

LAND ACCESS, LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION AND MIGRATION OF RURAL YOUTH IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Selecting an appropriate livelihood strategy is a critical turning point of any youth's life. Until recent years, most prominent livelihood among youth was agriculture, which was inherited from their family. Rural livelihoods have been diversified due to many factors causing a social change, and it has led the rural youth to be migrated. This study was designed to assess whether, the land access influences the choice of agricultural livelihood among rural youth and rural youth's choice of migration. A national representative sample of rural youth was isolated from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2016) data, compiled by Department of Census and Statistics. A multinomial logit model under random utility framework was estimated to assess the livelihood diversification. A probit model of migration outcome was employed to assess the rural youth's choice of migration with regards to land access. The multinomial logit model revealed that land access is strongly associated with the agricultural livelihood choice and urban salaried employment choice of rural youth. Being a female youth makes the choice of livelihood less likely to be agriculture. Education level of youth acts as an upward driver in choosing urban salaried employment while tendency for educated youth to choose agriculture decreases with education. Probit model of migration revealed that propensity to migrate reduces with land accessibility. Therefore, land access is a crucial factor for rural youth to choose agricultural livelihoods. Land access is also a crucial factor for rural youth not to be migrated. Thus, the policies required to be reformed to increase the land access to rural youth in Sri Lanka to address the adverse effects of this social change.

Key words: employment choice of rural youth, farmland availability, non-farm employment, sustainable agriculture