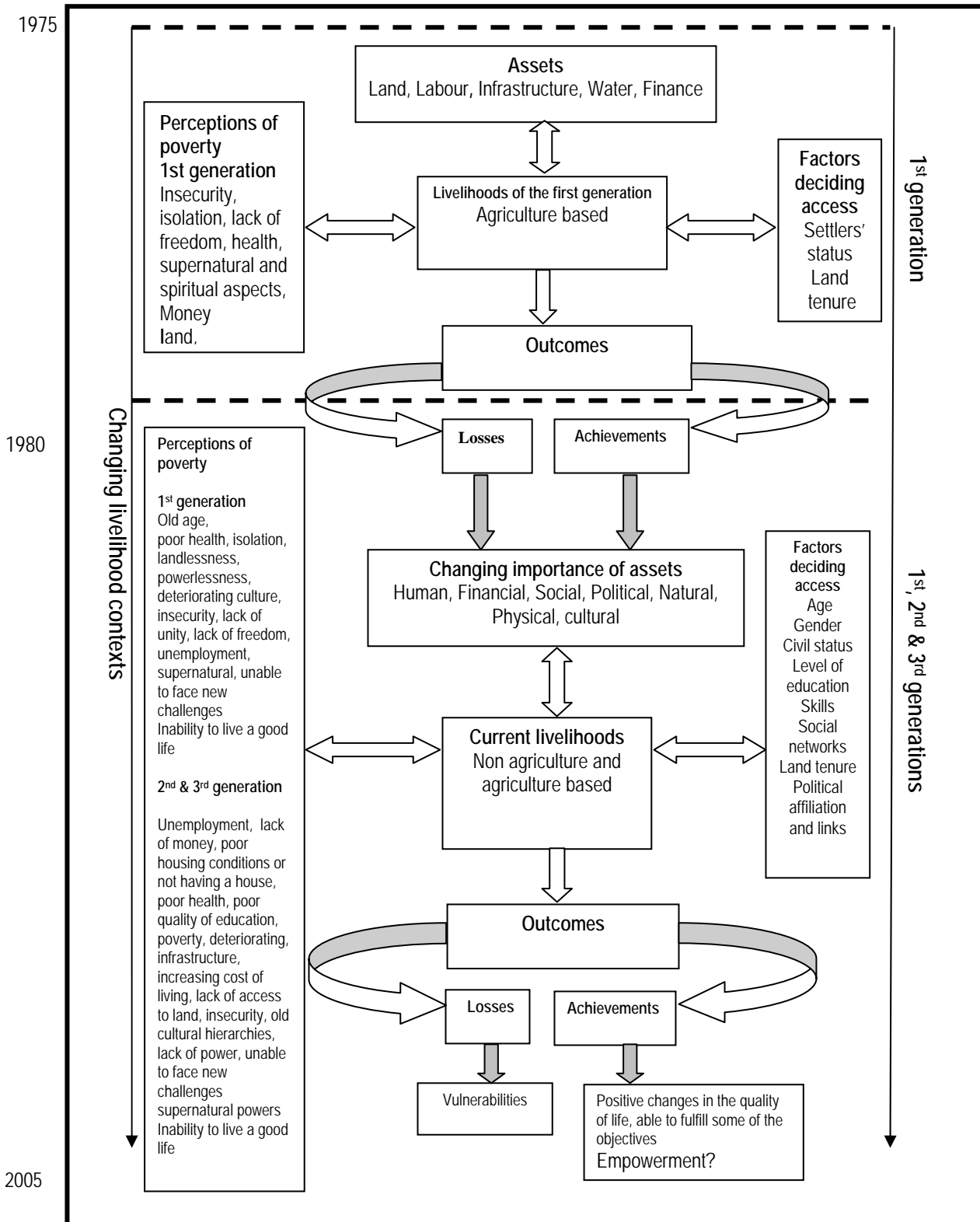
Figure 7.1: Analytical framework to analyse poverty in the context of changing

livelihoods.

(The spacing between the time periods shown on the left-hand side of the framework is not to scale.)

Responses to research questions

The first question is to understand how different generations perceive poverty. Chapter 3, which concerns the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of poverty, clearly shows that poverty is multidimensional. In this research, the narratives and group discussions have revealed that settlers also perceive poverty in relation to its various dimensions. Interestingly, this also captures the material and non-material prerequisites for a good life. First generation settlers' related their narratives on poverty with reference to two different periods. They related them both to the early resettlement period and to the present. Today, first generation settlers in the settlements are experiencing poverty in a totally different context compared to thirty years ago. What is interesting to learn from the narratives on the perception of poverty it is that today the first generation settlers are clearly experiencing many of the same dimensions of poverty as they experienced earlier, albeit in a different context. This is an important finding of this research.

The first generation settlers' perceptions of poverty capture many dimensions that are linked with poverty in old age (Sen 1981, Lloyd-Sherlock 2000). Today, for the first generation settlers, diminishing capabilities in both physical and mental terms result in poverty or increase their vulnerability to falling into poverty or, for those who are already poor, to remain in poverty. According to Sen's (1981) explanation of poverty, 'entitlement' is an important reference. The first generation settlers are poor today as a result of losing 'endowment' (loss of decision making power over what to produce, loss of labour power, mortgage, and they also have debts) and hence they are not in a position to enjoy the 'entitlement' they once had. This situation denotes that poverty is created by access to and control over resources rather than mere lack of availability. Further, Ellis also (2000) identifies age as an important component because access to and control over resources may change over time. The lifecycle changes of an individual have an important impact on his or her access to resources. The first generation settlers' perceptions of poverty revealed the importance that all of them assigned to assets. The former MDP had provided them with assets which they could use for making a living, but for many these assets were not only

sources for their livelihoods but also gave meaning to their status and power in society and within their family (Bebbington 1999, de Haan & Zoomers 2003).

Second and third generation settlers' perceptions concentrated mainly on unemployment, poor quality of education, poor health, poor housing conditions or lack of housing, rising costs of living, insecurity, and inability to face challenges created by local, regional and national economic policies. The cost of living dimension was captured mainly by women participants. What is interesting to note is that, compared to the first generation settlers, the two subsequent generations were concerned about more qualitative and better changes in their living standard. Put it in another way, their perceptions of what constitutes a 'good life' have been changing, and their goals are changing. For example, the first generation settlers did not pay much attention to having a proper home or they did not value home as an asset. While they felt the need for a home, it was just a place in which to live, and as long as the physical structure was able to protect them from the sun and rain then that was sufficient. Today, the need for a home is still felt (although settlers are at different stages in fulfilling this need), but the physical structure reflects more than it did for the first generation of settlers. Today's homes in the settlements are reflections of sites of change and contestations, reflections of social status, represent investment for the future, and stand as a symbols of globalization. The changing meaning of home and house in the settlements is discussed in Article 3, co-authored with my supervisor. Bebbington's (1999) claim concerning how assets assign social status and livelihoods are not only about making a living is exemplified through this article.

The second question that is examined in this research relates to identifying the shifting livelihoods of different generations and why people have changed their livelihoods. The livelihoods in the settlement are changing from agricultural to non-agricultural based. First generation settlers were engaged in paddy and vegetable cultivation. The second and third generation settlers' livelihoods are increasingly becoming non-agricultural, dominated by remittances and incomes from low-paid, irregular, seasonal work available mostly outside the settlements. A striking feature of the current livelihood activities is the involvement of women who were initially neglected at the project's outset by bureaucratic planners who either did not recognize or undermined the potential and productive capacities of women to

raise their families' standard of living. I highlight their contributions in all my articles. In terms of livelihoods, access to opportunities is framed by different factors compared to three decades ago. Today, age, gender, civil status, skills, and social and political factors are highly important in determining access to non-agricultural based employment opportunities, while access to agricultural-based opportunities is still framed by settlers' status, land tenure, and skills and knowledge of modern agricultural practices as well as markets. Their current forms of employment show that livelihoods are not only about survival but are also a reflection of the different ways settlers try to improve their own and their families' living conditions.

The second question examined in this research also concerns the reasons *why* settlers change their livelihoods. The findings of the research (refer to the articles) revealed that the changing livelihood contexts and the way people perceive poverty or what is good life have close links with changes in livelihoods. In terms of context, the AMDP, expanding regional, national and global economies and, to a lesser extent, physical environment were found to be most influential. At the same time, the settlers' perceptions of poverty have also changed considerably. As a consequence, the second and third generation settlers are not satisfied with the minimum basic standards of living which their parents or grandparents had. In other words, what constituted a good life for the first generation settlers is not the same for the later generations, who have different objectives and expectations. These objectives and expectations are partly motivated by their exposure to the living conditions in other parts of the country and worldwide, and disseminated by the media. From the research I discovered that even the first generation settlers' perceptions of good life have changed. This was clear from the way in which they were helping their children and grandchildren to fulfill their various goals, regardless of whether this help was given voluntarily. However, I have not attempted to elaborate further on the latter point.

The shifting livelihoods in the settlements also imply another important aspect of livelihoods. Land is not significant as it was thirty years ago. The study has captured the causes behind the declining importance of land. Other forms of assets are gaining importance as a result of this decline. The research findings confirm that human, financial,

social, cultural and political assets are becoming important in access to livelihoods in the settlements compared to in the past as they are prioritized in people's perceptions of poverty. Recent works in other parts of the world also show that the importance of natural assets is declining (Bebbington 1999) and social (Portes 1998, Ellis 2000, Narayan et al. 2000, Woolcock & Narayan 2000), human, political (Rakodi 1999), and financial assets are on the rise.

Next, this research has raised the question of constraints and opportunities faced by the settlers in their attempts to alleviate poverty. In answering this question, the findings of this research have shown how contexts act as both constraints and opportunities to overcoming poverty. The findings presented in the articles also confirm that despite the constraints of certain changing contexts the settlers are not remaining passive. They are trying to make use of other available opportunities or negotiating the changing contexts to pursue livelihoods. At the same time, access has been an important component in determining opportunities – as reflected in the livelihood approach. In contrast to the first generation, access to livelihoods by the second and third generations is largely framed by their age, gender, civil status, level of education, skills, social networks, land tenure, and political affiliation and links. The findings of this research reveal that in terms of access women are in a better position to secure employment in the FTZs and as domestic aids in Middle Eastern labour markets.

Finally, the research has attempted to understand the outcome of the livelihood choices of the settlers. This question cannot be answered adequately based on the findings from the present study. The outcome of livelihood choices in the established livelihoods models is generally related to assessing the success of livelihoods or the impacts of pursuing certain livelihoods (Scoones 1998, Carney 1999, Ellis 2000). In the settlement context, as the livelihood changes (especially those relating to remittance-based livelihoods) of the second and third generations are a comparatively recent phenomena it is too early to undertake a comprehensive analysis. However, this research documents some of the early achievements and vulnerabilities created when questioning the sustainability of the outcomes that shows losses as well as achievements.

The summary presented thus far has been based on the research questions and objectives and has also highlighted the fact that the whole purpose of the AMDP has been changing dramatically. The project was launched and accelerated as a solution to the many pressing socio-economic and political issues facing the country as well as in an effort to fulfill the various development objectives. After almost most three decades, the problems have changed as a result of combination of factors that are discussed in the thesis, mainly through articles. At the same time, the solutions also have changed. What is important in terms of solutions is that they are mainly sought by settlers themselves rather than imposed from outside as they were during the early settlement years. It is also quite clear from the research that the resettlement process has had a profound impact on the lives and livelihoods of the settlers and this is particularly relevant when looking at the consequences of resettlement for the second and third generations together with the changing contexts. At the same time, although the second and third generation settlers have been slow to exploit the opportunities provided by changing national economic policies and globalization, compared to other rural communities they have been forced to change at a faster rate.

Concluding remarks

The study recognizes that people's perceptions of poverty, captures how they have been negotiating their livelihoods, which are not only about making a living but also about fulfilling their various objectives in terms of what constitutes a good life. The research has rendered the actor's role more visible. Although different generations of settlers are embedded in different contexts over time, the finding of the research make evidence to the fact that why people do what they want to do in terms of livelihood are not only linked to the changing contexts but also to their different perceptions of poverty and eager for a good life. Through using the analytical framework that links people's perceptions of poverty and livelihood changes, it is also suggested how externally organized space (AMDP settlements plan) has been transformed by the interplay between changing contexts and actors over time. In terms of research, planning and policy making, this study

informs about many unrecognized dimensions that could not be captured by a simple poverty line, which in turn could be used to address poverty and the different ways people respond to it. The constraints and opportunities identified may be relevant for planners and policy makers in developing environments that could facilitate the materialization of many settlers' ambitions. A major challenge that remains, however, is how to translate the individual's insights and perspectives into changes in policy, as income-based dimensions still dominate the policies and planning even though the multidimensional nature of poverty has been accepted for a long time in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, I argue that by combining people's perceptions of poverty (which informs many aspects of an eagerness for a good life), a livelihood approach to poverty can capture more detailed understanding of why people change their livelihoods, what goals do they have, how they respond, what constraints and opportunities they face, and what the outcomes are. If adequately incorporated into future development and planning activities of the settlements, this could bring positive outcomes.

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Appendix 1

Background characteristics of research participants

Research participants	Sex	Age	Marital status	Settlement	Chapter	Article
1. Ukkuwa	M	59	M	Solama	5	2
2. David Appuhamy	M	97	M	M'pura	5	
3. Gunawathie	F	68	W	Solama	5	
4. Bandara	M	75	M	M'pura	5	
5. Gamini	M	70	M	M'pura	5	
6. Podimenike	F	63	W	M'pura	5	
7. Leelawathie	F	67	M	Kongwewa	5	
8. Rani	F	63	W	M'pura	5	4
9. Rathne	M	62	M	Solama	5	
10. Mahinda	M	19	S	Kongwewa	5	1
11. Priyantha	M	24	S	M'pura	5	
12. Heenmenike	F	45	A	M'pura	5	5
13. Wasantha	M	32	M	Kongwewa	5	1
14. Samam	M	24	M	Kongwewa	5	2
15. Wasana	F	25	S	Solama	5	
16. Gnawathie	F	24	M	Kongwewa	5	2
17. Kumari	F	25	M	Solama	5	3
18. Sanjeewani	F	22	M	Solama	5	2,3
19. Sumane	M	21	S	M'pura	5	
20. Bandara	M	33	S	Solama	5	1
21. Seneviratne	M	54	M	M'pura	5	
22 .Jayanthi	F	43	M	Kongwewa	5	1
23.Thilak	M	25	S	Kongwewa	5	
24. Wasantha	F	40	M	M'pura	5	
25. Jayamini	F	39	M	M'pura	5	2
26. Sisira	M	30	M	M'pura	5	
27. Janaka	M	18	S	Solama	5	2
28.Lisa	F	56	M	Solama	5	
29. Mangalika	FF	25	M	Kongwewa	5	
30. Nimali	M	17	S	M'pura	5	
31. Chandrapala	M	29	S	M'pura	5	
32. Samadara	M	58	M	Solama	5	
33. Sunil (GN)	F	47	M	Solama	5	2

34. Karunawathie	F	37	M	Solama	5	
35. Jayamini	M	39	W	M'pura	5	5
36. Priest	F	50	S	Solama		
37. Punchimenike	M	58	M	M'puara	5	1
38. Raja	M	27	M	Solama	5	
39. Piyaratne	M	43	M	Kongwewa	5	2
40.***	F	63	M	M'pura	5	
41.***	M	23	S	Solama		2
42.***	M	60	M	M'pura		2
43.***	M	45	M	M'pura		2
44.***	M	42	M	Kongwewa		2
45.***	M	37	M	Solama		2
46.***	M	29	M	M'pura		2
47.***	M	36	M	Solama		2
48.***	M	39	M	Kongwewa		2
49.***	M	29	M	M'pura		2
50.***	M	44	M	Solama		2
51.***	F	27	M	Kongwewa		2
52.***	F	29	M	M'pura		2
53.. Vineetha	F	35	M	Solama		3
54. Somalatha	F	28	M	Solama		3
55. Janaki	F	30	M	Solama		3
56. Swarnamalika	F	23	A	Solama		5
57. Jayamini	F	39	W	M'pura		5
58. Swarna	F	48	M	M'pura		4, 1
59. Lalitha	F	24	M	Solama		1
60.Malinia	F	23	S	Kongwewa		1
61. ***	F	45		Solama		4
62..***	F	54		M'pura		4
63.***	F	66		Kongwewa		4
64.***	F	50		Kongwewa		4
65.***	F	58		Solama		4
67. ***	F	80		M'pura		4
68.***	F	51		Solama		4
69.***	F	50		Kongwewa		4
70.***	F	63		Kongwewa		4
71.***	F	74		M'pura		4

*** Do not want to reveal their names. Although some participants wanted to reveal their names, to maintain consistency in some articles I have not revealed their names. .Source: Fieldwork 2004–2007

Appendix 2

Interview guides and checklist for articles

Interview guide for Article 1

1. Past livelihoods

      Informal discussions with the first generation settlers:

      What was the life in MDP settlements like then?

      What livelihood activities they were engaged in?

      Were their livelihood choices bringing the expected benefits? If not,

      What problems had they faced regarding their livelihoods?

      How did they over come these?

2. Present livelihoods

      Basic socio-economic data of each person interviewed

      Perceptions of poverty

      Current livelihood

      Reasons for choosing current livelihoods

      How did they gain access to their current livelihoods?

      Access to land

      Availability of off-farm employment

      Challenges faced in their present livelihoods

      How they handle the problems

      What have they have gained?

      What are the losses?

      What do they think of their future livelihoods?

Interview guide for Article 2

      Group discussion on community's view on changing gender roles of married

      men and women created due to women's migration to Middle East:

      When did this type of livelihood start in the settlements?

      Why do women migrate?

      What are the impacts of migration on their families, community and personally?

      What has happened to the men since their wives left?

How are their new roles viewed?

Why does society generally have a negative view, despite the fact that women are contributing to their family's well-being?

Do migrant women contribute to the community?

How and what contribution do they make?

In-depth interview guide for husband's of women migrant:

Individual and family socio-economic background

Why was the decision to migrate taken?

How do they conceptualize poverty?

Who decided?

How access to opportunities became known

How migration costs were covered

How household tasks are done

After their wives' migration, do they work?

Who take care of the children (if any)?

What do they think of their new roles and responsibilities?

What do they think of the settlers' view on their wives' migration to Middle East?

How often their wives send money

To whom they send money

For what purposes it is spent on

Do they have any savings?

How have they invested the money?

Have their expectations regarding their wives' migration been fulfilled?

Did migration bring any changes?

What sort of changes

Interview checklist on the changing gender role of migrant women (information from few returnee migrants):

General socio- economic backgrounds of them and their families

Why did they decide to migrate?

How and by whom were household responsibilities taken care of during their absence?

How do they view their migration?

Were they able to fulfil their expectations?

Will they migrate again or have they stopped migrating?

How do they view their return?

After their return how the household responsibilities are arranged?

How does society view the migration of women and their husband's taking care of household duties?

In-depth interview guide for Article 3

General socio- economic background of the migrant women and their families

Why did they take the decision to migrate?

How do they perceive poverty?

Who took the decision?

How did they come to know about this opportunity?

How did they finance the migration?

How were the household responsibilities arranged?

What do they think of their lives in the Middle East?

What were their roles and responsibilities?

Was the life difficult or easy?

What are the difficulties and good situations?

What contribution did they make towards meeting their family's daily needs when they were in the Middle East?

Did they have a house on their own?

If not, why could not they continue to live in the houses where they lived earlier?

What does home mean to them?

How did they contribute to build a home?

To whom they remitted their earnings?

Were they able to fulfill the whole purpose of migration?

If 'yes', how?

What do they think of being able to build a home?

What are their feelings about being able to build a home from their own earnings?

Do they feel empowered? (I had to explain and simplify this question as empowerment is conceptualized and understood differently)

How do they take part in important decision making?

Have they observed a change in their roles?

What experience and knowledge has migration provided them with?

What contribution have they made to the local community?

Do they intend to migrate again?

If 'yes', why?

If 'no', why?

Interview guide for Article 4

Interview with key informants:

Structure, functions and history of the small markets

Management of small markets

Role of small markets in the development of the AMDP settlements

How stalls are allocated

How stalls are maintained

Problems facing maintenance of small markets

What facilities or provisions do they have for women market traders?

Opinions on women traders

Interview with women traders:

General socio-economic backgrounds

Why they became a *pola* trader

How do they buy or produce what they sell?

Do they have the support of their family?

How do they manage household work?

What challenges do they face as *pola* traders?

How do they overcome problems in *pola*?

What do they think of the income they earn and the employment they are
        engaged in?

What do they think of the society's view on *pola* women?

In-depth interview guide for Article 5

General socio-economic backgrounds of the women

How they became a female heads of household

How do they perceive poverty?

Do they have access to land?

Do they have employment opportunities in their settlements?

Can they go outside the settlements to find an employment?

What employment activity are they engaged in now?

How did they come to know about the employment?

Is the income from employment sufficient?

What difficulties do they face in their employment?

Do they receive any government assistance?

How do they arrange their household tasks?

Do they receive support from their families, friends or relatives?

How does society view a female-headed household?

How does society view their employment outside the settlements?

Do they consider the views of society?

What impacts do such views have on them?

What challenges do they face in bringing their families out of poverty?

What problems do they face in their employment?

What benefits they get from their employment?

What do they think about their future?

Appendix 3

Checklist for informal discussions on life before and after the MDP

Purpose: To understand preconditions for migration.

Maliyadevapura settlers:

Place of origin

Livelihood activities engaged in

Socio-economic backgrounds

Decision to migrate

Solama settlers:

Livelihood activities

Socio-economic backgrounds

How they reacted to the decision to incorporate their village into the MDP

Kongwewa settlers:

Places of origin

Livelihood activities

How did they get to know about the project?

What are the reasons for migration?

Informal discussions: Life after the MDP

Maliyadevapura settlers and Kongwewa settlers:

Explain the migration process

How they started the life

What problems they faced

How they managed

What experience they had in the MDP during the initial resettlement years; initial

        resettlement

problems, social relations

What livelihood activities they were engaged in

Were they happy about the life in the new place?

Did they miss their old villages?

Familiarity with new agricultural practices?

What was the relationship with government officers? (With project officers?) Feeling?

Solama settlers:

Explain the incorporation process

What they felt about the project

What livelihood activities they were engaged in

Familiarity with the new agricultural activity

How was the relationship with government officers? (With project officers?) Feeling?

Appendix 4

Perceptions of poverty: First, second and third generations

Perceptions	Dimensions
Not having or lacking	Permanent employment, money, house, land, water, food, clothes, motivation, off-farm employment, basic facilities in the settlements
Feeling	Lonely, shame, humiliated, inferior, insecure, lazy, worried, an outsider in the community, sad
Inability (to)	Work, have a good family life, find a good life partner, feed the children, provide them with food, education and health care, access markets, bear the rising costs of living, live in society
Being	In debt, addicted to alcohol, physically disabled, mentally sick, isolated, neglected, old, uneducated
Not having power (to)	Undertake personal initiatives, decide, obtain a loan, talk to government officers, talk to politicians

Source: Fieldwork, 2004.